

A photograph of two women in a professional setting. The woman in the foreground, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, is writing on a whiteboard with a red marker. The woman in the background, wearing a green sweater, is smiling and looking at the whiteboard. The whiteboard has some handwritten numbers and a diagram. The entire image is overlaid with a blue tint and a network diagram pattern.

ARE YOUR FINANCES READY FOR ESSA?

HOW ESSA IMPACTS FINANCIAL DATA REPORTING

An Introduction to ESSA and Financial Data

Integrating financial and student demographic data in a way that meets new ESSA reporting standards has proven difficult for many school districts — but it doesn't have to be.

As educators around the country are already aware, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) creates a new set of accountability standards by which American public schools are evaluated. And while the Act includes an 18-month transition period for schools to realign their reporting systems as necessary, certain provisions of the legislation have presented new challenges for school administrators.

One of these new challenges comes in the form of ESSA's financial data reporting requirement. Under this provision, school districts must not only report per-student expenditures at the district, school, and demographic levels to the federal government, but also publish this data in a publically-accessible financial “report card.”

Financial transparency breeds equitable education, ESSA advocates argue, and more granular financial reporting is a fair tradeoff for ESSA's move away from high-stakes standardized testing. In short, rather than judging school districts based on how well their students perform on standardized tests, ESSA strives to ensure that districts' primary priority is ensuring that their highest-need students receive all the help — both financial and otherwise — they need to succeed.



Making Use of Existing Records

Though most districts already collect the vast majority of underlying data necessary to conduct the per-student analyses mandated by ESSA, data siloing continues to be a major stumbling block.

As things stand, schools tend to take a piecemeal approach to data collection, managing testing data in one system, enrollment and demographic data in another system, and budgeting and expenditure data in a third system. These disparate data catalogs are difficult to integrate efficiently and leave administrators responsible for bringing all of this information together manually in order to comply with ESSA requirements.

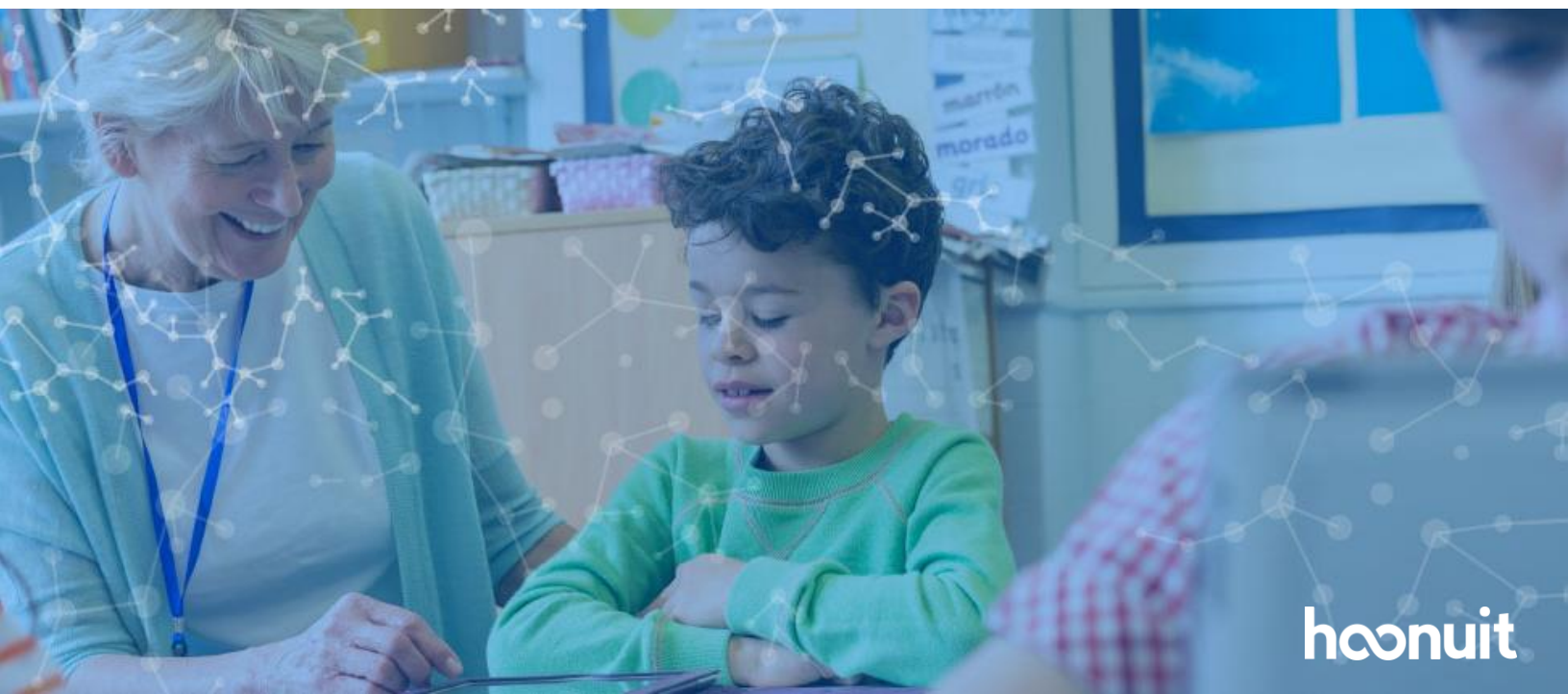
In terms of financial reporting specifically, most districts currently track their budgetary data using a

state-defined chart of accounts — and occasionally a locally-defined chart, as well — that breaks down spending at a school, department, and/or staff level, e.g. “This elementary school receives X amount of dollars” or “this physical education department receives Y amount of dollars.” This sort of financial tracking provides an important baseline, but since ESSA requires districts to track per-student expenditures in order to guarantee equitable funding for higher-needs populations, it is ultimately insufficient. Administrators need to be able to look at multiple factors simultaneously, and on a more granular level — e.g. “this program is receiving X amount of dollars, serves Y amount of students from this particular student population, and yields Z results.”

Digging Deeper Into Per-Student Spending

School districts have long kept track of racial and ethnic minority populations, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations (usually gauged by a metric like free and reduced-cost lunch program enrollment), their IEP and 504 plan populations, and other groups for years, but rarely have they used these records to evaluate the budgetary resources being allocated to each of these specific groups through the programs and faculty that serve them.

In many cases, school districts are not properly equipped to track per-student spending among these various demographic groups because of the complex connections that must be made between disparate datasets stored in incompatible systems. While it may be easy enough for a district administrator to look at how much money is allocated to a certain school, program, or teacher, in practice, these sums likely benefit students spanning a wide range of demographic groups rather than a select few participants.





Using Allocation Buckets to Meet ESSA Requirements

In order to disentangle this spending knot and meet ESSA financial reporting requirements, school districts must merge their bigger-picture financial data with their more granular student demographic data.

Typically, this involves district administrators creating a complex structure of expenditure “buckets” that can be populated with data from both student enrollment records and budgetary records. By analyzing the demographics of its students — on a district-wide, per-school, and per-program basis — a school district can more easily determine where money has been most effective and which schools or programs require more or less. If 13 percent of the district’s students come from low-income families, *at least* 13

percent (likely more) of its spending should be directly benefiting low-income students.

If, after analyzing their demographic enrollment records and their chart of accounts in tandem, the district administrators discover that only 10 percent of their funding is going toward schools or programs that serve students from low-income families, this is a sign that the district’s current budgetary allocations are out of alignment. In the event of such an imbalance, the district can use its newly connected datasets make well-informed adjustments to its “buckets” and bring itself back into compliance with ESSA requirements.

How a Data Reporting Partner Can Help

Facilitating this shift may sound like a major headache for administrators, but it doesn't have to be. In order to successfully implement this kind of demographically-informed budgetary tracking, school districts must find efficient ways to merge their financial and enrollment datasets. Fortunately, this need not involve an entire overhaul of a district's financial systems.

By automatically integrating a district's financial data with its enrollment data, a cutting-edge data reporting and analytics platform like Hoonuit empowers district administrators to continue with business more or less as usual; no need to change

how either dataset is collected and organized.

Adjusting to the nuances of ESSA's new regulations will take time, but equipped with the right tools, school districts are well-positioned to quickly become — and stay — compliant. Bringing multiple disparate platforms together under the umbrella of a unified dashboard will not only help districts comply with ESSA now, but will also prepare them to rapidly adapt to any and all future policy changes without the pain points they're experiencing today.



Your Data Partner

We are committed to supporting you in preparing your finances for the new accountability requirements.

With the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation upon us, clear and accessible financial reporting is evolving. The additional transparency is important, but the new reporting requirements are putting added strain on already scarce time and resources. Hoonuit supports your accountability reporting efforts and helps improve your fiscal efficiencies by quickly making the connection between per-student spending and successful outcomes to ensure every dollar is placed where it will make the biggest impact.

See the complete picture by breaking down your data silos. Integrate and overlay existing financial systems to create cross-analysis for payroll, accounts, purchasing, expenditures, and staff details to see your district's complete financial picture.



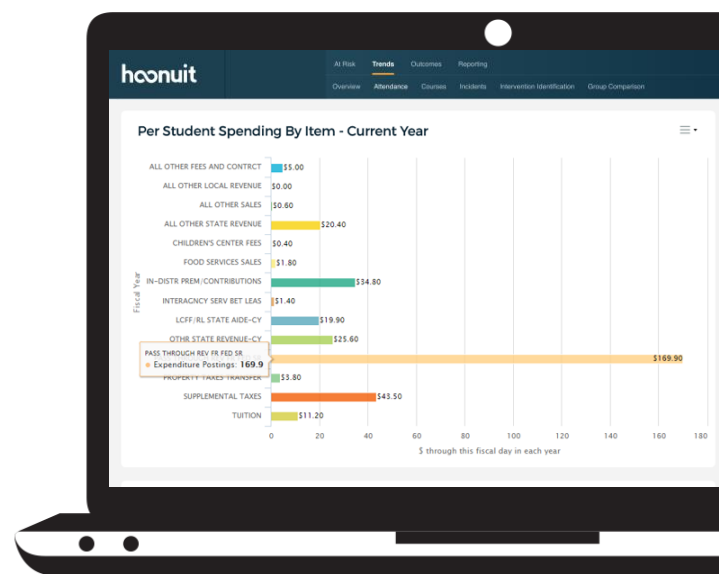
Meet Accountabilities Requirements



Optimize Per Student Expenditures



Drive Financial Return On Investment



Hoonuit's data analytics solutions allow educators to effectively measure per student spending and return on financial investments. Our intuitive dashboards allow for detailed analysis, accountability measures, and key tracking of interventions and outcomes — all with transparent communication and actionable presentation to stakeholders.

Contact Us to Get Started

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www.hoonuit.com/district-operations