

SAMPLE

Data for this report come from the YouthTruth student and teacher surveys administered during the 2025-26 school year. The student sample includes 139,562 middle and high school students across 430 schools, 122 districts, and 14 states. The teacher sample includes 10,062 teachers across 214 schools, 69 districts, and 9 states.

School context characteristics were drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data. Location classifications follow NCES locale definitions: large city schools are located in the principal city of a metropolitan statistical area with a total population of 250,000 or more; small city schools are located in a principal city with a population below 250,000; suburban schools are located outside a principal city within a metropolitan area; and rural schools are located outside any metropolitan area. Of the 430 schools in the student sample, 394 had NCES location data available. Among those, 42 were large city (11%), 68 small city (17%), 158 suburban (40%), and 126 rural (32%). School size is defined by enrollment: small schools have fewer than 300 students, medium schools have 300 to 999 students, and large schools have 1,000 or more students. The sample includes 163 small schools (38%), 185 medium schools (43%), and 82 large schools (19%). Just over half of schools in the sample, 217 (51%), are designated high poverty.

ANALYSES

Analyses of civic conditions required a minimum of 10 valid student responses per school on the Schools as Civic Spaces items, yielding an analytic sample of 335 schools for student findings. Teacher findings draw on 205 schools meeting the same minimum threshold.

All findings in this report are statistically significant, $p < .05$. For the findings on the perception gap, school context, belonging, and connected learning, we focused reporting on factors with at least a medium effect size.

SURVEY ITEMS

The Schools as Civic Spaces framework asks students to rate the degree to which their school functions as a civic space, and asks teachers to assess the degree to which students experience those same conditions.

The measure consists of six items, responded to on a five-point agreement scale:

Civic Climate	In my school, students have a say in how things are run.
	In my school, we talk about important topics, even if people disagree.
Civic Practice	In the past year, I have worked with adults to make changes in my school.
	In my school, we learn how to take action through civic and political systems.

Civic Joining

The way the schedule works at my school helps me spend time with different students.

In my school, I feel welcome when I join a group or committee where I do not know anyone. (Teachers were not asked about their perspectives on their students for this item).

When I choose to get involved in clubs, sports, or other activities, it's mostly because I want to...

- *Build my resume or college applications*
- *Support or hang out with friends*
- *Make new friends*
- *Connect with people who share my interests or values*
- *Get to know people who are not like me*
- *Explore new interests or learn new skills*
- *Do something I enjoy or that makes me happy*
- *Do what my parents/caregivers expect*
- *Be part of something bigger than myself*
- *Lead, speak up, or take action on issues I care about*

FINDING 1: PAIRED T-TESTS COMPARING STUDENT AND TEACHER RESPONSES

	n (schools)	Mean	SD
Student composite	204	38.27%	8.18
Teacher composite	204	55.04%	13.94
Difference (teacher – student)	204	16.78%	11.55

Paired t-test: $t(203) = 20.75$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.45$

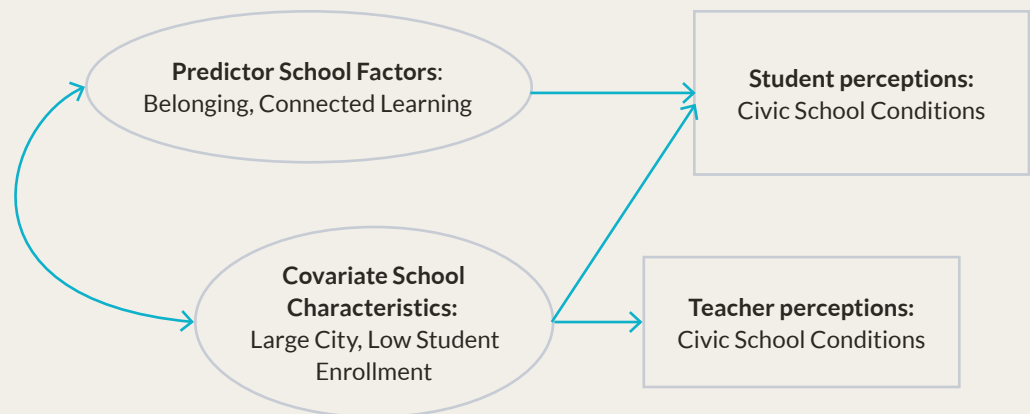
Note that each individual item was also statistically significant $p < .001$

SCHOOL CONTEXT MATTERS FINDINGS: T-TEST GROUP COMPARISONS

Survey (Composites)	Group (n)	t	p	d
Students	Large city (33); Else (302)	4.03	p<.001	0.84
Students	Small schools (134); Else (201)	4.97	p<.001	0.59
Teachers	Large city (28); Else (186)	2.30	p=.028	0.53
Teachers	Small schools (63); Else (151)	4.43	p<.001	0.72

The composite scores focus on civic climate and civic practice, the two dimensions of the framework most tied to school-level structures and adult-shared decision-making. For each school, the composite score reflects the percentage of individual item responses rated 4 or higher across all students or teachers with valid responses.

FINDINGS 2 AND 3: COMBINED REGRESSION MODEL



Overall Model: $R^2 = 0.769$ · Adj $R^2 = 0.766$ · n = 335 schools

Predictor	Partial r	p-value
School Belonging	0.452	<.001*
Connected Teaching	0.353	<.001*
Large City	0.137	0.13
Small size	-0.098	.074