

How District Leaders Can Productively Communicate About the Data

Four Common Communications Pitfalls to Avoid

1. Focusing solely on what we don't know
2. Focusing only on metrics, <u>e.g.</u> flaw/details
3. Avoiding saying the obvious
4. Explanations that don't acknowledge that the district made spending choices

"We'd need to know what programs the school implemented." "Is there a problem with teacher hiring?" "How well did the school perform the year before?"

"Tests don't measure everything -- including mental well-being" and "Does this adjust for special education spending?"

Crickets vs "Our larger investments in this school aren't working for students."

"This school costs more per student because it's smaller" vs "The district chose to subsidize smaller schools with one-per-school staffing"

If or when this happens: What districts can say (*and do*).

District leader: "Yikes!! I don't know how this happened or how to fix it."

"Looking at the district's expenses from the school lens is new for us and reveals some noteworthy patterns. We're eager to engage with our principals/community/board to explore how to best deploy our limited funds to do the most for all the district's students."

School Board Member: "Wow - teacher seniority seems to be driving up spending at some of our schools."

"We use a salary scale based on experience, so we spend more on schools that attract senior teachers. That leaves fewer dollars for schools with junior teachers. We're eager to engage with our principals/teachers/community about options that might both retain our teachers and work better for all our students."

Parent: "Why is this magnet school so expensive?"

"The extra funds we've been applying to our special programs do leave fewer dollars for other schools. This is good time to explore whether there are ways to protect those programs without drawing funds from other schools and students."

Parent: "How come some schools get so much more than others?"

"Our approach to equity means delivering more resources to students with higher needs. Going forward, we'll try to make that clear by clarifying allocations by student type."

Principal: "If the school is so small, why is it so expensive per student?"

"The district does deploy more dollars to its smaller (or under-enrolled) schools, leaving fewer dollars for all other schools. Given the limited district resources, it may be time to explore how we can construct a budget that better serves all our students where they are."