

DistrictView: A Pipeline to Study School Board Deliberations

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October 22, 2026

Abstract

School boards are central policy-making bodies in U.S. public education. Elected officials, parents, educators, students, and community members discuss both routine administrative responsibilities and contested policy choices in school board meetings. Studying these deliberations at scale has not been possible due to a lack of centralized data sources. We enable study of school board policy-making by building a computational pipeline to automatically collect school board meeting transcripts from across the country. As of this article, *DistrictView* contains 358,162 complete school board meetings in 3,039 districts across 48 states from 2008 to present. With this data, we show how researchers can analyze school board meetings at scale using large language models. We then dive deeply into discussions of language and immigration in California to show how DistrictView enables understanding subtleties between district responses

The authors contributed equally. The authors thank the Georgetown McCourt School of Public Policy Technology and Public Policy (TPP) Center grants program for funding. The authors thank Devanshi Shah for excellent research assistance. The authors acknowledge the MIT Office of Research Computing and Data for providing high performance computing resources that have contributed to the research results reported within this paper. *AI Disclosure*: During production of this work, the authors utilized Claude Opus 4, 5.1, and 5.5 to help with the creation of this manuscript. The authors conceived of the research, designed and built the first version of the data pipeline, and wrote all text. Generative artificial intelligence was used to to debug and update the final version of the pipeline. As detailed in [section A.1](#), an LLM was used to classify some meetings. For this task, the authors manually selected topics and wrote the prompt. Generative AI was then used to implement the code for classification. Generative AI was used to write the code for the figures in the paper. Generative AI was used to develop code to scrape demographic data from the California Department of Education (CDE) website. The authors reviewed the created content produced by the generative AI tools and assert that the content within this manuscript is factually accurate and free of plagiarism. The authors take full responsibility for the submitted document.

to immigration enforcement. *DistrictView* creates opportunities for researchers investigate new questions about education governance and policy.

Introduction

School boards make decisions about what students learn, the allocation of resources, and how districts should respond to changing community needs and newly salient issues. School boards do all of this while operating in very different, and sometimes rapidly evolving, political, demographic, and institutional environments. How do boards respond to changing conditions, whose concerns receive the most attention on school boards, and why do school boards respond differently to similar challenges? Acquiring answers to these questions at scale is difficult because what happens on school boards is difficult to observe.

While existing approaches tell us much about what happens inside school boards, data limitations leave room for scholars interested in understanding how priorities emerge or policy is created, the ways that competing demands are weighed, and how school boards approach problems across time and place. For example, scholars have used administrative data to answer questions about district characteristics, policies, and outcomes (e.g. [Houston and Henig, 2023](#); [Honingh et al., 2020](#); [Jacobsen et al., 2014](#)), but have been limited in their ability to evaluate the discussions connecting them. Surveys of school board members, teachers, and parents offer researchers the opportunity to ask key questions ([White, 2026](#); [Kitchens and Goldberg, 2024](#); [Kitchens et al., 2024](#); [Ford and Ihrke, 2017](#); [Frankenberg and Jacobsen, 2011](#)), but research struggles with response rates, representativeness, and connecting results to individual behaviors. Interviews, ethnographies, and qualitative work provide rich accounts of interactions within boards ([Castro et al., 2022](#); [Hoang, 2019](#); [Tracy and Durfy, 2007](#)), but are challenging to extend to thousands of school districts or over time.

School board meetings provide a key setting in which scholars can observe these processes ([Holman et al., 2026a](#); [Holman and Simko, 2025](#)). In school board meetings, elected officials, district staff, parents, educators, students, and other community members discuss both routine administrative responsibilities and contested policy choices. Research on public meetings more broadly has examined who participates, whose perspectives are represented, and how constituent messages are framed and evaluated (e.g. [Williamson and Scicchitano, 2014](#); [Williamson, 2014](#); [Einstein et al., 2020](#); [Simko and Siegel-Hawley, 2025](#); [Hoang, 2025, 2019](#)).

Work on school boards specifically has pointed to the importance of deliberation on assessments of legitimacy ([Collins, 2021a,b](#); [Adams, 2004](#)), the relationship between social capital among school board members and student outcomes ([Saatcioglu and Sargut, 2014](#)), and the ways that school board meetings reproduce existing patterns of racial and class inequality ([Tracy and Durfy, 2007](#); [Sampson and Bertrand, 2022](#); [Nuamah, 2022](#); [Liu et al., 2023](#)). For instance, a recent article in *AERA Open*, employing an in-depth qualitative case study, examined how a school board developed a policy banning LGBTQ+ pride flags and Black Lives Matter posters from school campuses ([Bridgeforth and Pickett, 2026](#)). Despite the majority of public commentators expressing support for the signage, the ban was ultimately rooted in more conservative board members' fears about "divisive" conversations around race and racism. Qualitative studies like these help spark questions to investigate at scale: for instance, are districts with certain types of changing demographics more likely

to emphasize these stances of “neutrality” in the wake of debates about race, gender, and other topics?

The growing availability of recorded meetings creates opportunities to study these dynamics across districts and over time in ways that have been previously unavailable to scholars (Holman et al., 2026a; Barari and Simko, 2023). But just because videos of meetings are available does not mean they are immediately usable as research data. Recordings are scattered across district channels, mixed with other content, and difficult to connect to consistent district identifiers, which inhibits the ability to match to other administrative, political, economic, and social data. Data in video form is also difficult to process and analyze (Boussalis et al., 2021; Holman et al., 2026b). Consequently, moving from a diffuse set of videos to a research resource requires collecting and validating meeting records, obtaining reliable transcripts, and linking those records to district characteristics. We develop a pipeline that implements these steps both at-scale and on a regular cadence for school boards across the United States. The resulting data connect local deliberations to the administrative records education researchers already use, allowing scholars to examine how district conditions relate to the issues discussed within them, the relationship between these discussions and student outcomes, and the influence of context on education policy.

In this article, we outline the process of building *DistrictView*—a dataset created by a computational pipeline that collects available school board meetings from around the country. We begin by filtering the Common Core Data roster of school districts down to 12,616 open, regular school districts or charter agencies in the United States. From that list of districts, we then identify, through a combination of automated search and manual validation, a YouTube channel associated with each district that regularly posts recordings of meetings. We then scrape the meeting transcripts and merge them with district-level metadata, validating the data in a variety of ways. We have automated much of this process, updating our data weekly with the latest available school district meetings. The most up-to-date version of the data can be found on the Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ERDATA>. As of writing, *DistrictView* contains 358,162 complete school board meetings from 3,039 school district YouTube channels across 48 states.

After discussing the process of collecting *DistrictView* and the scope of the data, we then demonstrate the utility of *DistrictView* with an application examining the substantive topics discussed in school board meetings. Using a large language model, we classify meetings across twenty policy areas, including such topics as budgeting and finance, staffing, curriculum and academics, diversity, equity, inclusion, language and immigration, and LGBTQ and gender issues. We first show how frequently these topics appear across school board meetings, then examine how attention changes over time and varies across states. The results recover both routine features of school board governance – such as the consistently high attention to budgets and staffing – and sharper changes around particular issues, including the increase in health-related discussion during Covid-19 and the rise and decline in DEI-related discussions. This application illustrates how *DistrictView* can be used to measure the substance of local educational governance across thousands of districts and over time.

These data also create opportunities to connect computational analysis with close study of educational practice. For example, researchers can first identify meetings with specific substantive discussions across many meetings (using tools like keywords or large language models). Researchers can then use the transcripts and underlying recordings to examine how those discussions unfold, the participants, and the outcomes. Such analyses require explicit choices about what counts as substantive discussion and documentation that supports replication (Barrie et al., 2026). They can also guide qualitative research by identifying districts with similar characteristics but different patterns of attention.

To illustrate this additional use case for researchers, we dive deeper into *DistrictView* data from California on discussions of immigration policy in school board meetings. Using the meetings, we show that two school districts, one with a high proportion of English Language Learner (ELL) students and one with a low proportion of ELL students, responded differently to heightened concern about immigration enforcement in January 2025 in the wake of federal proclamations that school campuses no longer served as “sanctuaries.” In the district with a low proportion of ELL students, the district affirmed their sanctuary status but the discussion was short and non-specific. In the district with a high proportion of ELL students, discussions in the meeting were detailed, longer, translated into Spanish, and showcased the personal experiences of board members who were immigrants themselves. Although both districts ultimately adopted a similar “sanctuary school” policy, we are able to illuminate important differences in the policy-making process taken by the two districts using *DistrictView*.

Combined, the two example applications show how we can utilize *DistrictView* and similar databases in education research to study both recurrent issues in K-12 schooling such as annual budgeting and ever-shifting, episodic pressures like responses to national protest movements and Presidential actions surrounding immigration. By giving researchers the ability to compare how similar discussions unfold in different districts over time, we can use these novel data sources to build theory on how local contexts can produce divergent responses to similar external pressures on schools.

Data pipeline

While videos represent a revolution in how local governments provide information about policy-making, they remain frustratingly inaccessible for scholars. We address this problem by adapting a data-collection procedure devised by Barari and Simko (2023), which began with the universe of Census Bureau Places to collect data largely focused on entities like city councils and county commissions. We instead begin with the universe of regularly operating U.S. school districts to collect school board meetings. We use a five-step data collection, cleaning, and validation process to build *DistrictView*: (1) defining a universe of districts; (2) identifying YouTube “channels” posting school board meeting videos; (3) creating and manually validating a channel-to-district merge; (4) finding and scraping school board meeting video transcripts and metadata posted to these channels; and (5) automating

steps 3 and 4 to continuously update the data. Below, we provide more details on each of these steps.

Step 1: Start with all open, regular school districts We began with the Common Core Data roster of school districts in all school years between 2014–2015 and 2021–2022 from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). We filtered to school districts that were: (1) open (neither closed nor inactive); (2) located in U.S. states or the District of Columbia; and (3) classified as either “regular school districts” or “charter agencies” by NCES. The most commonly excluded districts are districts that are part of unusual administrative arrangements like supervisory unions or districts that operate specialized schools or programs like vocational programs or correctional facilities. For more information, see the [NCES district classification rules](#). Our total population is 12,616 active school districts.

Step 2: Search YouTube for potentially relevant channels We then query the YouTube API for each school district by name (e.g. Benson Unified School District). We use these search results to build a set of potential channels for each searched district name. At this stage, this means a single “candidate channel” could be a potential match to multiple districts, or none at all for districts with names similar to other local government entities (e.g., Benson County). These non-unique matches generally happen because school districts are not uniquely named. For example, New Jersey alone has four separate school districts named Washington Township School District (in Burlington, Gloucester, Morris, and Warren counties, and a fifth, separate, Washington Borough School District also in Warren County).

Duplicate names commonly appear across state lines as well: for instance, “Richland 01,” a school district in South Carolina, and “Richland R-I,” a different school district in Missouri, share a name with a channel from our sample: the “Richland Rebel Stream.” We are intentionally over-inclusive at this stage due to the variation in the naming conventions that districts use when creating a YouTube channel—for instance, some districts name their channel after their town or county with no indication of “School District” or “School Board” in the name. All of our potential matches are manually validated in the next step, so we are inclusive to avoid false negatives (i.e. excluding a school district that does post school board meetings but has an idiosyncratically-named YouTube channel).

Step 3: Validate and match channels to specific school districts Next, we used manual validation to narrow down the “candidate matches” to unique matches between channels and school districts. A team of research assistants manually verified the channel status of each of the 12,616 districts in our universe by using channel metadata, websites, and other linked social media accounts. This resulted in an initial sample of 5,991 channels that had a valid match to a single school district and were identified as an official district YouTube channel.

The remaining channels were not linked to any school district, and were most often user generated content affiliated with the school (e.g., a local news organization sharing the city name, or a parent posting homemade videos of athletic events). We also explored at this

stage whether districts without a valid YouTube channel posted school board videos on their website or another forum. We were only able to find 87 districts that did not post on YouTube but posted on their district website, with many more cross-posting across both platforms or linking to their YouTube channel from their district website. Collecting these videos beyond our YouTube sample would likely require a distinct scraping approach for each district, as districts tend to have custom websites.

Research assistants manually verified if the channel posted videos of school board meetings. Some channels are used only to post non-meeting content like superintendent updates and school athletic events. Channels without any school board meetings are removed from the sample.

Step 4: Scrape relevant meetings, transcripts, and metadata For each validated channel, we then used the YouTube API to search for common terms among their uploaded videos that likely indicated school board meetings (e.g. “School board meeting,” “BOE meeting”). We first pulled all videos on every channel identified in the previous step, producing a set of 1,536,777 videos. We used regular expressions to then narrow down the videos into a set of “likely school board meetings,” searching for evidence that it was a school board meeting in either the video title or the video description.

For each video we identify as a meeting, we then use the YouTube Transcript API to scrape the automatically generated transcripts, or manual transcripts for the very small number of school districts that upload their own transcripts. After this stage, *DistrictView* contains transcripts from all school board meetings from identified distinct channels. Previous work has found these automatic and manual transcripts to be high-quality and accurate (Bokhove and Downey, 2018; Liao et al., 2013), although proper names and local vernacular are often misspelled in these transcripts; scholars interested in evaluating proper names might use a custom LLM dictionary to identify those terms or an alternative transcription process like WhisperX (Holman et al., 2026b).

Step 5: Automatically update database Finally, we set up steps 3 and 4 to run on a weekly interval. Each week, our pipeline uses the YouTube API to download the full list of videos posted on our list of channels, filters those to likely school board meetings, and then downloads transcripts and metadata only for meetings we have not already collected. The metadata and transcripts are appended to our existing data and re-uploaded to our Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ERDATA>. We institute a six-month lag on public uploads of the data to allow us the chance to fix issues with the YouTube API as they arise or resolve problems with the data itself.

Data in *DistrictView*

At the time of this article, our pipeline collects 358,162 complete school board meetings from 3,039 school districts. Despite only about a quarter of districts being represented in our sample, those districts include nearly 26.1 million students (54.2% of all public school

students). This disparity is driven by a long right tail in school district enrollment: 37.7% of regular U.S. school districts enroll fewer than 500 students, while 57.5% enroll less than 1,000 students. Our sample includes a wide range of school districts with slight over-representation of large and nonrural districts. Depending on their chosen application, researchers can use district-level characteristics to develop weights appropriate to their desired target population.

DistrictView is geographically dispersed across the United States. As shown in [Figure 1](#), our sample includes school districts from every state, except Hawai'i and Vermont.¹ The states with the most representation in our sample closely map onto states with the most school districts overall, like New York, California, Texas, Ohio, and Illinois.² These data offer researchers a very large set of geographically diverse data on the processes of school boards across the United States.

As shown in [Figure 2](#), our sample includes videos from nearly a decade, with a large increase in 2020 when many meetings were moved online to platforms like Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, we continue to see growth in the number of school board channels (right pane) and meetings. As we would expect, there are currently fewer meetings in the dataset for 2026 as we have not completed the full calendar year of data collection. After the dramatic growth in the number of channels and meetings in 2020, there are consistently more than 2,000 channels and 40,000 meetings per year in the dataset, offers scholars a deep set of data across the last half-decade.

¹Hawai'i has a single school district without a YouTube channel and Vermont uses a regional multilayered system with "supervisory unions" that oversee school districts to deliver public education.

²The [NCES](#) provides a full list of the number of school districts by state.

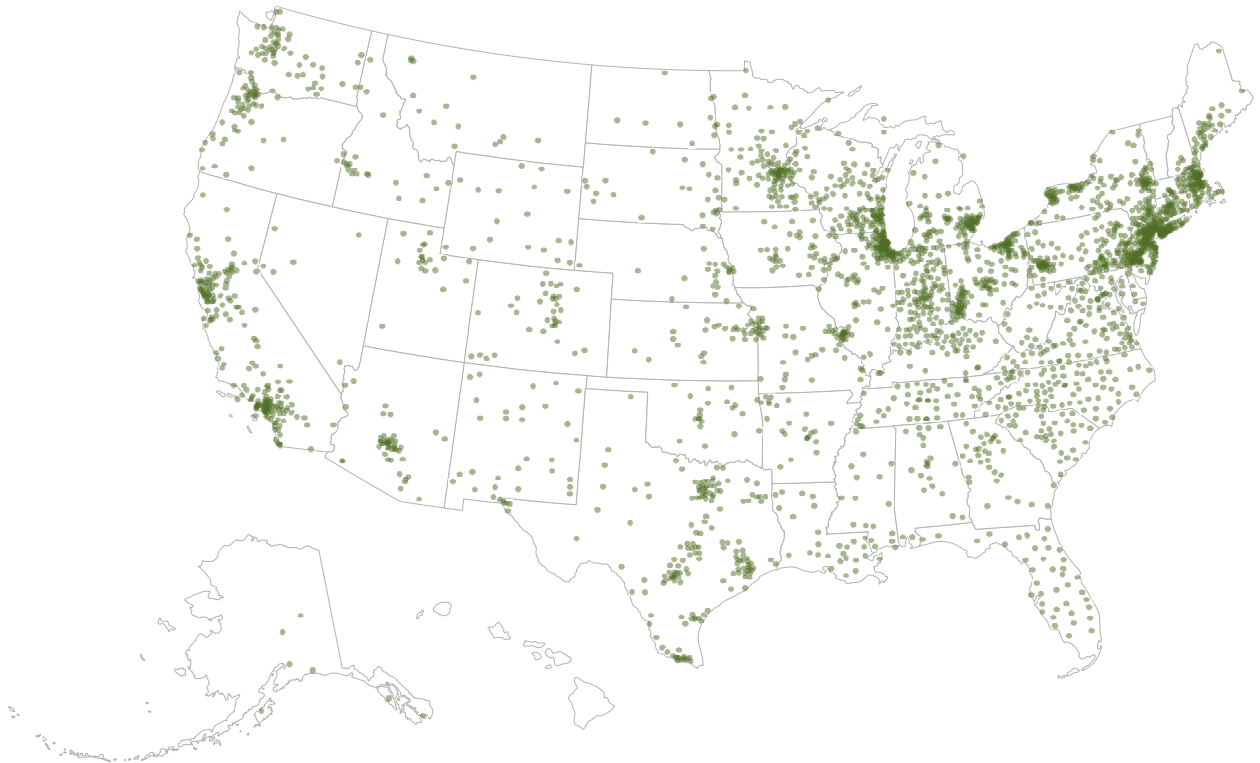


Figure 1: Sample coverage. Our sample is large, includes districts from 48 states, and covers over a decade of school board meetings. The plot shows a map of the 3,042 districts (points) in *DistrictView*.

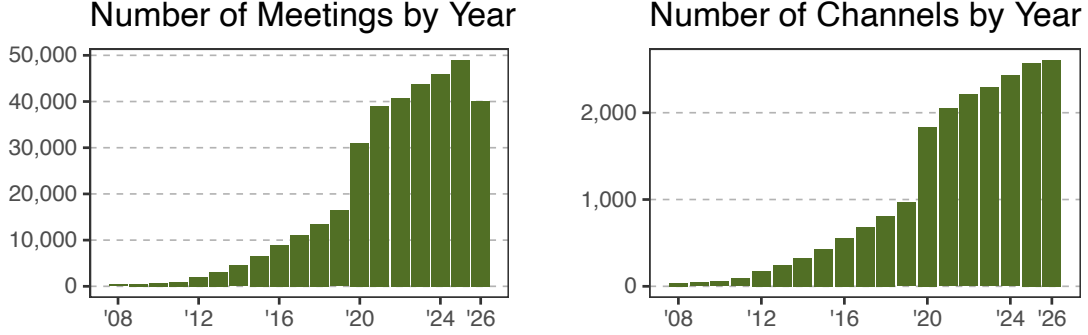


Figure 2: Sample growth over time. Our sample covers over a decade of school board meetings. The plots show the growth in our sample by the number of meeting videos (left) and districts with any meetings (right) in each year. The number of meetings in 2026 is lower than previous years because the year is not yet complete.

Application one: Using large language models to classify meeting topics

DistrictView offers researchers a very rich dataset of school board meetings, but its size can also be a challenge – how does one identify broader patterns in this data or find which meetings or boards to examine? Researchers might be interested in studying specific topics discussed in school board meetings; these topics might range from the very broad or highly specific. While some topics might lend themselves to a dictionary approach, identifying these topics from meeting transcripts by hand can be an arduous task and require specialized knowledge of nomenclature, sentence structure, and other features of meetings. Instead, we turn to large language models (LLMs) to identify topics. LLMs have been shown to reliably classify text with accuracy comparable to that of expert coders and substitute well for manual identification at scale (Nakamura et al., 2026). Here we demonstrate their use for school board meetings.

Our process for identifying topics proceeds as follows. First, we manually defined twenty topics of interest that might be discussed in school board meetings. With those topics in hand, we then build a prompt, or a set of instructions, for the LLM. Our full prompt and list of topics can be found in Section A.1. We pass the prompt, and each full meeting transcript, to an LLM. For each meeting, the model returns an estimate of whether that topic was discussed in the meeting. Any discussion could be classified into multiple topics. In our example analysis below, we use the open-source LLM `gpt-oss:120b` with a 131,072 unit context window (OpenAI, 2025), but researchers are welcome to use any model they choose. We prefer the open-source model following recent work suggesting they are better for replication and reproducibility, while remaining as effective as closed-source models (e.g., Claude or ChatGPT) (Barrie et al., 2026).

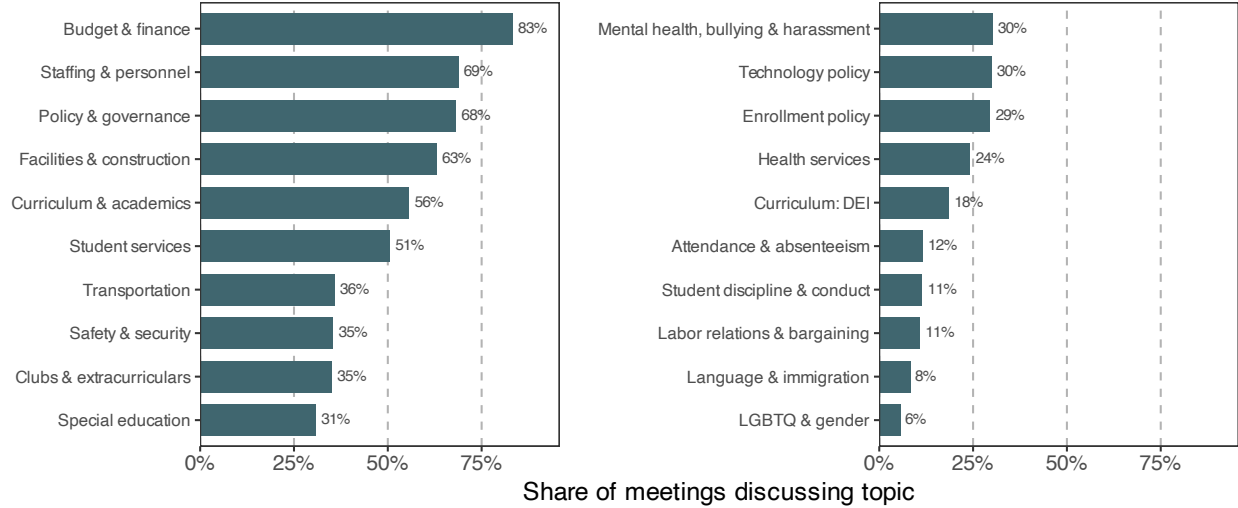


Figure 3: Meeting topics, drawn from 20 pre-selected topics and generated using an LLM on the full text of 50,000 meeting transcripts. Bars represent the share of meetings where the LLM detected a discussion relating to the topic. Examples of responses to each topic are available in [Table A.2](#).

Using the LLM, we classify topics from a stratified random sample of 50,000 meetings.³ We start with a basic assessment of the frequency of topics in school board meeting in [Figure 3](#). The most common topics (budget, staffing, policy) are the core “bread and butter” topics of school boards. Anyone spending time at a school board meeting would see some discussion of these topics and might expect to hear a discussion of how a “high dollar project” might need financing (budget), teacher retention and hiring (staffing), or what policy the school board should select to determine how to schedule makeup days from weather events (policy). Topics that occur regularly (but not at all meetings) include facilities, curriculum, and student services. Here, boards discuss how to draft lessons to reduce “learning loss over the holidays” (curriculum) and “different types of requests for assistance” (student services). Less frequently, school boards might discuss issues like labor relations, language services and immigration, or LGBTQ and gender issues.

We can use these topics to then examine variation in how school boards discuss issues over time. We provide examples of shifts across time in [Figure 4](#). There is relative consistency in a topic like budgeting across time, while discussions of health services spikes during the Covid-19 era. The increase in public discussions of diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) in 2020 following police killings and Black Lives Matter protests (and then the backlash against those discussions and efforts to ban critical race theory ([Shah et al., 2024](#))) are evident in the rise of DEI related topics rising in the late 2010s, peaking in 2021. And while immigration issues have gained substantial public attention since 2024, we do not see a similar increase in discussion of these issues in school board meetings.

We also see interesting variation (or the lack thereof) in discussions if we look state by state, as displayed in [Figure 5](#). Here, we scale the occurrence of the topics by their

³We balance the sample of meetings geographically and over time.

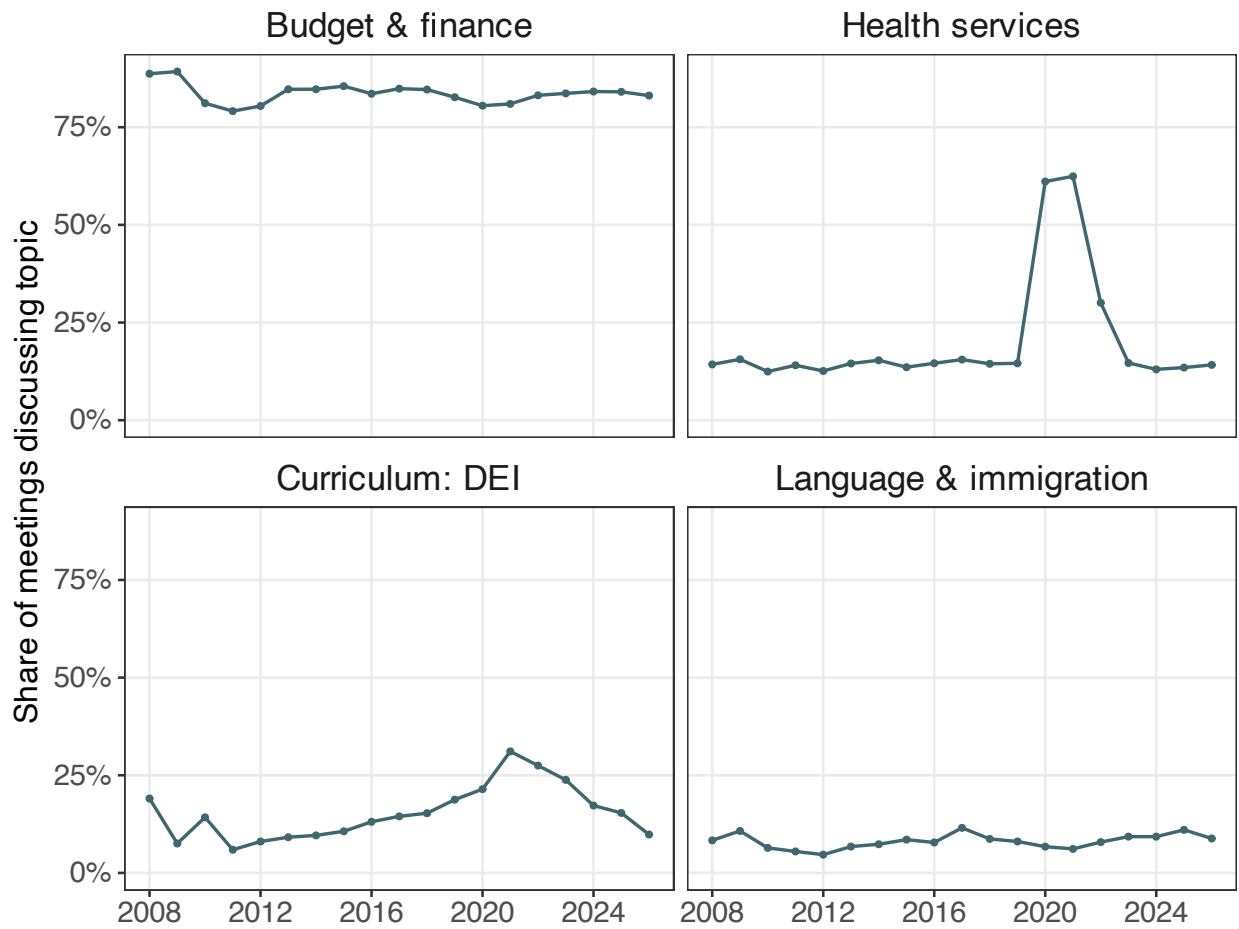


Figure 4: Discussions of budget and finance, health, diversity, equity and inclusion, and language and immigration issues over time in school board meetings. Time trends for all topics are available in [Figure A.1](#).

mean national rate of frequency and then evaluate whether the school boards in each state discuss that topic more or less frequently than the national average. For a common topic like budget and finance, there are few differences in the state-by-state level of discussion of the topic; in essence, school boards across the United States regularly discuss budget and finance at relatively similar rates. For temporally variable topics like health services, there is some variation (particularly, Southern states are less likely to discuss health services) but generally the topic varies only slightly more from state to state than does budget and finance. But for less common topics (such as DEI and language and immigration), there are large state-level differences. We see clear patterns of higher rates of engagement on both topics by school boards in the American West and lower rates of engagement in South. For topics like language and immigration, discussions of the topics do not align with border states (either the U.S.-Mexico or U.S.-Canada border).

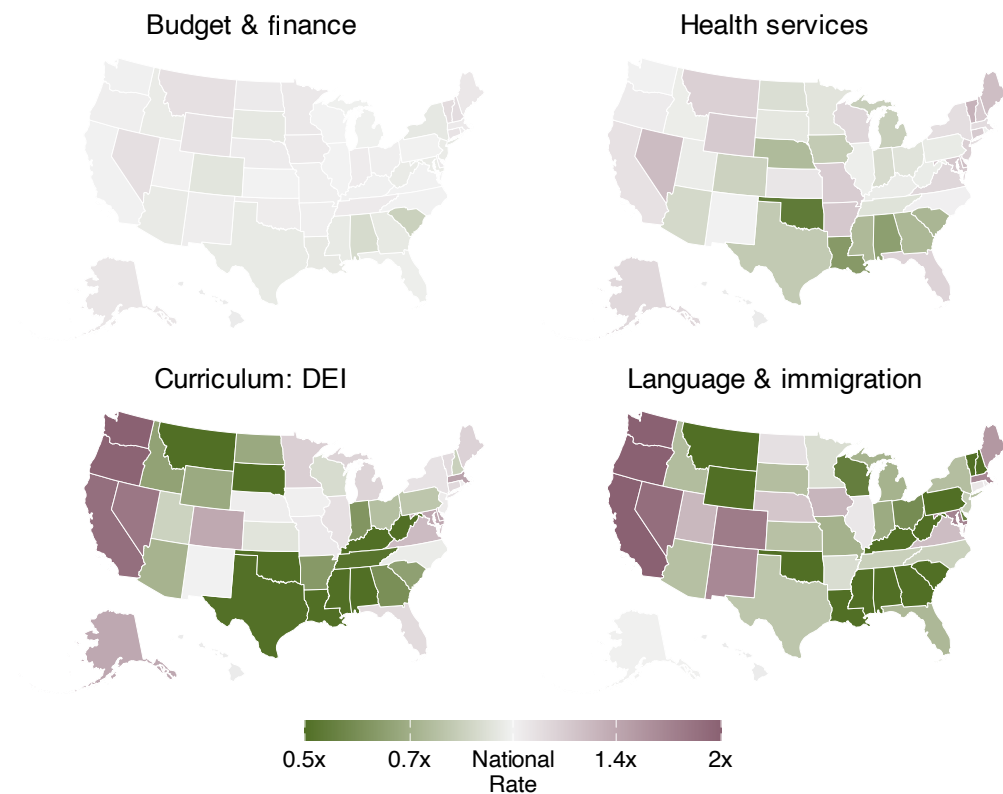


Figure 5: Discussions of budget and finance, health, DEI, and language and immigration issues by state, with each topic’s variance measured against the national rate. Geographic trends for all topics are available in [Figure A.2](#).

Application two: Using *DistrictView* to build district-specific case studies

DistrictView data create opportunities to combine computational analysis with close qualitative study of educational governance, using large language models to identify substantive discussions across thousands of meetings and then examining transcripts to understand how those discussions unfold, who participates, and what outcomes follow. This approach can also inform case selection by identifying districts with similar characteristics but different patterns of attention, while requiring clear definitions and replicable measurement procedure. We provide an example of such an approach using discussions of English Language Learner policies.

The map in [Figure 5](#) shows that California ranks among the states whose meeting topics focus most heavily on issues surrounding language and immigration. Over a quarter of incoming students in California schools arrive at school not yet proficient in English, with Spanish being the native language of over 80% of these students ([Hill and Deng, 2025](#)). Meanwhile, about 20% of children in California live in a mixed-status family ([State of California, 2026](#)), making issues of immigration salient for many school-age children and districts. Immigrant students suffer from lower mental health ([Tulin and Smith, 2020](#)), concerns about immigration enforcement ([Rodriguez Vega, 2022](#)), and barriers associated with serving as a conduit of information about the world to their families ([Carlos, 2026](#)); all of these (and more) offer specific policy challenges to school boards. In this section, we dive deeper into a subset of *DistrictView* data from California to highlight additional use cases of for education researchers.⁴

First, we show that the database can be used as a *discovery tool* to select case studies for qualitative research. Researchers can begin with an axis of variation they want to study: for instance, districts with different levels of and changes in their English Language Learner (ELL) student composition. They can then use the database’s LLM-based topic coding to identify districts that share similar demographics but devote different degrees of attention to a topic: in this case, issues around language and immigration. This can aid qualitative researchers in selecting districts in which to conduct interview or ethnographic-based research exploring mechanisms for divergence despite demographic similarity (e.g. [Seawright, 2016](#)).

While the first use case uses a summary of the transcripts—the LLM-based topic coding—the second uses the underlying text of the transcript. Two districts might each support adopting a “sanctuary policy” protecting the rights of immigrant students. Yet the transcripts can highlight how the underlying demographics of a district shape the specificity and depth of these discussions, which can be short or long, symbolic or deeply detailed.

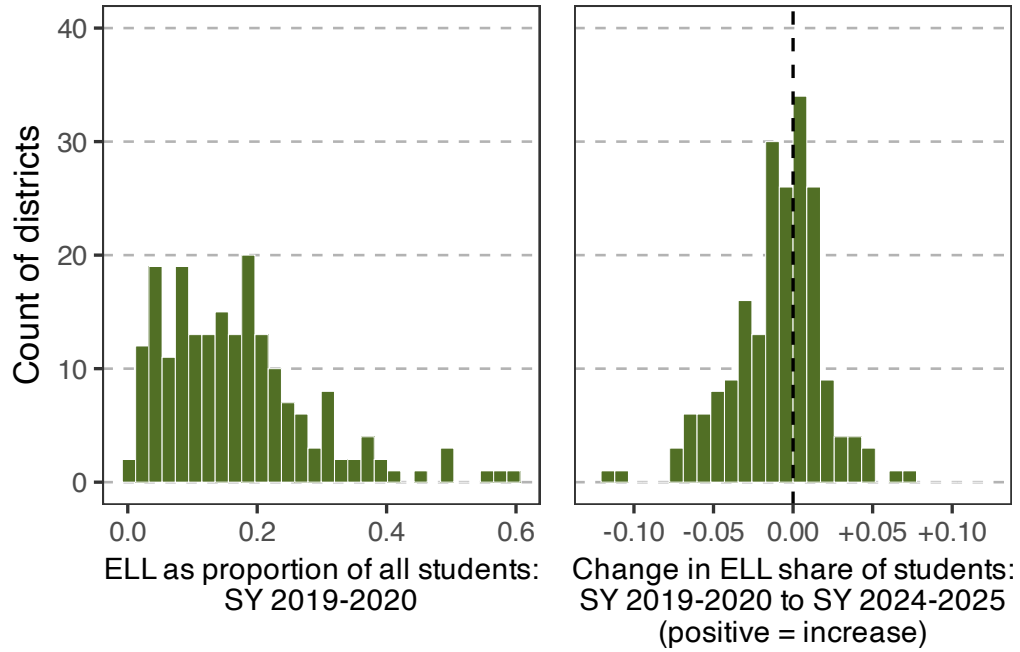


Figure 6: English Language Learner (ELL) students: share and growth over time in California districts represented in *DistrictView*. The left panel shows, for the school year 2019-2020, a histogram of the proportion of ELL students in each district. The right panel shows the change in this proportion for each school year between the 2019-2020 school year and the 2024-2025 school year, where positive values indicate an increase.

Identifying districts in the corpus for analysis and research

How can we leverage the database, merged with demographic data about California students, to identify districts that might serve as useful case studies for understanding the relationship between a district’s composition of English Language Learner (ELL) students and debates about immigration and language within local school boards? Section A.2.3 contains details of the methodology for merging demographic information about California students with the database topics.

Figure 6 shows that, among the 202 California districts represented in the analytic sample of districts with demographic and meeting data (21% of all California districts), there is wide variation in the student population classified as ELLs. The left panel shows the shares in school year (SY) 2019-2020 while the right panel shows changes in that share over time. In terms of baseline shares, we see a wide range of districts. On one end are those like Tamalpais Union High School District, a wealthy district in Marin County in the Bay Area, where fewer than 2% of students are ELLs; on the other end are districts like Calexico Unified School District, a lower-income district in Imperial County located near the border, where over 50% of students are regularly classified as ELL. Researchers may also wish to examine changes in demographic features over time. California as a whole exhibited statewide declines in the percentage of students as ELL, driven by broader demographic shifts in terms of a drop in the school-age population of those students. Yet, Figure 6 also shows some districts grew in their ELL population over the last 5 school years. Selecting on this key point of variation (or constraining evaluations to districts that fell into a specific band of either share or change) would allow scholars to identify specific channels to evaluate for discussions.

Qualitative researchers may want to know what best predicts a district’s attention to language and immigration issues within its school board meetings: its absolute *levels* of ELL students, the change in that student population, or neither? Figure 7 explores this descriptively. We see a strong positive relationship between a district’s absolute levels of ELL students and the share of meetings with some discussion of immigration and language topics, with a simple bivariate regression confirming a strong relationship ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, we see little relationship between changes in these shares and more discussion. This suggests that district attention to the issue *is* highly related to the underlying demographics of the district, reflected in the *share* of the district comprised of ELL students, but is not particularly sensitive to recent changes in these levels.

This descriptive exploration suggests axes of variation that researchers could use when selecting districts for a qualitative research project. In particular, researchers might be interested in a 2×2 typology comprised of four types of districts. Table 1 shows real district examples in each cell. The contrast between districts raises questions that are ripe for qualitative investigation. For instance, are districts with low *actual* shares of ELLs that devote a lot of attention to immigration issues discussing issues of national concern rather than local salience? Have districts with large shares of ELL students but who devote comparatively less attention to the issue “settled” debates at an earlier point in their trajectory, precluding

⁴We focus on meetings from the 2019-2020 school year onwards due to significant improvements in district-level coverage.

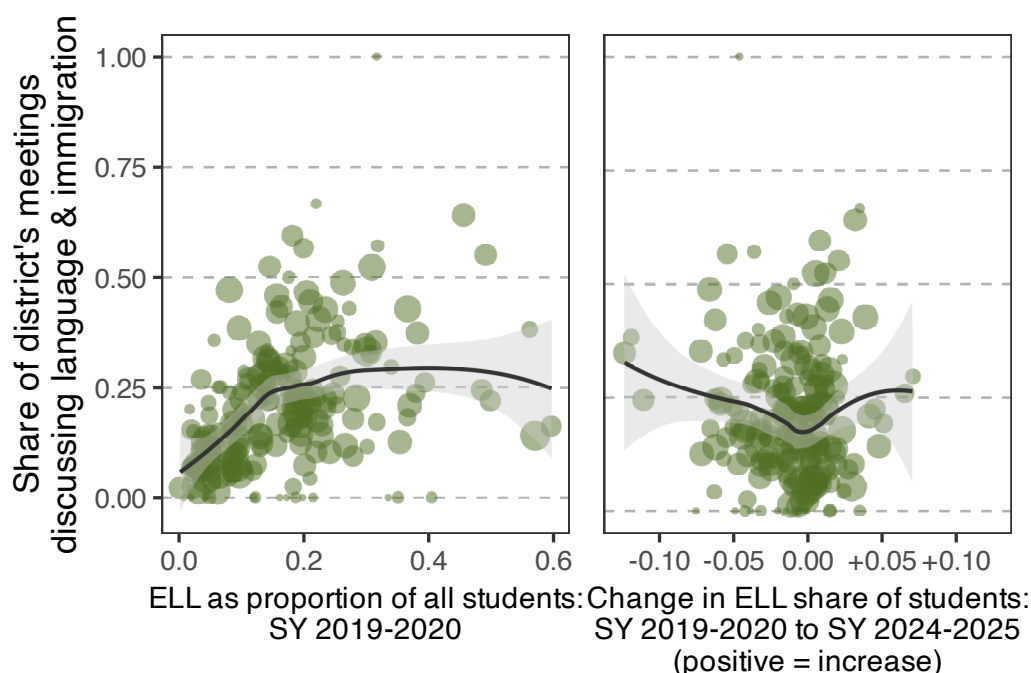


Figure 7: How do discussions of language and immigration within meetings change as a function of the district’s underlying demographics? The y-axis reflects the proportion of the district’s meetings (SY 2019-2020 to 2024-2025) with a discussion of the language and immigration topic. The left panel shows how this varies across share of ELL students; the right panel, based on changes in the student population. Size of dots are scaled to the total number of meetings. The black line is a weighted Loess curve fit to the data. We see a strong positive correlation between more ELL students and more discussion of immigration and language issues, while there is no discernible relationship between change in this population and discussions.

further discussion? This leads us to the next example application: using the transcripts to contrast discussions in districts occupying different quadrants.

<i>ELL share</i>	<i>Meeting attention</i>	
	More attention to ELLs	Less attention to ELLs
Many ELL students	San Rafael City Elem. SD 46% ELL students 64% of 92 total meetings	Jefferson City Elem. SD 35% ELL students 13% of 111 total meetings
Fewer ELL students	Berkeley Unified SD 8% ELL students 47% of 136 total meetings	Apple Valley Unified SD 9% ELL students 6% of 84 total meetings

Table 1: Examples of districts in different quadrants of underlying ELL demographics versus meeting attention.

Contrasting discussions of schools as sanctuaries in the midst of heightened fears of immigration enforcement

The previous section shows how the database can be used to identify districts that occupy different cells within a typology. The database’s transcripts allow us to enrich cells within this typology before delving deeper with qualitative research. While two meetings might both discuss the same issue within language and immigration, the *substance* of the discussion can highlight interesting contrasts between the two districts. Here, we focus on the two districts from [Table 1](#) that each devote a lot of attention to immigration and language issues despite very different concentration of ELL students (46% of students in San Rafael City versus 8% of students in Berkeley Unified). We show how the demographically dissimilar districts were each supportive of sanctuary policies but showed that support in more symbolic versus concrete ways.

The external trigger: heightened concern around immigration enforcement in January 2025

We focus on meetings in the weeks surrounding Donald Trump’s January 2025 inauguration, where the incoming administration signaled a shift toward more aggressive immigration enforcement. This included plans for expanded deportations and reports that it intended to rescind long-standing federal guidance treating schools as “sensitive locations” where immigration agents would generally not operate ([Watrobski, 2024](#); [Pate, 2025](#)). This stance towards schools prompted a wave of school boards throughout the country to clarify or pass policies affirming the “sanctuary” or “safe haven” status of schools, mirroring many similar policies by cities, counties, and states on cooperation with immigration enforcement ([Chapa and Cortina, 2025](#); [Farris and Holman, 2017](#)). School district policies varied across districts, but could include policies restricting access of immigration enforcement agents on school

property, reaffirming confidentiality provisions surrounding student records, and other measures (Watrobski, 2024; Pate, 2025). Research has highlighted the potential importance of these policies, with a study focused on the California Central Valley showing that immigration raids in January and February 2025 appeared to cause a sharp increase in student absences (Dee, 2025). The link between heightened immigration enforcement and spikes in student absences raises questions about the presence and substance of policies in specific districts.

A short, nonspecific response in a low English Language Learner district

Berkeley Unified School District, a district with a low share of ELL students (8%) (and presumably a lower share of students who might face immigration-related concerns), addressed the issue at its January 22nd, 2025 board meeting. The superintendent began by noting that the board had already passed a resolution in 2017, during the first term of the Trump administration, designating campuses within the district a “safe zone” for students and families threatened by immigration enforcement:⁵

Superintendent of Berkeley Unified School District: I want to call attention to the information item on tonight’s agenda, that’s item 16.5 reaffirming [the board’s] commitment to education of all children and making all... campuses a safe zone for students and families threatened by immigration enforcement. This resolution was passed by the Board of Education in 2017. This is not a new thing, this is what we do. But it is agendized tonight as an opportunity for this board to remind you of our commitment to ensure that every student regardless of immigration status is welcome and safe in our Berkeley Public Schools.

Rather than discussing specifics of the policy, the discussion quickly pivoted to broader values of inclusion held by the district. After outlining the role of partnerships in creating these safe zones, the superintendent shifted to discussing how other families beyond those of immigrant students likely felt “unsettled and unsafe,” including transgender and gender expansive students:

Superintendent of Berkeley Unified School District: Last night, the city of Berkeley, the first city in the nation to declare itself a City of Refuge in 1971, voted to reaffirm Berkeley as a sanctuary city. It is essential that we work in close partnership not only with our Police Department, nonprofits, CBOs, Alameda County, the City of Berkeley, and all of you to make sure that our schools truly are safe for all of our students and their families. Tonight’s agenda speaks specifically to protecting our undocumented students and families or those who are threatened by immigration enforcement.

But we all know that there are others in our community that feel threatened, unsettled, and unsafe at this time. The district is committed to our families

⁵The meeting can be seen [here](#).

threatened by immigration enforcement as well as our transgender and gender expansive students and all students and families that are feeling targeted, threatened, and dehumanized. We're committed to all of our students and families period.

Overall, the meeting discussion contained few specifics of the policy. In addition, the discussion quickly pivoted to the immigration policy serving as just one example of the district's general commitment to helping students and families who feel "targeted" and "dehumanized," with transgender and gender expansive students being another example. While this could stem from many factors, one reason for the lack of specificity could be the relatively low concentration of actual immigrant students within the district.⁶

A lengthy, highly specific response in a high English Language Learner district

The discussion unfolded very differently in San Rafael City Elementary SD, a district also located in the Bay Area with very different demographics. Nearly 46% of students are ELLs (in contrast to 8% of students in Berkeley Unified) and over 70% of students are Hispanic/Latino (in contrast to 22% of students in Berkeley Unified). In its January 27th, 2025 board meeting,⁷ held during a similar period of heightened national concerns surrounding immigration enforcement and five days after the Berkeley Unified meeting, there were a few notable differences in the discussion surrounding the district's sanctuary status.

First, the Superintendent discusses specific aspects of the sanctuary status that might be salient in the minds of families fearing enforcement actions. These include the district not collecting information about the citizenship or immigration status of students and specific training for school staff on what to do if an immigration enforcement agent arrives at the school:

Superintendent of San Rafael City Schools: We have before the board for approval a resolution which would declare San Rafael City School District a Sanctuary District. This is a revision and an update of a resolution came to the board in 2017. San Rafael City Schools aims to declare the District a sanctuary District, emphasizing its commitment to an inclusive and equitable education environment. The district affirms the dignity and worth of all individuals regardless of immigration status and underscores a legal obligation to provide education to all children as guaranteed by California law and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision of *Plyler v. Doe*.

While this initial framing of the resolution mirrored that in Berkeley Unified in many ways, the discussion moved from the policy's abstract grounding in inclusion and equity to specific provisions likely of interest to immigrant students and families:

⁶Other reasons could be the fact that the policy was originally passed in 2017 and the agenda item was just highlighting the existing policy. However, we see with the next example that, in a climate of heightened concern over immigration enforcement, a refresher on the policy's specific provisions could prove helpful for families.

⁷The meeting can be seen [here](#).

Superintendent of San Rafael City Schools: So this resolution also states the district will not solicit or collect information about the citizenship or immigration status of students or their families nor will it assist with immigration enforcement at schools except as required by state and federal law.

I want to assure that this work is underway and will continue San Rafael City Schools is working with partnership with the Marin County Office of Ed, local organizations including Canal Alliance, Legal Aid of Marin, and others.

Our educators and staff have shared trainings, events, and resources such as know your rights training for educators as well as a helpful two-page reference document for the in-school officials on what to do if an immigration enforcement officer comes to your school.

For students and families, this work is also ongoing. We are grateful to our school leaders, our community liaison, our family center staff, and others who are sharing streamlined resources. All of our schools have red cards that are available for families to have in multiple languages that have pertinent legal information. If this resolution passes, we plan to send a districtwide communication to all of our families in both English and Spanish with information and resources.

Second, while the discussion in Berkeley Unified was conducted solely in English, the Superintendent’s presentation of the proposed sanctuary resolution was followed by a school board member repeating the same information in Spanish. This concrete commitment to making meeting discussions more accessible to parents who do not speak English highlights another way that district discussions about the same topic can diverge. Scholars interested in these forms of communication and adaptation could use LLMs to detect discussions in other languages or references to translation services to identify where these services exist.

Finally, the discussion featured the personal experiences of another school board member. She noted:

School board member: as someone that came to this country at the age of two and then came back at the age of seven and a proud immigrant, I think it’s very important that we lead with: we want all of our students and families to feel very safe in our schools. I’m very proud that our board and our leadership and our cabinet is behind that. It’s important that when you go to school you want to be excited to learn and not live in fear and that is the same for our families and our parents and our communities.

This highlights another force affecting the specifics of the discussion within the school board: the demographics and personal histories of the board members themselves. Scholars have long pointed to the importance of descriptive characteristics of representatives in shaping policy and discussions (Holman, 2014; Molina Jr and Meier, 2018), including providing symbolic representation (Shah, 2009). *DistrictView* offers scholars the opportunity to investigate the ways that representation might shape both policy outcomes and the policy construction process.

Overall, this case study highlights that two districts that appear equivalent in a policy—in this case, a sanctuary policy for immigrant students—can have substantially different discussions surrounding that policy. The discussion of the district’s sanctuary status in the district with many fewer students with this background reaffirmed a 2017 resolution without expanding upon it and was short, nonspecific about provisions, and cited immigrant families as just one example of many student groups feeling dehumanized within a broader cultural climate. The discussion of the district’s sanctuary status in the district with more students from this background went beyond reaffirming the 2017 policy and instead expanded it. The discussion was lengthier, specific about protective measures, translated into Spanish, and featured a board member sharing how her own background mirrored that of the families the policy would protect.

While the transcripts in *DistrictView* help illuminate these differences, qualitative investigations could explore them further. For instance, did the greater specificity of the discussions in San Rafael City help address the concerns of immigrant families, or were there concerns the policy still failed to address? What contextual factors prompted one board to update its resolution and the other board to view its 2017 resolution as sufficient? The transcripts provide a helpful starting point for investigating these questions.

Conclusion

DistrictView makes the process of educational governance observable at a scale that has previously been difficult to achieve. Most existing education data capture inputs, policies, or outcomes, but we have traditionally lacked broad information about what happens between the inputs and outputs. School board meetings allow researchers to observe what issues receive attention, who raises them, how officials and members of the public respond, and how boards deliberate over competing demands. While we have focused our application on *which* topics arise in school board meetings, the data can support research that moves beyond identifying the topics on a board’s agenda to studying the structure of governance itself. Scholars asking which issues generate sustained discussion, which concerns receive a response, how disagreement unfolds, and which issues recur across meetings can use LLMs or related approaches to first identify topics of interest and then focus on those discussions. Linking these deliberations to agendas, votes, budgets, policies, or other administrative records would extend this further, allowing researchers to trace issues from attention and discussion through formal government action.

The scale and richness of these data also point to key measurement challenges associated with using cutting-edge tools in education research. Identifying substantive discussion requires researchers to make choices about what counts as attention, how topics are defined, and how ambiguous cases are classified.

And yet, like all data sources (particularly those constructed and analyzed in today’s fast-moving world), *DistrictView* is not without issues. There are coverage gaps in the data, with rural areas and school districts with small numbers of students less likely to appear in the data. The growth in coverage also means that scholars looking to examine a longer

timeline are more limited in their ability to examine a wide range of districts. Some of these gaps will shrink over time, as more school districts upload their meetings to YouTube.

We are also interested in continuously updating the universe of district channels with school board meetings. To this end, we have set up a form on our website ([districtview.net](#)) where users are welcome to submit YouTube channels for school districts that are not yet present in our data. For each submission, we will manually verify it, ensuring the channel is for a regular school district and does not already exist in our data. Then, we will add it to the list of channels, and the next weekly run of the pipeline will collect all associated metadata and transcripts automatically. Because we collect the entirety of relevant videos on newly added channels, this will continue to add materials back in time. Currently, we see very little evidence of school boards deleting videos or channels (unlike on Twitter / X, as [Küpfer \(2024\)](#) finds), but this could be an issue in the future.

We draw on LLMs to generate our topics, which offers an opportunity to study complex concepts at scale ([Malik et al., 2025](#)). While a computational approach is necessary for something like topic identification across the entire corpus, LLMs are not without problems. We pre-define topics in our approach, which means that researcher error may lead to the oversimplification of topics or collapsing of related topics or ignoring topics entirely. Another option might be to use interviews with school board members, teachers, or superintendents to first generate the topics ([Malik et al., 2025](#)). The topics of importance may shift over time, just as the language used to discuss those issues may shift. Further, researchers are always encouraged to engage in verification and validation of such an approach, particularly if an LLM approach is serving a core role in a research strategy ([Gebhardt et al., 2026](#)).

We also see opportunities and challenges associated with the multimodal nature of data drawn from YouTube. *DistrictView* is currently developed within the “text as data” paradigm within social science, and our applications highlight the depth of meaning conveyed by the meeting transcripts. Yet the underlying data on YouTube is multimodal data ([Barari and Simko, 2025](#)), encapsulating not only text but also audio data with the speaker voices and other sounds in the meeting and video data capturing attributes like speaker gestures and expressions. These audio and video data add still more measurement possibilities, including speaker identification, speaking time, turn-taking, and interaction, while introducing their own sources of error ([Cinar et al., 2026](#); [Boussalis et al., 2021](#); [Arnold and Küpfer, 2024](#); [Torres, 2024](#); [Paulmann and Weinstein, 2025](#)).

Future education research using the data could follow the lead of other social science fields ([Mestre and Ryan, 2026](#)) and investigate the extent to which incorporating audio data improves performance at tasks like sentiment classification of speech within the meetings. In addition, while there are important considerations of equity and bias involved in probabilistically inferring demographic attributes such as race and gender from visual data ([Birhane et al., 2024](#); [Booth et al., 2021](#)), computer vision tools applied to the video data could be used to explore other questions. For instance, research on social media has highlighted the use of computer vision to detect variation in the use of patriotic imagery ([Xi et al., 2020](#)); do we see similar dynamics in school boards across politically-divergent contexts? Research on political debates highlights how gender shapes emotional expression by leaders ([Boussalis](#)

et al., 2021; Homan et al., 2023); do these findings also apply to parents talking at school board meetings? Or to elected officials discussing sensitive issues like sanctuary policies? Scholars regularly identify large racial disparities in student disciplinary actions (Liu et al., 2023); do district demographics predict more emotive discussions of student disciplinary policy or evaluation? These are just a few of the potential research areas for scholars interested in using the multimodal data associated with *DistrictView*.

We believe that *DistrictView* creates opportunities for a broad research agenda around representation, government responsiveness, and educational inequality. School boards face many common administrative demands while operating in very different political, demographic, and institutional environments. *DistrictView* makes it possible to study how boards respond to sudden shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic, longer-term changes such as declining enrollment or demographic shifts, and demands raised by parents, employees, students, and other community members (Gillani et al., 2021). They also provide a way to examine how national controversies and state policy changes enter local institutions, allowing for studies of diffusion. At the same time, the large volume of discussion devoted to budgets, staffing, facilities, transportation, student services, and other routine responsibilities makes it possible to study less visible forms of responsiveness and administrative capacity. Together, these applications can show when local educational governance responds to changing conditions, whose concerns receive institutional attention, and why those responses differ across local educational contexts.

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Online Appendix

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A.1 LLM Topic Identification Prompt

You are analyzing a school board meeting transcript to detect which common discussion themes received non-trivial discussion. The transcript is a single continuous block of text — it has no speaker labels, no timestamps, and no section/agenda-item headers. Discussion of any given theme may appear in more than one place in the transcript (e.g., raised during a staff report and again during public comment); treat all mentions of a theme as one pool of evidence before you decide whether it clears the bar below.

Return ONLY valid JSON — no prose before or after. Every key listed in the schema must appear in your output, coded 0 or 1. Do not add, remove, or rename keys.

What counts as “non-trivial discussion” (applies to every theme)

A theme is coded 1 only if someone in the transcript **substantively engages** with it — states a position, gives a reason or piece of evidence, describes how something works or would work, raises a concern or objection, or the theme is picked up and responded to by more than one speaker turn. Passing mentions do not count, even if repeated.

Code 0 when the only appearances of a theme are:

- An agenda item title or consent-calendar listing read aloud with no discussion following it
- A single unelaborated reference in passing (“...and of course there’s always the budget to think about...”) that nobody follows up on
- A procedural motion or vote with no substantive remarks attached (“motion to approve, seconded, all in favor”)

Failsafe examples:

- *“We also have the budget report on file for review.”* — a listing, not discussion. Code 0 for `budget_finance` unless something else in the transcript engages with it.
- *“The proposed budget cuts three counselor positions, and I’m worried about the impact on kids already on wait lists.”* — substantive: names a specific action and a reason for concern. Code 1.
- *“Phones are becoming a problem in schools.”* on its own, with nothing else in the transcript connecting it to an actual or proposed rule, is generic commentary — code 0 for `technology_policy`. If any speaker later ties it to a specific rule, program, or proposal, the theme qualifies from that point.

When the transcript is genuinely ambiguous or borderline, prefer the less committal reading and code 0. Do not infer a theme from adjacent context that isn’t actually stated.

Themes

Key	What counts
<code>budget_finance</code>	Budget approval, spending levels, deficits/surpluses, cost overruns, audits, general fund allocation; bond measures and tax levies for facilities or operating funding; ESSER or federal stimulus funds, and approval of major vendor contracts, service agreements, purchases, bids, or other procurement decisions
<code>curriculum_academics</code>	Curriculum adoption or changes, instructional materials/textbooks, academic programs, pedagogy; standardized test scores, academic performance data, achievement gaps, and learning loss/gains
<code>curriculum_dei</code>	Curriculum relating to diversity, equality, inclusion, race, racism, Black lives matter, slavery, gender, women's rights, discrimination, bias, critical race theory, CRT, including curriculum choices and challenges/objections to specific books or content
<code>lgbtq_gender</code>	gender, sexuality, bathroom access, pronouns, trans athletes, sex education, lgtq and any policies related to these areas or efforts to stop or ban policies
<code>facilities_construction</code>	Building projects, renovations, maintenance, capital improvements, HVAC/infrastructure
<code>enrollment_policy</code>	Enrollment trends, redistricting, attendance boundary changes, school closures/consolidations; and school choice options such as charter schools, open enrollment, vouchers, and inter-district transfers
<code>student_discipline_conduct</code>	Code of conduct, discipline policy, suspensions/expulsions, disciplinary process
<code>safety_security</code>	Physical safety, security personnel/resource officers, emergency drills, weapons, lockdown procedures
<code>special_education</code>	IEP services, special education programs, accommodations, disability-related supports
<code>student_services</code>	Non-special-education student support programs and services: counseling programs (not specifically mental-health framed), gifted education, after-school programs, social work, family support; and school meals, cafeteria services, or food insecurity programs

Key	What counts
language_immigration	English learner/ESL programs, immigrant support, translation, immigration, customs, border control, undocumented, sanctuary policies, ICE, and any policies related to students moving from other countries or who have parents without legal documentation
attendance_chronic_absenteeism	Student attendance rates, chronic absenteeism, truancy, attendance policy, and interventions or incentive programs to improve attendance
mental_health_bullying_harassment	Student or staff mental health services, counseling framed as mental health support, wellbeing initiatives, crisis response; plus bullying policy, harassment complaints, and Title IX matters — the support/prevention side, not disciplinary consequences (see boundary note)
technology_policy	District technology policy broadly: student personal devices (phones, smartwatches, earbuds), 1:1 device programs, AI use policy, cybersecurity, internet/network access, learning management systems, ed-tech tools, screen-time rules — tied to an actual or proposed school policy or program
transportation	Busing routes, driver shortages, transportation safety or logistics
athletics_extracurriculars_club_extracurriculars	athletics/sports programs, sports eligibility rules, sports transportation, sports awards, student athletes non-sports related programs, drama, theater, debate, mathletes, art, extracurricular activities, booster clubs, funding for after school programs
staffing_personnel	Hiring, terminations, contracts, evaluations, staffing shortages, non-negotiated compensation; and superintendent search, evaluation, contract, or other executive leadership changes
labor_relations_bargaining	Union negotiations, collective bargaining agreements, strikes/work actions
health_services_policy	Student and staff physical health policies and services: vaccination requirements, communicable disease response, nursing services, medication administration, environmental health, illness protocols; also COVID-19 policy specifically, including COVID-driven school closures, reopening plans, and remote-learning transitions

Key	What counts
<code>policy_governance</code>	All other board governance and general district policy actions not better captured by a more specific theme: board bylaws, elections, board member conduct, ethics complaints, meeting procedure disputes; adoption, amendment, or repeal of district policies/administrative regulations — including academic calendar policy (start/end dates, early releases, non-health-driven remote/hybrid scheduling) as one common example; and parental notification/opt-out policies, parent engagement, or parental authority over their child’s education

Boundary notes:

- `special_education` vs. `student_services`: supports tied to an IEP or disability accommodation are `special_education`; other student support programs (English learners/ESL, gifted education, after-school programs, general social work, family support, school meals/food services) are `student_services`. Both can be 1 in the same meeting.
- `student_services` vs. `attendance_chronic_absenteeism`: attendance/truancy discussion always goes to `attendance_chronic_absenteeism`, even though it’s a kind of student support — do not also code `student_services` for the same attendance content.
- `student_services` / counseling vs. `mental_health_bullying_harassment`: if counseling or a support program is discussed specifically as mental health care (anxiety, depression, crisis response, wellbeing, social emotional learning), code `mental_health_bullying_harassment`; if it’s discussed as a staffing/funding/program question without a mental-health frame, code `student_services`. Both can be 1 together.
- `mental_health_bullying_harassment` vs. `student_discipline_conduct`: a discussion of a specific behavioral or bullying incident and its consequences (suspension, expulsion, code-of-conduct enforcement, a Title IX investigation’s outcome) is `student_discipline_conduct` even if mental health or bullying is mentioned as context. Code `mental_health_bullying_harassment` when the transcript substantively engages with mental health support/programming, or with bullying/harassment policy, prevention, or systemic response, as its own subject — not merely as a rationale offered during a discipline conversation. Both can be 1 if the meeting separately discusses a wellbeing/anti-bullying initiative and a specific discipline matter.
- `mental_health_bullying_harassment` vs. `health_services_policy`: mental health and bullying stay under `mental_health_bullying_harassment`; `health_services_policy` is for physical/medical health (vaccination, communicable disease, nursing, medication administration, environmental health).

- **technology_policy** vs. **budget_finance**: a discussion of the merits or design of a tech program (e.g., “should we roll out 1:1 laptops,” “what should our AI use policy say”) is **technology_policy**; if the discussion centers on approving/awarding a specific vendor contract or bid (dollar amount, vendor selection, procurement process) — for a tech purchase or anything else — that’s **budget_finance**. Both can be 1 if a meeting substantively discusses a tech program’s design *and* debates the specific contract or budget line to implement it.
- **policy_governance** vs. **health_services_policy**: calendar or schedule changes driven by COVID-19 or another communicable disease response (temporary closures, remote-learning pivots, modified reopening schedules) are **health_services_policy**, not **policy_governance**. Ordinary calendar policy unrelated to illness (start/end dates, early release days, routine remote/hybrid scheduling) stays under **policy_governance**.
- **policy_governance** vs. **curriculum_dei**: a parental-rights dispute that is really about a specific curriculum, book, or unit’s content (e.g., a parent objecting to a book on the reading list) is **curriculum_dei**; general parental notification/opt-out policy or parent authority over their child’s education not tied to specific curriculum content is **policy_governance**. Both can be 1 together.
- **policy_governance** is a catch-all of last resort: if a policy or governance action clearly belongs to a more specific theme above (e.g., a cell phone policy → **technology_policy**, a discipline code revision → **student_discipline_conduct**, a COVID-driven reopening decision → **health_services_policy**), code that more specific theme instead of **policy_governance**.

Output schema

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A.2 Additional Figures and Tables

A.2.1 Topic classifications

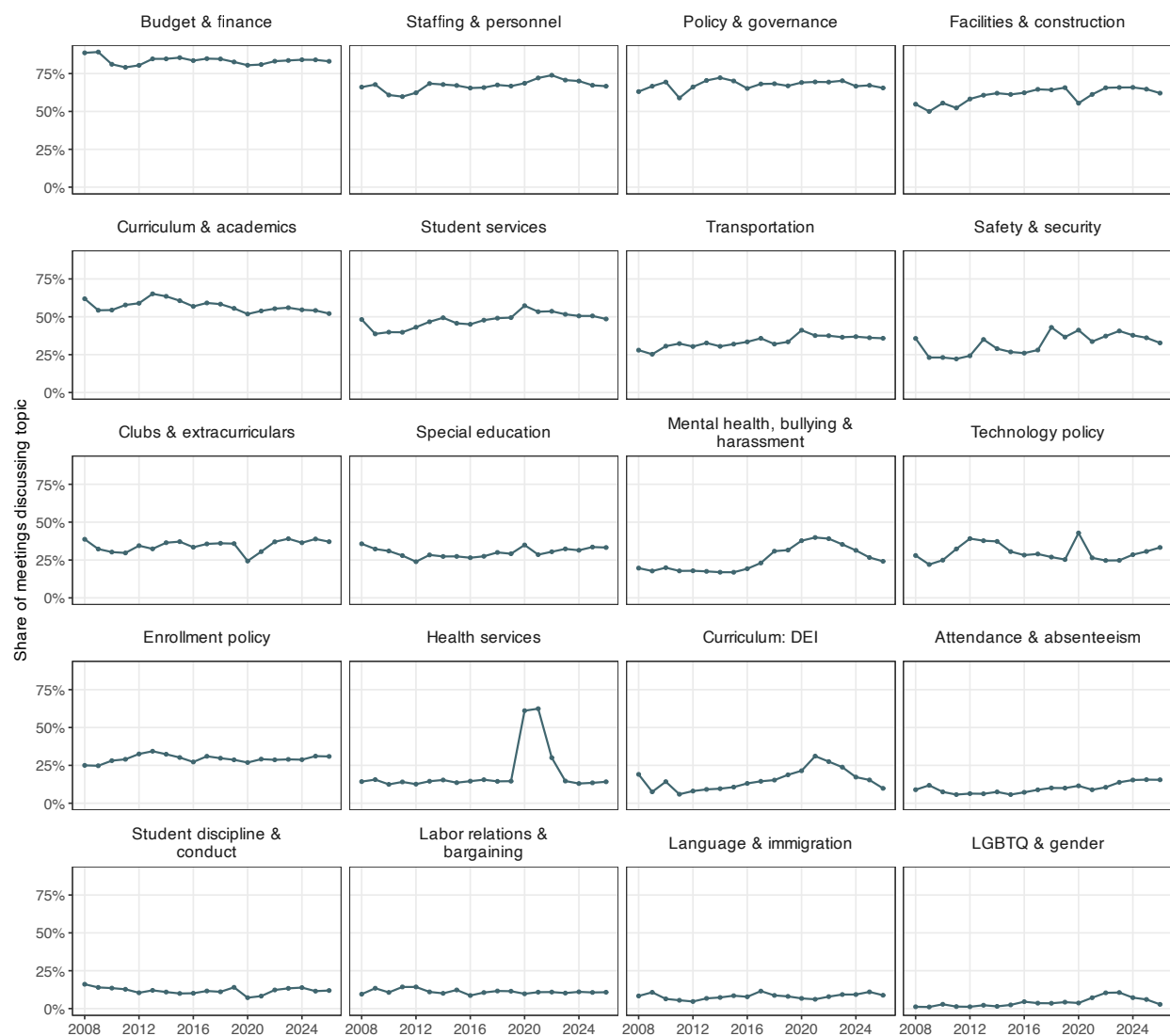


Figure A.1: Meeting topics over time. For all topics.

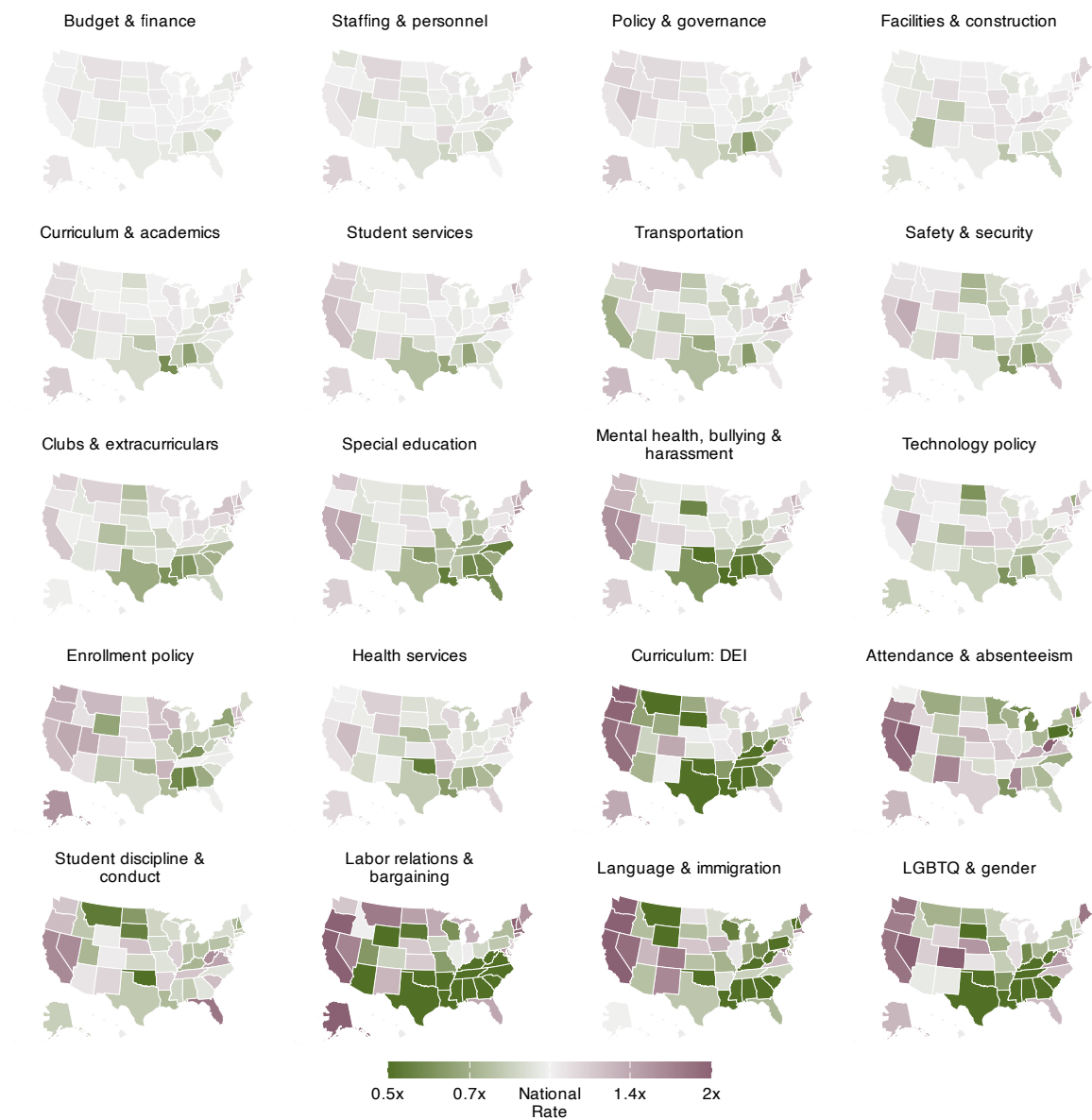


Figure A.2: Meeting topics in different states. For all topics.

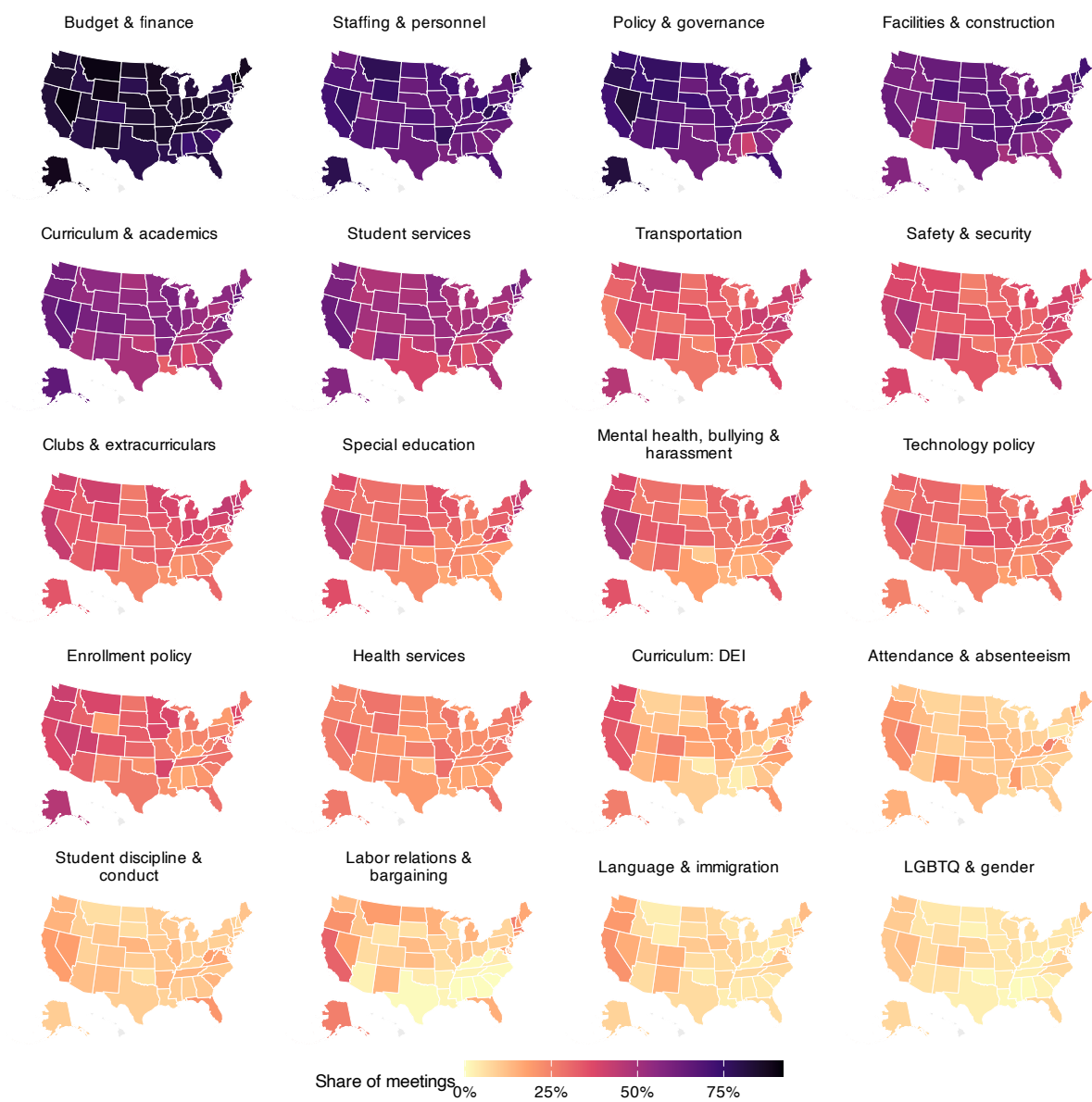


Figure A.3: Meeting topics in different states. For all topics. Unscaled version

A.2.2 Example quotes for each topic

Table A.2: Example quotations for each meeting topic.

Topic	Passage	District and date
Attendance & absenteeism	“Average daily attendance for this semester was 93.94%. I do want to know that this comes directly from our skyward data system so this is the data that we submit to the state is 93.94% for the semester. Looking at the total attendance by reason... there’s a little bit of a difference between those attendance numbers from the excused categories based on hand calculations. How we do that is we take the total number of unexcused absences or excused absences and we divide it by the number of school days per month”	Riverside-Brookfield Twp SD 208, IL 2018-06-12
Attendance & absenteeism	“Attendance and truancy matters. In this presentation, it’s a quick overview of what we hope to change with the policy and procedure. So first and foremost as we all know in Virginia mandates that every child attends school each and every day; therefore we must track that by law. So how do we do it is through excused and unexcused attendance. Primarily that’s usually what you’re gonna see we have a couple other codes but I mean is the kid here present and is it excused or unexcused”	King William County Public Schools, VA 2022-05-08
Attendance & absenteeism	“How do we have that campaign so that they are attending school that attendance is important and they should be in school. They should be learning so that we increase that student achievement”	Alisal Union, CA 2023-06-07
Budget & finance	“The big number and the graph that’s up there, the pie chart, is that 69%, so \$6.90 out of every \$10 went into classroom spending. I’ve got friends that are CFOs in different districts and if you’re in the – I don’t know if we’d call it the right size, the wrong size district – there are folks that struggle to stay above 50%.”	Humboldt Unified District (4469), AZ 2023-05-08
Budget & finance	“70% of the town’s annual budget is taken up by the school department. As stated by finance committee member Dan Sherman last year, the 2026 proposed budget request is a 5.94% increase over this year with grants and funds from revolving accounts. The operational budget will be approximately \$61 million.”	Wakefield, MA 2025-04-08
Budget & finance	“Since this is such a high dollar project, we’re going to have to use some lease purchase financing with a government capital. It’ll be a seven-year payoff on that.”	Muskogee, OK 2026-04-29
Clubs & extracurriculars	“Camp: Even though we’re probably not going to do a field show, the band marching band you know is mostly about the thing you do on the field”	City Schools of Decatur, GA 2020-08-11

Continued on next page

Topic	Passage	District and date
Clubs & extracurriculars	“MOU between the Boys and Girls Club and the District administration recommends the approval of this MOU regarding their before and after school program which is an operation at James Byrd and Nancy Grace Elementary School’s intermediate school and the middle school for their eight-week summer program and this is very similar to what’s the program in past summers”	Shippensburg Area SD, PA 2023-04-11
Clubs & extracurriculars	“This GSA has a chapter on campus of SDSU and advertising through the main SDSU website offered a family-friendly bring your K-12 students”	Brookings School District 05-1, SD 2023-08-14
Curriculum & academics	“Any materials purchased by the district pursuant to this section must be, number one, free of free of pornography and material prohibited under prohibited under section 847.012. Number two, suited to student needs and their ability to comprehend the material presented. And number three, appropriate for the grade level and age group which materials are used or made available.”	Hillsborough, FL 2023-03-28
Curriculum & academics	“There’s a 2-3 point decline in test scores because of learning loss over the holidays. Again, it is our students cannot relax, they cannot spend time, you know quality time with their families, and you know we have to put, I’m sorry, we have to put we have to put education over politics”	Moore County Schools, NC 2023-05-08
Curriculum & academics	“We really looked at our tier 1 instruction, we really looked at our tier 2, and tier 3 instruction and our leadership team. Our guiding coalition with the help and PD that our district leadership team has given us, we just decided we’re going to move this bus forward and we did. We went from an F to a C and we are going to just keep on moving.”	Springdale School District, AR 2025-10-08
Curriculum: DEI	“I don’t believe rated on movies can be shown in school so why are these books allowed? I am requesting EPS be fully transparent with parents regarding items that are given to our children that have sexual content and foul language. I also request that you update the book selection for 6th through 12th grade”	Edmond, OK 2022-02-08
Curriculum: DEI	“We are trying to attract minority educators I assume? I think we’re always trying to attract a more diverse workforce and and educators, particularly in the classroom for our students those teachers and support staff that are in front of our students on a day-to-day basis we’d like them to be more diverse”	Plymouth, MA 2022-03-07
Curriculum: DEI	“I would recommend once the strategic plan is approved that there have that you all do like a policy audit. And typically when you do a policy audit what will happen is someone will come in they can go through your policies to determine what policies are contributing to maybe some of the disparities that you might see because sometimes things are in place you just don’t realize it’s actually having a negative impact. On your students or even your staff.”	School City of East Chicago, IN 2025-06-10

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Topic	Passage	District and date
Enrollment policy	“Up in terms of enrollment – at this point, it appears that our enrollment numbers are approximately 17 more over projection for our 13 grades the preschool enrollment is at 5. Three of those students with special needs and 22 typical learners.”	Wilton School District, CT 2012-09-13
Enrollment policy	“There is a long-term problem that our district faces that can be mitigated by small class sizes and that is shrinking enrollment. We have had for many years a 2% reduction in student population year to year in our district. After COVID, it looks like it will get worse. We have to make our district as attractive as possible to families who move into the new housing being built. All of that housing is being built on the east side of South San Francisco and families will be looking at our east side schools”	South San Francisco Unified, CA 2021-04-29
Enrollment policy	“We have a hundred kids typically. You know, even in our smallest classrooms, our k2 classrooms, we have a 20 to one teacher student teacher ratio. So those hundred out-of-district kids basically fund 11 teachers. So you know if we were to say we don’t we want to get rid of those kids we would have to find a different way to fund those teachers”	Lockwood K-12, MT 2022-09-08
Facilities & construction	“The board designated Cherokee Elementary School as the next construction project and hired an architect to lead that effort. The board voted to rebuild Navajo Elementary School, which by the way is another point of pride after Navajo suffered suffered that tragic fire on August 22nd”	Scottsdale Unified District (4240), AZ 2019-01-15
Facilities & construction	“As you can see in the diagram on the bottom right, they’re comprised of many layers and the waterproofing membrane is very important important because it helps add waterproofing. It is pretty self-explanatory and it reduces the flow of storm water by 65% and it delays it by 3 hours which I think would be really beneficial for the high school because I know sometimes when we have a lot of rain like namely the k-pod bridge sometimes will have towels on the edge and there’s some leaking in B pod as well so I think anything that could help”	North Penn SD, PA 2024-05-06
Facilities & construction	“We are very close to getting our new playground. Construction is sealed to begin this this summer. We are so grateful to the town of Stern for helping make this happen. Student council played a very big part by giving input on what our new playground should include as well as picking our six colors.”	Stoughton, MA 2025-05-20

Continued on next page

Topic	Passage	District and date
Health services	“On September 7th, I came to you and we talked about the increasing number of cases on our campuses and as our district as a whole we were seeing a spike in our cases. And at that time I came with a recommendation that we implement an opt-out mask mandate. Of course, at that time, I also explained to you all about different litigation things going on court cases, attorney general opinion, and all of that, and expressed that we would come back and readdress it if needed. So at this time our cases have come down dramatically, we’re now at 0.6% overall, which is a huge decline”	Red Oak ISD, TX 2021-09-27
Health services	“Note all EPS students will be giving a free COVID-19 rapid antigen test to take home over the holiday break”	Erie City SD, PA 2023-12-13
Health services	“We’re looking at a couple of different options for that. One is looking at a process within the act in health insurance trust to modify plan design in order to bring costs down for both the district and employees, but the other option that we’re looking at would have to you know really be thoughtful about whether or not the health insurance trust continues to be the right mechanism”	Acton-Boxborough, MA 2024-01-04
LGBTQ & gender	“Concerns about bathroom access and having gender-neutral bathrooms only accessible in certain locations makes going to bathroom embarrassing. And fear for safety was a concern that they brought up a lot. I thought it was very brave of them to kind of share with me”	Kent School District, WA 2021-10-13
LGBTQ & gender	“And what depresses me is to realize they will lose and their in their innocence if they attend a public school they will be asked to whether they want to be a boy or a girl. That’s what I’ve heard a boy or a girl or a cat in some instances and I don’t really particularly like that. I think they should keep their innocence at this point. They don’t care what they are what anybody else is and what the race is or gender”	Osseo Public School District, MN 2022-08-30
LGBTQ & gender	“Policy 5517 anti-harassment has been revised to bring our policy in line with the new US Department of Education guidelines eliminating the phrase gender status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.”	Penn-Harris-Madison School Corp, IN 2025-10-06
Labor relations & bargaining	“The extension of the contract with CWA, which I’m the vice president of and I appreciate that because contract’s not going to cost you anything but you still will get your good substitutes”	Rialto Unified, CA 2013-12-11
Labor relations & bargaining	“And you obviously do how it works with the union, the union is with the employees. What’s your obligation as to what you have to do? But across the rest of the country, we’re all accepting a little bit more of the cost of our benefits and you know the Beekmantown School District, certainly my neighbors, a lot of them are fixed incomes, they’re retirees, and I’m about there myself”	Beekmantown Central School District, NY 2019-05-14

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Topic	Passage	District and date
Labor relations & bargaining	“I move the Board of Education approve the agreement between the East Lansing Board of Education and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, covering the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 as presented. Second?”	East Lansing School District, MI 2024-05-13
Language & immigration	“Thank you very much. So the STAMP test stands for the standards-based measurement of proficiency language test. It’s a test that’s an online assessment and it measures reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in a variety of different languages. And so students who speak another language maybe either at home or have learned another language or maybe English as a second language for them, can take the STAMP test”	Huron Valley Schools, MI 2022-05-16
Language & immigration	“Good evening Chairman Lawson, Superintendent Dr Williamson, board members, and guests. I am very pleased and honored this evening to stand before you for the second year to receive my migrant education award. When I arrived here in 2018, that was a concerning area for us was migrant education. The students are available, they’re out there, but there requires a lot of perseverance and dedication to find those students”	Public Schools of Robeson County, NC 2024-04-11
Language & immigration	“All of our EL assistants are 35-hour-a-week fully benefited positions. Right now there’s 6.125 FTE that are currently vacant about 11% of those positions.”	Washoe County, NV 2025-05-27
Mental health, bullying & harassment	“Counseling Center provided invaluable insights into innovative approaches for supporting our students’ mental health. Experts from Imagine, a center for coping with loss guided us through strategies for assisting children in navigating loss. These sessions reinforced our commitment to nurturing both the intellectual and emotional well-being of our students”	Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District, NJ 2024-09-18
Mental health, bullying & harassment	“That’s when we landed on addressing bullying and physical aggression in schools. We’ve learned that physical bullying often occurs in busy environments where it is difficult to detect every interaction. Security cameras record these moments, but they are rarely monitored live, meaning many incidents are only understood after the harm has occurred.”	Spencer-Owen Community Schools, IN 2026-02-12
Mental health, bullying & harassment	“CPI training, crisis prevention intervention, which is great. It will help our teachers better meet the needs of students in a respectful and collaborative way and to make sure that that we’re able to deescalate any type of, you know, behaviors, that may be presented in some form or fashion.”	Southfield Public School District, MI 2026-03-10
Policy & governance	“Board policy ordinarily limits the time to be devoted to public comment to 10 minutes overall with individual speakers ordinarily limited to three minutes if the board decides to expand the amount of time to be allocated to public comment because many speakers wish to address the board. The board may reduce the time allocated to individual speakers to two minutes or to one minute as appropriate in order to speak to permit more speakers to”	Sequoia Union High, CA 2021-08-18

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Topic	Passage	District and date
Policy & governance	"I am asking for your recommendation to waive the makeup of the instructional day for students on our February 21st excuse me February 23rd canceled school day we do keep this the teacher work day intact and they have the option of coming in and working their required contract day on either April 7th April 10th or June 5th they could also use a personal day if they choose that"	NRHEG School District, MN 2023-03-20
Policy & governance	"The reason was it was passed as a contract between County Commissioners and the school board now there's no there might be one member of the County Commission that's still present and would remember of this particular thing here no one on this board was here. It was before my time"	Sullivan County, TN 2024-06-19
Safety & security	"We do a good job of policing to make sure that our campuses are empty, so I told them a day, by the 15th, nobody should be there unless it's as needed the administrators only and they would have to give permission if they went on campus. I mean some employees will have to be there for essential reasons but I mean after the 15th they won't be there"	Chilton County, AL 2020-03-31
Safety & security	"We used a \$450,000 safety grant that we had an opportunity. We used that for smartboards because the smartboards we bought had technology where you could send out emergency messages to the whole district over the board. So, that made it eligible for a safety grant."	Douglas County School District No. RE 1, CO 2026-07-16
Special education	"In special education if there's a one to one, and the student transfers out, then we give that PER who is dedicated to that student a notice, so it leaves that position open"	Oyster River Coop School District, NH 2014-01-15
Special education	"That relates primarily to the additional LPN cost for the IEP one-on-one requirements of \$60,000 and additional contracted services of approximately \$40,000"	Washington County Public Schools, MD 2014-02-18
Special education	"We still have some vacancies for special ed and we have have about 40 vacancies in elementary. But because we've placed all of our individuals who were on the priority placement list in elementary, we've now opened elementary for our open contracts so we had offered open contracts to individuals and they agreed that they wanted to work for MCPS"	Montgomery County Public Schools, MD 2024-06-27
Staffing & personnel	"When they they surveyed the staff here at New Prague School District, I believe we had 125 or 123 staff members fill out that survey was rather lengthy detailed survey but the needs from that survey matched everything that we've talked about in those four meetings so it wasn't anything new or anything different. It was all in alignment"	New Prague Area Schools, MN 2014-10-27
Staffing & personnel	"We've received the resignation mentioned last meeting."	Cedar Falls Comm School District, IA 2016-06-13
Staffing & personnel	"Did work with a company called Kickup. So that we could now have our teacher evaluations be done online. And so up until this point, our evaluations were done by paper. You know, a teacher's evaluation that file could be anywhere from 10 pages to 30 or 40 pages depending on how much info they want to provide us."	Proviso Twp HSD 209, IL 2025-10-28

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Topic	Passage	District and date
Student discipline & conduct	“Situations of student disciplinary actions within the classroom setting. And you know, I realized that we needed to have teachers hit pause on that recording and that live stream and say ‘hey we’re going to handle a classroom situation here, we’ll be right back with you’ because we did not want those disciplinary issues recorded”	Lewis-Palmer Consolidated School District No. 38 in the co, CO 2020-09-21
Student discipline & conduct	“The traditional classroom proposal that we are sharing with you today is about again students who are suspended out of school, but we want to keep engaged in their learning in the district. What we are proposing is providing a structured short-term setting for students within the district. They would receive academic instruction aligned to their Coatesville Area School District curriculum, but also restorative coaching, helping students to reintegrate back into the district with a set of skills so that they don’t repeat those same behaviors.”	Coatesville Area SD, PA 2026-02-10
Student discipline & conduct	“First violation is a warning second is one day of in-school suspension. Third is one day of out-of-school suspension. Fourth is two days of out-of-school suspension. And then fifth just like on third third suspensions it’s a recommendation for expulsion”	Lafourche Parish, LA 2026-07-01
Student services	“We use the term referral to talk about different types of requests for assistance. And so there are disciplinary referrals, there are referrals to go to guidance counselors, there are referrals that go to district and social workers”	Sarasota, FL 2017-11-28
Student services	“I think I know a way that we might be able to make that right by having an after-school tutoring set up, Wednesdays, and Thursdays for 40 minutes then over a year period where they can get the total of 70 hours that they’re required to read”	Kansas City 33, MO 2018-08-22
Student services	“The 16.7-mill property tax on yesterday’s ballot was renewed by voters. The nearly 37 million dollars provides additional instructional support, addresses essential staffing needs, and assists with school safe day-to-day operations”	Lafayette Parish, LA 2022-11-09
Technology policy	“Which was technology. We were able to purchase technology and that’s gonna help and aid us in providing an online education for students, but we still have the constraint of internet access that we’re still trying to figure out an option for, which may not be perfect across the whole entire district. We have some areas of our county that have known no internet access whatsoever, no cell service access”	Gallup, NM 2020-07-06
Technology policy	“Thank you to the technology department, Mr. Trent for all their work, and getting those devices up and ready to go. So that’s a step in the right direction also finalizing our outdoor Wi-Fi connections at each school”	Elizabethton, TN 2020-09-15
Technology policy	“Cybersecurity is just the practice of protecting our systems, our networks, our programs from attacks”	RSU 04, ME 2023-01-25

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Topic	Passage	District and date
Transportation	“Transportation is a huge concern. We have students who are in the fine arts program at East High School. And as I’ve talked to you before, East High School has been a wonderful has provided a wonderful relationship for us and our families and our students. And we have some families that are in the fine arts program and they’re concerned about that. The transportation”	Green Bay Area Public School District, WI 2017-01-16
Transportation	“With transportation, the reimbursements are set on our payments, so if our payments do go down for transportation, it will equate to less subsidy for next year”	Yough SD, PA 2020-04-07
Transportation	“The transportation circuit breaker – that’s a substantial hit for districts that they’ll face from 75% to 44%. So that’s the projection for this year or was that the allocation last year for coming up so there’s advocacy to restore that back to 75%. That is impacting that will impact a lot of districts because transportation as we know is necessary and it’s a cost that keeps spiraling”	Danvers, MA 2024-11-04

A.2.3 California case study: methodological details

We focused on the 2019-2020 school year through the 2024-2025 school year, which corresponds to (1) the years of significantly improved database coverage of district meetings and (2) the most recently available district-level demographic data for California students. In the meetings database, this filter took the database from 22,024 meetings across 210 unique California districts to 15,851 unique meetings across 205 unique California districts. Of these, 98.5% or 202 of the districts had valid English Language Learner (ELL) data from the California Department of Education (CDE), comprising our analytic sample.

A district’s ELL composition is derived from CDE data on English Learners by school available at the following site: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/Ds/ad/fileselsch.asp>, aggregated to the district level and CDE data on enrollment serving as the denominator. The ELL shares of districts in the *DistrictView* data and those not found in the data were nearly identical, with districts in the database having an average of 16.7% students classified as ELL in the 2019-2020 school year and districts not in the database having an average of 16.4% of students classified as ELL. This decreases concerns about selection into the database along this particular dimension of interest.