

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:

- find a label on a document
- tell a total from an amount for each person
- write a polite question

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- label a budget document’s year, stage and units
- connect the torn curtain to one specific budget line
- write a question of 2 or 3 sentences that the school board can answer

Materials

- This chapter, one copy per student
- Evidence A and C on half-pages, one set per pair

Materials, continued

- A source-card template: year, stage, units, line

The task in this edition

Task: Make a source card for the district budget and write one question the theater crew could bring to the school board.

Students make: Source card plus a 2—3 sentence question

Pacing

Opener (page 303): 6 min. Short on time: 4 min. Read What happened aloud while students follow along.

Key terms (pages 304 and 305): 6 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.

Look at the evidence (pages 308 and 309): 12 min. Short on time: 10 min. Read the budget note aloud. Students fill in only the What it shows boxes.

Key idea (pages 310 and 311): 8 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read the first paragraph of the key idea aloud. Skip the code of ethics.

Sort the evidence (page 312): 8 min. Short on time: skip.

Practice (page 313): 8 min. Short on time: 5 min. Vote on the three options and skip the marked draft.

Pacing, continued

Your task (pages 314 and 315): 18 min. Short on time: 16 min. Fill in the source card together, then students write the question.

Check your work (pages 316 and 317): 5 min. Short on time: skip. Check the questions with the success list yourself.

Questions to discuss (page 318): 8 min. Short on time: 4 min. Use question 2 as an exit ticket.

Talk about this case at home (page 319): at home.

Periods: full chapter 79 minutes; one period 45 minutes.

Standards

RI.6.1 Use evidence from the text to support what it says directly and what you can infer from it.

W.6.2 Write an informative text that explains a topic by choosing, organizing and analyzing relevant information.

W.6.5 With help from peers and adults, strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing or rewriting.

SL.6.1.c Ask and answer specific questions with details that add to the discussion.

SL.6.1.d Review the main ideas of a discussion and show you understand other views by reflecting and paraphrasing.

Case 18 plan, continued

Standards, continued

RI.7.1 Use several pieces of evidence from the text to support what it says directly and what you can infer.

W.7.2 Write an informative text that explains a topic by choosing, organizing and analyzing relevant information.

W.7.5 With help from peers and adults, strengthen writing by planning and revising, focusing on purpose and audience.

SL.7.1.c Ask questions that draw out more detail, and respond with relevant ideas that bring the discussion back on topic.

SL.7.1.d Take in new information from others and change your view when the evidence calls for it.

RI.8.1 Use the evidence that most strongly supports your analysis of what a text says and implies.

W.8.2 Write an informative text that explains a topic by choosing, organizing and analyzing relevant information.

W.8.5 With help from peers and adults, strengthen writing by planning and revising, focusing on purpose and audience.

SL.8.1.c Ask questions that connect several speakers' ideas, and respond with relevant evidence and observations.

Standards, continued

SL.8.1.d Take in new information from others and qualify or defend your view based on the evidence.

D2.Civ.4.6–8 Explain the powers and limits of the branches of government, public officials and agencies at different levels. In this case: Students explain the powers of local school boards compared with state and federal governments.

Codes of ethics

- **ASPA Code of Ethics:** 5. Fully Inform and Advise.
- **SPJ Code of Ethics:** Seek Truth and Report It
- **Credo for Ethical Communication:** “We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason...” (one of nine unnumbered principles)

Heat map

■□□ **Opener (page 303):** Low

■□□ **Key terms (pages 304 and 305):** Low

■□□ **Look at the evidence (pages 308 and 309):** Low

■□□ **Key idea (pages 310 and 311):** Low

■□□ **Sort the evidence (page 312):** Low

■□□ **Practice (page 313):** Low

■□□ **Your task (pages 314 and 315):** Low

Heat map, continued

■□□ **Check your work (pages 316 and 317):** 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

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 6 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: 6 min.

 Short on time: 4 min. Read What happened aloud while students follow along.

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 6 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: 6 min.

 Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.

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.

Your first guess

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

I think the curtain is not fixed because ____.

Q I think the curtain is not fixed because the district spends its money on other needs.

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. There is a dark vertical border on the left side, suggesting it's part of a bound notebook or folder. The paper has rounded corners on the right side.

This page continues page 304. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 304.

Reading passage

\$48 million and one torn curtain

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: The curtain that won't close

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 has priced a new curtain at \$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.

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.

Mari's first question is simple: where are those numbers from? Your role is to work out the per-student number before anyone repeats the post.

? Stop and think. Why is comparing \$48 million with \$21,000 per student unfair?

Same scale, fair comparison

In Case 11, you learned to compare two things on the same terms. The post does not. It compares a total for a whole district with an amount per student. That is like comparing a whole pizza with one slice.

⌚ Pacing

Reading: about 5 min (458 words). Short on time: read it aloud together, pausing at each Stop and think.

❓ Stop and think

1. **After “The story: The curtain that won't close”:** Why is comparing \$48 million with \$21,000 per student unfair?
2. **After “Same scale, fair comparison”:** What does the word “proposed” tell you about the budget?
3. **After “A TV show asks the same question”:** Why does Dec start with his photo and the quote instead of guessing?

Same scale, fair comparison, continued

A **per-pupil amount** is a total divided by the number of students, so that districts of different sizes can be compared. Do the math: \$48,000,000 divided by 3,200 students is \$15,000 per student. Now the two numbers are on the same scale. Even so, the comparison is not complete. Nobody knows Westbrook's budget year or stage.

An **expenditure** is money that a government or an organization spends. **Revenue** is money that comes into a government or an organization, such as taxes and grants. The budget is marked "proposed." In Case 4, you learned that a **proposal** is a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. The figures may change before the board adopts the budget.

In Case 5, you read a pay statement line by line. A budget works the same way. Mari looks for the line that might pay for a curtain. The building repairs line is one guess. Dec starts with what he can show: the curtain, his photo and the \$6,800 quote. "I don't know where the money went," he says, "so I'm not guessing."

In Case 4, you also learned that a **decision-maker** is the person or group with the power to make a particular choice. Here, the school board adopts the budget. So Dec's question goes to the board: which line pays for stage equipment, and when does the board hear requests?

 **Stop and think.** What does the word "proposed" tell you about the budget?

A TV show asks the same question

In the first episode of the TV comedy Abbott Elementary (ABC, December 7, 2021), teachers need rugs and supplies. The principal gets money and spends it on a new sign instead. The money existed. The question is which line it was in, and who decided.

 **Stop and think.** Why does Dec start with his photo and the quote instead of guessing?

Sources

Real source | ABC | No date listed

About Abbott Elementary

This page continues page 306. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 306.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 12 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

➤ It is a plan for next year: \$48 million for 3,200 students.

One question I still have

➤ Does the \$310,000 for repairs cover a stage curtain?

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 new curtain would cost \$6,800.

One question I still have

➤ Which budget line would pay for it?

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 12 min.

✂ Short on time: 10 min. Read the budget note aloud. Students fill in only the What it shows 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

What is still missing from the evidence?

☛ We don't know if the repair money covers a curtain, or who decides which repairs come first.

Notes

[illegible]

This page continues page 308. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 308.

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 8 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: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 3 min. Read the first paragraph of the key idea aloud. Skip the code of ethics.

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 should see ____.

→ The board should see the \$6,800 quote, a photo of the torn curtain and the budget line that could pay for it.

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 310. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 310.

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 school board's view is missing. I would ask which line pays for stage repairs.

Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

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 8 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. One number is a total and one is per student. You have to check the year, the stage and the units before you compare them.

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

➤ Our district has a proposed \$48 million budget for next year.

Rewrite phrase 2

➤ Could the board tell us which line pays for stage repairs?

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 5 min. Vote on the three options and skip the marked draft.

💬 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 6—8

Your task

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

Make a source card for the district budget and write one question the theater crew could bring to the school board.

Use: A one-page budget excerpt with the facilities line and a photo of the curtain.

You'll make: Source card plus a 2—3 sentence question

Time: 45 minutes

- 1 Read the top of the budget in Evidence A. Write its year and stage on the source card.
- 2 Check the units. Write whether \$48 million is a total or a per-student number.
- 3 Find the line that might pay for repairs. Copy it onto the card.
- 4 Write a question of 2 or 3 sentences in the Your draft box.
- 5 Name the curtain, the \$6,800 quote and the budget line in your question.
- 6 Read your question aloud and check that it blames no one.

Show it your way

Write it: Write 2—3 sentences with the frame “The budget says __. We noticed __. Could the board explain __?”

Say it: Practice asking your board question aloud in 30 seconds, holding up the photo of the curtain.

Show it: Build the source card as sticky notes on the budget excerpt: year, stage, units and the line that might pay for the curtain.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 18 min.

✂ Short on time: 16 min. Fill in the source card together, then students write the question.

💬 Say this

“A good board question names one line and one need.” — Write “one line, one need, one question” on the board.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Questions accuse the board. **Listen for:** “Why are you wasting our money?” **Then:** Ask what the board could answer. Turn it into a which or when question.

📄 Support

- Source-card template: year, stage, units, line
- Frames: “The budget says __. We noticed __. Could the board explain __?”
- Vocabulary: revenue, expenditure, per pupil
- Worked example

🔗 Stretch

- Explain why the district total alone can’t tell you whether there’s money for the curtain.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Your task, continued

Year

Stage

Units

The line that might pay for the curtain

Your draft

The budget says _____. We noticed _____. Could the board explain _____?

Notes

This page continues page 314.

Standards

Common Core, grade 6: RI.6.1; W.6.2; W.6.5; SL.6.1.c; SL.6.1.d.

Common Core, grade 7: RI.7.1; W.7.2; W.7.5; SL.7.1.c; SL.7.1.d.

Common Core, grade 8: RI.8.1; W.8.2; W.8.5; SL.8.1.c; SL.8.1.d.

C3 Framework: D2.Civ.4.6-8.

The Case plan sheet gives each code in plain words.

☐ Answer key

A strong response:

- Labels year, stage and units correctly
- Connects the curtain to a specific line
- Asks a question the board can answer
- Doesn't accuse anyone of wasting money

What to notice in the sample:

1. Labels the stage and the year.
2. Brings the repair quote as evidence.
3. Asks a question the board can answer, without blaming anyone.

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 5 minutes.

Does your question say the budget is proposed and for next year?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Does it name the curtain and the \$6,800 quote?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Does it name one budget line?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Does it ask without blaming anyone?	☒ 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: 5 min.

 Short on time: skip this page. Skip this page. Check the questions with the success list 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 educator checks the source-card labels and the question against the four success criteria.

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 took out my guess about wasted money, because we don't know where the money went.

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.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 8 minutes.

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

➤ Dec pulls the curtain every show. He can say what is wrong because he sees it himself.

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

➤ I would want both numbers per student, from the same year.

My take

I think Dec should ask ___ because ___.

➤ I think Dec should ask which line pays for the curtain because the total does not say.

The evidence that changed my first guess is ___.

➤ The evidence that changed my first guess is the word “proposed” on the budget.

One question I still have is ___.

➤ One question I still have is who decides which repairs come first.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 4 min. Use question 2 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.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Question 2: 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 6—8 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.