

Case 18: Why is the theater curtain still falling apart?

Overview

Students read a short story in which the theater curtain at Dec and Anika’s school will not close. Meanwhile, a social post points to the district’s \$48 million budget. Students label a proposed-budget excerpt by year, stage and units, explain why the post compares a total with a per-pupil figure and map who decides. They then write a budget question and a 60-second comment for the school board.

Before this case

Students should already be able to:

- explain federal, state and local roles in school funding
- define a criterion and apply it to examples
- write a structured policy brief

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- explain accurately how federal, state and local rules and the local board shape a district budget
- distinguish equity from adequacy
- propose clear criteria for ranking facilities requests
- acknowledge the trade-offs of their own criteria

Materials

- This chapter, one copy per student

Materials, continued

- Evidence A, B and C
- A district capital-planning document you choose
- The brief template and the equity and adequacy explainer

The task in this edition

Task: Write a policy brief on how facilities requests should be prioritized in a district budget.

Students make: Policy brief, 450—550 words

Pacing

Opener (page 350): 4 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read What happened aloud and go straight to the evidence.

Key terms (pages 351 and 352): 4 min. Short on time: skip.

Look at the evidence (page 356): 8 min. Short on time: 6 min. Students fill in only the What it leaves out boxes.

Look at the evidence (page 357): 4 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read Evidence C aloud. Students fill in only its What it leaves out box.

Key idea (pages 358 and 359): 12 min. Short on time: 10 min. Skip the In the news section.

Sort the evidence (page 360): 8 min. Short on time: 4 min. Complete the chain together on the board.

Pacing, continued

Practice (page 361): 5 min. Short on time: skip.

Your task (pages 362 and 363): 12 min. Short on time: 10 min. Write the equity and adequacy box together.

Your draft (page 364): 30 min. Short on time: 22 min. Students draft the two sections in class and finish the brief at home.

Check your work (pages 365 and 366): 8 min. Short on time: skip. Collect the briefs and score them with the rubric yourself.

Questions to discuss (pages 367 and 368): 10 min. Short on time: 2 min. Ask question 1 aloud as an exit ticket.

Talk about this case at home (page 369): at home.

Periods: full chapter 105 minutes; one period 60 minutes.

Standards

RI.11-12.1 Back up an analysis with the strongest evidence from the text, including where the text leaves things uncertain.

W.11-12.2 Write an explanatory text that conveys complex ideas clearly and accurately.

W.11-12.5 Strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing or rewriting, focusing on what matters most for the purpose and audience.

Case 18 plan, continued

Standards, continued

SL.11-12.1.c Keep a discussion moving with questions that probe reasoning and evidence, and make sure the full range of views is heard.

SL.11-12.1.d Respond to different views, pull together what each side says, resolve conflicts where possible and name what still needs research.

D2.Civ.11.9-12 Evaluate how well different government decision-making procedures meet their civic purposes at each level. In this case: Students evaluate how the budget process achieves or misses civic purposes.

D2.Civ.13.9-12 Evaluate public policies by their intended and unintended outcomes and consequences. In this case: Students evaluate intended and unintended outcomes of how facilities money is allocated.

D4.8.9-12 Use deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and act at school and in the community. In this case: Students apply democratic procedures by preparing a question for the board.

Codes of ethics

- **ASPA Code of Ethics:** 5. Fully Inform and Advise.
- **SPJ Code of Ethics:** Seek Truth and Report It

Codes of ethics, continued

- **Credo for Ethical Communication:** “We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason...” (one of nine unnumbered principles)

Heat map

- **Opener (page 350):** Low
- **Key terms (pages 351 and 352):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 356):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 357):** Low
- **Key idea (pages 358 and 359):** Low
- **Sort the evidence (page 360):** Low
- **Practice (page 361):** Low
- **Your task (pages 362 and 363):** Low
- **Your draft (page 364):** Low
- **Check your work (pages 365 and 366):** Low

Try it at your school

Find one line in your school’s budget.

- With a teacher or advisor, find your district’s budget on its website
- Label the document’s year and stage
- Find one line connected to something you use (facilities, arts, technology)
- Ask your student council how students can submit a budget question or comment

Try it at your school, continued

Who to ask: Student council advisor, school business office, school board clerk, principal

Safety: Get permission before photographing spaces or people at school. Stick to observed facts when posting about budgets.

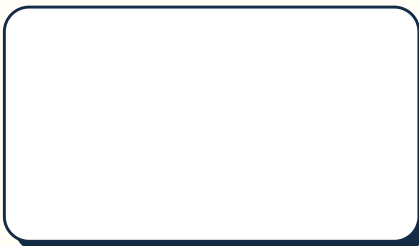
Sources

- ABC, “About Abbott Elementary,” No date listed
- National Center for Education Statistics, “Revenue sources for public schools by state, 2022—23 (Digest table 235.20),” No date listed

Case 18: Why is the theater curtain still falling apart?

The district's proposed budget is \$48 million, the school theater curtain won't close, and Dec wants to ask the school board about it.

On your own Read What happened and underline the three dollar amounts. About 4 minutes.



Anika, Dec and Mari test a small light circuit in a theater workshop, with Pauta beside them.

Your role: You're the one who works out the per-student number before anyone repeats the post. **New skill:** Compare numbers on the same scale.

What happened

The curtain in the school theater is torn, and it no longer closes all the way. Dec, 17, pulls that curtain at every show. He and Anika, 16, are on the theater crew. The facilities office gave the theater advisor a quote to replace the curtain: \$6,800.

Mari, 19, is helping them prepare a question for the school board. They find the district's proposed budget for next school year. The total is \$48 million for a projected 3,200 students. One line sets aside \$310,000 for building repairs at all schools. A note says the figures may change before the board adopts the budget.

Your question: What can the \$48 million total tell Dec about the curtain, and what should he ask the school board?

On Tuesday at 6:10 p.m., a post starts going around. It compares the district's \$48 million with another district, Westbrook, at \$21,000 per student. "And they can't fix ONE curtain??" it asks. Dec has a photo of the torn curtain. He wants to be the one who asks the board about it.

Pacing

Full chapter: 4 min.

Short on time: 3 min. Read What happened aloud and go straight to the evidence.

Say this

"\$48 million, and the curtain still won't close. What is your first reaction?" — Collect reactions. Then ask what kind of number \$48 million is.

Watch for

Misconception: Students assume a large total means money is free for any need. **Listen for:** "They have millions, they're just wasting it." **Then:** Ask what the \$48 million has to cover. Write "whole district, next year" on the board.

Support

- Read What happened aloud. List the three dollar amounts on the board with their labels.

Heat check

Low.

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 4 minutes.

Revenue Revenue is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants.

En español: ingresos

In this case: NCES reports that public schools get revenue from federal, state and local sources. That national data cannot show what Dec's district spends on a curtain.

Expenditure An expenditure is money that a government or an organization spends.

En español: gasto

In this case: The \$48 million is a proposed plan for next school year. It lists planned expenditures, but none of that money has been spent yet.

Per-pupil amount A per-pupil amount is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared.

En español: monto por estudiante

In this case: $\$48,000,000 \div 3,200 \text{ students} = \$15,000 \text{ per student}$. Westbrook's \$21,000 is already per student, but its year and stage are unknown.

Who is involved

Mari

Helping the theater crew with a budget question

"Forty-eight million dollars, and the curtain still won't close. Ay, bendito. Before we get mad at the big number, which line is supposed to fix it?"

Dec

Pulls the curtain at every show

"I pull that curtain every show. It doesn't close all the way anymore. That part I can show you."

Pacing

Full chapter: 4 min.

 Short on time: skip this page.

Say this

"Has any of the \$48 million been spent yet?" — No. It is a proposed plan. Planned expenditures are not money already spent.

Watch for

Misconception: Students treat revenue and expenditure as the same. **Listen for:** "Revenue is what they spend." **Then:** Revenue comes in and an expenditure goes out. Draw two arrows on the board.

Support

- Pair students who share a language to explain each term with a number from the case.
- **Cognates:** district (distrito), total (total), proposed (propuesto), student (estudiante), repair (reparación), comparison (comparación), calculate (calcular), federal (federal).

Heat check

 Low.

Answer key

Any first guess is fine. Students return to it on the My take page.

Before you look at the evidence, why do you think the theater curtain is still not fixed?

➤ My first guess is that the curtain ranks below other repairs, because \$310,000 has to cover every school.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Reading passage

Reading a budget before reacting to it

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Revenue:** Revenue is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants.
- **Expenditure:** An expenditure is money that a government or an organization spends.
- **Per-pupil amount:** A per-pupil amount is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared.
- **Proposal:** A proposal is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet.
- **Decision-maker:** A decision-maker is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice.

The story: Where is the money going?

Dec, 17, a senior on the theater crew, pulls the stage curtain at every show. It is torn and no longer closes all the way. The facilities office has already priced a flame-retardant replacement, removal and installation included, at \$6,800. Dec has a photo of the tear. He wants to take the problem to the school board, and he wants to be the one who asks.

Mari, 19, is helping him and Anika, 16, prepare. The district's proposed budget for next school year is posted online. The headline figure is \$48,000,000, with projected enrollment of 3,200 students. A facilities line provides \$310,000 for building repairs across all schools. A note warns that the figures are proposed and may change before adoption.

On Tuesday at 6:10 p.m., a post begins circulating. It sets the district's \$48 million beside Westbrook's \$21,000 per student and asks why the district cannot fix one curtain. The post has the emotional logic of a good question. It also has the arithmetic of a bad one. Mari's instinct is to ask where the numbers are from.

Your role is to work out the per-student number before anyone repeats the post.

- Stop and think.** The post “has the emotional logic of a good question.” What makes it feel convincing?

⌚ Pacing

Reading: about 5 min (706 words). Short on time: read it aloud together, pausing at each Stop and think.

❓ Stop and think

1. **After “The story: Where is the money going?”:** The post “has the emotional logic of a good question.” What makes it feel convincing?
2. **After “Putting numbers on the same scale”:** Why can't a per-pupil figure show whether a district has enough money?
3. **After “Funding, spending and outcomes”:** What would Dec need to know to show that the curtain belongs in the building repairs line?

Putting numbers on the same scale

Budget numbers carry three labels that must match before a comparison means anything: year, stage and unit. The post mismatches all three. It pairs a proposed district total for next year with a per-student figure of unknown year and stage.

A **per-pupil amount** is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared. The new skill in this case is comparing numbers on the same scale. It extends Case 11's habit of comparing like with like. Dividing \$48,000,000 by 3,200 gives \$15,000 per student. The recalculation changes the post's implied story, but it does not settle it. Westbrook's year and stage are still unknown, and a per-pupil figure cannot show whether either district's funding matches its students' needs.

The vocabulary of public finance keeps other distinctions straight. **Revenue** is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants. An **expenditure** is money that a government or an organization spends. This document is a **proposal**, the Case 4 term for a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. A proposed budget, the adopted budget and actual spending are three different records.

The crew's method draws on earlier cases. Mari reads the budget line by line, the skill from Case 5, looking for the line that could plausibly cover a stage curtain. She is not sure a curtain counts as a building repair, and she wants to find out. Dec follows Case 13's rule of keeping a claim as small as the evidence. His photo proves the tear and nothing about where money went, so he brings the photo, the quote and a question rather than an accusation. Case 4's **decision-maker**, the person or group with the power to make a particular choice, points to the school board, which adopts the budget within state and federal rules. His question should name one budget line, one need and the board's next chance to hear requests.

? **Stop and think.** Why can't a per-pupil figure show whether a district has enough money?

Funding, spending and outcomes

National data give context but not local answers. NCES reports that public-school revenue comes from federal, state and local sources, with a mix that varies by state (NCES, May 2024). Its state-by-state table for 2022–23 includes per-pupil amounts (NCES Digest table 235.20, March 2026). Reliance on local property taxes produces large differences between districts (NPR, April 18, 2016).

Budgets also change over time. When temporary federal pandemic relief ran out, districts faced what reporters called a funding cliff (Chalkbeat, September 13, 2023). In 2026, many districts made cuts and layoffs tied to inflation and enrollment declines (Chalkbeat, May 28, 2026). Spending levels matter for students.

This page continues page 353. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 353.

Funding, spending and outcomes, continued

A major study of school finance reforms found that more per-pupil spending raised graduation rates and adult earnings, especially for low-income students (Jackson, Johnson and Persico, Quarterly Journal of Economics, October 1, 2015).

The SPJ code offers a rule for anyone writing about budgets: “Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story” (SPJ Code of Ethics, September 6, 2014). The viral post fails that test, and Dec’s question passes it.

? **Stop and think.** What would Dec need to know to show that the curtain belongs in the building repairs line?

Sources

Real source | National Center for Education Statistics | May 2024

Public School Revenue Sources (Condition of Education)

Real source | National Center for Education Statistics | March 2026

Revenue sources for public schools by state, 2022–23 (Digest table 235.20)

Real source | NPR | April 18, 2016

Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem

Real source | Chalkbeat | September 13, 2023

Schools face a funding cliff. How bad will the fall be?

Real source | Chalkbeat | May 28, 2026

A financial reckoning is hitting America’s public schools

Real source | The Quarterly Journal of Economics (Jackson, Johnson & Persico) | October 1, 2015

The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms

Real source | Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) | 2014

SPJ Code of Ethics

This page continues page 353. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 353.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Budget excerpt

The proposed budget for next school year

PROPOSED BUDGET, NEXT SCHOOL YEAR. Total proposed budget: \$48,000,000. Projected enrollment: 3,200 students. Facilities, building repairs (all schools): \$310,000. Note: figures are proposed and may change before the board adopts the budget.

Look closely: Circle the year, the stage and the unit for each number.

What it shows

➤ A proposed plan, not spending: \$48 million total and \$310,000 for repairs at all schools.

What it leaves out

➤ Last year's actual spending, how repairs are ranked and what the board will adopt.

Evidence B | Social media post

A post shared Tuesday at 6:10 p.m.

Our district: \$48 MILLION. Westbrook: \$21,000 per student. And they can't fix ONE curtain?? Where is the money going?

Look closely: Which number is a total, and which is per student?

What it shows

➤ A comparison of a district total with another district's per-student figure.

What it leaves out

➤ Matching units, Westbrook's budget year and stage, and any source for its figure.

Case 18 | Look at the evidence

| Grades 11–12 educator edition

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 6 min. Students fill in only the What it leaves out boxes.

💬 Say this

“Before you react to any number, find its year, its stage and its unit.” — Model it on the \$48 million: next year, proposed, whole district.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students read the proposed budget as money already spent. **Listen for:** “They spent \$48 million and didn’t fix it.” **Then:** Point to “PROPOSED” and “NEXT SCHOOL YEAR.” Nothing here has been spent.

📄 Support

- Give students a calculator and the budget excerpt with its labels highlighted.
- Read the budget note aloud.
- **Cognates:** district (distrito), total (total), proposed (propuesto), student (estudiante), repair (reparación), comparison (comparación), calculate (calcular), federal (federal).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask why the \$310,000 line cannot show whether the curtain is funded, even though it is the right kind of line.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Repair quote

The facilities quote for a new curtain

Stage curtain replacement, main auditorium: remove the torn curtain, supply and install a flame-retardant replacement. Total: \$6,800.

Look closely: What does the quote confirm, and who received it?

What it shows

➤ A priced need: \$6,800 for a flame-retardant replacement, sent to the advisor.

What it leaves out

➤ Whether the request reached the board, and where it ranks among other repairs.

What is still missing from the evidence?

➤ Whether stage equipment falls under the building-repairs line, how repair requests are ranked, and Westbrook's year and stage. We also don't know what the board will adopt.

Notes

Case 18 | Look at the evidence | Grades 11–12 educator edition

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 4 min.

✂ Short on time: 3 min. Read Evidence C aloud. Students fill in only its What it leaves out box.

💬 Say this

“Before you react to any number, find its year, its stage and its unit.” — Model it on the \$48 million: next year, proposed, whole district.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students read the proposed budget as money already spent. **Listen for:** “They spent \$48 million and didn’t fix it.” **Then:** Point to “PROPOSED” and “NEXT SCHOOL YEAR.” Nothing here has been spent.

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🔗 Stretch

- Ask why the \$310,000 line cannot show whether the curtain is funded, even though it is the right kind of line.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Key idea: per-pupil amounts

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

Before you compare two budget numbers, check three labels: the year, the stage and the unit. An **expenditure** is money that a government or an organization spends. A proposed budget is a plan for expenditures. An adopted budget is the plan the board approves. Actual spending is what the district really spent. The \$48 million is a proposed total for the whole district. The Westbrook figure is an amount per student.

A **per-pupil amount** is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared. Dec's district proposes \$48,000,000 for a projected 3,200 students. That works out to \$15,000 per student. The comparison is still not complete, because Westbrook's budget year and stage are unknown. A per-pupil figure also cannot show whether either district has enough for its students' needs.

Revenue is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that public schools get revenue from federal, state and local sources. The mix differs from state to state. National data like this gives context, but it cannot say what one district spends on a curtain. In most states, an elected local school board adopts the budget within state and federal rules. That is why Dec's question should name one budget line, one need and the board's next chance to hear requests.

Professional standards

Real source | American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

ASPA Code of Ethics: 5. Fully Inform and Advise

"Provide accurate, honest, comprehensive, and timely information and advice to elected and appointed officials and governing board members"

In plain words: ASPA members agree to give decision-makers, such as school board members, accurate and complete information.

Question: The \$6,800 curtain quote went to the theater advisor. What should the board see to rank that repair?

Pacing

Full chapter: 12 min.

 Short on time: 10 min. Skip the In the news section.

Say this

"Divide \$48,000,000 by 3,200 students. Compare it with \$21,000. Is the comparison fair yet?" — Not yet. Westbrook's year and stage are unknown.

Watch for

Misconception: Students treat the ASPA code as a law for school boards. **Listen for:** "The board is breaking the ASPA code." **Then:** Say: "ASPA's code is for its members in public service. It is not a law."

Support

- Work the division on the board. Label the answer \$15,000 per student, proposed.

Stretch

- Use the SPJ row: what context would a news story need before comparing the two districts?

Heat check

 Low.

Professional standards, continued**Your answer**

The board needs _____. Then it can _____.

➤ The board needs the \$6,800 quote, evidence of the damage and the budget line that would cover it. Then it can rank the curtain against other repairs.

In the news

Real source | NPR | April 18, 2016

Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem

Explains how local property taxes make school budgets very different from one district to the next.

Real source | Chalkbeat | May 28, 2026

A financial reckoning is hitting America's public schools

Big districts are making cuts, showing how a huge budget can still leave little for extras like a stage curtain.

Notes

This page continues page 358. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 358.

Sort the evidence

On your own Trace the curtain request from the photo to the vote and fill in each box. About 8 minutes.

Trace the curtain request from the photo to the vote. Who ranks it, who adopts the budget, which rules limit them, and where can students speak?

Fund the \$6,800 curtain replacement next year

Who decides

The elected local school board, which adopts the budget

The facilities office, which ranks repair requests (how is still unknown)

Under which rule

State and federal rules and funding streams set limits on district budgets

Proposed building-repairs line: \$310,000 for all schools

Who lives with it

Your way in

➤ A written question or public comment before the budget is adopted

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

➤ The board and the facilities office are missing. I would ask whether stage equipment counts as a building repair and when requests are heard.

Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 4 min. Complete the chain together on the board.

Say this

“Trace the curtain request. Who ranks it, who adopts the budget and where can students speak?” — Model the first box: the facilities office.

Watch for

Misconception: Students name the principal as the decider. **Listen for:** “Just ask the principal to buy it.”

Then: Point to the chain: the elected school board adopts the budget.

Support

- Let students write the name of each office before writing sentences.

Heat check

■□□ Low.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what the crew should do first, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 5 minutes.

A post compares the district's \$48 million total with Westbrook's \$21,000 per student. Someone reposts it and adds "we get way less." What should the crew do first?

- ☐ A Share it. Both figures are in dollars, and the curtain really is torn.
- ☒ B Check that both figures use the same year, budget stage and units before comparing them.
- ☐ C Divide \$48 million by 3,200 students, and post that the district is underfunded.

Why I chose it

➤ B. A repeats a unit mismatch. C corrects the units but jumps to underfunding, and Westbrook's year and stage are unknown. B makes a fair comparison possible.

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

Our district has a **1** \$48 million budget but our theater curtain is ripped and gross. That's so much money and they can't even fix one curtain? It has been like this since before any of us joined the crew and it keeps getting worse every show. Where is all the money going? Other districts get way more. I saw a post that said so. We deserve better and **2** the board needs to explain themselves. We are honestly tired of waiting for this.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

➤ The \$48 million is next year's proposed budget, not this year's spending.

Rewrite phrase 2

➤ Which line covers stage equipment, and when will the board hear repair requests?

Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

Say this

"Someone reposts the comparison with "we get way less." What do you do first?" — Hold a quick vote before any discussion.

Watch for

Misconception: Students pick C because the math is right. **Listen for:** "\$15,000 is less, so we're underfunded." **Then:** Ask what one per-student figure can prove. It cannot show need.

Support

- Read the three options aloud before students choose.

Heat check

Low.

Answer key

A revised version: Our question is about next year's proposed budget. The theater curtain is torn at the seam and no longer closes fully; we have a photo and a \$6,800 replacement quote from the facilities office. The proposed budget lists \$310,000 for building repairs across the district. We'd like to know whether stage equipment is covered by that line or a different one, how repair requests are ranked, and when the board considers them. Could a student from the theater crew submit a written request before the budget is adopted? Thank you for considering it.

Grades 11–12

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 12 minutes.

Write a policy brief on how facilities requests should be prioritized in a district budget.

Use: Case sources plus a teacher-selected district capital-planning document.

You'll make: Policy brief, 450–550 words

Time: 60 minutes

- 1 Reread Evidence A and C. Note the \$310,000 line and the \$6,800 quote.
- 2 Write one sentence each defining equity and adequacy for facilities.
- 3 Draft three criteria for ranking repair requests.
- 4 Test your criteria on the curtain request. Record where it would rank.
- 5 Draft the criteria and trade-offs sections on the Your draft page.
- 6 Finish the brief, 450 to 550 words, on lined paper or in the online workspace.
- 7 Name one request that would lose under your criteria.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Equity and adequacy

Equity asks _____. Adequacy asks _____.

➤ **Equity asks whether repair money is fairly shared given different needs.**

Adequacy asks whether there is enough to meet them.

Case 18 | Your task | Grades 11–12 educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 12 min.

✂ Short on time: 10 min. Write the equity and adequacy box together.

💬 Say this

“Equity asks if the share is fair. Adequacy asks if there is enough. Which one is the curtain question?” — Accept either, with a reason.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students treat equity and adequacy as the same claim. **Listen for:** “If it’s fair, there’s enough.” **Then:** Ask: could every school get a fair share and the curtain still stay torn?

📄 Support

- Brief template
- Equity vs. adequacy explainer

🔗 Stretch

- Distinguish equity from adequacy and recommend criteria for choosing among repair requests.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

📋 Standards

Common Core: RI.11-12.1; W.11-12.2; W.11-12.5; SL.11-12.1.c; SL.11-12.1.d.

C3 Framework: D2.Civ.11.9-12; D2.Civ.13.9-12; D4.8.9-12.

The Case plan sheet gives each code in plain words.

Your task, continued

Three criteria for ranking requests

➤ 1. Safety risk. 2. How many students use the space. 3. Cost compared with what is left in the repair line.

The curtain request under my criteria

➤ Safety risk unknown. Used at every show. \$6,800 from a \$310,000 line for all schools. It ranks in the middle.

Notes

This page continues page 362.

➤ Answer key

A strong response:

- Accurately explains federal, state and local roles
- Uses equity and adequacy correctly
- Proposes clear criteria
- Acknowledges trade-offs

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes, using your planner from the page before. About 30 minutes.

Criteria section

🔗 The district's proposed budget sets \$310,000 for building repairs across all schools. That line must cover many requests, so the board needs clear criteria for ranking them. I propose three. First, safety: repairs that protect people come first. Second, use: spaces that many students use every week rank higher. Third, cost: a request's price is weighed against what remains in the line. Under these criteria, the \$6,800 curtain is a middle-ranked request. The auditorium is used at every show, but no document shows a safety risk.

Trade-offs section

🔗 These criteria serve equity, because they direct money by need rather than by who asks loudest. They do not settle adequacy. If \$310,000 cannot cover every urgent repair, ranking only decides who waits. The trade-off is real. Arts spaces with no safety risk may wait behind other repairs year after year. The board should publish the ranking each year, so students and staff can see where a request stands. State and federal rules limit the budget, but the local board adopts it, so the ranking is a local decision.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 30 min.

✂ Short on time: 22 min. Students draft the two sections in class and finish the brief at home.

💬 Say this

“Name one request that loses under your criteria. Say it in the brief.” — Partners check for that sentence.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Criteria are vague. **Listen for:** “Fix what matters most first.” **Then:** Ask how the board would measure “matters most.” Each criterion needs a test.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

🔗 Answer key

What to notice in the sample:

1. States clear criteria.
2. Tests the criteria on the case.
3. Uses equity and adequacy correctly.
4. Names who loses under the criteria.
5. Explains state, federal and local roles accurately.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Does your brief explain federal, state and local roles accurately? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does it use equity and adequacy correctly? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does it propose clear criteria and test them on the curtain? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does it name a trade-off of your own criteria? ☒ Yes ☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Uses an unlabeled total.	☐ Uses a figure without year or stage.	☐ Labels year, stage and line and cites the need.	☐ Adds a repair quote and notes what the figures can't show.
Reasoning	☐ Assumes waste or theft.	☐ Compares mismatched numbers.	☐ Links the need to a specific budget line.	☐ Explains process questions: ranking, timing, decision-maker.
Audience & purpose	☐ Accuses the board.	☐ Complains without a request.	☐ Asks a question the board can answer.	☐ Asks a question and offers a concrete way for students to contribute.

Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

 Short on time: skip this page. Collect the briefs and score them with the rubric yourself.

Say this

“Find the sentence in your question that names one budget line and one need.” — Circulate and ask for the label “proposed” if it is missing.

Watch for

Misconception: Revisions only soften the tone. **Listen for:** “I took out the rude part.” **Then:** Point to the Revision row. Ask for an added label or a specific budget line.

Heat check

 Low.

Answer key

How to assess: The brief is scored for accurate federal, state and local roles, correct use of equity and adequacy, clear criteria and honest trade-offs.

Proficient looks like:

- **Evidence:** Labels year, stage and line and cites the need.
- **Reasoning:** Links the need to a specific budget line.
- **Audience & purpose:** Asks a question the board can answer.
- **Revision:** Adds labels and a specific line.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Removes insults only.	☐ Adds labels and a specific line.	☐ Explains how each change makes an answer more likely.

I changed ___ because ____.

🔍 I added a request that loses under my criteria, because my first draft made the ranking sound free.

[illegible]

This page continues page 365. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 365.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 10 minutes.

- 1 What could make spending rise without the service getting better?

➤ Rising costs, such as higher prices for the same work, or more students to serve. Spending can grow while each student gets the same or less.

- 2 Dec wants to ask the board himself. Why might it matter who brings the question?

➤ A student who uses the curtain brings firsthand evidence and shows the board who is affected. It also gives students practice in a process that affects them.

- 3 What else would you want to know before saying one district gets less than another?

➤ Westbrook's year, stage and categories, and what each district's students need. A per-student figure alone cannot show need.

My take

My claim: ____.

➤ Dec should ask which line covers stage equipment, how repairs are ranked and when the board hears requests.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

➤ The budget excerpt, because its labels show a proposed plan, not spending.

Case 18 | Questions to discuss | Grades 11–12 educator edition

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

✂ Short on time: 2 min. Ask question 1 aloud as an exit ticket.

💬 Say this

“Answer with a label or a number from the evidence.” — Ask for one answer per question.

🔗 Stretch

- With an adult, find your district's budget, label its year and stage and find one line for a space you use.
- Going further: Write two headlines about the same budget: one with the \$48 million total and one with \$15,000 per student. Compare the story each headline tells. Then name one group that uses the theater but is missing from this discussion.
- Going further: Some people say every school should get the same amount. What problem does that plan assume it is solving? Name one need it might miss.
- Going further: Make a chart of the proposed budget that shows the total, the per-student amount and the building-repairs line. Label the year, the stage and the units. Ask a reader to explain what the chart cannot show.
- Going further: With a teacher or advisor, find your district's budget on its website. Label its year and stage. Find one line for something you use, such as facilities, arts or technology. Ask your student council how students can send a budget question. Get permission before you photograph spaces or people at school.
- Find your own district's adopted budget and locate the facilities or capital line

My take, continued

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

- The \$48 million total proves there is money for a \$6,800 curtain.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

- No document shows how the district ranks repair requests.

I would change my mind if ____.

🔑 The board showed that the curtain is already scheduled for repair.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. On the left side, there is a vertical black margin line. The top-left corner of the paper is rounded. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

This page continues page 367.

Heat check

Question 3: Medium. Students may compare wealthy and poor districts they know, or talk about family income.

Cool-down: Keep it to the two figures in the case. Ask what we would need to check, and list year, stage, units and need.

Talk about this case at home

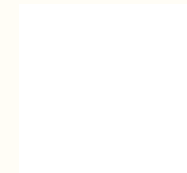
Case 18: Why is the theater curtain still falling apart?

In this case, a group of friends reads a school district budget to find out why a torn theater curtain has not been fixed. Your student checked what the numbers mean and wrote a clear question for the school board.

Questions to talk about

- 1 Where do you think a school's money comes from?
- 2 Why can it be misleading to compare a total with an amount per person?
- 3 Who would you ask if something at school needed fixing?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 18 | Talk about this case at home | Grades 11–12 educator edition

🕒 Pacing

At home: this page takes no class time.

💬 Say this

“Read this page at home with someone you trust.” —
Nobody needs to share family money information to complete it.