

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:

- divide a total by a count
- summarize a short source accurately
- write a short post for a named audience

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- identify a unit mismatch in a social post
- calculate a comparable per-pupil figure from a total and an enrollment
- write a correction post of 80 to 120 words that cites its source and year
- state what even a fair comparison cannot show

Materials

- This chapter, one copy per student
- Evidence A, B and C

Materials, continued

- A calculator and the comparison checklist: year, units, category, stage

The task in this edition

Task: Correct a misleading social post that compares mismatched budget figures, then write a better comparison.

Students make: Correction post (80–120 words) plus worked calculation

Pacing

Opener (page 341): 5 min. Short on time: 4 min. Read What happened aloud and go straight to the evidence.

Key terms (pages 342 and 343): 5 min. Short on time: skip. Define per-pupil amount aloud in one minute.

Look at the evidence (page 347): 8 min. Short on time: 7 min. Students fill in only the What it shows boxes for Evidence A and B.

Look at the evidence (page 348): 4 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read Evidence C aloud. Students fill in only its What it shows box.

Key idea (pages 349 and 350): 10 min. Short on time: 8 min. Skip the code of ethics. Work the division together.

Sort the evidence (page 351): 6 min. Short on time: skip.

Pacing, continued

Practice (page 352): 8 min. Short on time: 6 min. Vote on the three options and fix only the first marked phrase.

Your task (pages 353 and 354): 20 min. Short on time: 18 min. Fill in the calculation box together, then students write the post.

Check your work (pages 355 and 356): 8 min. Short on time: skip. Collect the posts and score them with the rubric yourself.

Questions to discuss (pages 357 and 358): 10 min. Short on time: 4 min. Use question 3 as an exit ticket.

Talk about this case at home (page 359): at home.

Periods: full chapter 84 minutes; one period 50 minutes.

Standards

RI.9-10.1 Support an analysis with solid, complete evidence from the text, both for what it states and for what it implies.

W.9-10.2 Write an explanatory text that presents complex ideas and information clearly and accurately.

W.9-10.5 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.9-10.1.c Move a discussion forward with questions that connect it to larger ideas, bring others in and test ideas and conclusions.

SL.9-10.1.d Respond to different views, sum up where people agree and disagree, and adjust your view when the evidence calls for it.

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 341):** Low
- **Key terms (pages 342 and 343):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 347):** Low
- **Look at the evidence (page 348):** Low
- **Key idea (pages 349 and 350):** Low
- **Sort the evidence (page 351):** Low
- **Practice (page 352):** Low
- **Your task (pages 353 and 354):** Low
- **Check your work (pages 355 and 356):** 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

Try it at your school, continued

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 5 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: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: 4 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 5 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: 5 min.

 Short on time: skip this page. Skip this page. Define per-pupil amount aloud in one minute.

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?

My first guess is ___, because ___.

➤ My first guess is that the money is going somewhere else, because \$48 million sounds like plenty.

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 no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 342. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 342.

Reading passage

A total is not a per-student number

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: A curtain and a viral post

Dec pulls the stage curtain at every show. The fabric is torn, and the curtain no longer closes all the way. Dec, 17, and Anika, 16, are on the theater crew, and the facilities office has already given the theater advisor a quote to replace it: \$6,800.

Mari, 19, is helping them prepare a question for the school board. Together they find the district's proposed budget for next school year. The top line is \$48 million for a projected 3,200 students. One line reads "Facilities, building repairs (all schools): \$310,000." A note at the bottom says the figures are proposed and may change before the board adopts the budget.

Then, on Tuesday at 6:10 p.m., a post starts circulating: "Our district: \$48 MILLION. Westbrook: \$21,000 per student. And they can't fix ONE curtain?? Where is the money going?" Anika sends it to the chat. Dec admits the curtain part is true. Mari asks where the numbers come from.

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

Stop and think. What three labels should you check before comparing budget numbers?

Year, stage and unit

Before comparing two budget numbers, check three labels: the year, the stage and the unit. The post skips all three. Its \$48 million is a proposed total for a whole district next year.

Pacing

Reading: about 5 min (586 words). Short on time: read it aloud together, pausing at each Stop and think.

Stop and think

1. **After “The story: A curtain and a viral post”:** What three labels should you check before comparing budget numbers?
2. **After “Year, stage and unit”:** After you work out \$15,000 per student, what is still missing from the comparison?
3. **After “Real budgets, real limits”:** Dec wants to ask the board himself. Why might it matter who brings the question?

Year, stage and unit, continued

Its Westbrook figure is a per-student amount from an 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 is comparing numbers on the same scale, and it builds on Case 11, where you compared two jobs on the same terms. Divide \$48,000,000 by 3,200 students, and the district's proposed amount is \$15,000 per student. The post's comparison now looks different. It is still incomplete, because Westbrook's budget year and stage are unknown. A per-pupil figure also cannot say 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. An **expenditure** is money that a government or an organization spends. The budget is a plan for expenditures, and it is a **proposal**, the Case 4 term for a change that someone suggests and that has not been approved yet. A proposed budget, an adopted budget and actual spending are three different documents.

Case 5 taught you to read a document line by line. Mari applies that to the budget. She reads the labels before reacting to the big number, and she looks for the line that could cover a curtain. Case 13 taught you to keep a claim as small as your evidence. Dec does that. His photo shows the tear, and that is all it shows. He brings the photo, the \$6,800 quote and a question.

The Case 4 **decision-maker**, the person or group with the power to make a particular choice, is the school board, which adopts the budget. Dec's question should name one line, one need and the board's next chance to hear requests. He also wants to ask it himself, because it is his crew's curtain.

❓ **Stop and think.** After you work out \$15,000 per student, what is still missing from the comparison?

Real budgets, real limits

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that public schools get revenue from federal, state and local sources, and the mix differs by state (NCES, May 2024). NPR has explained how local property taxes make school budgets very different from one district to the next (NPR, April 18, 2016). Many large districts are now making cuts because of inflation and enrollment declines, which shows how a large budget can leave little room for extras (Chalkbeat, May 28, 2026).

❓ **Stop and think.** Dec wants to ask the board himself. Why might it matter who brings the question?

This page continues page 344. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 344.

Sources

Real source | National Center for Education Statistics | May 2024

Public School Revenue Sources (Condition of Education)

Real source | NPR | April 18, 2016

Why America's Schools Have A Money Problem

Real source | Chalkbeat | May 28, 2026

A financial reckoning is hitting America's public schools

Notes

[illegible]

This page continues page 344. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 344.

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 total of \$48 million for 3,200 students, and \$310,000 for all repairs.

What it leaves out

➤ What the district spent this year, and whether a curtain counts as a building repair.

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

➤ Someone is upset about the curtain and compares two dollar figures.

What it leaves out

➤ That one figure is a total and one is per student, plus Westbrook's year and stage.

Case 18 | Look at the evidence | Grades 9–10 educator edition

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 7 min. Students fill in only the What it shows boxes for Evidence A and B.

💬 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

➤ Replacing the curtain would cost \$6,800. The facilities office priced it.

What it leaves out

➤ Which budget line pays for it, and how it ranks against other repairs.

What is still missing from the evidence?

➤ Whether the building-repairs line covers stage equipment, how repairs are ranked, and Westbrook's budget year and stage.

Notes

Case 18 | Look at the evidence | Grades 9–10 educator edition

🕒 Pacing

Full chapter: 4 min.

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

📄 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.

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 10 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: 10 min.

✂ Short on time: 8 min. Skip the code of ethics. Work the division together.

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, the photo and the budget line that would pay for it. Then it can compare the curtain with 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 349. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 349.

Sort the evidence

On your own Trace the curtain request from the photo to the vote and fill in each box. About 6 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 facilities office is missing. I would ask how it ranks repair requests and where the curtain is on the list.

Pacing

Full chapter: 6 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. A total and a per-student amount cannot be compared directly. C fixes the units but still overclaims, because one figure cannot show underfunding.

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 school year.

Rewrite phrase 2

➤ Could the board explain which line covers stage equipment and how repairs are ranked?

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 6 min. Vote on the three options and fix only the first marked phrase.

💬 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 9—10

Your task

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

Correct a misleading social post that compares mismatched budget figures, then write a better comparison.

Use: The post, two district budget excerpts and the NCES revenue table.

You'll make: Correction post (80—120 words) plus worked calculation

Time: 50 minutes

- 1 Read the post in Evidence B. Underline the total and the per-student figure.
- 2 Calculate $\$48,000,000 \div 3,200$ students in the calculation box.
- 3 List what you still cannot compare: year, stage and categories.
- 4 Write a correction post of 80 to 120 words in the Your draft box.
- 5 Cite the proposed budget and its year in your post.
- 6 Finish with one question the numbers cannot answer.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Worked calculation

___ $\div$ ___ = ___

➤ $\$48,000,000 \div 3,200$ students = \$15,000 per student

The mismatch in the post

➤ The post compares a district total with another district's per-student figure.

What still does not match

➤ Westbrook's budget year and stage, and whether both figures count the same costs.

Case 18 | Your task | Grades 9—10 educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 20 min.

✂ Short on time: 18 min. Fill in the calculation box together, then students write the post.

💬 Say this

"What unit is each number in? Say it out loud before you divide." — A district total, and dollars per student.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: The correction concludes the district is underfunded. **Listen for:** "\$15,000 is less, so we're shortchanged." **Then:** Ask what else differs between districts: costs, needs and categories.

📄 Support

- Comparison checklist: year, units, category, stage
- Model correction

🔗 Stretch

- Calculate a per-pupil figure from a total and enrollment to make a fair comparison.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

📋 Standards

Common Core: RI.9-10.1; W.9-10.2; W.9-10.5; SL.9-10.1.c; SL.9-10.1.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 draft

Your correction post, 80 to 120 words

✎ Correction: a post going around compares our district's \$48 million with Westbrook's \$21,000 per student. Those numbers use different units. The \$48 million is our district's total proposed budget for next school year. To compare fairly, divide it by projected enrollment: $\$48,000,000 \div 3,200 \text{ students} = \$15,000 \text{ per student}$. That is less than Westbrook's figure, but we don't know Westbrook's year or stage. A per-student number also can't tell us whether either district has enough for its students' needs. Source: our district's proposed budget, next school year.

Notes

This page continues page 353.

✎ **Answer key****A strong response:**

- Identifies the unit mismatch
- Calculates a comparable figure correctly
- Cites the source and year
- States what the numbers still can't show

What to notice in the sample:

1. Names the mismatch before any math.
2. Shows the calculation, so readers can check it.
3. States what still does not match.
4. Keeps the conclusion within what the numbers show.

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 post name the unit mismatch?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Is your calculation correct and shown?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Do you cite the source and its year?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Do you say what the numbers still can't show?	☒ 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 posts 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 correction is scored with the case rubric, plus a check of the calculation and of the sentence naming what the numbers cannot show.

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 changed “which proves we are underfunded” to what the numbers can’t show, because one figure cannot prove that.

[illegible]

This page continues page 355. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 355.

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?

➤ Prices could go up, so the district pays more for the same repairs. More money would not mean better service.

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

➤ Dec uses the curtain at every show, so he can speak to what he has seen. The board hears from a student who is affected.

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

➤ Westbrook's budget year and stage, and whether both figures count the same costs.

My take

My claim: ____.

➤ Dec should ask which line covers stage equipment and bring the \$6,800 quote.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

➤ The budget excerpt, because it shows \$310,000 for repairs at all schools.

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

➤ The district must have money for a curtain, because the total is \$48 million.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

✂ Short on time: 4 min. Use question 3 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
- Compare two years of the same line and explain what might explain a change

My take, continued

I would change my mind if ____.

🔑 The board showed that the curtain is already funded.

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 no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 357.

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

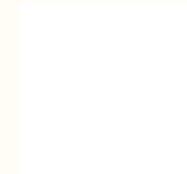
Case 18: Why is the theater curtain still falling apart?

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 9–10 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.