

Polarization in School Board Elections and Impact on District Enrollment*

Kalie Pierce[†]

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Abstract

School board politics in the United States have become increasingly polarized. A growing number of candidates are campaigning under the banner of “parental rights,” a divisive policy agenda centered on issues of gender, race, and sexuality; others run explicitly in opposition. While polarization’s effects on voting and civic engagement are well documented, less is known about how it shapes everyday household behavior. This paper examines whether the win or loss of a polarizing school board candidate will drive families out of a school district. I construct a novel dataset identifying all 2022 school board candidates in California and their stances on parental rights using online sources and an artificial intelligence (AI) -powered large language model (LLM). Employing a regression discontinuity design, I estimate the causal impact of electing a parental rights candidate on subsequent district enrollment. I find evidence of a response only in populations under financial stress. In districts with a parental rights win, I find enrollment of socioeconomically disadvantaged students is 14.4% larger compared to districts with a parental rights loss. In high cost-of-living districts, I find Hispanic student enrollment is 6.6% larger in districts with a parental rights win while Black student enrollment is 17.1% smaller. These findings suggest that while school board election outcomes are less salient than financial pressures in shaping family decisions around schooling, they can serve as a tipping factor, particularly for minority groups.

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[†]Department of Economics, Colgate University khperce@colgate.edu

1 Introduction

For decades, local school board elections in the United States have been characterized as "sleepy" affairs, with low voter participation and minimal controversy ([Ballotpedia, 2016; 2020; Cai, 2020](#)). This changed dramatically in 2021. Throughout the spring and fall of that year, media outlets documented heated school board meetings and confrontations between community members and board members, some of which escalated into physical altercations and arrests. ([Atterbury & Perez, 2021; Carr & Waldron, 2023; Ortiz, 2021; Valant, 2021](#)). In September 2021, the National School Boards Association issued a public letter to President Biden requesting federal assistance to protect school board members who had received death threats and harassment ([Thompson, 2021](#)). The same election season saw a marked politicization of school board contests. Many candidates campaigned against what they described as “woke” educational policies, including the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, and policies concerning transgender students ([Mervosh & Heyward, 2021; Reilly, 2022](#)). Their opponents ran on explicitly progressive platforms, defending diversity initiatives, ethnic studies, and LGBTQ+ rights ([Kingkade, 2022](#)).

Local elections have grown increasingly contentious as partisanship has grown in the U.S. Scholars in economics, political science, and sociology have documented widening gaps in ideology and policy preferences between the two major political parties over the last few decades ([Boxell et al., 2017; 2021; McCright & Dunlap, 2011](#)). Marc Hetherington traces this polarization to the 1980s, when Americans began to identify more strongly with religious, racial, and cultural groups, and national party affiliation increasingly aligned with those identities ([Hetherington et al., 2016](#)).

Studies in the early 2000s began studying the increase of "affective polarization," or the emotional hostility and distrust between members of opposing parties, and found that it increases alongside partisan polarization. ([Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2015](#)). While much of polarization literature has focused on voters’ attitudes and

electoral behavior, more recent work has begun to study affective polarization in relation to non-political behaviors. For example, [Shafranek \(2019\)](#) finds that individuals strongly prefer roommates who share their partisan affiliation. Similarly, [Huber and Malhotra \(2017\)](#), [Klofstad et al. \(2013\)](#), and [Iyengar et al. \(2018\)](#) demonstrate that people increasingly choose romantic partners within their own party and that political agreement between parents and children has strengthened over time.

While many studies have demonstrated a common preference for co-partisans, it is yet unclear whether individuals are willing to make significant and potentially costly decisions based on this preference alone. Many studies on affective polarization are based on survey responses, which likely reflect “expressive partisanship,” or symbolic statements of loyalty or hostility ([Huddy et al., 2015](#)). The extent to which Americans are willing to make major life decisions based on political identity – especially those concerning where they live or where their children attend school – remains an open empirical question.

Leaving a school district and possibly changing residential locations to do so is an especially expensive move, and recent papers on partisanship and geographic sorting do not find definitive results. While researchers observe individuals often live in politically homogeneous communities ([Brown & Enos, 2021](#)), it is unclear whether this pattern is intentional. The paper that speaks most directly to this question is [McCartney et al. \(2021\)](#), in which the authors merge deed data with voter registration records to find that homeowners are more likely to sell their homes when an opposite-party neighbor moves in nearby, compared to a same-party or unregistered neighbor. They interpret this finding as evidence of polarization affecting real economic decisions.

Until recently, school board elections, which are majority non-partisan in the U.S., seemed immune to this nation-wide trend of polarization. Yet scholars are finding identity-based disputes now dominate many local educational debates as national political organizations and wealthy donors increasingly intervene in local school board elections. According to this research, partisan divisions on education issues have also widened substantially ([Henig et al.,](#)

2019; [Houston, 2024](#)). The question remains: Will the politicization of school board elections cause households to select school districts based on partisan preference?

This paper makes two contributions to the study of polarization and education. First, it contributes to the still-growing literature on how polarization affects non-political behavior. Second, it provides the first causal evidence of partisan preferences affecting school district selection, a potentially significant household decision.

Partisan polarization often intensifies when racial identities and attitudes are salient, and this paper also notes the role of race in polarized school board elections. Recent scholarship finds that when racial attitudes are activated, polarization between the two parties grow ([Zhirkov & Valentino, 2022](#)). For example, [Sides et al. \(2018\)](#) show that White voters' shifts in party identification during the 2016 election when President Obama was up for re-election correlated more strongly with views on race and immigration than with economic considerations. These findings suggest that polarization may be particularly acute in communities where racial tensions are triggered, whether by demographic change or by contentious public debates about race and racism. This paper contributes to this literature by demonstrating that a racial minority may view a polarizing campaign or candidate as more relevant to their district enrollment decision than other groups.

Finally, this paper offers a new dataset for the study of school boards. School boards are difficult to study because no publicly available dataset of school board candidates and their political affiliations or beliefs at either the state or national level exists. Most states do not gather even basic information about school board elections, such as candidate name and date of election. California is an exception, collecting election date, candidate name, occupation, incumbency status, and filing date. But California, like most states, has non-partisan school board elections and does not record political affiliations. Ballotpedia, a nonprofit organization that collects information on local elections, has a dataset containing school board candidate name along with seat type (at-large or specific to a ward or subdivision) and election type (primary or general) but only for the top 100 largest cities in the U.S. and the top 200 districts

by enrollment.

To study the impact of politicized school boards, I created a new dataset on all school board candidates in California in 2022 and their public stances on a wide range of cultural issues. Today, candidates running against “woke” issues are likely to identify as “parental rights” candidates, so I will refer to them as such. When I refer to their liberal opponents, I will describe them as “anti-parental rights” candidates. This dataset is the first to measure the size and success of what education law scholar Kristine Bowman has called the New Parents’ Rights Movement by looking at candidate statements and their success in winning school board seats ([Bowman, 2024](#)).

In this paper, I exploit narrowly decided contests between parental rights candidates and non-parental rights candidates and use a regression discontinuity approach to capture the effect of a parental rights win or loss on subsequent school district enrollment. I first provide background information on school board elections and school district enrollment trends in California, and then describe the parental rights movement in more detail. In the next section, I detail my dataset and method. Finally, I present my results and finish with a discussion of possible mechanisms.

2 Background

Locally elected school boards, where any voter within the boundaries of a school district can vote for a school board candidate, are a unique feature of the American educational system. Once elected, members are tasked with governing schools within their jurisdiction: articulating a core mission, establishing meeting structure, providing support to schools, and ensuring accountability for the community. In more tangible terms, their responsibilities include hiring the superintendent, approving curriculum, establishing budget priorities, overseeing the development of bylaws and board policies, monitoring program effectiveness, adopting collective bargaining agreements, and other activities. Boards wield impressive influence over

local education policy in the U.S. Yet the literature on school boards and their impact on educational outcomes is small due to little available data on school board elections, members, beliefs of members, or policies created by school boards.

2.1 School District Enrollment

School enrollment in California has been on the decline in the last eight years. From 2021 to 2023, California lost 89,140 students, a decrease of 1.7% ([California Department of Education, 2022](#)). Declines have affected roughly three-quarters of California’s districts but are concentrated in coastal regions; Los Angeles, for example, experienced a decline of 15% in the last decade and is projected to experience another 19% decline in the next decade ([Lafortune & Prunty, 2023](#)). Experts believe this drop is at least partially driven by families with children migrating out of the state due to high housing costs ([Dee, 2022](#)).

In my analysis, I am interested in families that are financially stressed and likely to leave a region. I first study socioeconomically disadvantaged students across all districts in my sample and then conduct subgroup analyses in specifically for districts with high housing prices.

2.2 School Board Elections in California

Californian school board elections are nonpartisan and the vast majority are on-cycle with state and federal elections. They may sometimes take place in March or June due to members departing in the middle of the term, whether due to resignation, death, or recall, but these make up only a small fraction – about 2% of school board elections in 2022. Different seats within a school board are up for election in different years so rarely is an entire school board up for re-election. School board terms are usually four years and school boards in California have, on average, five members. In 2022, the average number of seats up for election was 2.5, suggesting there is potential for a school board to undergo a dramatic re-make.

There are 1,105 school districts in California, serving roughly 5.8 million students. Most

of these school districts have at-large elections, meaning many candidates can compete for one or more spots and voters select the same number of candidates as there are available seats. If the board has two seats up for election, for example, voters can vote for two candidates. A large minority of school districts – about 200 – have trustee-area-based elections. In these elections, the school district is divided into smaller geographic areas called “trustee areas” and only one seat is available. A candidate running for trustee area must reside in that area and only voters residing in that area may vote on that seat. These districts are more likely to be large and diverse as many school districts transitioned to trustee-area-based elections in response to the California Voting Rights Act of 2001, which prohibits at-large elections if they discriminate against a protected class of voters by suppressing their representation.

2.3 The New Parental Rights Movement in the U.S.

To define a parental rights candidate requires an understanding of the parental rights movement. For this, it is perhaps best to look toward the most prominent parental rights organization, Moms for Liberty, which was formed in January 2021, largely in response to pandemic masking rules. Moms for Liberty has since leveled a number of criticisms at public schools, including but not limited to: teaching social emotional learning (SEL), Critical Race Theory (CRT), Marxism, and/or ethnic studies, encouraging LGBTQ+ and transgender identities in children, providing comprehensive sex education, incorporating restorative justice practices in disciplining students, and not notifying parents of their child’s sexuality or use of preferred gender pronouns. They have advocated for removing books they believe inappropriate or offensive from libraries, rejecting curriculum for similar reasons, banning Critical Race Theory and DEI statements or training, and replacing sex education with more conservative approaches. ([Moms for Liberty, 2024](#); [Pondiscio, 2023](#)) Although conservative and liberal commentators may describe these polarizing figures in starkly different terms - Moms for Liberty describe themselves as "joyful warriors" while the Southern Poverty Law Center classifies them as anti-government extremists – both would likely agree that Moms for

Liberty seeks to affirm traditional family values and exert greater control over the curriculum of traditional public schools in areas related to race, gender, and sexuality. ([Moms for Liberty, 2024](#); [Yousef, 2023](#))

While Moms for Liberty might have once been described as a fringe group, they are now solidly a subgroup within the Republican Party, exemplified by the co-founder Tiffany Justice joining the Heritage Foundation earlier this year as a Visiting Fellow to manage the new Parental Rights Initiative ([The Heritage Foundation, 2025](#)).

3 Data

In most states, school board election data is collected at the local level by school districts or counties. Few states centralize the information, but among those that do are California,¹ North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. California has one of the most comprehensive and easily accessible datasets, containing candidate name, incumbency status, occupation, date of filing, date of election, and number of votes received. Party affiliations and policy positions of the candidates, however, are not recorded. For 40 states,² including California, school board elections are non-partisan, meaning party affiliation does not appear on the ballot ([Carloni, 2025](#)).

Recent papers studying school board elections and their impact on schools have tried to approximate policy stances by linking candidate name to party affiliation or ethnicity. [Macartney and Singleton \(2018\)](#) use Democrat or Republican registration to link candidates to party affiliation and assess impact on racial segregation across schools; [Fischer \(2023\)](#) uses Census data to predict race of a candidate based on name and finds that Hispanic candidates support greater funding for Hispanic-majority schools. Still, difficulties in finding basic data

¹The collection of school board election information in California is not carried out by the state but rather by the California Elections Data Archive (CEDA), a joint project by the office of the California Secretary of State, the Center for California Studies, and the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the California State University, Sacramento.

²This is a recent change: Indiana only switched to partisan school board elections in July 2025. In general, states are revisiting the question of non-partisan elections. In 2025, legislators in 11 states introduced bills to allow party labels in school board elections. All bills were introduced by Republicans.

about election participants make it costly to identify more granular information related to candidate beliefs or policy positions.

In this paper, I track a particular partisan candidate: parental rights supporters. As a subset within the Republican party, they cannot be identified solely based on party affiliation. To address this challenge, I generate a novel dataset containing all school board candidates in California in 2022 and their stances concerning parental rights issues. Sources involved in this data collection include online news coverage, campaign websites, and social media profiles. I study California because of the size and diversity of the state and the variety of localities with differing compositions of conservatives and liberals.

To generate the dataset, I use an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered Large Language Model (LLM), ChatGPT-4, to “flag” which school boards in 2022 may have had a parental rights candidate. I do not use ChatGPT-4 to code individual candidates as ChatGPT-4 coding does not match human coding closely enough to be reliable on its own. In a pilot test, I selected a random sample of 156 candidates and a limited survey for both human coders and ChatGPT-4 to complete for each candidate. Human coders and ChatGPT-4 matched 87.8% of the time. In benchmarking ChatGPT-4 to human coding, ChatGPT-4 had a specificity rate of 41.5% but a sensitivity rate of 93.5%, indicating that ChatGPT-4 was reporting too many candidates as parental rights candidates. As a result, I do not use ChatGPT-4 coding as the final classification of parental rights candidates.

To identify school boards with some likelihood of having a parental rights candidate, I send automated queries about every school board candidate to ChatGPT-4 and collect ChatGPT-4’s responses in a dataset. School boards that do not have any candidates characterized by ChatGPT-4 as sympathetic to parental rights are coded as having no parental rights candidates. School boards that have, according to ChatGPT-4, at least one parental rights candidate are assigned to a small research team, which manually researches and codes every candidate running for those school boards.

In short, I use ChatGPT-4 to filter out school boards with low likelihood of a parental rights

advocate and employ human coders to take the remaining school boards and manually code the individual candidates. The only candidates characterized as parental rights supporters in the final dataset are candidates coded by humans.

3.1 Robustness Checks

To check whether ChatGPT-4 is mistakenly filtering out parental rights candidates, I randomly select 15 school boards that were not flagged by ChatGPT and assign their candidates to human coders. The research assistants are not informed they are coding candidates of un-flagged school boards. In this "un-flagged" sample, assistants found a parental rights candidate in 6.7% of school boards and coded 1.9% of candidates as parental rights candidates. In contrast, research assistants found a parental rights candidate in 51.3% of flagged school boards and coded 17.0% of candidates as parental rights candidates. This suggests it is possible ChatGPT-4 missed approximately 10 school boards with parental rights candidates.³

3.2 Querying an AI Bot with Internet Browsing Capabilities

When a user asks a ChatGPT-4 model – or the more current ChatGPT-5 model – a question that requires current information, ChatGPT queries Bing’s search index through Bing’s API. The bot pulls keywords from a user’s query and enters them into the search engine. Once the LLM has compiled a list of relevant webpages, it will attempt to access a subset of these pages. Which pages the LLM selects depends on factors like relevance to the query, authority of the domain, and depth of content.

Once a website is selected, ChatGPT-4 retrieves the HTML, CSS, and JavaScript content that creates the text of the webpage. It does not crawl the website; that is, it does not

³ChatGPT did not perform as well in identifying school boards with liberal anti-parental rights candidates. Of the candidates in un-flagged school boards, research assistants found a liberal identity candidate in 26.7% of school boards, compared to 53.3% of the flagged school boards. They coded 9.2% of candidates in un-flagged boards as an anti-parental rights candidate and coded 19.7% of candidates as such in flagged boards. This suggests that 39 school boards with liberal identity candidates were missed, which could change the results of this project significantly. This paper is therefore focused on parental rights candidates only.

interact with hidden or dynamically generated content. Rather, it retrieves the text that is displayed on the page. With the text retrieved, ChatGPT-4 then uses natural language understanding (NLU) to summarize key points from the website and assess its relevance to the user’s question.

After repeating this process for every website selected, ChatGPT-4 formulates a general answer to the user’s question based on consistency across multiple sources, relevance to the question, and perceived accuracy of the content. It removes details it tags as extraneous. ChatGPT-4 cannot access websites that are blocked from search engines, are behind paywalls, or require an account. It cannot, for example, access posts on Twitter/X or a full article in the Sacramento Bee. This means information gathered from ChatGPT-4 is biased toward free news sources like the Orange County Register and professional campaign websites.

3.3 Generation of Dataset

To gather ChatGPT-4’s assessment of every candidate, I use a template-based query system built in Python and a browser tool, Selenium WebDriver, to automatically submit multiple questions about every candidate to an online conversation with ChatGPT-4. This allows me to send a question to ChatGPT-4 every few seconds for as many hours as the ChatGPT-4 account will allow. Multiple ChatGPT-4 accounts allow me to send questions about multiple candidates simultaneously. I then use a web scraping code to scrape the ChatGPT-4 conversation as it dynamically updates. By exporting ChatGPT’s responses to a spreadsheet, I turn ChatGPT-4’s summaries based on its online research into a dataset.

I ask the same 18 questions of each of the 2,619 candidates, totaling 47,142 questions. The full ChatGPT-4 questionnaire is in [Section](#) . An obvious alternative to this method is asking ChatGPT-4 the main question, which is: “Did District have a school board candidate in 2022 running in support of parental rights?” or “Did District have a school board candidate in 2022 running against parental rights?” ChatGPT-4, however, has a well-documented propensity to “hallucinate,” or generate baseless responses. This is especially likely when ChatGPT cannot

find enough information to make a fact-based response ([Burman, 2025](#)). Standard methods for reducing ChatGPT hallucinations – also called “prompt engineering” – include breaking up a single complex question into several simpler questions, giving examples of a correct answer, and reiterating on a theme to give ChatGPT multiple opportunities to search for relevant information ([OpenAI, 2025](#)).

I follow these recommendations in the ChatGPT questionnaire. First, in questions 1 and 2, I prompt ChatGPT to conduct a broad search for a candidate and summarize their stances generally. Questions that ask for kinds of proof (questions 3, 8, 12, and 15) are used to repeatedly provide ChatGPT with examples of appropriate evidence.

3.4 Identifying Parental Rights Supporters

Due to the wide-ranging nature of the parental rights movement, I did not seek to define candidates with a single question. Rather, in my dataset, a candidate is labeled a parental rights supporter if they do any of the following:

- Say the following phrases to describe their campaign: “parental rights,” “parents’ rights,” “voice of the parents,” “parental oversight,” “parents first,” “we do not co-parent with the government,” or “leave the parenting to the parents.”
- Support greater parental oversight of the curriculum
- Say schools are indoctrinating, brainwashing, or perpetuating propaganda or misinformation
- Support masking and/or vaccinations being left up to parents
- Advocate for the removal of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Marxist ideology, or the 1619 project from schools and bring it up unprompted
- Oppose diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statements or programs
- Bring up diversity, equity, “social justice,” “racial justice,” “anti-racism,” or “Black Lives Matter” in a negative manner and do so unprompted
- Advocate for renaming schools or mascots for conservative reasons (for example, renaming a school after President Reagan)
- Criticizes books in schools for conservative reasons (for example, criticizing a LGBTQ+ romance book in the school library)

- Oppose LGBTQ+ identities and/or information about sex being shared at school (for example, opposing the display of a gay pride flag)
- Support a notification policy where schools are required to notify parents if their child is going by a different gender at school

This is a loose definition to allow for advocacy of different parts of the parental rights platform.

I combined this dataset of candidates and their beliefs with district-level demographic and economic data from the Common Core of Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), as well as student performance data from the California Department of Education. Precinct-level voting data from the 2020 presidential election was pulled from the MIT Election Lab and mapped onto school districts using spacial mapping software. Data on George Floyd protests came from Harvard University’s Crowd Counting Consortium. Finally, I collected information on virtual, hybrid, and in-person learning in California from the COVID-19 School Data Hub.

3.5 Summary Statistics

My dataset includes 755 electoral contests from 500 school districts. Of the 755 contests, 227 of them included a parental rights candidate. Almost half of them, 101 contests, have a parental rights winner. Out of 2,619 candidates in 2022, 300 are supporters of parental rights. To determine what kind of districts have an electoral contest with a parental rights candidate, I conduct an OLS regression with a parental rights indicator variable as the outcome variable (see [Table 8](#)). I find districts with parental rights candidates have, on average, higher enrollment, higher housing costs, and a larger proportion of the population is White. Districts that experienced a George Floyd protest and had high support for President Donald Trump also were more likely to have a parental rights candidate.

4 Empirical Strategy

Isolating the impact of a parental rights school board member on district student enrollment is difficult because the success of such a candidate is likely related to unobserved traits of a district. For example, school districts where parental rights candidates win might also be districts where many parents are already dissatisfied and planning to move their child to a new district by the next school year. It would then be incorrect to conclude that parental rights board members cause parents to move their children to other districts. To handle endogenous variation, I use a regression discontinuity (RD) approach at the electoral contest level, using only narrowly decided contests to identify the causal impact of a parental rights winner.

I construct the running variable in my first regression discontinuity design by calculating the difference in vote percentage between the least popular parental rights winner (loser) and the most popular non-parental rights loser (winner). If there are multiple candidates and multiple winners, it is possible to have two possible calculations for a single electoral contest – one where a parental rights candidate is a marginal winner and one where another parental rights candidate is a marginal loser. In this case, I select the smallest difference or the most marginal winner or loser.

I estimate the following regression using the MSE-optimal bandwidth ([Calonico et al., 2020](#)):

$$Y_d = \alpha + \beta D_{cd} + \gamma_1 x_{cd} + \gamma_2 D_{cd} \cdot x_{cd} + \gamma_3 Z_d + \varepsilon_d \quad (4.1)$$

In [Eq. \(4.1\)](#), c is the electoral contest for each school district d , x_{cd} is the running variable, and $D_{cd} = 1(x_{cd} > 0)$ indicates whether a marginal parental rights candidate won an electoral contest on a school board in 2022. A positive value indicates the most marginal parental rights candidate won the election while a negative value indicates they lost. Coefficient β is the parameter of interest, identifying the effect of adding an additional parental rights candidate to the school board on Y_d , student enrollment in traditional public schools in the

district in the fall of 2023. This estimate can be taken as causal if only assignment to school board is discontinuous when vote margin for the most marginal parental rights candidate, x_c , changes from negative to positive.

I cluster standard errors at school district level because the treatment of an additional school board member is at the district or school board level. Z_d represents pre-election district enrollment. I include lagged enrollment controls to reduce variance as a result of the small sample size. I do not use weights as I am interested in the effect of an additional parental rights board members on district enrollment rather than the effect of an additional parental rights member on the average student’s district enrollment. All enrollment variables are the log of enrollment; as such β should be interpreted as the difference in district enrollment by percentage increase or decrease.

In the next section, I conduct the following RD validity checks: I test for manipulation in the running variable, check for discontinuities in variables other than vote share, and run placebo tests on pre-election enrollment growth. Through these tests, I argue that the identifying assumption of a regression discontinuity design holds: only the election of an marginal parental rights candidate is discontinuous as the vote margin of candidate crosses zero.

4.1 Validity Tests

I first test for a discontinuity in vote share around the threshold as any manipulation of the running variable around the cutoff would nullify a causal interpretation (Imbens & Lemieux, 2008). Section 7 demonstrates continuity of vote density among parental rights candidates around the cutoff point, with the shaded area denoting the confidence interval.

In Table 1, I present RD estimates of discontinuities in covariates at the threshold. For these estimates, I follow Eq. (4.1) but replace the outcome variable with each covariate. I do not include control variables and again use the MSE-optimal bandwidth and cluster standard errors by district.

All covariates are balanced. In [Table 1](#), columns 1-4 of Panel A indicate that the observed political context is not significantly different between districts with a parental rights winner and districts with unsuccessful parental rights candidates. Districts with a parental rights winner do not have significantly more support for Trump at either the district or county level. In terms of how different the district and county are in their political compositions - whether the district is more conservative than the county - the districts also do not differ significantly. A binary variable that tracks the occurrence of a George Floyd protest, an indicator of local support for the Black Lives Matter movement, also does not vary at the cutoff. In Panel B of [Table 1](#), I demonstrate that size of the district, as captured by enrollment at the district level, does not experience a discontinuity at the cutoff although the magnitude is large. Voter turnout, relative to the size of district enrollment, is not significant and neither is the number of school board seats open or whether the election was on-cycle. In Panel C, I show that the share of students who are Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, socioeconomically disadvantaged, English learners, homeless, and failing standardized testing, do not show up as discontinuous at the threshold.

I also test for discontinuities in enrollment trends prior to the election. In [Table 2](#), column 1, my outcome variable is the log of district enrollment in 2021, the year before the election. In column 1 and 2, I experiment with adding more or less years of enrollment as control variables and do not find differing results. The estimates in [Table 2](#), columns 3 and 4 are specific to school districts where housing prices are above the median in California. I find that enrollment is not significantly different between districts with a parental rights winner and districts with unsuccessful parental rights candidates. See [Fig. 2](#) and [c3](#) for visual evidence of no discontinuities in pre-election enrollment.

As I conduct subgroup analyses in my main results, I also check for discontinuities in enrollment trends for Black, Hispanic, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and homeless students, in high cost districts. Again, I find no discontinuities in enrollment growth for these subgroups prior to the 2022 election. See [Table 3](#) for estimates and [Fig. 4](#), [Fig. 5](#), [Fig. 6](#), and

[Fig. 7](#) for graphical depictions.

5 Results

In this section, I present my main results, including several heterogeneity analyses. I follow this with several robustness checks and then discuss possible mechanisms for changes in enrollment. As every candidate with a positive vote margin was successfully elected to a seat in 2022 and every candidate with a negative vote margin lost their electoral contest, the first stage of the regression discontinuity design is straightforward.

Including all districts in my sample with a marginal parental rights winner or loser, I do not find a significant difference in overall enrollment. [Table 4](#), column 1, presents these results, with an estimate of 1.3% and p-value of 0.282. This null result suggests that school board election outcomes are not a primary concern for families when deciding where to enroll their children. It is possible, however, that election outcomes are a secondary concern; a parental rights loss may be relevant only to a household that is already open to leaving an area.

To test whether school board election outcomes are more relevant for families considering an exit, I change my outcome variable from log of total enrollment to log of enrollment for specifically socioeconomically disadvantaged students. I again control for past enrollment. I find in districts with a parental rights winner, enrollment is 14.4% greater than districts with an unsuccessful parental rights candidate. The p-value is significant at 0.041. See [Table 4](#), column 3 for these results, and [Figure 1](#) for a graph depicting this discontinuity. As the median enrollment for socioeconomically disadvantaged students in close contests is 3,275 students, this is, on average, a difference of 471 students. While this is a large number, the median size of a district in my sample is 8,312 students, so a departure of 471 students would translate to a 5% decrease. As noted earlier, school districts on average experienced a 1.7% decrease in California during this time period. In my sample, a quarter of the districts

experienced greater than 5% decrease, with the most extreme case being a 12% decrease.

To further test this hypothesis, I look at districts with high housing prices as these districts have already experienced steady decline in enrollment in recent years. I define high cost districts as districts with a one bedroom apartment annual rent above the median in California in 2019 (\$13,284/year). I re-run my specification on this sub-sample and find a 1.9% decrease in total enrollment in high cost districts with a marginal parental rights loser. The p-value is not significant at 12% but it suggests school board election outcomes may be more relevant in a high cost environment.

5.1 Sub-Group Analyses

In light of the polarization literature that finds minorities may be mobilized by polarization when racial identity is considered salient, I also test whether Black students in expensive districts are more likely to leave. Updating the outcome variable to the log of enrollment for Black students and keeping the sample to only high cost districts, I find Black student enrollment in districts with a parental rights winner is lower by 17%. For Hispanic students, I find the enrollment is larger by 6.6%. Both estimates are significant. See [Table 5](#) for details and [Fig. 10](#) and [Fig. 11](#) for a graphical depiction.

5.2 Robustness Checks

To test the robustness of my results, I adjust two parameters: the vote margin bandwidth and the definition of a parental rights candidate. To test that my results are not sensitive to bandwidth size, I re-run my main regression using a smaller alternative bandwidth of 0.05. Due to the small sample, the estimates of [Table 6](#) are not reliable. Yet for all significant main results - increases in socioeconomically disadvantaged and Hispanic students and decreases in Black students - the sign of the coefficient is correct and the results remain significant with p-values below 0.05.

5.3 Possible Mechanisms

An important question is whether the observed difference in public school enrollment reflects students leaving a region entirely or simply switching to or from charter schools or private schools. To investigate this possibility, I re-estimate [Eq. \(4.1\)](#) with socioeconomically disadvantaged student enrollment in traditional public schools as my outcome variable and constraining my sample to including school districts with charter schools available within their borders. If the response by disadvantaged students is concentrated within districts with charter school options, then it would be reasonable to conclude that students may be switching. Yet in [Table 7](#) I find a null result in column 1. I repeat the exercise for districts with high housing prices and the subgroups of Black and Hispanic students. However, less than half of the high cost districts have charter schools available. When I re-run my specification, I find null results for both Black and Hispanic student enrollment (see [Table 7](#), columns 2 and 3).

Taken together, these results suggest that students leaving districts with unsuccessful parental rights candidates are not switching to nearby charter schools. Rather, the evidence is consistent with the interpretation that students are relocating out of a district to other parts of the state or out of the state entirely.

6 Conclusion

This paper provides the first causal evidence that school board election outcomes can shape household schooling choices at the margin. Leveraging close 2022 California contests and a regression discontinuity design, I show that districts with a parental rights winner have significantly higher numbers of socioeconomically disadvantaged students enrolled in 2023. In high cost-of-living districts already experiencing declines, I find electing a parental rights candidate lowers Black student enrollment and increases Hispanic enrollment. These asymmetric responses suggest that local election outcomes can act as a tipping factor for

groups whose vulnerabilities or racial identities are rendered salient by local campaigns, even if broader financial pressures remain the primary driver of enrollment change.

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7 Tables and Figures

Figure 1: McCrary Density Test at the Cutoff

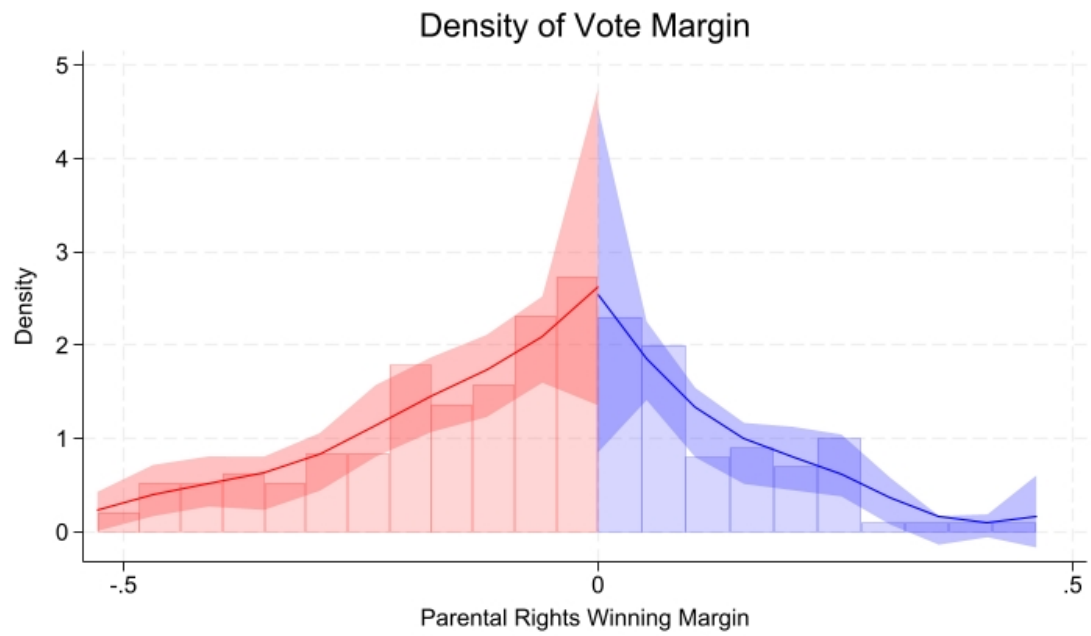


Table 1: Balance Checks

<i>Panel A: Political Factors</i>				
	(1) District support for Trump	(2) County support for Trump	(3) Diff in district and county	(4) George Floyd protest
Vote margin > 0	0.033 (4.348)	-1.732 (4.450)	1.202 (2.712)	0.040 (0.216)
<i>Panel B: Electoral Contest Traits</i>				
	(1) Enrollment	(2) Voter turnout	(3) Number of seats	(4) On-cycle election
Vote margin > 0	-5216 (3896)	1.143 (1.545)	-0.282 (0.343)	0.003 (0.003)
<i>Panel C: District Demographics</i>				
	(1) % Asian	(2) % Black	(3) % Hispanic	(4) % White
Vote margin > 0	5.481 (3.980)	-0.533 (0.618)	-12.490 (9.107)	6.729 (8.040)
	(5) % Socio-econ. disadvantaged	(6) % English learners	(7) % Homeless	(8) % Standard not met
Vote margin > 0	-3.718 (10.248)	-0.045 (0.992)	2.523 (0.598)	-2.039 (1.681)

Notes: Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Significance: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. All percentages are in percentage points rather than decimals. In Panel C, column 8, "Standard not met" refers to the percentage of students whose standard testing results are below standard for the state.

Table 2: Pre-Election Analysis

	(1) 2021 Enrollment, All Districts	(2) 2021 Enrollment, All Districts	(3) 2021 Enrollment, Pricey Districts	(4) 2021 Enrollment, Pricey Districts
Vote margin > 0	-0.003 (0.014)	-0.000 (0.014)	-0.012 (0.017)	-0.014 (0.015)
Bandwidth	0.125	0.122	0.128	0.129
Controls	2018, 2019 enroll.	2019 enroll.	2018, 2019 enroll.	2019 enroll.
Observations	108	108	74	74

Notes: Coefficients are RD estimates; standard errors in parentheses. $*p < 0.10$, $*p < 0.05$, $*p < 0.01$. Both outcome variables and control variables are logged enrollment to capture percentage change.

Figure 2: Pre-Election Analysis, All Districts

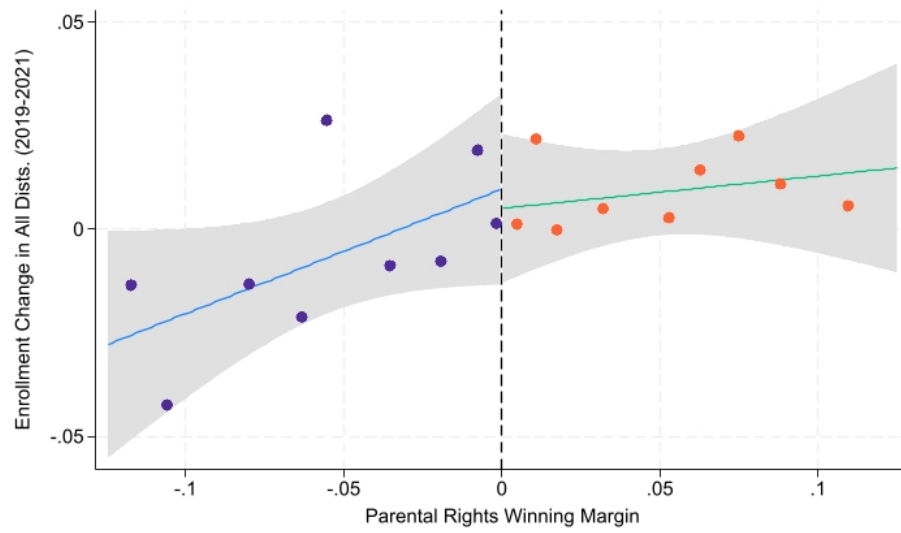


Figure 3: Pre-Election Analysis, Pricey Districts

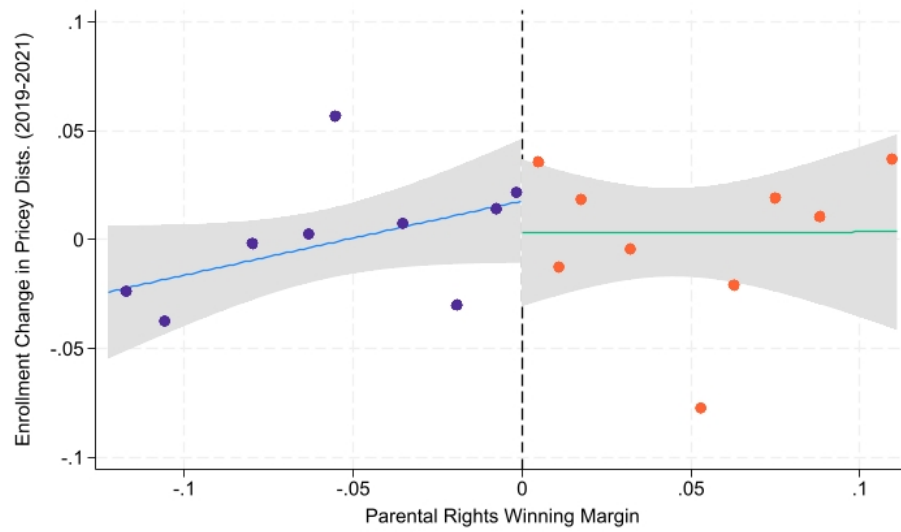


Table 3: Pre-election Sub-group Analysis in Pricey Districts

	(1) 2021 Enrollment, Black	(2) 2021 Enrollment, Hispanic	(3) 2021 Enrollment, Socio-econ. Disadv.	(4) 2021 Enrollment, Homeless
Vote margin > 0	0.020 (0.079)	0.028 (0.020)	0.073 (0.056)	0.153 (0.123)
Bandwidth	0.099	0.098	0.139	0.096
Controls	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.
Observations	59	59	76	59

Notes: Coefficients are RD estimates; standard errors in parentheses. $*p < 0.10$, $*p < 0.05$, $*p < 0.01$.
Past enrollment controls include enrollment in years 2018 and 2019. All enrollment variables are logged variables. RD estimates should be interpreted as percentage change in enrollment.

Figure 4: Black Students in Pricey Districts

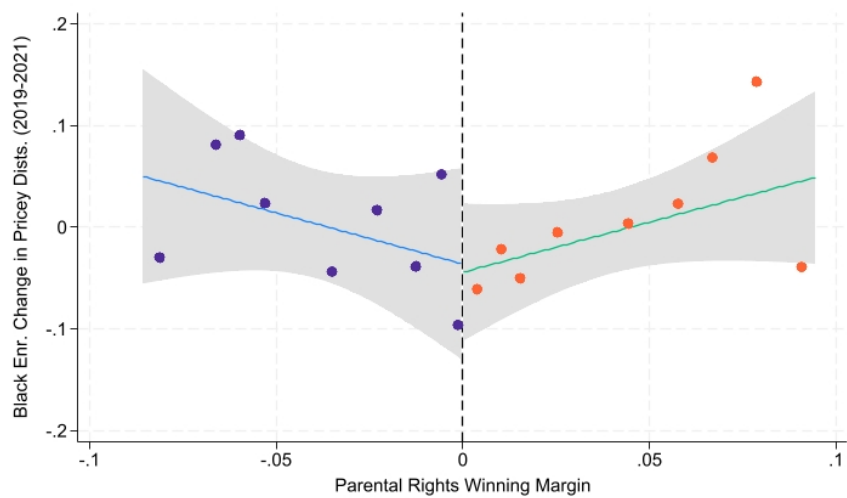


Figure 5: Hispanic Students in Pricey Districts

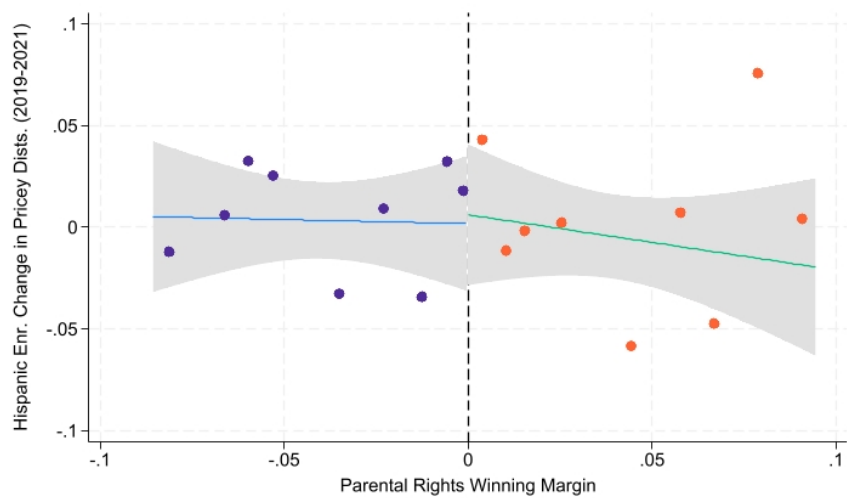


Figure 6: Disadvantaged Students in Pricey Districts

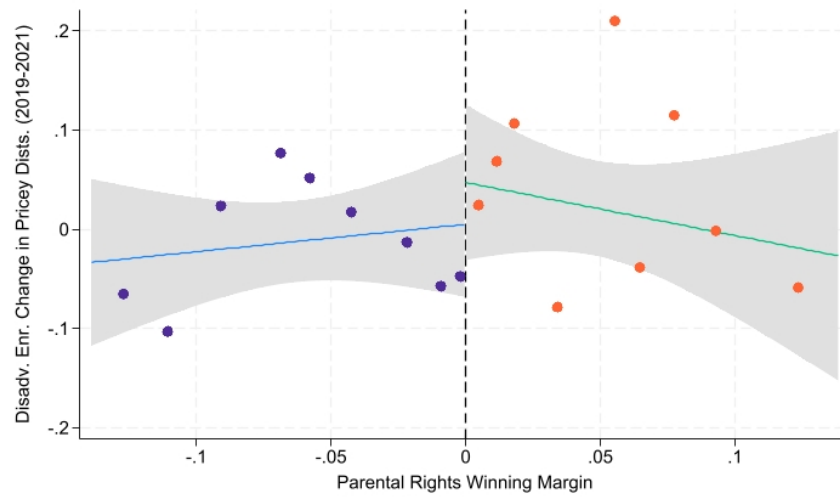


Figure 7: Homeless Students in Pricey Districts

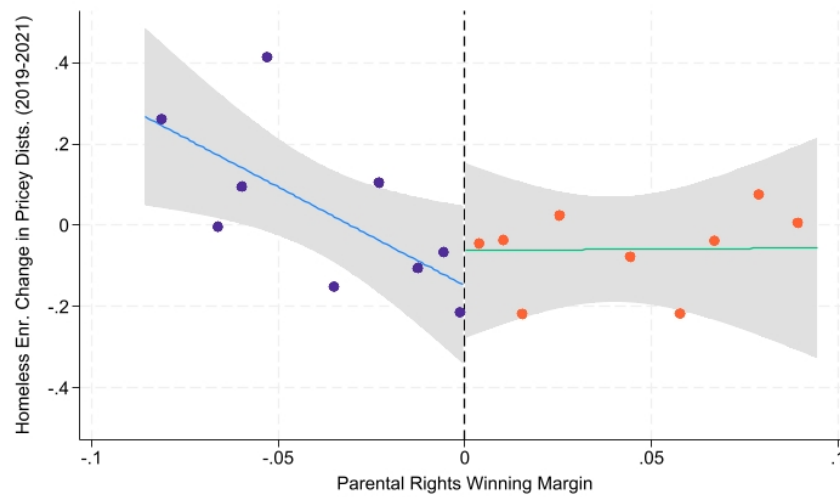


Table 4: Impact of Parental Rights Candidate on Total Enrollment

	(1) 2023 Enrollment, All Districts	(2) 2023 Enrollment, Pricey Districts	(3) 2023 Disadv. Enroll., All Districts
Vote margin > 0	0.013 (0.012)	0.019 (0.012)	0.144** (0.070)
Bandwidth	0.156	0.100	0.106
Controls	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.
Observations	125	59	97

Notes: Coefficients are conventional RD estimates. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 8: Impact of Parental Rights Winners on Enrollment,
All Districts

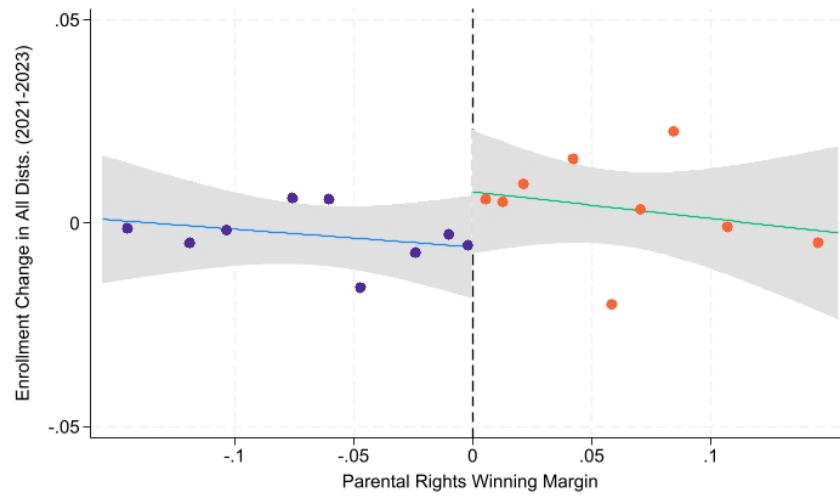


Figure 9: Impact of Parental Rights Winners on Enrollment,
Pricey Districts

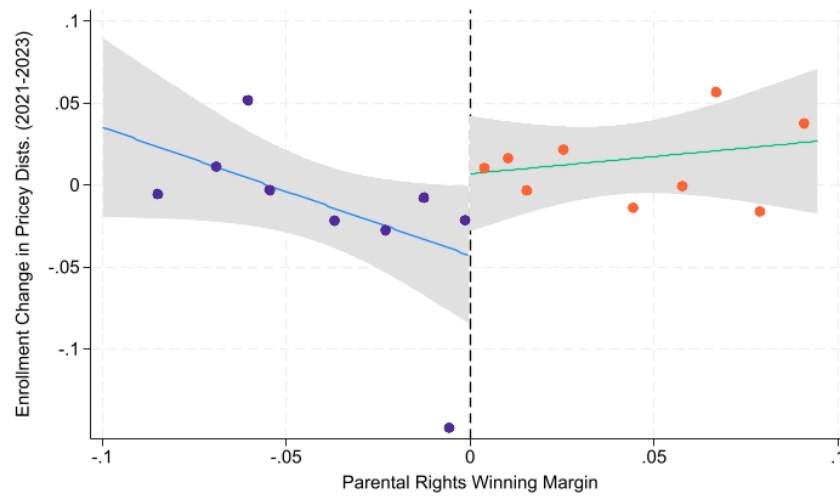


Table 5: Sub-group Analysis in Pricey Districts

	(1) 2023 Enrollment, Black	(2) 2023 Enrollment, Hispanic	(3) 2023 Enrollment, Socio-econ. Disadv.	(4) 2023 Enrollment, Homeless
Vote margin > 0	0.171* (0.095)	0.066** (0.031)	0.129** (0.058)	0.679*** (0.198)
Bandwidth	0.096	0.097	0.092	0.119
Controls	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.
Observations	59	59	58	72

Notes: Coefficients are RD estimates; standard errors in parentheses. $*p < 0.10$, $**p < 0.05$, $***p < 0.01$. Past enrollment controls include enrollment in years 2018, 2019, and 2021. All enrollment variables are logged variables. RD estimates should be interpreted as percentage change in enrollment.

Figure 10: Impact of Parental Rights Winners on Black Enrollment, Pricey Districts

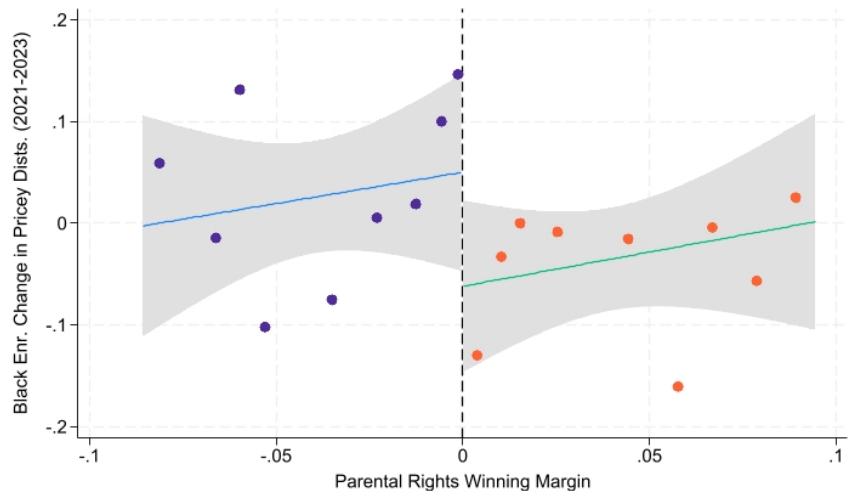


Figure 11: Impact of Parental Rights Winners on Hispanic Enrollment, Pricey Districts

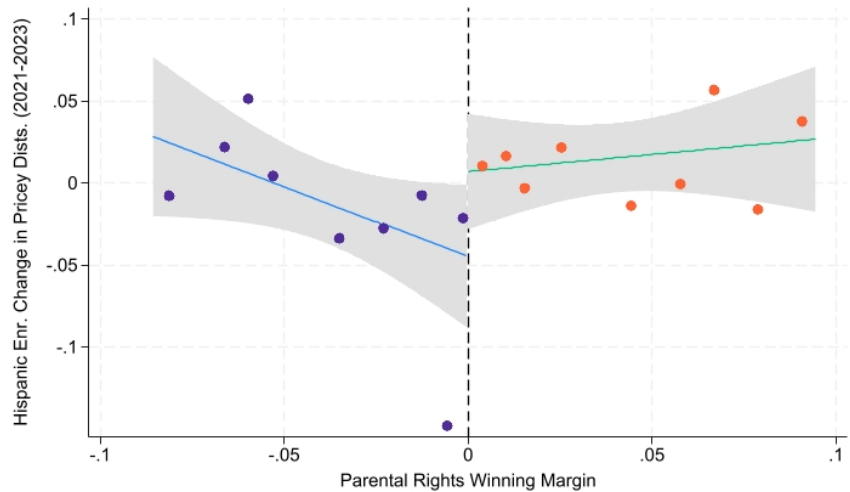


Figure 12: Impact of Parental Rights Winners on Disadv. Enrollment, Pricey Districts

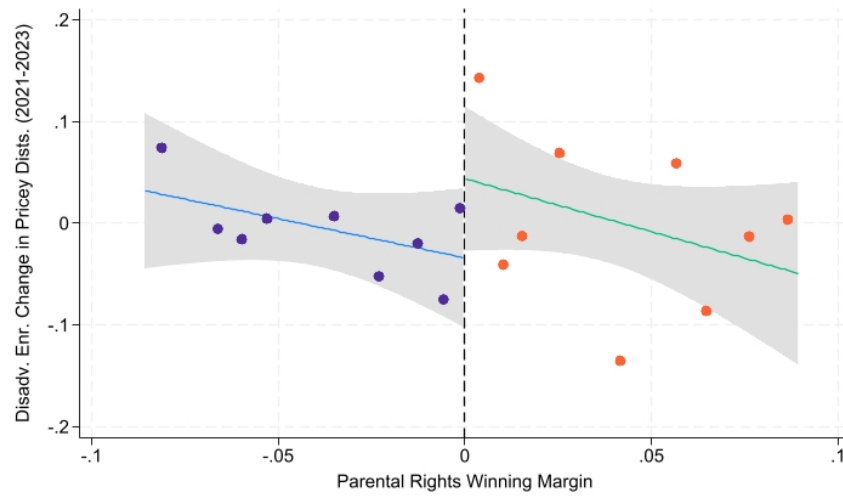


Figure 13: Impact of Parental Rights Winners on Homeless Enrollment, Pricey Districts

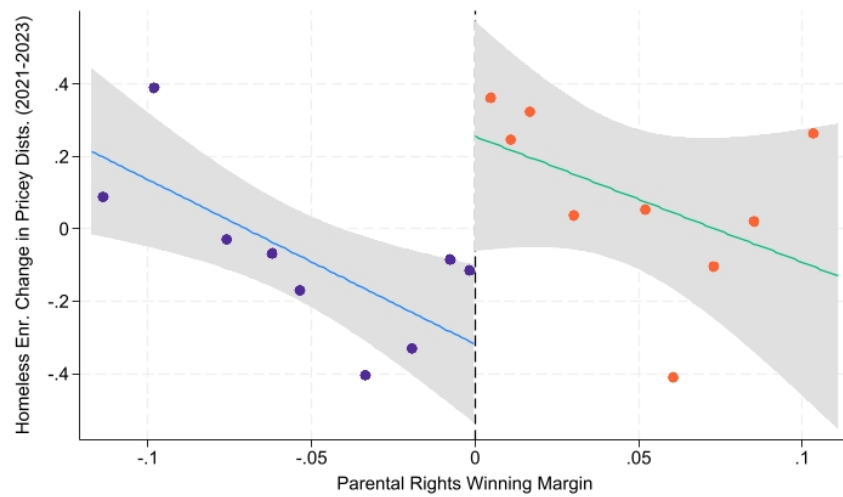


Table 6: Robustness Checks on Main Results

	(1) 2023 Disadv. Enroll., All Districts	(2) 2023 Total Enroll., Pricey Districts	(3) 2023 Black Enroll., Pricey Districts	(4) 2023 Hispanic Enroll., Pricey Districts
Vote margin > 0	0.158*** (0.061)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.397*** (0.154)	0.073** (0.036)
Bandwidth	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Controls	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.
Observations	52	35	35	35

Notes: Coefficients are RD estimates; standard errors in parentheses. $*p < 0.10$, $**p < 0.05$, $***p < 0.01$.

Past enrollment controls include enrollment in years 2018 and 2019. All enrollment variables are logged variables. RD estimates should be interpreted as percentage change in enrollment.

Table 7: Impact on Traditional Public School Enrollment
in Districts with Charters

	(1) 2023 Disadv. Enroll., All Districts	(2) 2023 Black Enroll., Pricey Districts	(3) 2023 Hispanic Enroll., Pricey Districts
Vote margin > 0	0.026 (0.066)	0.027 (0.100)	-0.001 (0.019)
Bandwidth	0.136	0.103	0.104
Controls	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.	Past Enroll.
Observations	52	20	21

Notes: Coefficients are conventional RD estimates. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 8: Linear regression Predicting Parental Rights Candidate

	Dependent variable: <i>Has a PR Candidate</i>	
	Coefficient	(Robust SE)
% of Pop. that is White	0.003**	(0.001)
Had a George Floyd protest	-0.266*	(0.129)
Votes share for Pres. Trump	0.003	(0.003)
George Floyd protestX		
Votes share for Trump	0.009***	(0.003)
Political diff. between		
District and County	0.001	(0.003)
Months of Virtual Learning	-0.012	(0.009)
% of Students Failing	-0.004*	(0.002)
Num of Seats Open	0.054**	(0.022)
Avg Annual Rent (1000s)	0.010*	(0.006)
Ln(Enrollment 2021)	0.119***	(0.016)
Constant	-1.078***	(0.260)
Observations		597
Clusters (district_id)		387
F-stat (10, 386)		19.73
R-squared		0.250
Root MSE		0.408

Notes: Huber–White robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by `district_id`.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

A Appendix

Figure 14: ChatGPT-4 Survey

Does 2022 District school board candidate Name have a website of any kind? If so, please summarize some of the opinions they express on their website. This could be described as "issues" they're concerned about or their "platform."
Conduct a live search to answer this question: Overall, would you say Name is a "parental rights" candidate? Say "Yes" or "No" and then elaborate, in detail.
To be clear - did you make this conclusion because of STATEMENTS they made, TRAININGS they received, ENDORSEMENTS they received, AFFILIATIONS they have, or something else?
Please answer ONLY with "Yes" or "No" to answer this question: Does Name ever use the phrases, "parental rights" or "parents' rights"? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No". Do NOT give an explanation.
Please answer ONLY with "Yes" or "No" or "Candidate did not speak on this" to answer this question: Has Name ever stated support for greater parental oversight of curriculum? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No" or "Candidate did not speak on this". Do NOT give an explanation.
Conduct a live search to answer this question: Did Name ever say anything to suggest that schools are indoctrinating children? Say "Yes" or "No" and then elaborate.
Perform a live search to answer this question: Overall, would you say Name supports or opposes diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs? Answer with "pro-DEI" or "anti-DEI" or "neither" and then elaborate, in detail.
Did you make this conclusion because of STATEMENTS they made, TRAININGS they received, ENDORSEMENTS they received, AFFILIATIONS they have, or something else?
Please answer ONLY with "Yes" or "No" to answer this question: Does Name ever use the words, "diversity" or "equity"? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No". Do NOT give an explanation.
Please respond with ONLY "Yes" or "No" to answer the following question: Has Name ever used the phrase, "ethnic studies"? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No". Do NOT give an explanation.
Perform a live search to answer this question: Is Name an "anti-Critical Race Theory" candidate? Say "Yes" or "No" and then explain, in detail.
Just to be clear, did you make this conclusion because of STATEMENTS they made, TRAININGS they received, ENDORSEMENTS they received, AFFILIATIONS they have, or something else?
Please answer ONLY with "Yes" or "No" to answer this question: Did Name ever say the phrase "Critical Race Theory" or "CRT"? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No". Do NOT give an explanation.
Perform a live search to answer this question: Overall would you say that Name supports or opposes LGBTQ+ causes or programs? Please answer "pro-LGBTQ+", "anti-LGBTQ+" or "neither" and then elaborate, in detail.
To be clear, did you make this conclusion because of STATEMENTS they made, TRAININGS they received, ENDORSEMENTS they received, AFFILIATIONS they have, or something else?
Please answer ONLY with "Yes" or "No" to answer this question: Has Name ever said specifically that parents should be informed if their child is going by a different gender at school? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No". Do NOT give an explanation.
Please answer ONLY with "Yes" or "No" to answer this question: Has Name ever said anything in defense of transgender students or people? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No". Do NOT give an explanation.
Please answer ONLY with "Yes" or "No" to answer this question: Has Name made public statements using ANY of the following phrases: "detransition", "gender confusion", "gender ideology", or "radical gender theory"? Again, respond ONLY with "Yes" or "No". Do NOT give an explanation.

A Rubric for Undergraduate Coders

OVERALL GUIDELINES

Materials that can be used to look for evidence You can use the campaign or professional website of the candidate, their social media profiles or posts, videos of them, their participation in school board meetings, their job, or news coverage of the candidate (whether a news article, radio interview, video, etc.) to answer these questions. For these questions, do not use other people’s social media profiles, posts, comments, blogs or online forum posts. For example, if a candidate has no statements, affiliations, trainings, or endorsements, to indicate they are a parental rights candidate but another person in the community states they are, you must code this person as NOT a parental rights candidate.

The goal is to only make a claim that you can defend with online sources. Your goal is NOT to guess what is in their heart. In short, try to imagine someone who has the opposite political affiliation but is equally earnest in coding accurately. The goal is that you and this imagined peer would code the same. In general, resist the urge to put candidates into clear and coherent boxes. Do not assume that someone having one belief means they must have other beliefs that seem similar to you. You may often find yourself suspecting that someone is, indeed, a “parental rights” candidate but nevertheless coding them as not. Or that someone is a “diversity and equity” candidate but coding them as not. This is completely fine. We will miss some people in order to identify candidates who inarguably hold certain views.

Common issues in coding

No information:

For every question where you simply don’t have any information, you can code, “No information.”

There is little information:

First, remember these candidates are from 2022. If you cannot find anything on them, be sure to check their social media from two years ago. Second, if you have searched extensively and cannot find any information, assume you have full information and write, “No,” to questions that only allow you to answer with “Yes” or “No.” If after 30 minutes of searching, you cannot find any information about a candidate’s stances, move on to the next candidate.

Statements:

A graphic with words that the candidate has posted on their website or social media page counts as a “statement.” For example, a graphic on their Instagram that has the words “Stand Against CRT” would count as a “statement” made about CRT. A retweet will also be counted as a “statement” by the candidate.

Endorsements:

This must be an official endorsement. Recommendations, affiliations, or general praise do not count.

Affiliations:

Affiliations can be anything from volunteering or working for an organization or inviting a guest speaker to an event. It can also include being a donor to another campaign or endorsing another campaign (for e.g., a candidate saying publicly they endorse Kevin Kiley). It can also include accepting an award from an organization.

“Neither”:

Neither should only be used when the question offers it as an option and it will typically be used when a candidate does not talk about certain issues (for e.g., DEI) or if, when they do talk about the issue, they don’t express an opinion (for e.g., “On the topic of DEI, I will do what the rest of the board wants.”) If a candidate gives such conflicting signals that you truly do not know how to code them, you can also code as “neither.”

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PARENTAL RIGHTS

1. Did the candidate ever say the following phrases (in a positive manner) to describe their stances: “parental rights,” “parents’ rights,” “voice of the parents,” “parental oversight,” “parents first,” “we do not co-parent with the government”? Or describe themselves as a “parent advocate,” or as someone who “represents parents,” “works for the parents,” or supports the “Bill of Parental Rights”? Please answer “Yes” if they have done ANY of these things. Please answer “No” otherwise.

Many candidates will say they encourage parental involvement and want to engage with parents. They may also say they support board transparency. Do not code “Yes” if they have only said these things and have not said any of the phrases in the question. If you suspect they are a parental rights candidate but they are refusing to use parental rights buzzwords, code “No.”

2. Has this candidate ever stated support for greater parental oversight of curriculum? Respond only with "Yes" or "No."

If a candidate uses the phrase, “parental oversight” or says anything critical about specifically the curriculum, code this as “Yes.” If they mention more parent involvement but do not mention curriculum, materials, books, language used by teachers or staff, or homework, code

this as “No.” For example, if they say they want to help parents get involved, code this as “No.” If they say that they want to help parents review the books assigned to classes, code this as “Yes.” If it is completely unclear to you, write, “No.”

3. Has this candidate ever stated that math and reading (often called the fundamentals or traditional subjects) have been neglected for other topics?

They may not name what other topics the fundamentals have been neglected for. It is common to identify the other topics as being “political.” They also may use the phrase, “back to basics.”

4. Did this candidate ever say anything to suggest that schools are indoctrinating children? Say “Yes” or “No.”

Other words that can be considered equivalent to “indoctrination” include “propaganda,” “brainwashed,” or “hidden agendas.” Suggesting that schools are currently teaching theories that are subjective, untrue, biased, or harmful to children counts as indoctrinating children. A candidate saying they do not want politics in school (or want to remove politics from school) does not count as a candidate suggesting schools are indoctrinating children. A candidate can be either liberal or conservative and believe schools are indoctrinating children.

5. Does this candidate say in their campaign that decisions around masking or vaccinations should be left up to parents? Say “Yes” or “No.”

Saying that schools stayed closed for too long is not the same as saying that masking and vaccinations should be left up to parents. Only code “Yes” to this question if the candidate discussed specifically masking or vaccination. If they do not say that decisions around masking or vaccination should be left up to parents but they are, in general, against masking, vaccinations, mask mandates or vaccine mandates, go ahead and code them as “Yes.” 6. Is this candidate pro- or anti-social-emotional learning (SEL) or neither? Answer with “pro-SEL” or “anti-SEL” or “neither.” Describing SEL as a “disguise” for something else (for example, Marxism or Critical Race Theory) should be considered an anti-SEL stance (unless the candidate speaks positively about Marxism or Critical Race Theory.) If someone teaches SEL for a living, code them as pro-SEL.

RACE

7. Does this candidate want to remove diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statements or programs? Answer with “Yes” or “No” or “Unclear.”

8. Does this candidate bring up diversity, equity, “social justice,” “racial justice,” “anti-racism,” or “Black Lives Matter” in a positive manner without a question prompt? Answer with “Yes” or “Did not bring up unprompted” or “Brought up as a negative.”

If the only time they bring up diversity is in response to a question about diversity then code their response as “Did not bring up unprompted.” An example of bringing up diversity

unprompted is if they list “social justice” as a part of their platform. Another example: If they never talk about diversity or equity but they have a Black Lives Matter graphic posted on their Instagram, code them as “Yes.”

9. Does this candidate think Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a threat? That is, do they think CRT is already in schools and needs to be removed or is about to enter schools and needs to be prevented from entering? Answer “Yes” or “No.”

If the candidate thinks Critical Race Theory does not exist in schools and they do NOT want to introduce it to schools, you would code this as “No.” If a candidate says they do not know if Critical Race Theory is in schools and do not plan to introduce it, code this as “No.” If they do not appear motivated to find it and root it out, you should code them as “No.” If they say that parents have asked them to look for it and they looked and did not find it, code them as “No.” They never talk about this subject, code as “No.”

If they say that CRT is not currently in the school district but is coming to other school districts and the schools need to guard against it, code this as “Yes.”

10. Does this candidate state that schools named after historical figures should be renamed (for any reason)? Answer “Yes” or “No.” Put the reason in your notes.

SEX & LGBTQ+ & GENDER

11. Does the candidate support “traditional values” or “family values”? Code “Yes” or “No.”

12. Does this candidate criticize sex education or books in the school library that deal with sex? In short, do they want less information about sex at school? Code “Yes” or “No”

If a candidate says schools are “sexualizing” students, code “Yes” to this question.

13. Does this candidate think LGBTQ+ identities or information should not be at school? Code “Yes” or “No.”

If a candidate wants to remove pride flags from classrooms or remove novels from school libraries featuring queer characters, code this question as “Yes.”

14. Has the candidate ever said that schools should be required to inform parents if their child is going by a different gender at school? Please answer simply “Yes” or “No.”

This is an ongoing debate in California and it should be clear when a candidate is referencing this debate.

15. Has the candidate ever said that schools should NOT be required to tell parents if their child is going by a different gender at school? Please answer simply “Yes” or “No.”

16. Do they bring up the well-being of transgender students in a positive manner and without a question prompt?

POLITICS

17. Are they Democrat, liberal, unclear, conservative, Republican, or Other Party?

Democrat means they publicly identify as a Democrat. If a Democrat club endorses them, we will code them as a Democrat (because they had to accept the endorsement). If a Democrat club recommends them but there is no endorsement, we will take them to be a liberal. Liberal means you believe from their public stances that they are liberal even though they have no public identification or official affiliation. Similar rules for conservative vs Republican. Unclear is if you can't tell. If someone is anti-COVID measures and nothing else, code them as unclear. Whenever you code, "liberal," or "conservative," put your reasons in your notes.

18. List endorsements for this candidate. If there are none, respond with "N/A."

Only include endorsements that you think can tell us something about their political stances. For example, an endorsement from their wife does not tell us very much so no need to include it. If you're unsure, include it. You can also include endorsements that are from other races in the last 10 years unless they explicitly disown it.

19. List any affiliations they had that you think could be relevant. If there are none, respond with "N/A"

20. List any trainings for political activity they had that you think could be relevant. If there are none, respond with "N/A"

INFORMATION

21. List all urls you used to code (be sure to include social media links)

22. Write in "Notes" anything that confused you, anything you struggled with.