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The Parents' Rights Movement's Effect on School Board Functioning

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Executive Summary

School board meetings across the country have become battlegrounds for political debate. Once civil, these forums have devolved into chaotic scenes fueled by truculent speeches against race-conscious policies, protecting LGBTQ+ students, and updates to history curricula.[1] These are often made by parents, acting as foot soldiers for the "Parents' Rights Movement," who package their activism as a campaign for increased transparency.[2] Their efforts have derailed hundreds of meetings by escalating tensions, all the while eclipsing good faith community stakeholders who want to address impediments to student achievement and school success.

The rise of "parents' rights" activism has come at a time when the American education system is plagued by numerous crises. Average test scores for reading and math are the lowest they have been in decades;[3] a rise in education spending has yet to translate into better student outcomes, as the U.S. ranks among the worst developed nations for student performance-per-dollar spent;[4] in the last recorded school year, more than 2.7 million students received an out-of-school suspension at least once, while over 100,000 students were expelled;[5] schools, experiencing the residual effects of the pandemic, are seeing record high rates of absenteeism across all demographic groups—potentially related to the sharp rise in depression and anxiety diagnoses among children nationwide;[6] and, the looming teacher shortage has been exacerbated by a shrinking pool of substitutes, nurses, and school social workers.[7]

While districts desperately try to navigate the issues above, "parents' rights" groups have made identity (i.e. race, gender, and sexual orientation) the focal point of their crusade.[8] Their rhetoric against race-conscious and transgender-*affirming* content in schools notably omits students who are *targeted* based on their race, gender, and sexual orientation on school campuses. For example, only 15% of the public school population is African-American, yet these students account for 36% of expulsions and 31% of school-related arrests—rendering them three times as likely to be suspended or expelled than their white counterparts.[9] Women, too, face alarming rates of mistreatment in schools: the U.S. Department of

Education found that 40% of the 42,500 incidents involving harassment or bullying last school year were on the basis of sex.[10]

In my paper, I hypothesize that a movement to ban library materials and censor curricular content has forced school boards to spend valuable time on issues that align with "parents' rights" values, which I deem "political," and away from addressing the aforementioned crises, which I deem "constructive."[11] By measuring the number of constructive and political comments from board meetings in three districts with a large "parents' rights" activist presence—and comparing trends before and after the rise of such activism—this paper demonstrates how the Parents' Rights Movement has hindered school districts' ability to properly function.

Policy Question

Has activism from the Parents' Rights Movement increased unrest in school board meetings and pushed debate away from constructive education reform?

I. Issue Background

a. Rise of a Movement

Today's so-called "Parents' Rights Movement" describes a Conservative group of parents who take a narrow view of how schools should function. Their alarmist rhetoric about the American education system represents a small fraction of public school parents' sentiments, yet they exert an outsized influence over school board decision-making and district functioning. Policies that favor parents' rights activists often align with state laws entitled the "Parents' Bill of Rights," which have been exclusively passed through Republican-controlled legislatures. These bills aim to intimidate teachers into self-censorship and restrict students' freedom of expression.[12]

There is nothing new about parents working to improve schools or advocating on behalf of their children. For decades, nonpartisan coalitions of parents have pushed for healthier parent-teacher partnerships, leading to laws that guarantee fair and equitable treatment of all children.[13] Recent efforts by Conservative-backed "parents' rights" activists, however, seek an unreasonable expansion of the law that would place undue power in the hands of a small faction of parents. Bills in Florida and Georgia, for example, "make it easier for individual parents to challenge curricular materials," giving a vocal minority the power to change how students learn.[14]

Longstanding organizations such as the National Parents Union have stated that Conservative groups like Moms for Liberty are "making a mockery out of parents' rights and parent voice" with political stunts that "highligh[t] how deeply disconnected they are from American families."[15] Parents certainly deserve a voice in their children's education. But school board meetings have been hijacked by activists that force boards to debate over culture war issues—ignoring the myriad problems hindering student success and threatening the future of American education (see Appendix F for quotations from school board meetings analyzed in this paper).[16]

b. "Parents' Rights" Roots

"Parents' Rights" is not a new term. It has been used as a rallying cry for school reform movements across the 20th and 21st centuries.

During the Red Scare of the 1950s, parents used the term to garner support for greater monitoring of schools, in search of supposed communist activity.[17] Twenty years later, in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the U.S. Supreme Court decided in favor of parents advocating for expanded school choice—exempting Amish families from the state's mandatory schooling requirement.[18]

This history took a partisan turn in the 1990s when evangelical activists on the right began building an argument against sex education curricula.[19] This movement absorbed groups opposed to advancing LGBTQ+ citizens' rights, as well—particularly those opposed to the more open embrace of LGBTQ+ students and parents in the education system.[20] Activism translated into white (mostly Christian) flight from the public school system for parochial private schools in the early 2000s—many opted for homeschooling instead.[21]

Over the course of the next two decades, nonpartisan parent coalitions pushed for healthier parent-teacher partnerships to ensure that all students are treated fairly, regardless of race, gender, sex, religion, or class.[22] The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 was borne out of these efforts, guaranteeing fair treatment of all children and equitable rights for parents through the "Parents Right-to-Know" section, which ensured that all parents could: obtain information on their student's academic progress, history, and growth; evaluate the qualifications of their child's teacher; learn about changes to classroom personnel; receive updates on testing policies and procedures; learn how to opt their child out of an assessment; and, analyze the school or district's budget.[23]

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new campaign ascended to prominence, departing from this history. Labeled the "Parents' Rights Movement," adherents not only welcomed partisan politics, they were fueled by it, as policy demands clearly aligned with Republican talking points,

particularly around the issue of mask mandates.[24] In late 2020 and early 2021, incidents abounded at school board meetings as activists turned these open forums into political battlegrounds over COVID-19 safety measures.[25] Republican lawmakers recognized this movement's influence, capitalizing on the chaos by spreading false claim that certain curricular materials were signs of a "woke agenda" propagating in American schools.[26]

Republican candidate Glen Younkin ran the first notable campaign on parents' rights issues during Virginia's 2021 gubernatorial race.[27] In fact, Youngkin staked the election on his ability to harness parents' anger across the state—ultimately proving successful.[28] Before taking office, Governor Younkin issued his "Day One" plan, which centered school reforms that included banning "Critical Race Theory" and "antiracist" curriculum, fighting policies that protected transgender students, and increasing parents' ability to "inspect" curricular materials.[29]

The 2021 gubernatorial race in Virginia was a premonition of what was to come; Republicans' success only fueled more alarmist rhetoric about schools, which led the most ardently Conservative community members to attend board meetings—causing hundreds of incidents that year.[30] This feedback loop has recently spurred an influx of Conservative policy proposals regarding education.[31]

c. Institutionalizing Bad Policy

Recent legislation has given school boards the green light to implement broad bans of school materials**:** Texas HB 900 permits schools to eliminate any library materials deemed "sexually explicit" or "pervasively vulgar;"[32] Colorado U.S. House Representative Lauren Boebert introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would ban the purchase of "pornographic" and "radical gender ideology" books for schools that the Department of Defense oversees;[33] and in Missouri, SB 775 prohibits schools from providing "explicit sexual material" to students.[34]

On their face, these policies may sound sensible. But in practice, vague definitions of what can be "banned" open the door to discriminatory targeting of LGBTQ+ authors whose lifestyle does not align with Conservative values—creating a hostile environment for LGBTQ+ students.[35]

Other provisions from the Parents' Bill of Rights intentionally suppress classroom conversations about race, instead encouraging a whitewashing of American history. Florida's HB 1557—better known by the name critics gave it, the "Don't Say Gay" bill—has become a lodestar for legislators from other states who are seeking to chill classroom discourse, particularly regarding topics like race, racism, and societal victimization of marginalized communities.[36] North Carolina HB 187 punishes teachers who "promote" or "advocate" a myriad of concepts regarding race and identity.[37] Arizona HB 2439 opens school curriculum and textbooks to public review and approval. which, given the state's political climate, will undoubtedly invite demands for instructional censorship.[38] State legislators in Kentucky even went as far as to embolden far-right ideology with SB 1—requiring that teachers avoid "defining racial disparities solely on the legacy of [slavery]," since doing so would purportedly be "destructive to the unification of our nation."[39]

Not only do these policies harm students, they take the spotlight away from parents who have raised legitimate concerns over discriminatory school practices that disproportionately target their Black, Latinx, and Native children.[40]

d. ACLU Interest

Over the past two years, a handful of American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) affiliates have developed campaigns to combat the Parents' Rights Movement at the state and local levels. Historically, the ACLU has fought on behalf of those whose constitutional rights were in peril or actively being infringed upon, particularly when it comes to the first amendment and censorship.[41] But, since its work in enforcing school integration in the late 20th century, the organization has seldom taken up education-

related issues. Recent state education bills have brought the organization's focus back to schools and the right to free expression, as well as protecting teachers and students.

As a coalition of Conservative parents have organized in school communities and expanded their authority over district decision-making, opponents are seeking evidence-based talking points and solutions. The ACLU, in particular, wants to debunk claims made by parents' rights group that have fueled their rise in popularity, such as: the expansion of parent involvement into district decision-making increases school transparency and communication; curriculum censorship benefits students and their ability to be successful; and parents know best when it comes to curriculum and classroom decision—outweighing recommendations from career experts in state and local education agencies.[42]

These policies are illiberal in their effort to restrict school life based on Conservative values. But unconstitutionality has been hard to prove since school policies tend to be discriminatory in practice, rather than in writing. This paper provides evidence that the Parents' Rights Movement has harmful effects on schools, and can inform ACLU talking points for advocates against the Conservative crusade.

II. Literature Review

a. Media Interest

Coverage of school board meetings during and after the COVID-19 pandemic focused on rare, extraordinary incidents of fighting, arrests, and criminal charges.[43] Analysis has been limited to reports by nonprofits and media outlets, like PEN America, Propublica, EdWeek, The Associated Press, and numerous other news outlets.[44] Academic research on the impact of the Parents' Rights Movement on school board decision-making, though, is nonexistent.

And, while there is ample scholarship on the problems afflicting American schools, such as the growing teacher shortage, less attention has been paid to the decision-making process itself.[45] As activists from parents' rights groups gain attention in school board meetings, my analysis shows that time could be better spent. In Georgia, for example, Clay County District Schools led the state in book removals and objections, while student performance ranks in the bottom 50% of districts across the state and the district has been sued for failing to adequately serve English language learners.[46] District leaders and community members could benefit from seeing how school boards spend their time—hopefully leading them away from debates over fleeting, ideologically-driven issues and towards more urgent problems hindering student and teacher success.[47]

b. Scholarly Interest

While academic insight into the impact of the Parents' Rights Movement is limited, there is ample research on what contributes to healthier school communities. Studies of the education system from as recent as 2021 have shown that when students feel connected to school, they are more likely to succeed.[48] Healthy communication between parents and their child's school is a vital part of student success and leads to better student outcomes, especially for youth exhibiting behavioral problems.[49]

In the wake of a pandemic, this has become especially true; millions of young Americans feel isolated, making classrooms and teachers an essential source of emotional support.[50] School board meetings addressed these issues more often before the Parents' Rights Movement, such as in Cobb County during the April meeting, where a board member mentioned that "there's been a lot of discussion around mental health issues, as it relates to school safety and the important role that school counselors play in that regard. But nothing was done this year to address any of that. We have not addressed anything as far as numbers of any employees." The lack of distractions from parents' rights groups makes it easier for administrators to address staff shortages and the mental health crisis (Appendix A shows Cobb County's decline in constructive debate and increase in political discussion across the two time periods).

Policies and laws emanating from the Parents' Rights Movement work to chill classroom discourse and stoke fear in the minds of teachers who embrace student diversity—undermining healthy student-teacher relationships. This can cause rifts between students and their teachers, which is correlated with more rule-breaking and perceived stress on the part of the former, according to researchers.[51]

The benefits of strong parent-teacher dynamics are more acute for younger children. A multitude of studies have shown that the first five years of a child's life are crucial in determining life outcomes, as up to 90% of their brain development occurs by the age of five.[52] While schools can aid or inhibit this development, researchers found that cooperation between parents and teachers has an even greater influence on students' academic and social skills in their first year of school.[53] Parents influenced by Conservative dogma around school reading materials, though, believe, as one parent in my sample put it, that curricular material is "aggressively sexualized with age-inappropriate material." Comments by the same parent later on demonstrated how this narrative creates rifts between parents and teachers, stating that lesson plans promoted "Democrat and Marxist partisan politics."

Teachers provide students with a framework to understand complex social dynamics that afflict them and their peers, equipping them with the tools to thrive upon graduation. But the opposition to diverse content has pitted parents against teachers, casting a chilling effect over classrooms and how

instructors engage with students. These are new phenomena that have not yet been studied by social scientists and may influence the research mentioned above. Findings from this paper (described in the *Discussion* section below) suggest that undermining inclusion and open discourse could be detrimental to the next generation.

c. **Relevant Agency Intervention**

In May of 2023, a resource from the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) was released, documenting recent investigations into school discrimination across eleven states.[54] The report uncovered rampant prejudice directed at students of color, through policies and by school staff. Some examples included:

1. Disproportionate discipline rates for Black, Latinx, and Native American students, with larger disparities among disabled students within these groups.
2. Insufficient services for vulnerable population groups, such as low-performing students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners.
3. Inappropriate interventions for students experiencing mental health issues.
4. District policies that denied equal educational opportunities for Black students.
5. Neutrally written dress codes that, when enforced, solely targeted students of color.[55]

Demands from parents' rights activists do not protect the student groups above, likely because activists' children tend to be white and, thus, are less likely to be affected by racial discrimination. In fact, many of their demands actively *target* students of color and LGBTQ+ students—compounding the harm these students face.

The Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights has already taken action against districts encouraging homophobia and transphobia. In a lawsuit against Forsyth County Schools (Georgia), OCR

lawyers found that the district had responded to parents' complaints about "sexually explicit content" with a book-banning campaign that primarily targeted LGBTQ+ authors and library content about the queer community.[56] A council set up by OCR concluded that the district's actions were "detrimental to students" and may eventually "lead to increased bullying."[57]

Still, the prevalence of parents' rights activism nationwide suggests that the Department of Education has not done enough to remedy the problem. Forsyth County Schools experienced incidents like those found in the 90 districts ProPublica identified as "flashpoints for anger" in 2021, including the districts in this paper's sample.[58] Thus, it is likely that more school boards have adopted policies that are discriminatory in practice and urgently need to be addressed.

III. Methods

a. Creating a Sample

After conducting the literature review above, it seemed that a district-level case study was the best way to answer my policy question. A case study is an analysis that is structured around a guiding question and focused on certain aspects of historical "cases" that constitute the study's sample.[59]

I wanted my sample to consist of districts, not states, to increase my precision when analyzing trends. First, I narrowed my search to states that had passed a Parents' Bill of Rights. These bills were chosen because they indicated that the state was experiencing "parents' rights" activism before passage, media coverage on the bills sparked unrest in districts, and after passage, when speakers at school board meetings were concerned with bill implementation. To minimize the role of the COVID-19 pandemic—which made education data collection inconsistent—I chose to study the 2022-2023 school year (SY). States, therefore, had to have passed a Parents' Bill of Rights before or during the '22-'23 SY.

Three states fit this criteria: Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas. Georgia passed House Bill (HB) 1084 in April of 2022—the earliest among other states in my sample.[60] This bill effectively "ma[de] it easier for individual parents to challenge curricular materials."[61] North Carolina HB 187, entitled the *Equality in Education* bill, was passed during the school year in March of 2023 and discouraged conversation about topics like racism and sexism in the classroom.[62] Texas HB 900 was passed in June of 2023, making it last in the sample.[63] This bill permitted schools to eliminate any library materials deemed "sexually explicit" or "pervasively vulgar."[64]

The sample, therefore, includes one state where a bill was passed before the '22-'23 school year, Georgia; one where a bill was enacted during the school year, North Carolina; and, one where a bill passed after the school year, Texas. Georgia and North Carolina, where the effects of their bill's passage can be seen and studied, may make more sense as parts of my sample. But, Texas gave me the opportunity to see if media coverage of legislative debate prior to bill passage also spilled over into

school board meetings—since Governor Greg Abbott announced his intentions to pass the Parents' Bill of Rights in January of 2022, a year before it was adopted, to great fan fair.[65]

Once the states were selected, I began searching for the most "affected" districts by looking for news on school board policies that emanated from recent legislation. Naturally, chaos, anger, and brazen language elicited media attention, so I looked for districts that came up most often in the news coverage. By choosing places where the Parents' Rights Movement had a larger effect, I hoped to magnify my results (units of measurement are listed in the next section).

Three districts stood out in their respective states: in Georgia, Cobb County Schools banned classroom discussion around gender or sexuality, going as far as to fire a fifth-grade gifted students teacher who read from a book describing gender roles and identity;[66] in North Carolina, Johnston County Public Schools reserved the right to fire a teacher if they "undermine[d] the U.S. Constitution in lessons or sa[id] that racism is a permanent part of American life;"[67] and, in Texas, Keller Independent School District became notorious for their prolific banned book list, as well as for threatening termination for teachers who hung LGBTQ+ flags in their classrooms.[68]

Analysis of this sample was taken a step further to incorporate temporal changes. I hypothesized that comparing school board meetings in the pre- and post-Parents' Rights Movement eras would make school board meeting changes more apparent—showing how meetings that once debated over substantive school improvements were now settings for tumultuous debate over culture war issues.

Finding significant differences in the anger and chaos that fomented before the bill was adopted compared to after the bill's passage would signal that the bill itself was a factor in increasing unrest. To avoid impaired results from the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2018-2019 SY was chosen as a "pre" period to be compared to the "post" period, in the 2022-2023 SY.

b. Measurable Metrics

In service of my policy question, I chose two metrics to gauge changes to school board meetings:

1. Frequency of comments on political issues, like book bans, curriculum oversight, or LGBTQ+ students' rights, versus frequency of comments on traditional, constructive education issues, like school budgets, academic performance, and hiring.
2. Overall time spent in meetings.

To track changes in these metrics, I compiled recordings of all school board meetings in my sample that took place during the "pre" and "post" periods.

c. Compiling and Transcribing Recordings

Today, most states have open meetings laws that require public access to forums like school board meetings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, additional requirements in some states mandated that all meetings had to post recordings online.[69] This made school board meetings an accessible tool for a researcher hundreds of miles away.

In my search for the sample set of districts, I found that some school board videos had audio that too faint to definitively transcribe. So, districts were additionally screened for their technological capabilities. Each of the districts in my sample passed the "adequate audio" test, as well as having posted recordings on a public Youtube channel.

While districts met at different frequencies, every district met at least once a month in the '22-'23 SY. (This was not true in the '18-'19 SY, and is discussed in the *Limitations* section.) In some months, multiple meetings were held, including meetings titled "work session" and "Parent Suicide Awareness Night." Videos were only downloaded if there were board members present and public statements made by the community or staff. Videos for "award night" and similar types of meetings were excluded.

Videos were downloaded using two separate tools: Youtube to MP4 software for regular videos and Youtube to TS software for "live" recordings. The latter process only applied to Cobb County's videos, which required an additional step of converting TS files into MP4 files because the qualitative data analysis software, *Atlas.ti,* could only handle the MP4 filetype.

Once downloaded, I used *Otter.ai* to transcribe meeting audio into text files in an SRT format, which connects the text to timestamps in the video, à la subtitles.[70] A video conversion limit was met before Johnston County videos could be transcribed, so an identical program, *Cockatoo.com*, was used to transcribe these recordings.[71] (These software are discussed further in the *Limitations* section.)

Finally, videos and their matching SRT files were brought into qualitative data analysis software, *Atlas.ti*, and placed into folders delineated by district, and by "pre" or "post" periods.[72] After uploading the files, I double-checked videos in each folder to ensure that the audio could be heard, the SRT file scrolled alongside the video, and that each month of the school year was represented.

d. Coding

As noted above in the *Measurable Metrics* section, one of my measurements is changes in frequency of political versus constructive comments.

Constructive words, terms, and phrases are defined—in coordination with the ACLU—as those that are associated with establishing healthier parent-teacher partnerships, addressing the numerous crises afflicting the American education system (i.e. mental health, teachers' needs, etc.), removing impediments to student success, or spending money on the school (see Appendix C, part one, for a full list). Political words, terms, and phrases are defined as those repeatedly used by parents' rights groups, Republican legislators affiliated with the Parents' Rights Movement, and those flagged by authors in the literature review as related to "culture war" issues (see Appendix B, part one, for a full list).

"Coding" in the qualitative data software, *Atlas.ti,* simply means to stamp or highlight a word in the transcript. Choosing which terms were coded and to which word group they belonged was a subjective process susceptible to bias. However, the extensive literature review and research prior to the analysis process supports my rationale behind each word and phrase chosen (discussed further in the *Limitations* and *The "Guns" Word Group* sections below).

To differentiate between terms used in the '18-'19 SY and those used in the '22-'23 SY, transcripts were split up by time period. Then, words and phrases were categorized into sub-folders called "word groups" in *Atlas.ti*, such as "Religion" or "Gender Issues," to better organize the large corpus of words (a full list can be found in Appendices B and C). When a word was "coded" in the transcript, it was added to the overall tally of occurrences for that word. So, word groups were simply a way to measure the total tallies of all codes in that group.

Because of the numerous issues tied to the Parents' Rights Movement, I broke down political topics into gender issues, meeting disruptions (i.e. profanity or epithet), political issues, race and racism, religion, and complaints about school materials. Constructive comments were broken into substantive issues and guns (discussed further in the next section). Categorizing codes by issue area allowed me to analyze changes in the discussion of whole topics, like race, rather than single words or phrases, like "Critical Race Theory" or "diversity."

After categorizing the codes, I went through each folder and began to do a "text search" of every transcription in my project. Importantly, *Atlas.ti* allows users to "include inflected forms" which means that, for example, a search for the word "run" will also extract the paragraphs that contain "running", "runs" and "ran".[73] In other words, no version of my code words would be overlooked in the transcript. (Code searches were not sensitive to letter case).

When *Atlas.ti* conducts a search, it extracts the paragraph that the searched word sits within. This allows the user to discern context before choosing to code. For example, in my search for comments regarding religion, I read many excerpts that mentioned a student named "Christian" rather than the Christian faith. These instances were not applicable to the Parents' Rights Movement or constructive education policies, so they were not coded. (The threats that this method poses to the study's validity are addressed in the *Limitations* section.)

e. The "Guns" Word Group

As I began the coding process, I noticed that words related to mass shootings and gun violence were prevalent in both time periods. Choosing which words would be searched and how to categorize them was surely a subjective process (see *Limitations* section for a longer discussion). But I was conflicted on how to categorize words affiliated with guns and law enforcement (see Appendix C, part one for a full list of chosen words and phrases).

Addressing gun violence felt like a worthy cause for each district since surveys from the current school year revealed that students were most concerned with gun violence, when compared to all other education-related issues.[74] However, grouping words affiliated with this topic into the "Constructive" word group felt inaccurate given the evidence I had gathered at the ACLU, which showed that current solutions to school-related gun violence, such as increasing the presence of armed law enforcement on campuses nationwide, do not in fact stop school shootings (discussed further in the *What the data indicate* section below).[75] Thus, I grouped words related to police and gun violence into a separate category than "Political" and "Constructive" words and phrases.

f. Graphing

Data extrapolated from *Atlas.ti* on code groups was brought into *R* to create bar graphs, scatterplots, and other charts. The ggplot and tidyverse packages helped create graphs in the next section and the *Appendices* section. Data on the time spent in meetings were recorded in *Excel* and brought into *R*, as well, to create the charts shown below.

IV. Analysis

a. Hypothesis

The idea for this project began three years ago as I watched the Parents' Rights Movement take shape while teaching in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Classes at Duke University years later would show me how this movement has destabilized the education system, allowing non-expert community members to overturn curricular and content decisions made by state education agencies.[76]

My concern deepened as an intern at the ACLU-Pennsylvania. There, I researched endemic education issues that were not being addressed, such as the recent surge in exclusionary discipline that has disproportionately affected Black and disabled students—leading to a cumulative loss of 11 million school days per year and a 31% increase in school-related arrests.[77]

In my research, I found that, contrary to what was covered most often in the news, many district stakeholders were raising alarms about these problems. But, their school boards had yet to address them.[78] This led to the Department of Education's report on civil rights concerns that was detailed in previous sections. As these problems persisted, parents' rights activists were aggressively advocating for the censorship of library books deemed "sexually explicit," "pervasively vulgar," or "pornographic" in nature, community curriculum inspections, and restrictions LGBTQ+ students' rights.[79]

With this backdrop, I hypothesized that the Parents' Rights Movement was a threat to school district operations by derailing school board minutes that could be spent improving schools.

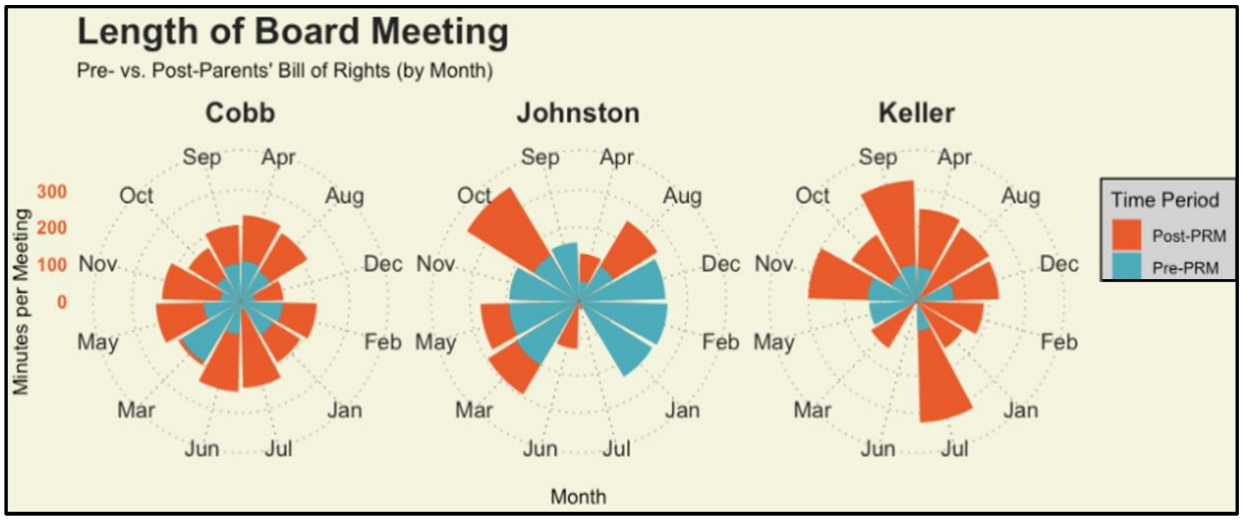
b. Time Spent

The easiest metric to track was time spent per meeting. I tracked meeting times by entering the total video length listed on Youtube into an *Excel* sheet. "Will Begin Shortly" and "Will Return Shortly" notices at the start of some videos offered a potential limitation that could skew meeting lengths. However, video directly after these warnings indicated that board members were in the room and already

discussing topics on their agenda among themselves, so the total video length ultimately included these notices.

Across all districts, meetings in the ‘22-’23 SY were an average of exactly two times longer than those in the ‘18-’19 SY, or an average of 108.4 additional minutes per meeting. This result matched my hypothesis, though I expected a greater magnitude of difference.

Broken down by district, these changes amounted to a 118-minute or 2.34 times difference in Cobb County, a 93.6-minute or 1.57 times difference in Johnston County, and a 113.5-minute or 2.10 times difference in Keller Independent School District (see Appendix E for results broken down by district). One limitation in counting these times was the absence of recorded meetings in some of the months during the ’18-’19 SY for Johnston County and Keller ISD (discussed in the *Limitations* section). Changes in time spent across all school board meetings are shown below, broken down by month:

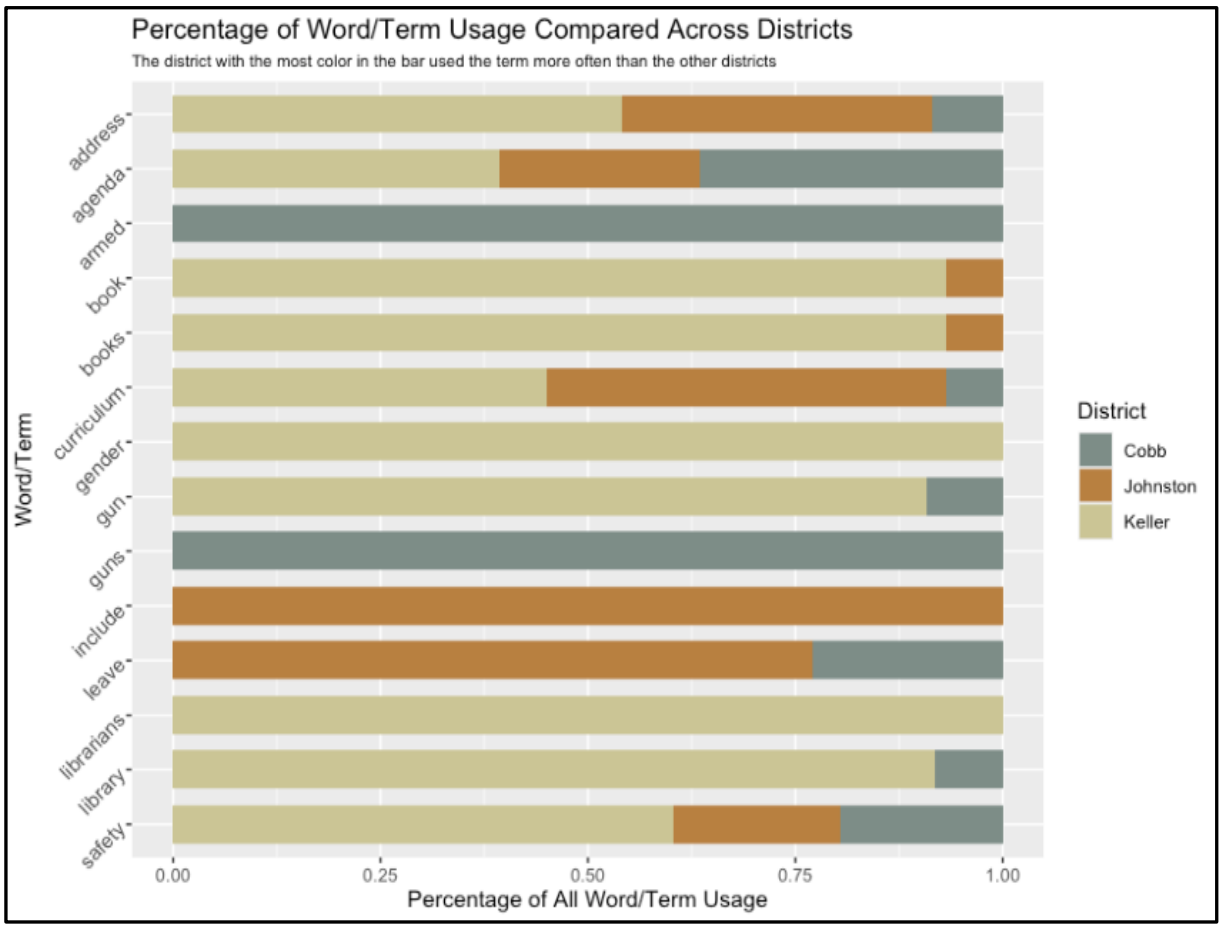


Charts are separated by district in *Appendix E* to magnify the trends in each county.

c. Coding Results: Political Phrases

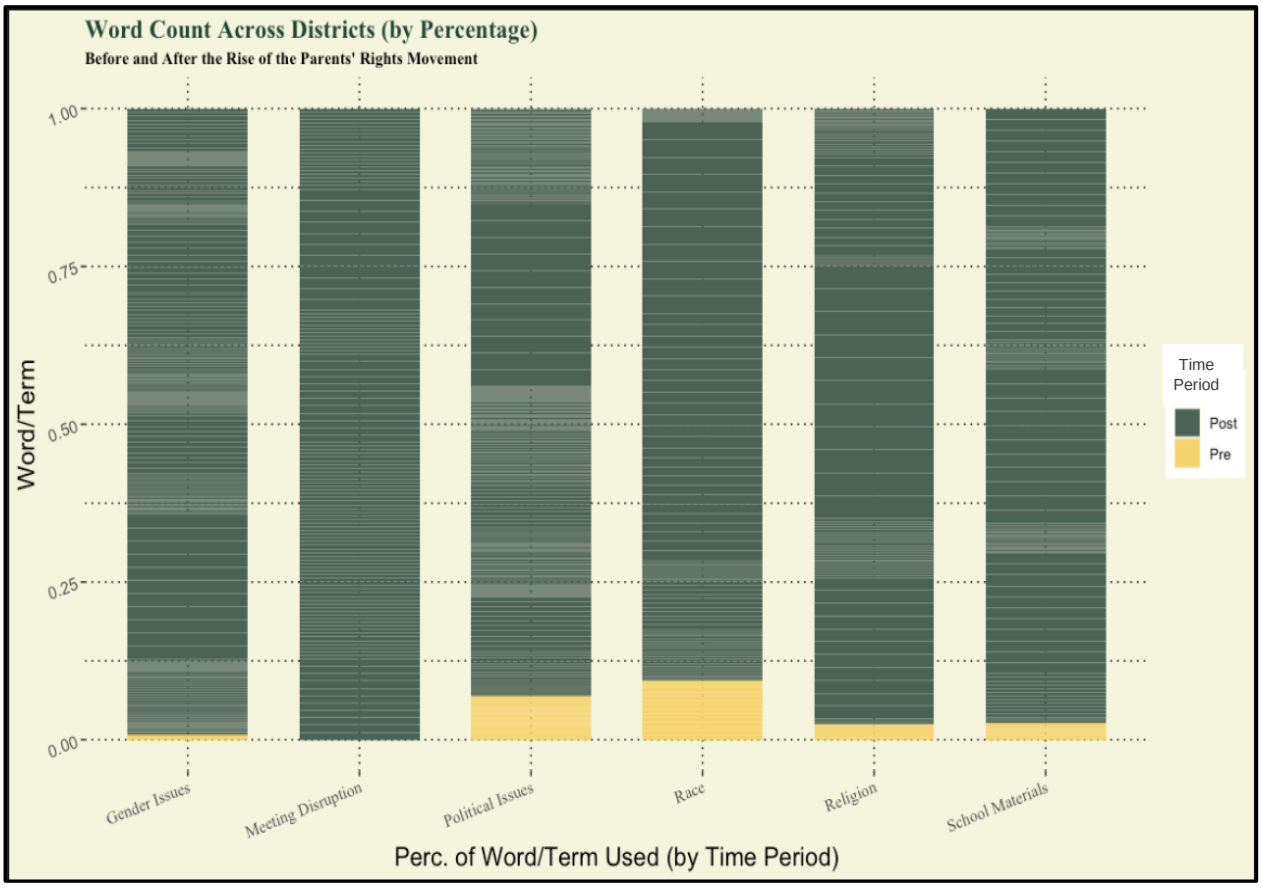
Changes in the frequency of terms used across the two time periods were heavily skewed by Keller Independent School District in the ’22-’23 SY. Out of 110 codes searched, there were a total of 1190 political words and phrases used across all districts, when accounting for both time periods (see

Appendices B and C for a full list). Exactly 81% of these occurred in the Texas school district. Still, changes in the frequency of political rhetoric before and after the rise of the Parents' Rights Movement were noticeable in each of the districts. This can be seen in the graph below, showing the percentage of term usage among a random word cluster where the green, indicating Keller ISD, dominates the graph:



In Cobb County, usage of politically charged words and phrases went from 21 instances in the '18-'19 SY to 73 times in the '22-'23 SY. Johnston County saw a jump from 11 instances in the pre-period to 115 times in the post-period. The greatest jump was seen in Keller ISD, where political words or phrases were only used 7 times during school board meetings in '18-'19 SY, but 963 times in the '22-'23 SY. The most regularly used words and phrases were "gender," which was used 97 times, "political,"

used 85 times, “book ban,” used 61 times, and “appropriate,” used 48 times. (These tallies include inflected versions of these terms.) Changes in political word usage by word group are shown below:

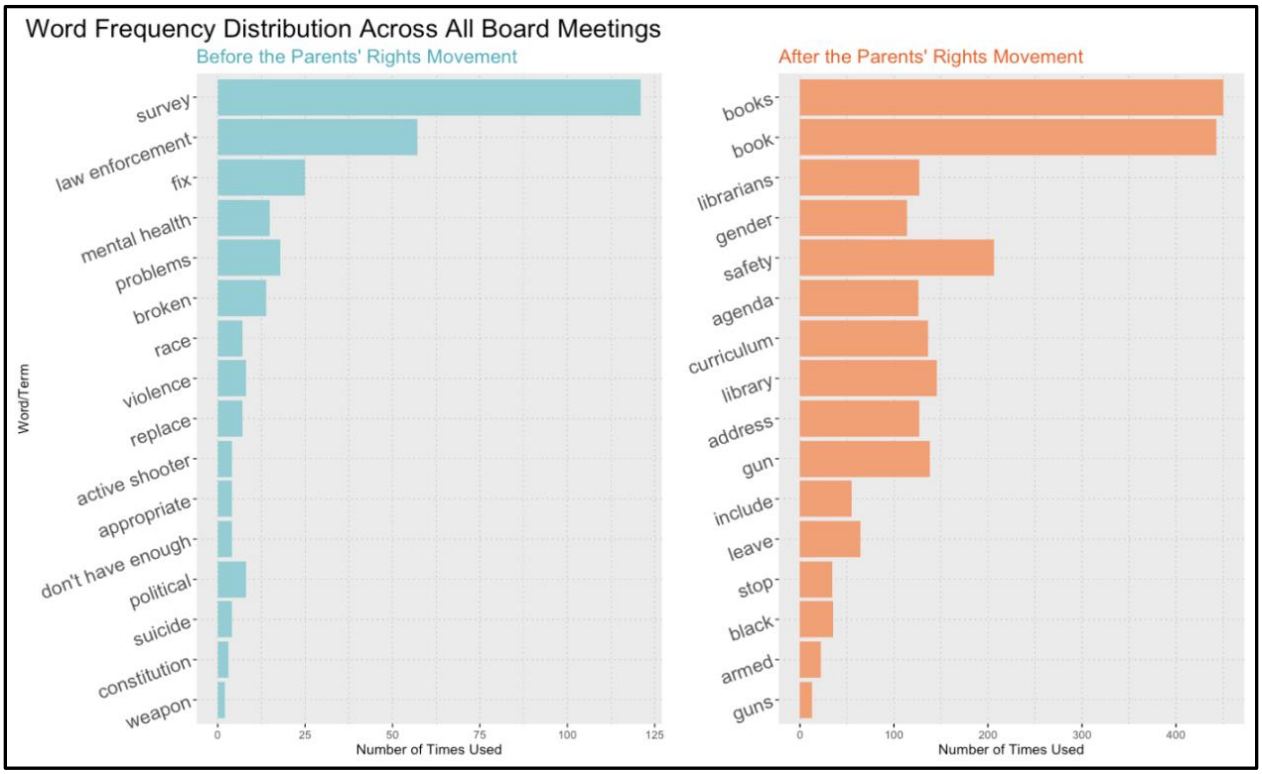


In *Appendix A*, this bar graph is broken down by district.

d. Coding Results: Constructive Comments

Differences in constructive language across the two time periods were once again skewed by Keller Independent School District in the ’22-’23 SY, while trends for the two other districts matched expectations in my hypothesis: a decline in constructive debate. Out of 19 constructive word codes searched (see Appendix C, part one, for a complete list), there were a total of 662 instances of usage across all districts, when accounting for both time periods (see Appendix C, part two, for graphs).

In Cobb County, there were 61 instances of speakers using constructive words and phrases in the ‘18-’19 SY compared to only 47 times in the ‘22-’23 SY. In the pre-period in Johnston County, there were 192 constructive comments in the pre period compared to 123 in the post period. Only in Keller Independent School District was there an increase in constructive comments. One of the leading words, used 54 times, was “mental health,” which may make more sense given the analysis of violence-related terms discussed in previous sections. Changes in the most commonly used terms are reflected in the graph below:



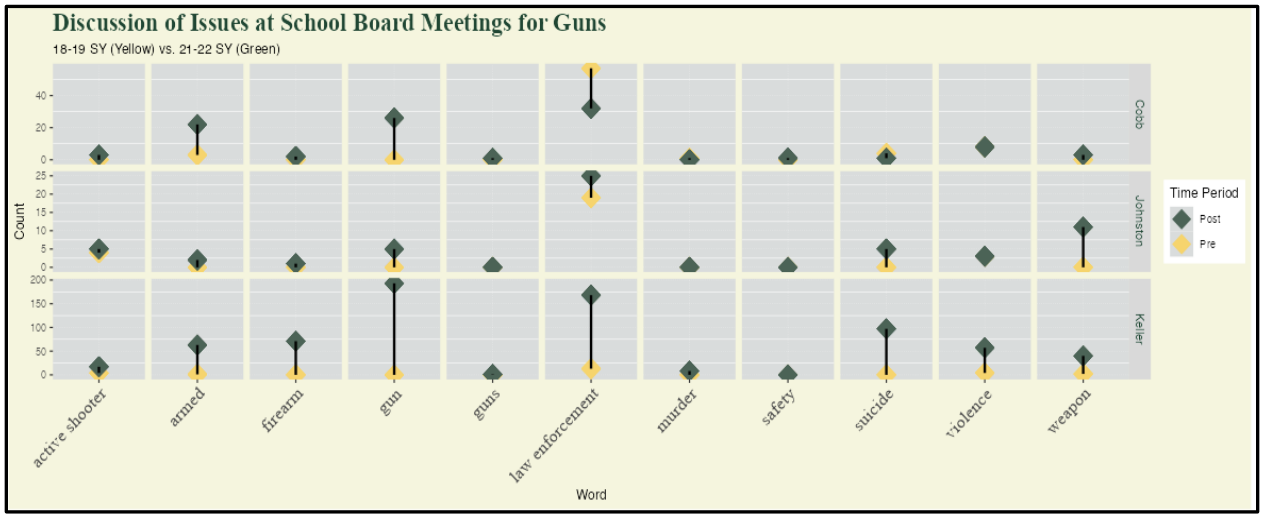
For Cobb County, it is important to note that overall constructive comments went down from the pre to the post period, despite the increase in time per meeting. This points to a connection between surges in political rhetoric and increases in board meeting length, as extra minutes spent in the meetings were spent debating culture war issues and not more substantive topics (examined in greater detail in the *Discussion* section).

e. Coding Results: Salient Topics

A separate trend concerning weapons and police was revealed in the data. At first, I grouped codes for "guns" and "law enforcement" into constructive rhetoric because tackling the rise in arrest rates and school violence, as discussed in the *Discussion* section. However, the conversation around weapons and safety seemed more nuanced and required separate examination.

In total, there were 11 code words and phrases grouped into the "Guns" category with 887 references made across all districts when accounting for both time periods. Once again, Keller Independent School District in 2022-2023 dominated the discussion, making up nearly 70% of the discussion around guns across all districts.

Interestingly, each district saw a rise in these discussions from the '18-'19 SY to the '22-'23 SY. "Law enforcement," or equivalent terms incorporated into the code, like "cop" and "police," led all other terms in frequency, as shown in the graph below:



All word groups are broken down using similar charts in part two of Appendices B and C.

As noted in the previous section, the rise in discussions around "mental health" across all districts may be tied to a similar rise in conversations about guns, safety, and other related topics. Student surveys examined in the next section point to an association between these two topics. In total, across both time

periods, the term “mental health” was used 111 times, and the word “suicide” or one of its inflected forms was used 107 times. In all three districts, these terms increased from the pre to post periods.

V. Discussion

a. Correlation, Not Causation

Before discussing the results, it is important to note that this project is a qualitative case study and does not purport to establish a causal relationship between the Parents' Rights Movement and school board functioning or policy decisions. Instead, the data was examined to see if correlations existed between the noted surge in political discussion and the two units of measurement: constructive debate about school improvement in school board meetings and time spent per meeting.

b. What the Data Indicate

The rise of activism tied to the Parents' Rights Movement is correlated with an astronomical rise in discourse over political issues in school board meetings, compared to a small rise in constructive discourse, which was to be expected as meetings got significantly longer.

In the '22-'23 SY, the three districts in my sample displayed a stark change in time spent during school board meetings. Absent other data, these changes could be viewed as a commitment to making schools better and mitigating district issues that arise. After all, the schools in my sample dealt with the myriad issues described as "crises" in the sections above. The data, however, tells a different story.

Instead of spending the requisite time grappling with serious issues like the "mishandling of IEPs" or "the lack of communication" about school programs—both of which came up in a Cobb County meeting in May of 2023—districts were mired in debate over politically divisive topics that proved to be futile.[80]

The frequency with which certain terms were used displays their ability to spark anger and chaos, rather than real change. "Gender" and "gender identity" were discussed more often than "mental health;" "race," "racism," and "critical race theory" were brought up more regularly than "don't have enough,"

"fix," "broken," "problems," "replace," "shortage," and all inflected versions of these terms. During the '18-'19 SY in Johnston County, no words or terms grouped into the race category were ever mentioned compared to 20 instances four years later.

This reveals one of many problems: race is only being discussed in relation to curricular and literary materials—not to address racially disparate rates of exclusionary discipline in districts like Johnston County, which saw a 14% surge in total suspensions.[81] District policies, in turn, have become preoccupied with chilling classroom discussion and not with removing impediments to student achievement and staff success. Johnston County Public Schools still reserves the right to fire a teacher if they "undermine the U.S. Constitution in lessons or say that racism is a permanent part of American life."[82] These kinds of policies undermine teacher welfare and contribute to a negative school environment.

The same problem is true of gender issues. "Gender" was mentioned 374 times across all districts in the '22- '23 SY in connection to hotbed issues like LGBTQ+ students' rights and trans-students' freedom of expression, compared to only 3 times in the pre period. Incidents of gender-based discrimination, however, are notably overlooked by school boards: the U.S. Department of Education reported 42,500 incidents involving harassment or bullying in the '20-'21 SY, 40% of which were on the basis of sex.[83] Rarely did this issue get mentioned in the meeting transcripts.

In Keller ISD—where gender went from not being discussed at all in the pre period to being discussed 327 times in the '22-'23 SY—one would hope that speakers were responding to reports about gender-based harassment. Instead, they were *fueling* such harassment by implementing a record number of book bans on material confirming LGBTQ+ students' sexual orientation and gender, as well as threatening teachers who hung LGBTQ+ flags in their classrooms with termination.[84] District policies went further and got more radical, though: once a book was banned, students could not request it for the next ten years.[85] Relatedly, discussion around religion and the Bible in Keller ISD went from just one occurrence in the pre period to 104 times four years later.

District transcripts also revealed sentiments from a less vocal majority of parents and stakeholders who could not attend every meeting.[86] These individuals raised alarms about large gashes in the schools while parents' rights activists worked to destabilize districts by a thousand cuts.

During the May 2023 school board meeting in Cobb County, one speaker described concerns over racism and discrimination; another expressed the need for additional mental health support for students and staff; and a parent went as far as accusing the district of purposefully stonewalling the public from "weighing in on the merits of a $50 million" building project (see Appendix F for all chosen quotations). Yet, while Cobb County saw the greatest leap in board meeting length—adding an average of 118 minutes to each gathering—the frequency of substantive debate decreased across the sample's four-year span. In the same period, the number of times "politics," "divisive," and other similar terms were used more than doubled.

In Keller ISD, issues related to students' sexuality were discussed only once in the pre period compared to 406 instances in the post period. But while ideologically-driven opposition to LGBTQ+ protections in schools was prevalent in the district, so, too, were speeches by LGBTQ+ advocates. In the January 2023 school board meeting, a student boldly rebutted previous speakers, stating that, "these recent book bans have represented an attack on the rights of people of color, and LGBTQ people." A mother from the district spoke next, echoing this students' concerns and calling the districts' book banning rubric "nonsensical and contradictory," stating that the district lied about what constituted as "sexually explicit materials."

Stands against the parents' rights movement were not studied separately in this paper. But these instances of advocacy against the Parents' Rights Movement raise an important point: increased debate over political issues was not exclusive to parents' rights activists. The rise in discussion around culture war issues and subsequent increases in minutes spent per meeting were a product of comments from both sides of the debate. It would seem that censoring literary and curricular materials was a zero-sum game, rewarding the hostility of Conservative parents while angering the majority of community members and students.

Outside of the quotation above, students were rarely represented in public comment periods. Yet, hindrances to normal school board operations hurt the student body most, especially as achievement declined from the ’18-’19 SY to the ’22-’23 SY and children lost a cumulative 11 million school days to suspensions, expulsions, and arrests last year.[87] Surveys from the current school year reveal the top issue students are concerned with is gun violence.[88]

School boards have tried to address these concerns. Findings from previous sections shows a marked rise in time spent discussing policies concerning “active shooters,” “firearms,” and “violence” prevention plans from the pre- to the post-period. However, national data shows that districts’ responses have been short-sighted. Instead of following the evidence, school leaders craft policies that are politically palatable to Conservatives in a similar way to policies concerning gender and race: data from the U.S. Department of Education found that, as of 2020, 72% of high schools had an armed law enforcement officer in their building.[89]

Studies by social scientists show that expanding the police presence on campuses does not, in fact, stop gun violence.[90] Instead, school-based cops, or “resource officers,” have been linked to a 5% uptick in school-related arrests and a 12% increase in students’ referrals to law enforcement.[91] Since many of these officers were used to handle behavioral management, schools with law enforcement had a 402.3% increase in arrest rates for disorderly conduct over those without a cop.[92]

The number of comments about rising rates of arrests, racially discriminatory discipline, and other concerning trends was dwarfed by conversations that only seemed to lull parents and students into a sense of safety. More concerning is that less than half of students nationwide felt that having police on their campus elicited a sense of safety.[93] More students expressed living in a “constant state of fear,” especially after their first “run-in” with the school’s police officer.[94]

c. Limitations

The chosen research method for this paper was a case study. This type of analysis focuses on the collection and organization of data that can be observed, synthesized, and presented.[95] Statistical analyses, on the other hand, examine data to establish relationships and causal mechanisms between two or more variables.[96] My case study could not reach this level, and, likewise, does not purport to have internal or external validity. Instead, I have made correlative observations, which may serve as a jumping-off point for future research (described in the next section).

Missing data made certain observations in this paper weaker. Recording technology became nearly ubiquitous in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, but this was not the case in the '18-'19 SY. Johnston County SD did not have a publicly accessible school board recording for the months of June and July, while Keller ISD was missing January, February, March, and June. This could have constrained the volume of words analyzed in the pre period such that there were imbalanced comparisons in the post period, as well as skewed results for "time spent" per meeting.

In calculating each district's "time spent" per meeting, I chose to add together meetings that occurred within the same month such that "time spent" reflected the total time per *month*, not necessarily the total time per *meeting*. However, I do not believe that this tainted my findings, since, in the post-period, districts were using additional meetings to get work done as a board, since other meetings were used to hear the large number of speakers. If the volume of comments increased due to the Parents' Rights Movement, such that more meetings were necessary, the correlation between this movement and a rise in time spent in school board meetings remains true. (The math described here was only used to calculate time spent in meetings and did not affect my code.)

Qualitative analysis of words and phrases was susceptible to bias. While the terms chosen were informed by my literature review, the literature itself skewed towards articles about parents' rights rhetoric and not as much on what I deemed "constructive" debate. Thus, the corpus of "political" words and phrases was larger than that of the "constructive" terms. Furthermore, the notion of "constructive"

debate was subjective—potentially skewing the coding process since I used context clues around a word to decide whether or not it would be selected.

On the other side of this problem were terms that I blindly selected, rather than individually evaluated for context clues. For example, the word "Bible" was used so often in school board meetings—most often to kick off the meeting with a prayer—that I chose to simply look at the change in its usage between the two time periods, regardless of the situation. The assumption behind my decision was that, since the districts that conducted prayer did so consistently in both time periods of my study, any increase in the word's frequency between the pre and post periods would indicate that "Bible" was being used more outside of prayer.

Transcribing hundreds of hours of board meetings in only a few months would have made the analysis and writing process impossible. Instead, I used online transcribing programs *Otter.ai* and *Cockatoo.com* to automatically convert .MP4 files into .SRT files that could be read by my qualitative analysis software. While both programs claim to be 100% accurate, and I checked portions of each video to ensure that the transcriptions were correct, fluctuations in speech and recording volume could have impaired the programs' abilities. My findings on the frequency of word usage, however, showed large disparities between time periods, so any inconsistencies in the transcripts would likely have little impact on this paper's results.

d. Scholarly Follow-Up

The correlation between a rise in political discussion at school board meetings and the loss of constructive debate, despite more time spent per meeting, presents a promising opportunity for scholarly study. Through a review of the pressing issues afflicting American education today, this paper has proposed several outcomes and trends that researchers could use to establish The Parents' Rights Movement's negative effect on district functioning: average test scores for reading and math across the two time periods; an analysis of budgetary priorities in districts with a large parents' rights presence; or,

the movement's effects on teacher and administrative retention. A more direct study may look at the pedagogical advantages or disadvantages of curriculum censorship policies passed at the district level.

As states attempt to address the myriad crises plaguing K-12 education, researchers will have greater access to data through mandated evaluations, such as: Arizona's Teacher Attrition Survey[97] and the Arizona School Personnel Administrators Association survey;[98] the Georgia School Personnel Survey;[99] Louisiana's Working Conditions Survey,[100] Professional Treatment Survey,[101] and Educator Evaluation System Stakeholder Survey;[102] and, Virginia's Positions and Exits Collection survey.[103] More states will likely follow suit, but it will be a few years before enough data is collected to accurately measure trends. Researchers could use this data to establish a causal connection between the Parents' Rights Movement and a decline in student mental health, staff retention, or the equitable treatment of all individuals in the district.

VI. Conclusion

The Parents' Rights Movement has left an indelible mark on the American education system, allowing political divisions to impair district functioning. This paper used a case study of school board meetings across time to demonstrate the correlation between the rise of Conservative-led "parents' rights" activism and a decline in time spent addressing critical education issues—such as historically low test scores, rising rates of youth depression, and a looming teacher shortage—when compared to time spent on political issues.[104]

Effects extend beyond the classroom in subtlety pernicious ways; overusing terms like "age appropriate" and "pornographic" in relation to school materials portrays classrooms and libraries as harmful spaces for children (see Appendix B, part two, for more details). Student surveys show that the majority of school-aged children view these spaces as safe.[105] Yet, Republican lawmakers have distorted the role that schools play in a child's life and this narrative has embedded itself in the minds of Conservative Americans, translating into support for candidates who will attack the public education system.[106]

This feedback loop has led to the adoption of "Parents' Bills of Rights," signed by legislators seeking greater support from parent activists. In the process, new legislation puts unconstitutional restrictions on students' freedom of expression and chills classroom discussion.[107] As the politics around education has changed, so, too, have school board meetings: administrators bear the brunt of policy debates that have trickled down from state legislatures into the community (see Appendix F for quotes from community members).

In wrestling power away from state boards of education, legislatures now wield more control over public schools than ever before, right as a partisan divides reach historic highs across the country.[108] This helps explains my findings; debate leading up to bill passage and directly after correlated with the rise in ideologically-driven discussion in my sample, with terms like "gender equity," "Nazism," and "woke

mob" increasing astronomically when compared to constructive debate around "fixing" broken supplies and "problems" around schools or aiding teachers who "don't have enough" resources to effectively educate students (see Appendix D). As a result, school board meetings after bill passage took an average of two times longer than those that were held before. Instead of "encouraging transparency," the Parents' Bill of Rights helped overburden educators and undermine efforts to make education more inclusive.[109]

The legislative backdrop may suggest that these trends are hard to reverse. However, results from this paper indicate that there are potential policy solutions. First, the majority of parents and community members who are opposed to the Parents' Rights Movement must organize at school boards and vocally oppose the injection of Conservative values into school operations. Just as the activists described in past sections campaign against recognizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools, future legislation should encourage *greater* cultural awareness and the embrace of multiculturalism across the education system. Conversations around race in school board meetings should be on programs to shrink disparities in disciplinary practices for minoritized students and curb racially-motivated bullying.[110] Instead of a preoccupation with "age-appropriate" material, states should align their health curriculum with sex education standards that prioritize well-rounded, medically accurate instruction.

Finally, power over curricular and content decisions should lie with education experts in state agencies, not ideologically driven legislators or community activists. Federal policymakers have the power to increase equity between districts through targeted funding, but states should be focused on attracting teachers and increasing student achievement.[111] Education decisions at all levels should seek to avoid political motivation, centering student success and the removal of obstacles in the way.

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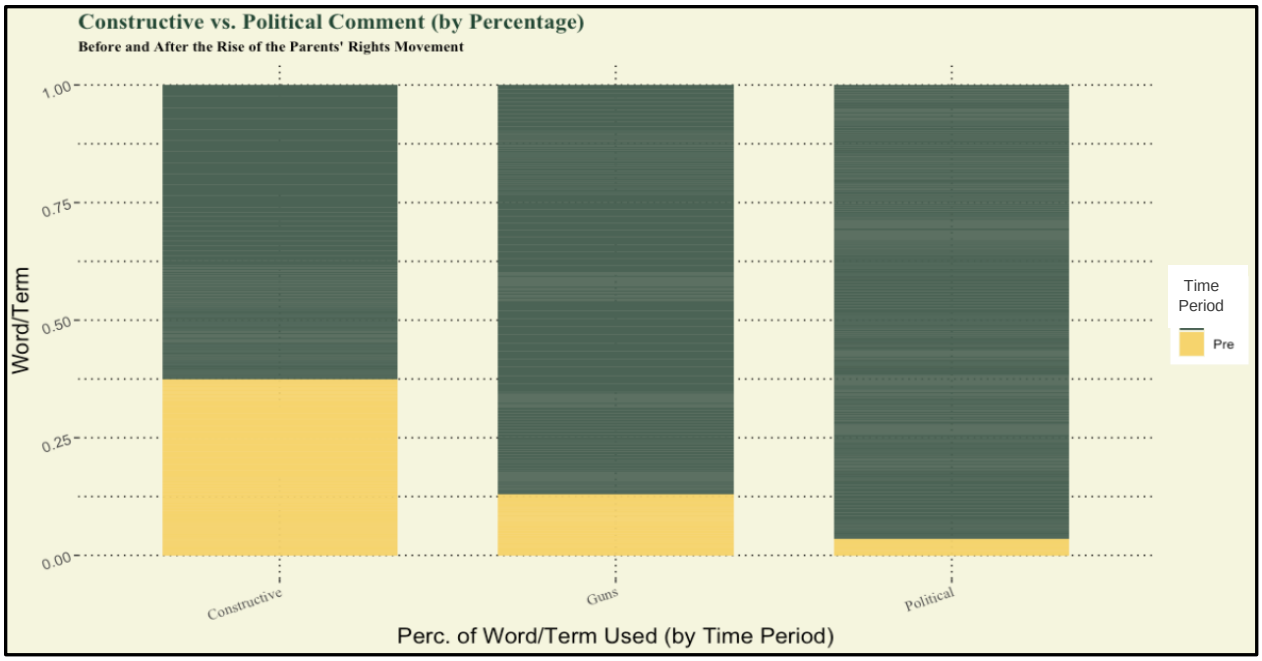
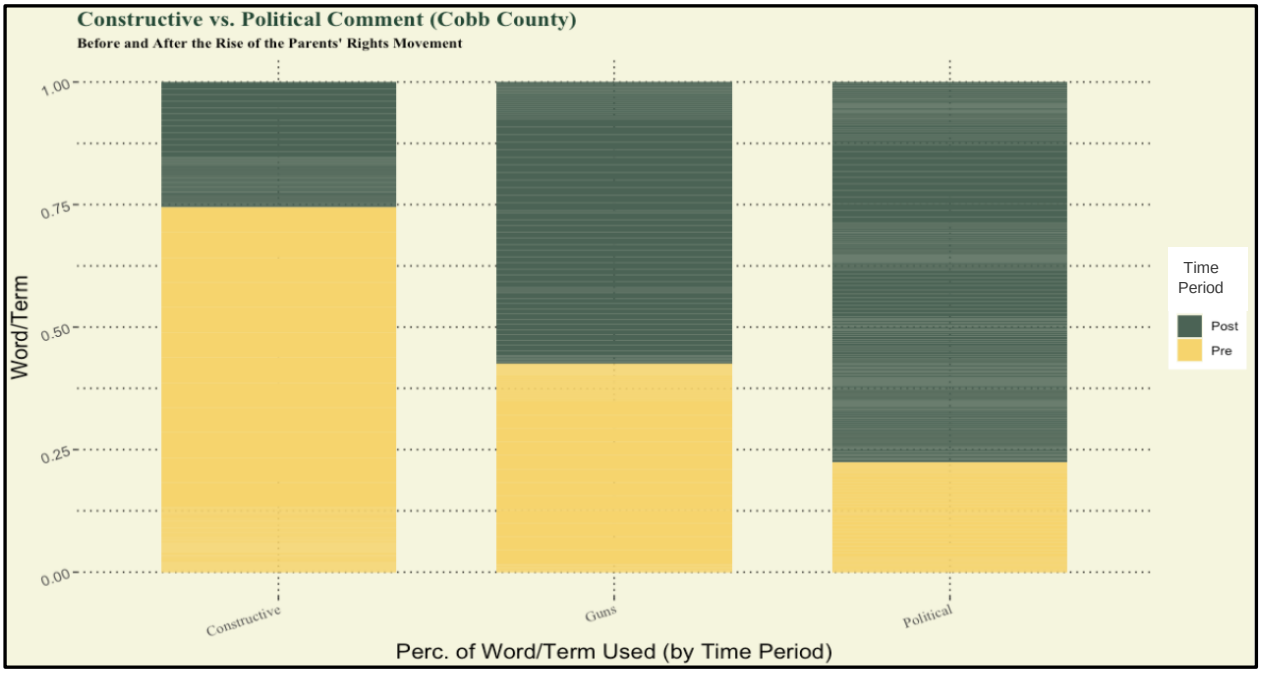
VIII. Appendices

a. Appendix A: Changes in Constructive, Political, and Gun-Related Discussion



Cobb County only



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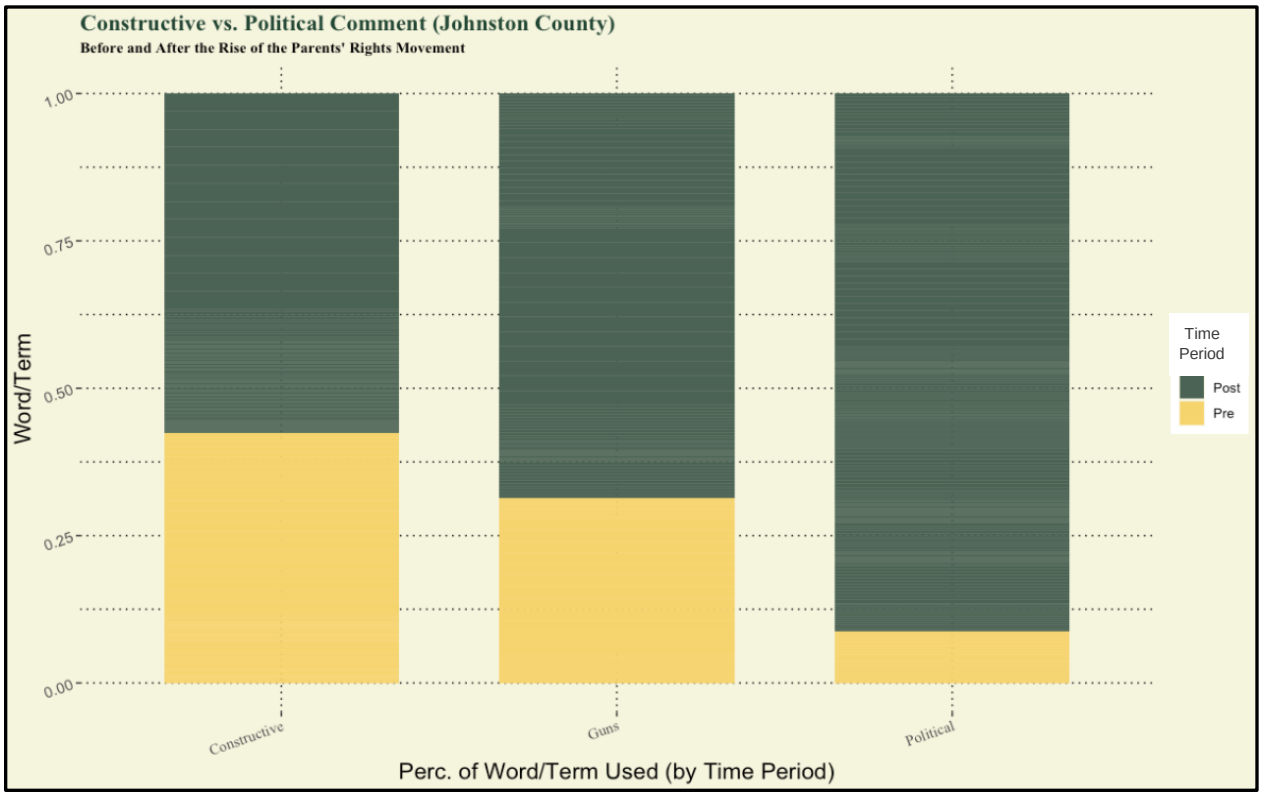
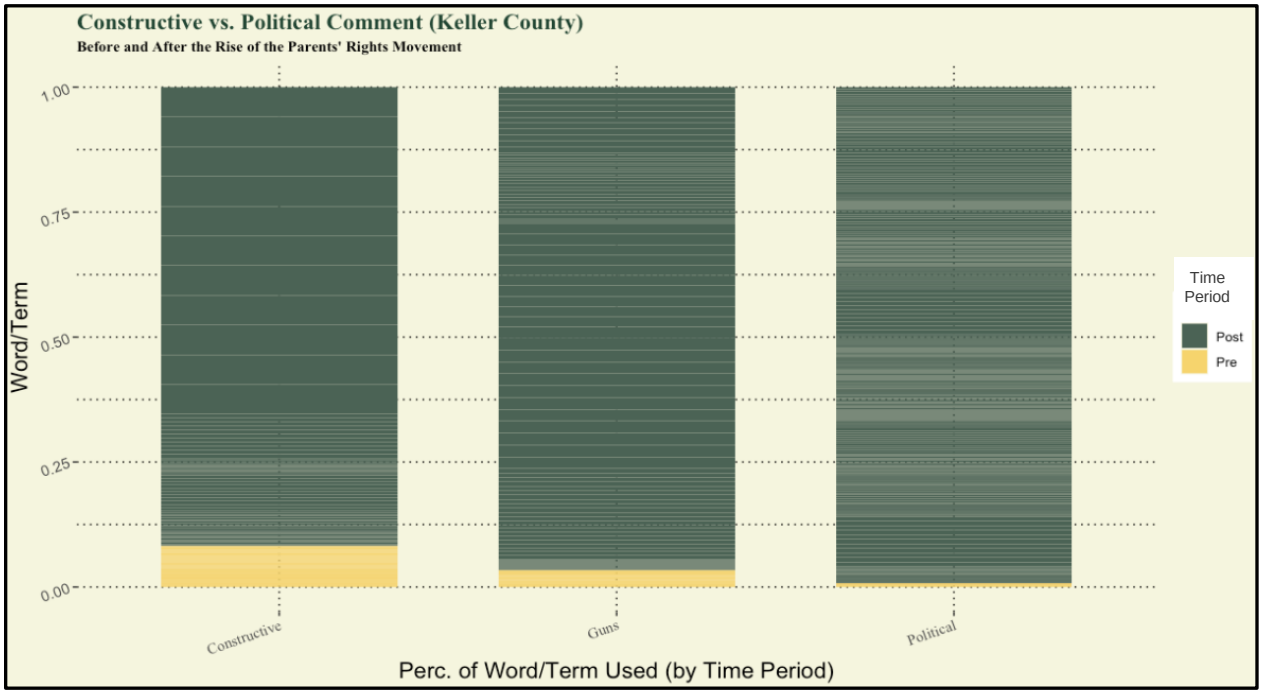


Keller County only



b. Appendix B (1/2): *List* - Political Words and Phrases (by Word Group)

Note: *Words were searched verbatim and for inflected versions (i.e. singular, plural, -ing, -ed, etc.)

Gender Issues	Meeting Disruption	Political Issues
bathroom	ass	accused
biological	conflict	agenda
biology	crap	communist
bodily	end	conservative
dysmorphia	freak	constitution
gay	fuck	constitutional
gender	heck	controversial
gender identity	hell	democrat
genital	leave	divisive
genitals	mob	fringe
homosexuality	scary	harassment
hormone	shit	indoctrinate
lesbian	stop	indoctrination
LGBTQ	whoa	liberal
obscene		Nazi
pronoun		parents rights
pronouns		political

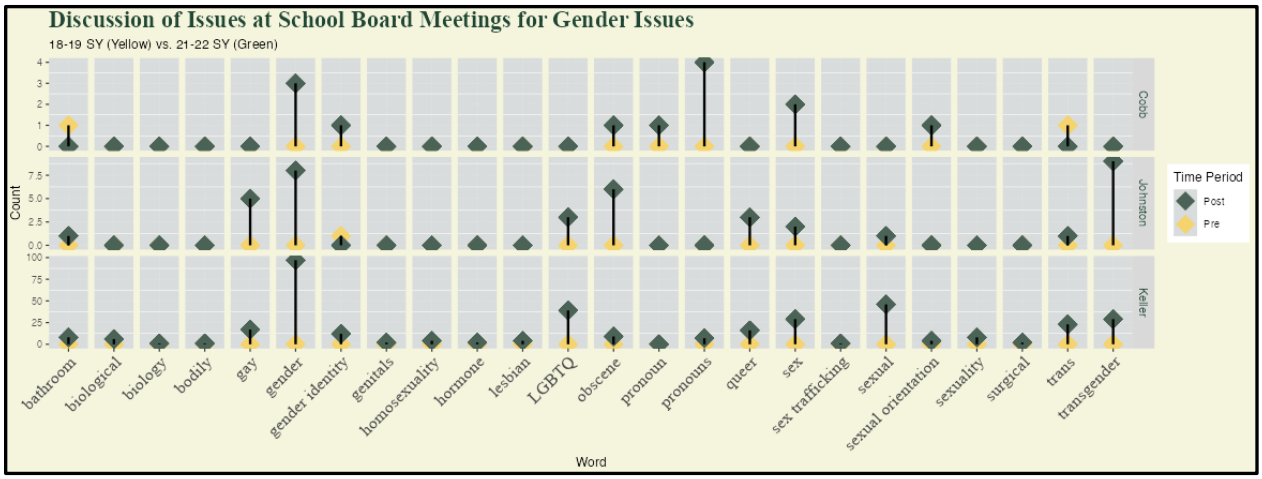
queer		propaganda
sex		republican
sex trafficking		socialist
sexual		unconstitutional
sexual orientation		woke
sexuality		woke mob
surgical		wokism
trans		
transgender		

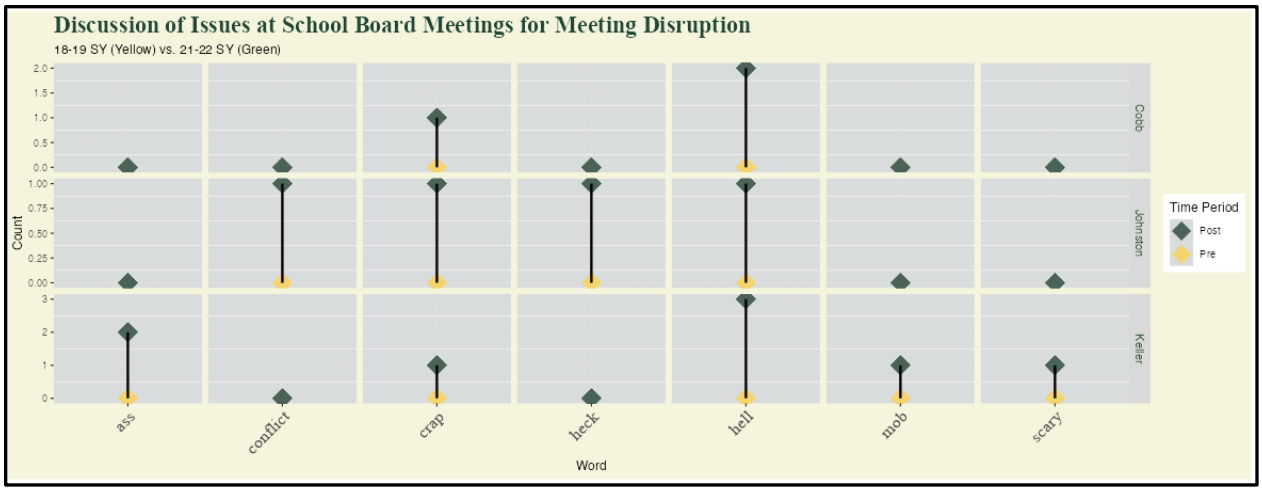
Race	**Religion**	**School Materials**
affirm	bible	appropriate
African	Christian	ban
Black	God	banning
critical race theory	Jesus	book / book ban
CRT	religion	curriculum
culture	Satan	exclude
D.E.I.		exclusion
DEI		explicit
discriminate		inappropriate

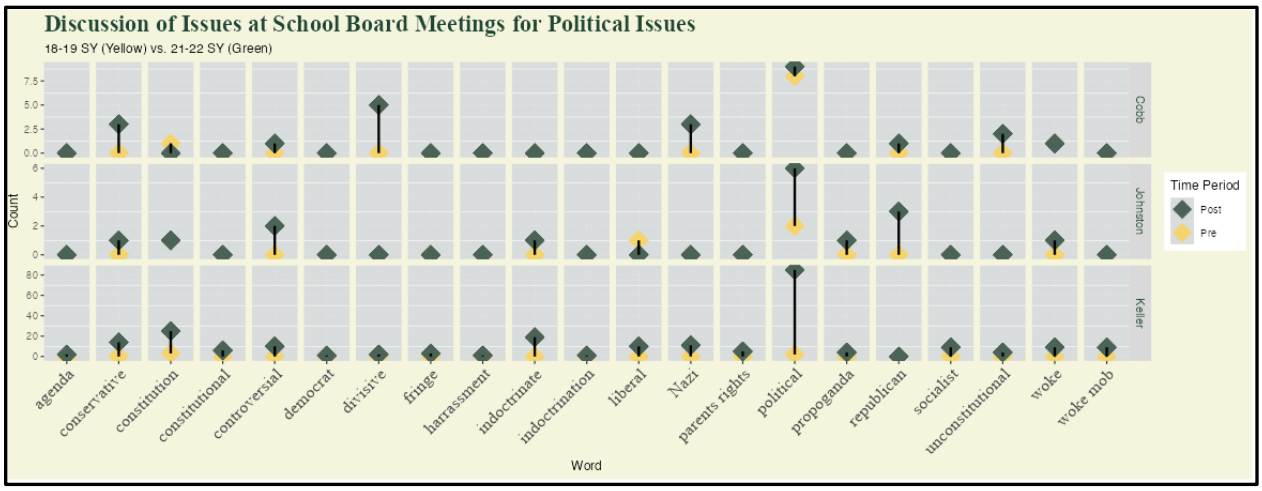
diversity		include
equality		inclusion
equity		lesson
ethnicity		lewd
Hispanic		librarians
identities		library
race		material
racism		opt in
racist		porn
theory		

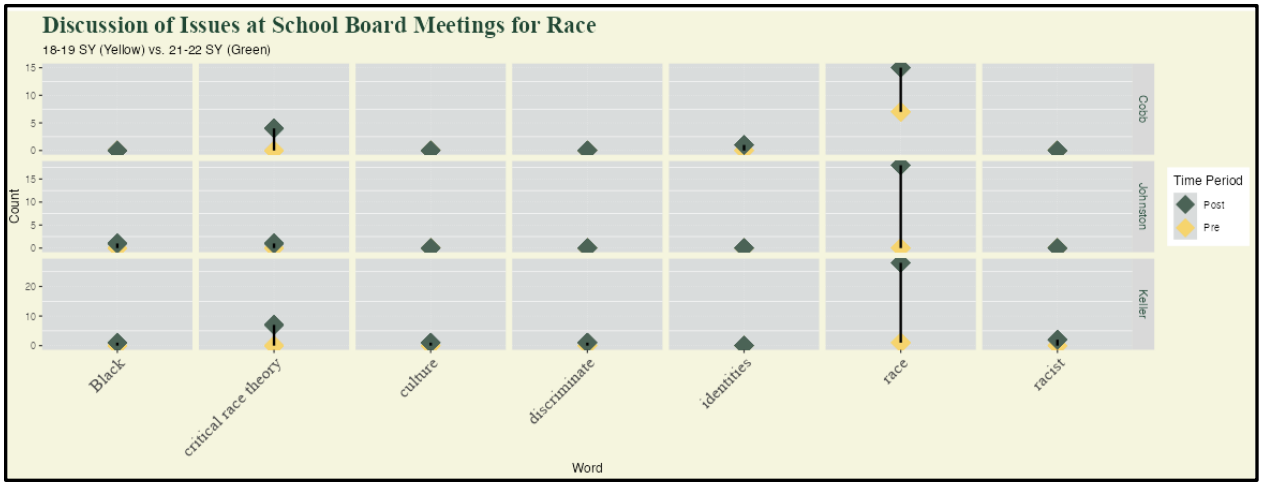
Appendix B (2/2): *Charts* - Shifts in Political Word Usage (separated by Word Group)

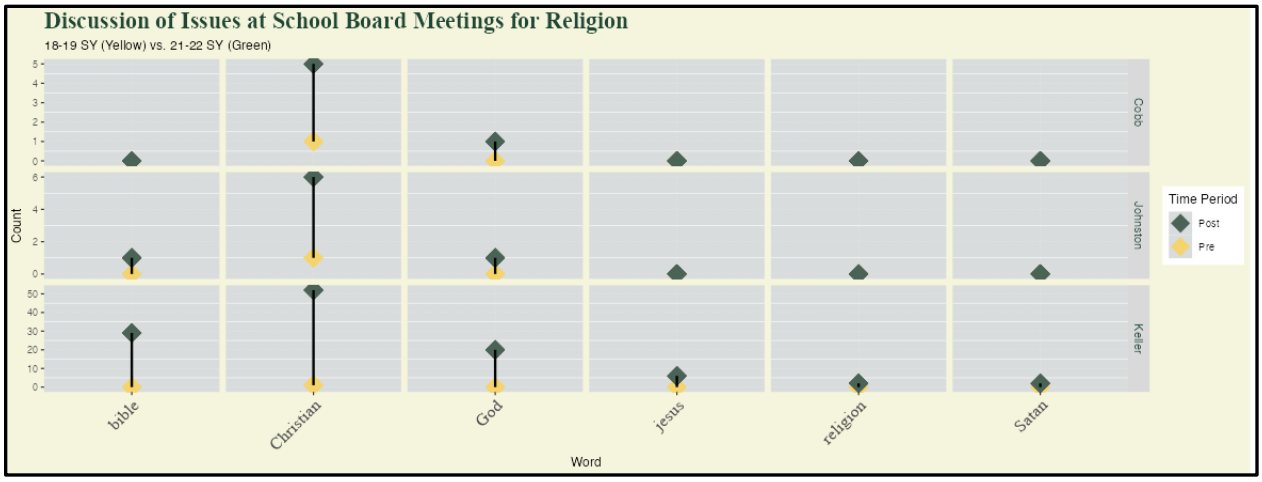
Graphs below are showing changes in word usage across all three districts. Each district is labeled on the right side of the graph: Cobb occupies the top row, Johnston, the middle, and Keller, the bottom.

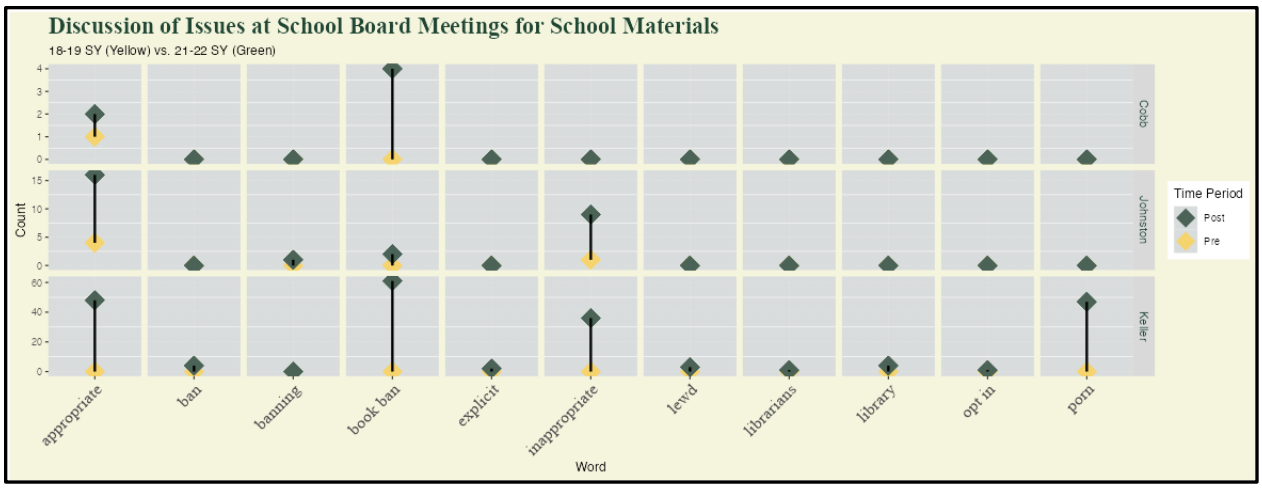







Discussion of Issues at School Board Meetings for Race
18-19 SY (Yellow) vs. 21-22 SY (Green)
Count
Cobb
Johnston
Keller
Time Period
Post
Pre
Black
critical race theory
culture
discriminate
identities
race
racist
Word


Discussion of Issues at School Board Meetings for Religion
18-19 SY (Yellow) vs. 21-22 SY (Green)
Count
Cobb
Johnston
Keller
Time Period
Post
Pre
bible
Christian
God
jesus
religion
Satan
Word


Discussion of Issues at School Board Meetings for School Materials
18-19 SY (Yellow) vs. 21-22 SY (Green)
Count
Cobb
Johnston
Keller
Time Period
Post
Pre
appropriate
ban
banning
book ban
explicit
inappropriate
levd
librarians
library
opt in
porn
Word

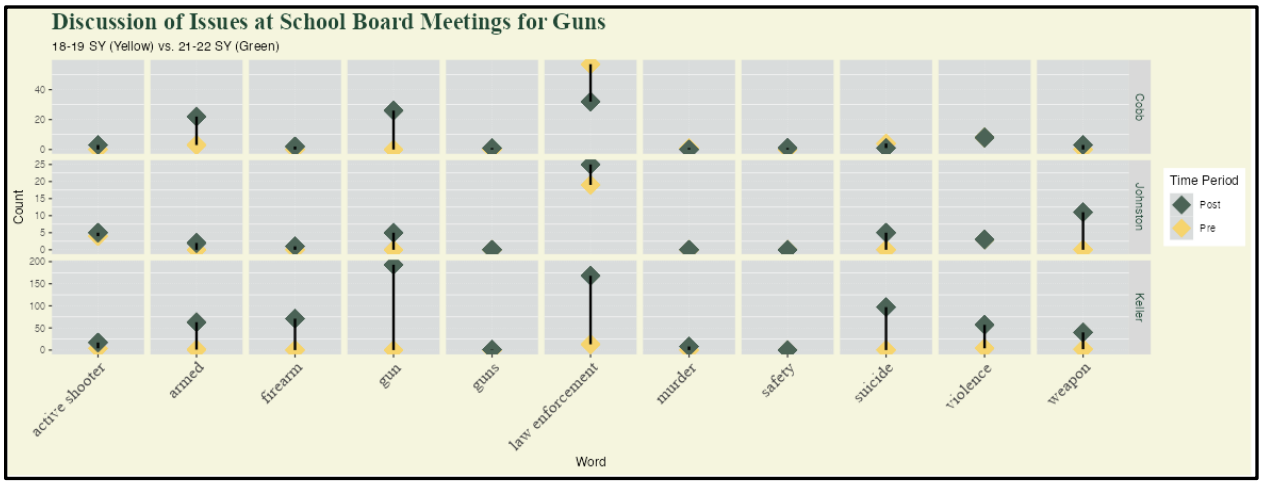
c. Appendix C (1/2): *List* - Constructive and Gun-Related Words and Phrases

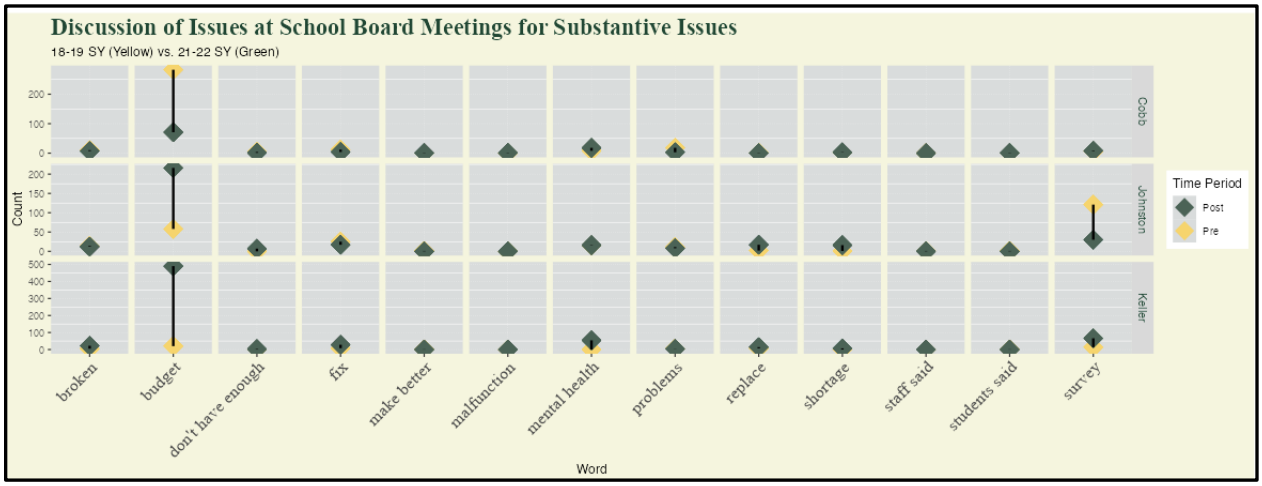
Note: Words were searched verbatim and for inflected versions (i.e. singular, plural, -ing, -ed, etc.)

Guns	Constructive
active shooter	address
armed	broken
emergency operation plans	budget
firearm	don't have
gun	don't have enough
guns	fix
law enforcement	make better
murder	malfunction
safety	mental health
violence	millions
weapon	need
	parents said
	problems
	replace
	revitalize
	shortage
	staff said

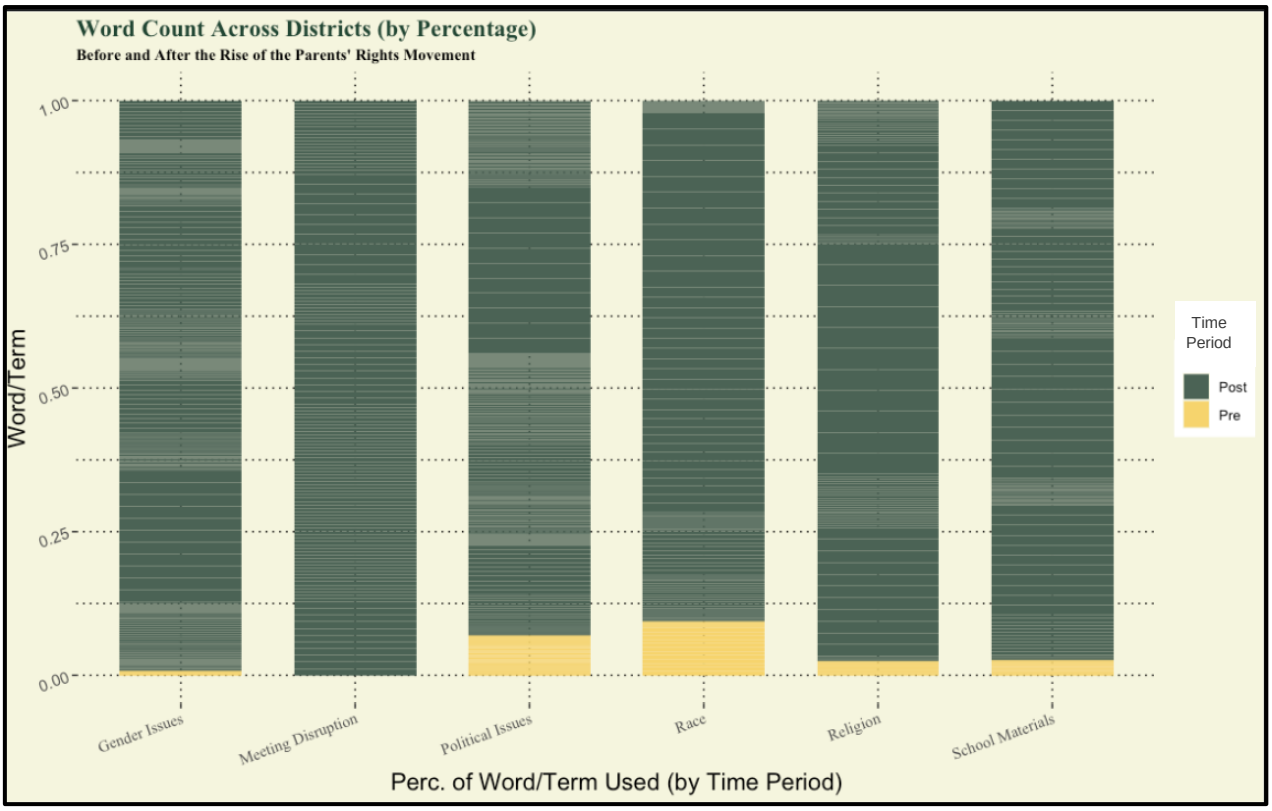
	students said
	suicide
	survey
	teachers said
	want

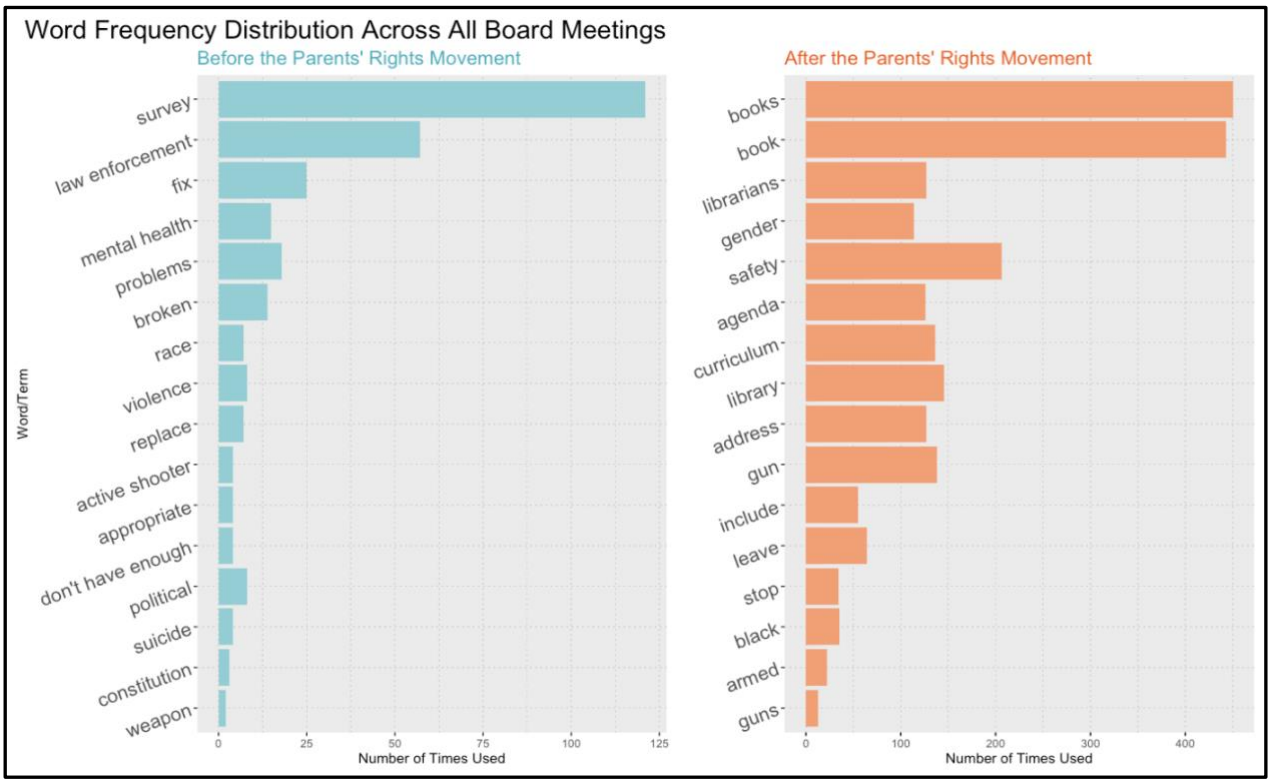
Appendix C (2/2: *Charts* - Shifts in Constructive and Gun-Related Words (by Word Group)





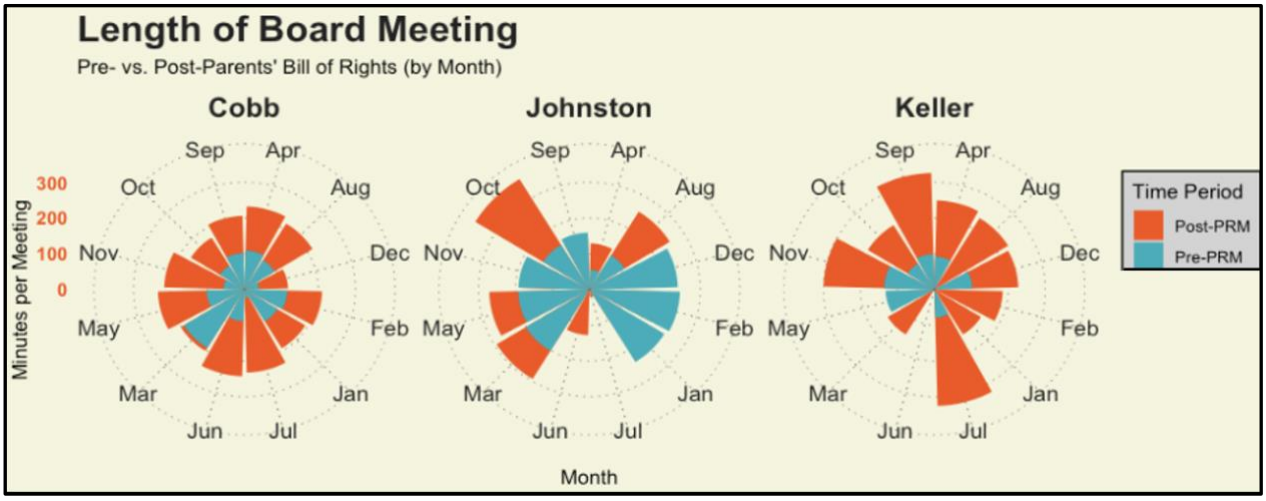
d. Appendix D: Overall Trends



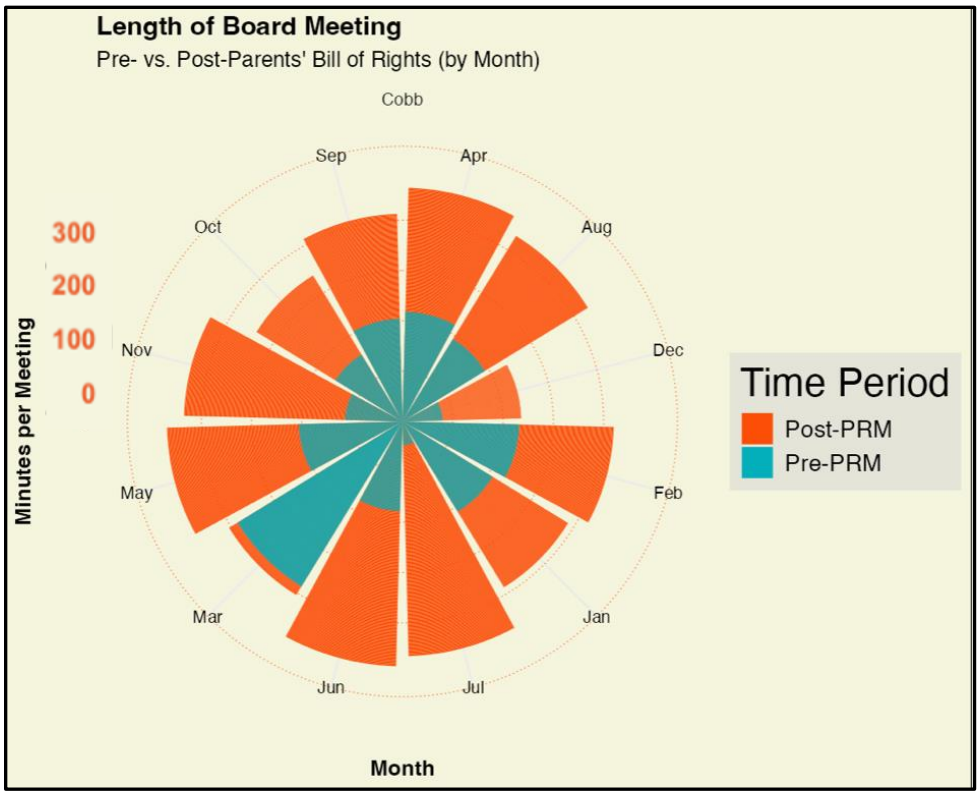


e. Appendix E: Changes in Time Spent in Board Meetings

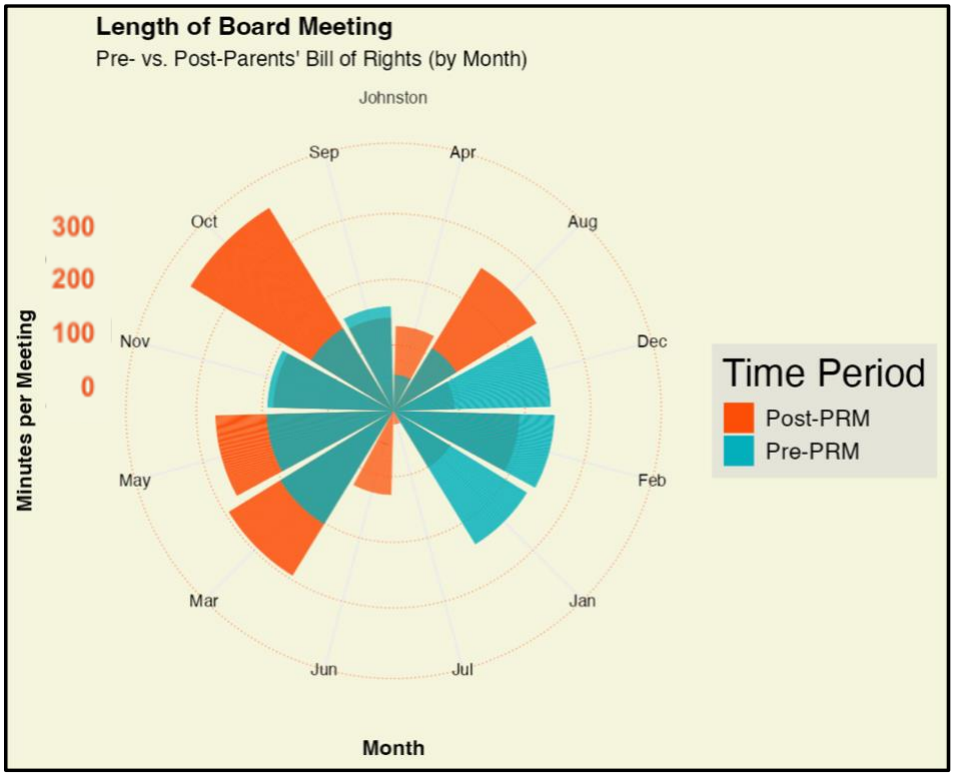
Overall



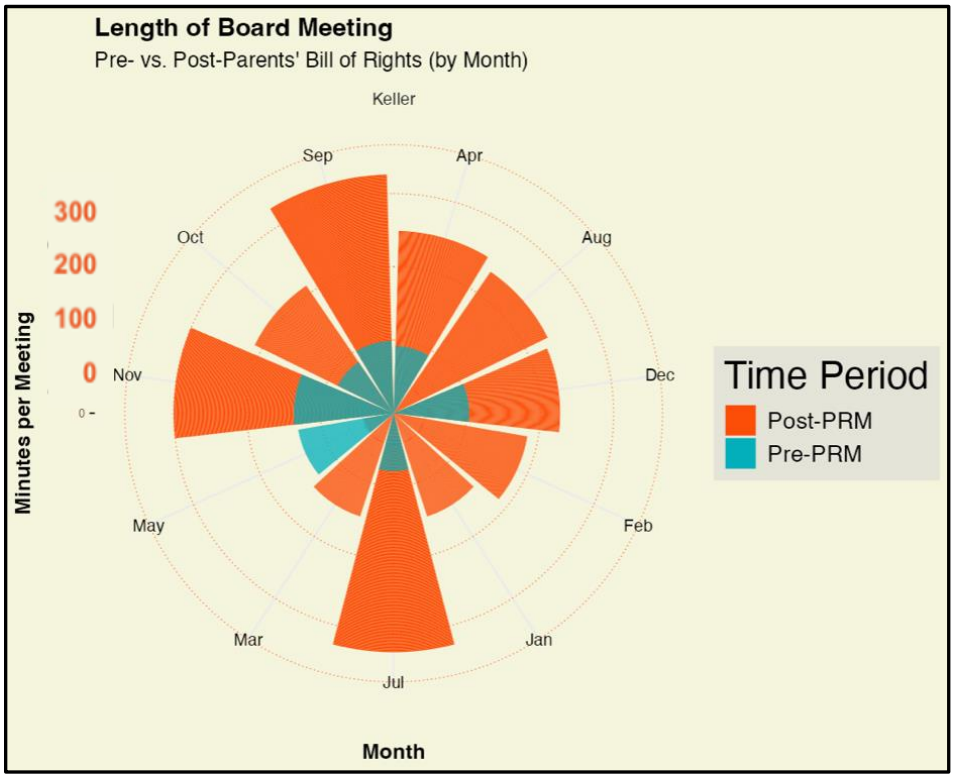
Cobb County



Johnston County



Keller County



f. Appendix F: Quotations

Cobb County

- *August 2022*: "Within the past year, the board has passed a resolution that marginalizes students of color removed inclusive anti bias curriculum from schools and pressure to qualified black educators who resigned from her position as head of social studies." – Michael, parent
- *August 2022:* "Social Studies Education is under attack in the wake of the state divisive concepts law and the CRT ban, which was passed despite the then Board Chair being unable to define it. These policies infringe on the right of faculty to teach and students to learn the clear goals just press learning about the role of racism in the history of the US despite the actual letter of the law, and to create a chilling effect through the threat of reprisals. Suppressing discussion of divisive concepts deprives students of opportunities to discuss and foster solutions to social division and injustice and hinder student's ability to engage in critical thinking. A whitewashed view of history cannot change what happened in the past in a free and open society depends on the unrestricted pursuit and dissemination of knowledge." – Shannon, parent
- *January 2023*: "We released a statement yesterday regarding the Project Veritas video, where the Cobb County School District was referenced as purchasing products from Quinton Bostic secretly incorporating CRT into teaching and learning. In the last 48 hours, we have conducted a thorough review of district purchasing. Based on that review, I want to assure parents of the Cobb community, the CCSD team members, and the board that the district has no record of purchasing any service or product from The Teaching Lab nor Quinton Bostic." – Superintendent Chris Ragsdale[112]
- *March 2023:* "We hear a lot about how this district aims to stay out of politics to not cater to adult agendas. But it seems as though for this board majority and leadership to strive for representation, Safe Schools and accurate teaching of history. It's considered being political when children stand before you asking for changes in their schools, describing racism and a desire to attend a school not named after a Confederate General. I'm a parent in this district and I want my children learning about social justice issues and

receiving an anti-racist education. I also want a math curriculum and a reading curriculum backed by research." – Stacey, parent

- *May 2023:* "You don't trust white families in this county. Otherwise, you would have trust that parents of white children could handle anti racist education that make classrooms more inclusive of the diverse group of students that live in Cobb." – Michael, parent

Johnston County

- *December 2022*: "You idiots want to preach Black Lives Matter, then turn around and talk about child sex trafficking. Let me guess, the black kids are more important to save than the other colors? Or are you OK with all ethnicities being saved equally?" – Alan, community member
- *January 2023*: "On October 18, 2022, this board member claimed that another candidate who is a parent and has children in JCPS who is running for a seat wanted pornographic materials in her school system yet again with no proof…If I were to have any issue, God forbid, in the future, how can I depend on this board member to assist me if she publicly called my husband, the father of my children, a pedophile, and a groomer. So, this disgusting accusation that was made is an entire liability to my life, my livelihood, and my children." – Erica, community member
- *April 2023:* "What's clear is these groups are using their power to elect school board members to censor books they disagree with. They're not just targeting books about LGBTQ plus issues or the boogeyman critical race theory. They also target books about history, science, and even classic literature. When we censor books, we're not just limiting children's access to information, we're also limiting their ability to think critically and form opinions." - Erica, community member
- *April 2023*: "I want to talk about a book called My Shadow is Purple, written by Scott Stewart…What's dangerous about a book that helps children feel like they belong? The answer is absolutely nothing. In fact, books like My Shadow is Purple are essential for helping children grow up to be kind, compassionate, and understanding adults. They teach children about diversity and inclusion, and they teach children about the importance of being true to themselves. It teaches children to not be bullies." – Alan, community member

Keller ISD

- *August 2022:* “There are new, outrageous topics being forced on kids and the majority of the public are not okay with it. We reject this curriculum. It's now clear that extreme content is okay with some brainwash parents that are unknowingly spreading a socialist agenda.” – Jennifer, parent
- *August 2022*: “Regarding the restriction of book availability, I will concede that seeing sexually explicit content you are not prepared for can be jarring, especially as a child but what gives me pause is that most of these books do not feature of sexual sexually explicit activity, but they do feature stories of marginalized people, especially people of color, and LGBTQ plus members. Most of these books I've read. And so I wonder why these stories are on this list. And why are we allowing these books to be challenged if the only thing challenging about them is that they offer a historically marginalized perspective.” – Haley, community member
- *November 2022*: “There are only two genders and pronouns for only those two genders is often seen as offensive or oppressive. Personal preferences are celebrated without truth by our God.” – Ms. Robinson, teacher
- *November 2022*: “These transgender students are anywhere from six to 16 times more likely to kill themselves in their lives…In the current population of the 33, plus, out of 1000 students in the ISD, 80 of them are going to end their lives. It's happening because these kids feel isolated, bullied and rejected.” – Todd, community member
- *January 2023*: “This month, you have empowered extremists in this community to try and push their racism and bigotry on my children. The book was posted on the agenda this evening is 28 titles that have been removed for further review. I went through the list of crosstab books, and I found hate and I found bigotry and I found racism. There's a book called my fate is fresh. I went and got the book for myself to read. It's beautiful to children's book with incredible artwork, artwork, all about a little black girl going to the salon to get a haircut. There is absolutely nothing in this book that violates any line and your absurd rubric.” – Amy, parent
- *March 2023*: “Schools across the country are being run by woke mobs unchecked and have kids being aggressive, aggressively sexualized with age inappropriate material and Democrat and Marxist partisan

politics…The teachers unions have become puppet masters. And what's scary to me is the materials are pushing down to our teachers to be used for history and civic lessons." – Jennifer, community member

Endnotes

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