Students' Reflections on Returning to School after Covid-19

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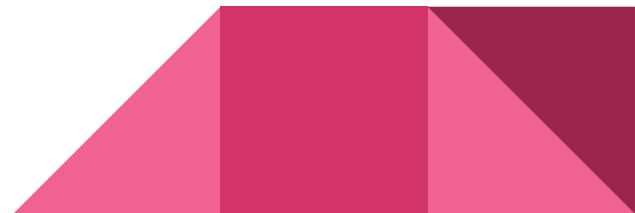
Group members: Ziling Hu, Cassia Fernandez, Carolyn Kerns, Rui Li

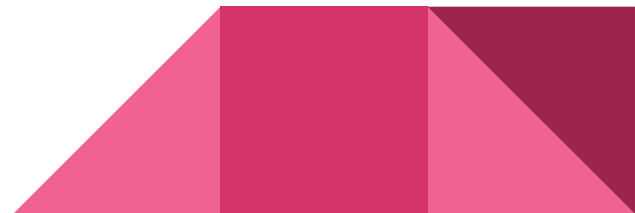**Mentors**: Brendan Eagan, Yeyu Wang

Dataset

DataSet 6: Student Reflections on Returning to Normal Life after Covid-19 (New York Times)

Total posts = 315

Research Questions (RQs)

1. What do students in different states say about their school experiences and expectations during the pandemic?

1. What feelings (positive or negative sentiment) do students hold about going back to in-person school?

Methods

NCoder

Identified posts that mentioned "school" (n = 235) → Parsed into sentences (*Keywords:* school, education, learning, teacher, class)

Codes: **Learning mode** (Online Learning; In person school); "**back to school**" **sentiment** (positive; negative); **Reason** (social interaction; grades; freedom)

ENA Models for RQ1
Units: Location > Post ID
Conversation: Sentence (Whole Conversation)
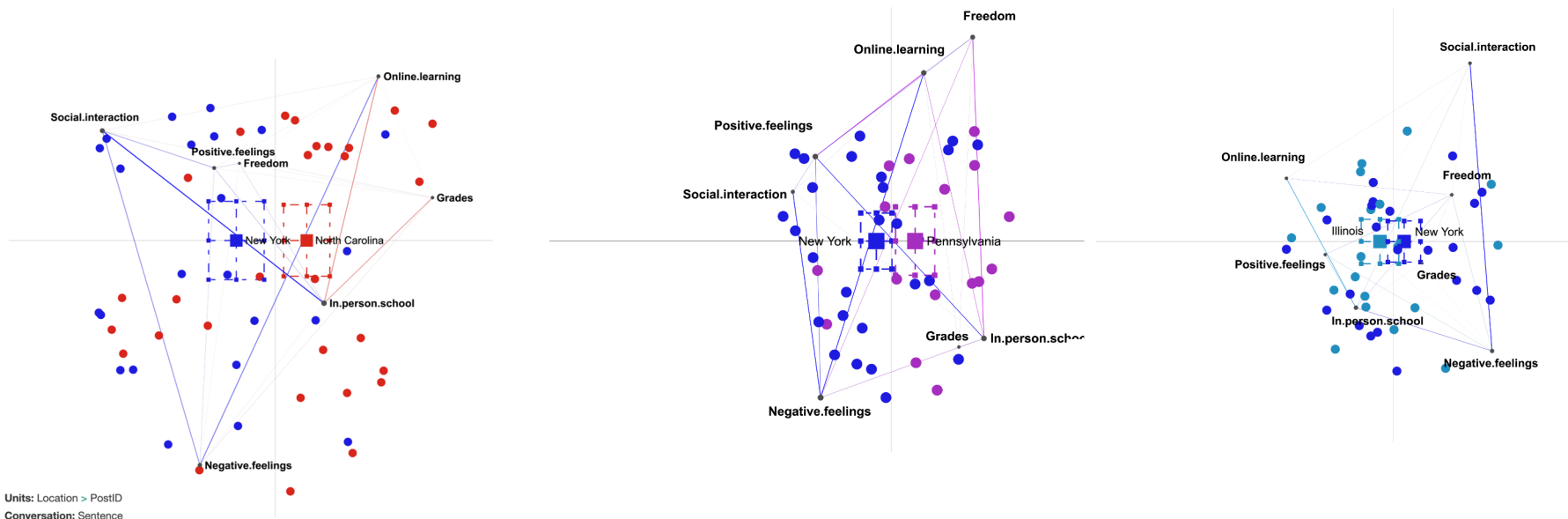
Codebook (Part 1: Learning Mode & Sentiment)

Code	Definition	Keywords	Examples
Online	Mentions online or hybrid mode of learning	Virtual, zoom, online, remote, remotely	I have been doing fine doing **online classes**.
In-person school	Mentions going back to school for in-person class	back to school, school environment, in person, return, in-person, resuming, regular	Indeed, going **back to school** every day of the week will upset my routine.
Positive feeling	Mentions positive feeling about going back to school	enjoy, excited, happy, looking forward, comfortable	I will be **excited** to be able to go back to school and do things I could do before the pandemic. I am **looking forward** to seeing more of my friends, spending more time in public, and, more importantly, resuming normal school again.
Negative feeling	Mentions negative feeling about going back to school	nervous, stress, worried, terrified, upset, sad,	It has definitely been easier for me at home because I don't have to deal with the often **stressful** environment at school.

Codebook (Part 2: Reasons)

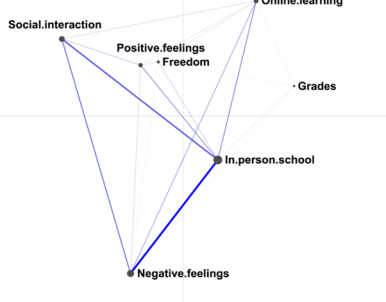| Code	Definition	Classifier/Keywords	Examples
Social interaction	Mentions interacting with others in school	introvert; extrovert; interact; converse; relationship; social skill; classmate; social anxiety; antisocial; social angst; social aspects; socially anxious; friends; meet *** people; excited *** around people	It is harder to make friends online in school than to make friends in person. I like being able to see my friends all the time and being taught by a teacher in person instead of over the Internet.
Grades	Mentions academic performance	catch up; performance; struggle ***school; doing test; grade [exact]; grades; harder at school	After doing tests, zoom classes, and classwork in the comfort of my home just the thought of doing a test in school scares me so much. i think returning to a normal life especially in school could be good for my grades because i cant just roll back into bed
Freedom	Mentions freedom, flexibility in schedule and time use (e.g. less time on transportation; more sleep) that is not explicitly linked to learning quality.	flexib; transport; sleep; freedom; wake up; get up; nap; waking; comfort *** home; my *** pace; time at home	I feel like I got used to online school and I have started feeling more comfortable doing school from home and not having to wake up in the morning to take transportation. As I stated before, I am slightly happier that my school routine was much easier, since I was able to gain an extra two hours of sleep on the weekdays.

Finding 1: Comparison across states

Along the X axis (MR1), Mann-Whitney tests showed that **New York** (N=41) was **statistically significantly different** at the alpha=0.05 level from **North Carolina** (NY Mdn= -0.18; NC Mdn=0.16, N=50 U=1479.00, p=0.00, r=-0.44) and from **Pennsylvania** (NY Mdn= -0.04; PA Mdn=0.06, N=26 U=767.00, p=0.00, r=-0.44) but **not statistically significantly different** from **Illinois** (NY Mdn= -0.10; IL Mdn= -0.10, N=33 U=834.50, p=0.08, r=-0.23).

Units: Location > PostID
Conversation: Sentence

Finding 1 - Example posts (sentences)

New York

North Carolina
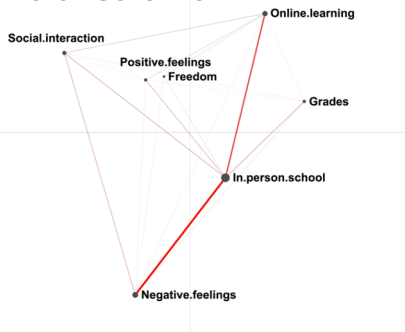

NY: More connections between social interaction and in person school
More connections between social interaction and sentiment (positive and negative).
More connections between online learning and negative sentiment.

E.g.

- Post #129 (part) I did first go to school in person(blended) and I mean at first I was excited because I am a 9th grader meaning new people possible new friends.
- Post #113 (part) I do feel anxious about going back to my pre-pandemic life because it's been so long since I saw my friends, my school building, and people around me when I'm outside.
- Post #23 (part) Since gyms closed during the pandemic, I lost all motivation to work out from home, and I've been struggling with mental fatigue due to complications with online school.
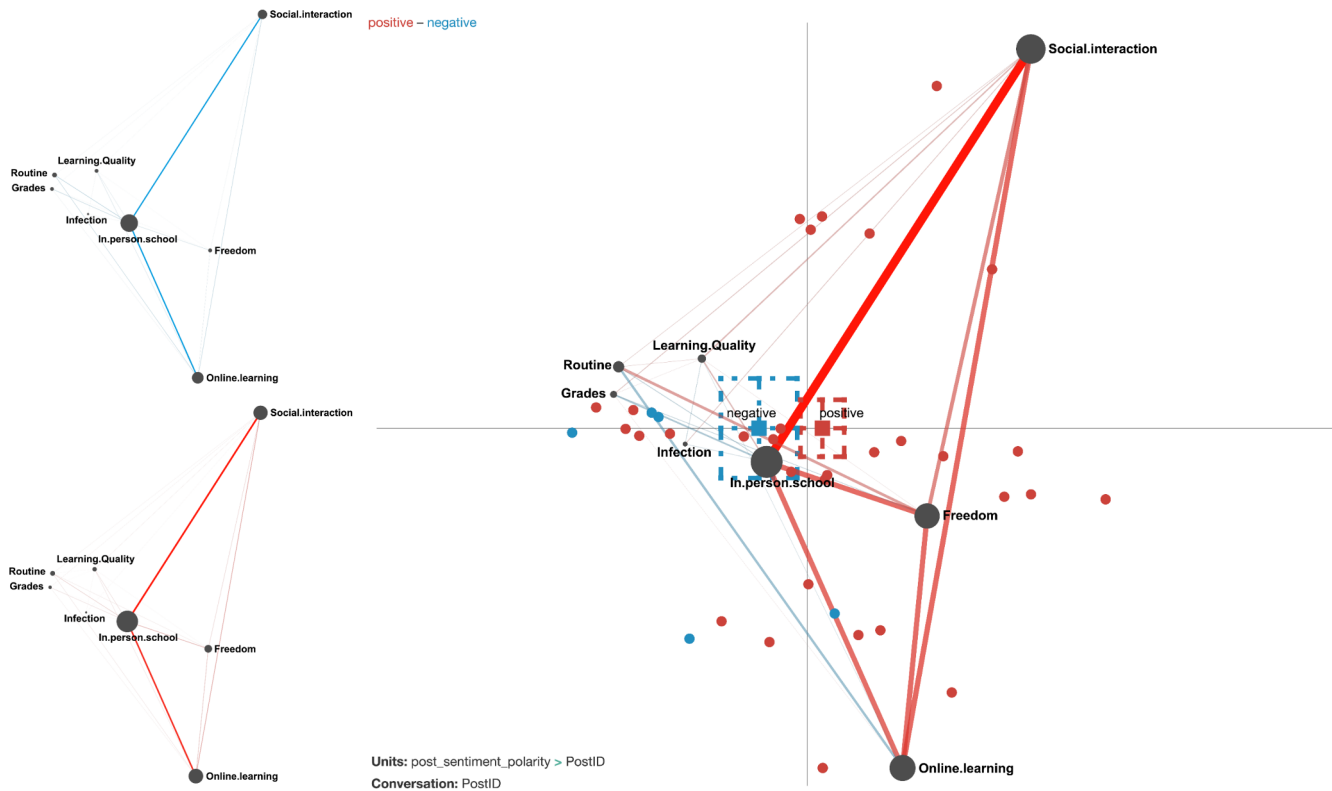
NC: More connections between grades and in person school.

E.g.

- Post #303 (part) i think returning to a normal life especially in school could be good for my grades because i cant just roll back into bed

Finding 2: comparison between positive post and negative post

We made use of a Python package - "vaderSentiment" which enables us to assign each post with a compound sentiment score. If the score > 0, we classify the post as positive and vice versa.

However, certain sentence patterns like "I don't think …" cannot be interpreted correctly. And classifying posts containing both positive and negative sentences is also a challenge.

Next Steps and Questions

- How to deal with mixed feelings in the same sentences or posts?