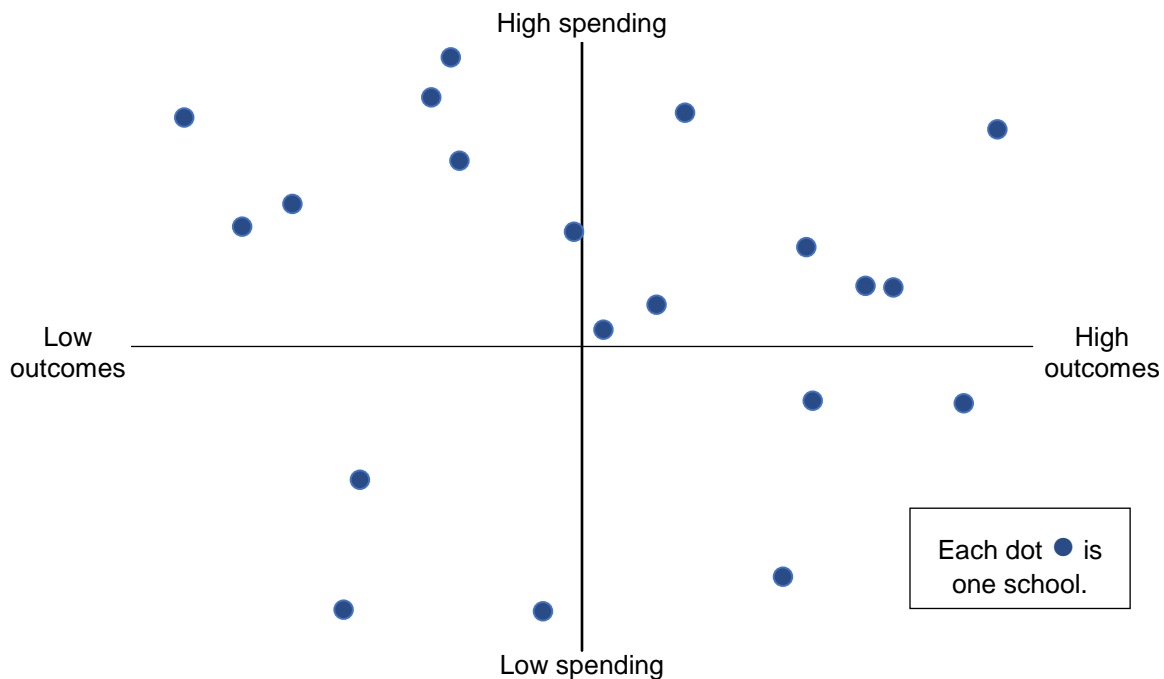


## PER PUPIL SPENDING: Questions for Principals to Use When Talking to District Leaders About Spending and Outcomes

With per pupil spending now or soon available for every school for the first time, principals can play a larger role in discussing budgeting/resource allocation for their schools by comparing spending and outcomes across their district. This is a natural comparison to make – after all, student learning is the purpose of our education system. Grids like the one shown below can help visualize these data together.

**Example: School Spending vs. Student Outcomes**



Presenting these data this way is useful for starting a conversation about school spending. However, it is just that – a conversation starter. A school that lands in the low outcomes and high spending quadrant does not indicate that the school’s leadership or teachers are at fault, nor does landing in the high outcomes and low spending quadrant necessarily mean that a school has beat the odds. Nevertheless, it’s a new tool for discussion, and one that will likely come up in communities across the country with these new data available.

The following are questions that principals can use to discuss with their district leadership how spending at their school compares with outcomes. The goal is to help principals become better advocates for the needs of their students!

### **Low Spending, High Achieving**

1. What do we know about our approach that could be replicated across the district? How can our school be a resource for the district in finding efficiencies?

2. What factors allow us to be able to expend lower levels of funding than other similar buildings?
3. Have we intentionally implemented a strategy to keep staffing costs down? What was it?
4. What can we attribute our low costs to?
5. How can our school be a resource for the district in finding efficiencies and improving practice in other schools that may be spending more but seeing lower achievement?
6. Are there maintenance of effort assurances in place so that we can work to continue our track record without worrying about cuts to our already low spending?
7. Given that our expenditures are below average, what are the areas that could benefit from additional resources?

### ***Low Spending, Low Achieving***

1. How can we invest in our existing staff to produce better outcomes?
2. What supports can be provided from the district to support low income families?
3. How can we tap into the experience of other low spending schools who are seeing greater achievement? What inexpensive differences in practice exist?
4. Can we collaboratively examine our school's budget by line item and determine the areas for which more equitable funding would impact student achievement?
5. Are there grant opportunities we can access to begin change initiatives which can be sustained by local funding in future years?
6. Does our spending match our priorities? How does our spending match similar schools?

### ***High Spending, High Achieving***

1. Is our spending matching our desired outcomes? What can we attribute the high cost to, and is it in alignment with our district's or school's vision for success?
2. How are we telling our school's story so that the community will fully understand the high impact of their investment dollars?
3. In what areas are we spending more effectively than others?
4. Are there programs or schools (i.e. early childhood v. middle schools) that are consistently receiving more funding than others in our district?

### ***High Spending, Low Achieving***

1. What changes have taken place in our community in the last 10 years? If any?
2. Have any new staff been introduced to our school in the last several years?
3. Have we reviewed the professional development strategies in the last several years?
4. How can we tap into the experience of low spending schools who are seeing greater achievement? What differences in practice exist?
5. How can we shift funding to target specific populations of students who are in need according to assessment data?
6. Do we have a systemic approach to funding allocations? Where can funding be reallocated?
7. Does each district allocation have specific goals for which effective funding will be assessed?