

SCHOOL CLOSURE & REUSE

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES



ASSEMBLY RULES COMMITTEE - AUGUST 2026

MEMBER ERIN BALDWIN DAY

WHY IS THIS OUR LANE?



School districts “make and unmake” neighborhoods, acting as planners through school facilities decisions. (Bierbaum 2018)

“Conversations about reuse... tend to treat school closures as education decisions, but that’s too narrow of a view that can actually hamper trust-building with communities, because schools are **not only educational infrastructure** – they are social, political, and physical infrastructure in neighborhoods.”

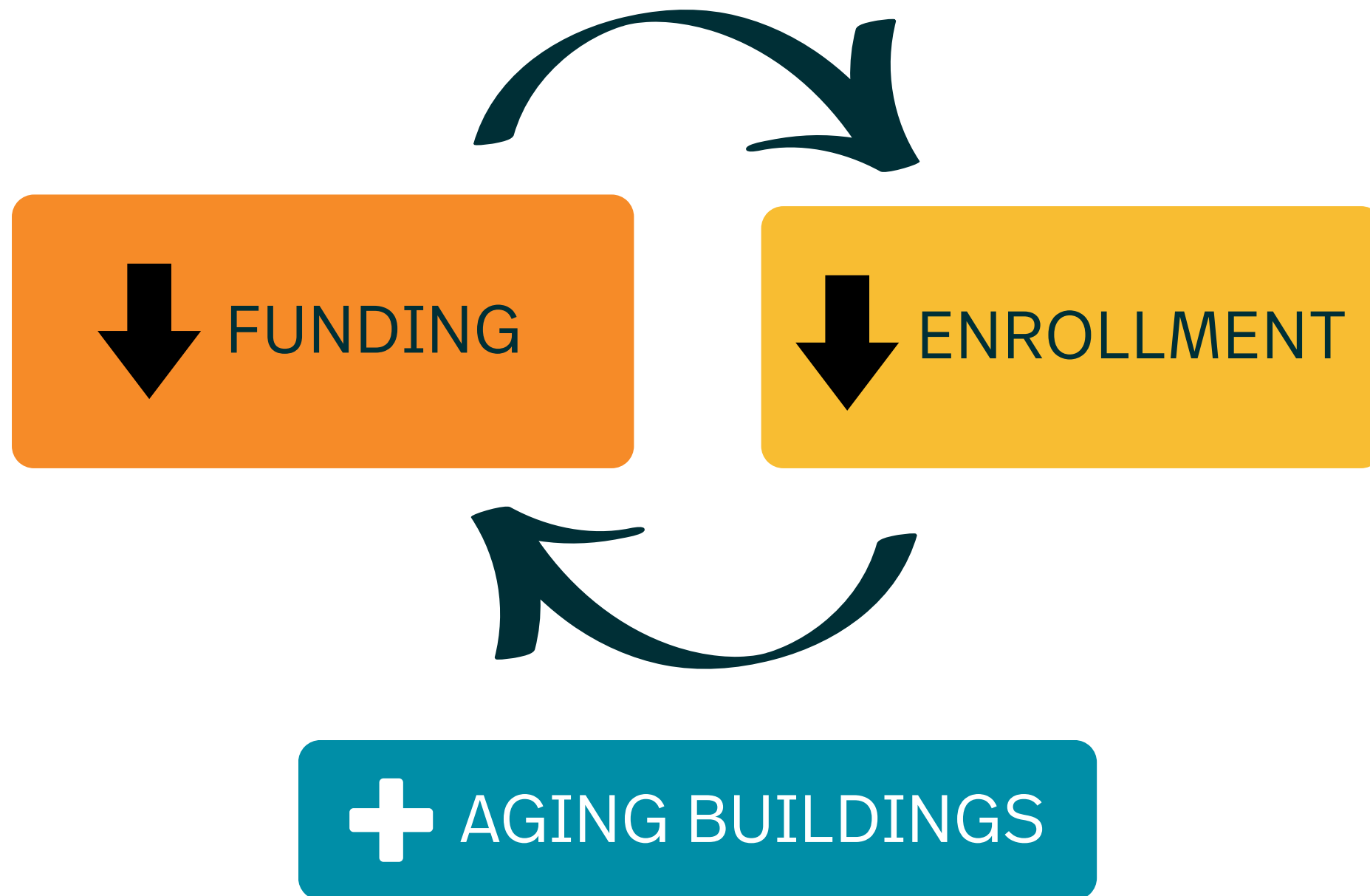


SCHOOL CLOSURE IS A LAND USE DECISION.

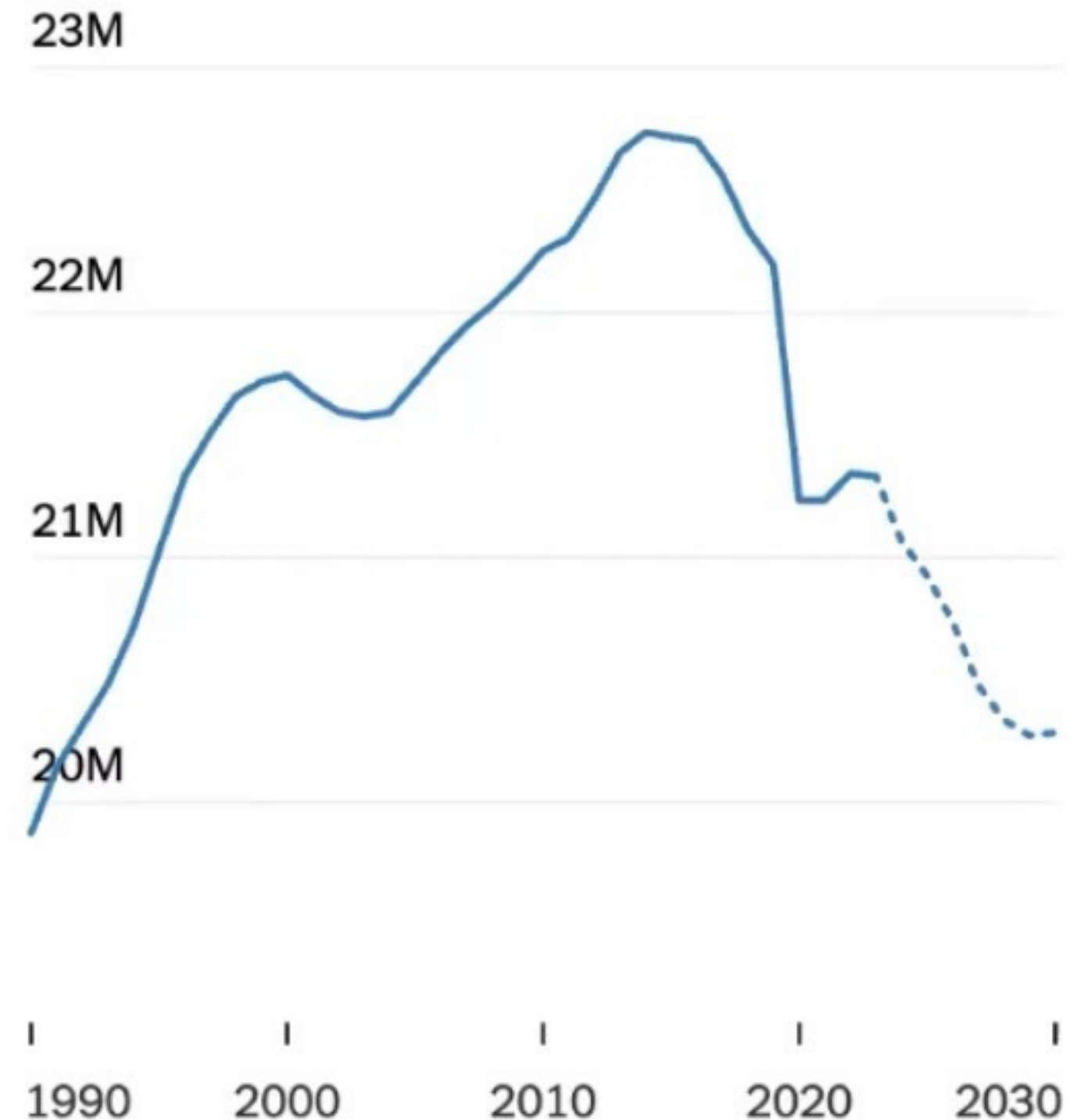
A NATIONWIDE CHALLENGE



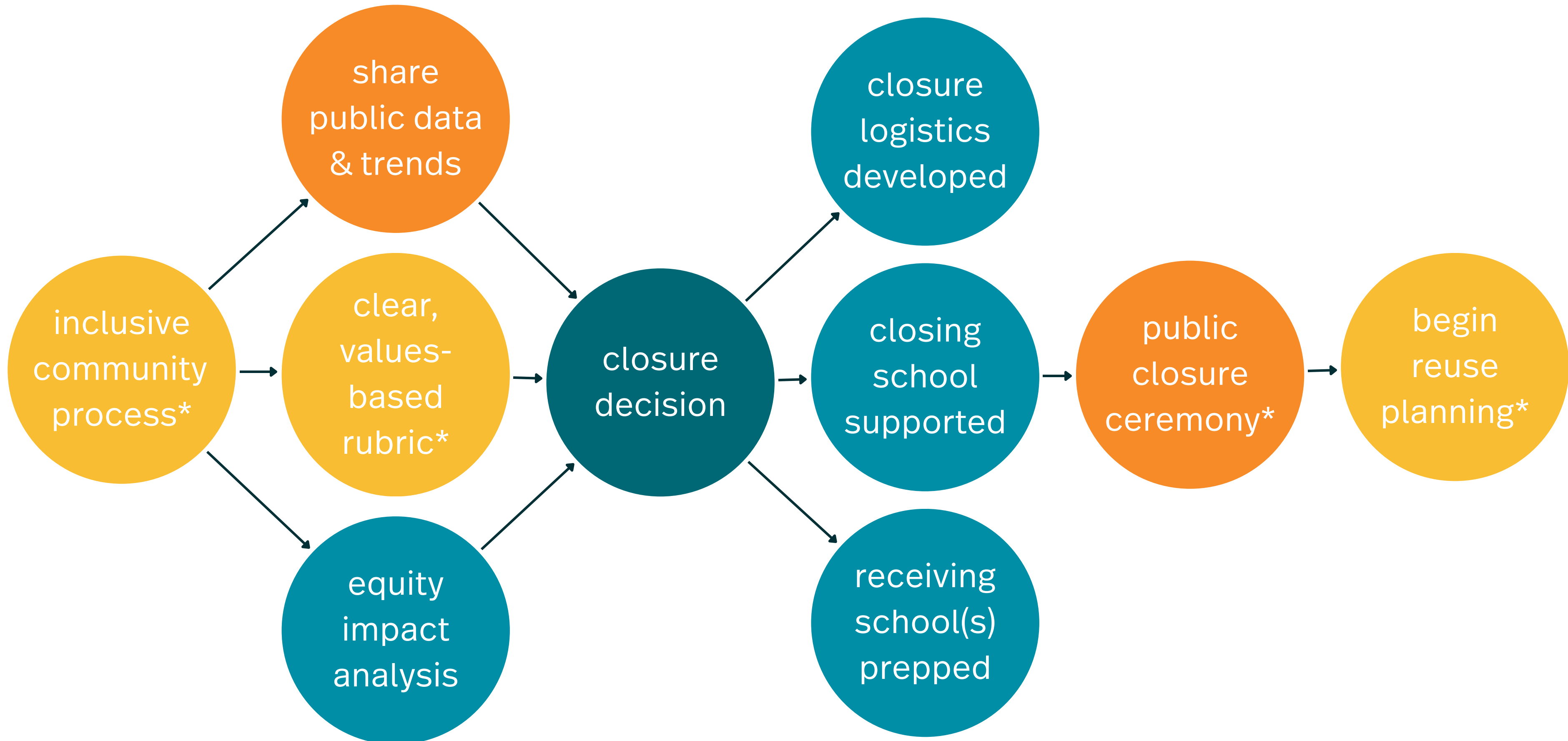
PUBLIC EDUCATION LANDSCAPE SINCE 2016:



US PUBLIC ELEMENTARY ENROLLMENT
PER NCES DATA



CLOSURE CAN BE INTENTIONAL



PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER



consultation early and often with the people closest to the impact of policies



clarity among government entities for better outcomes & increased trust



preservation of public use, benefit, and/or ownership in reuse plans



BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL REUSE



- 01 POLICY GUIDELINES &
DEFINED PROCESS
- 02 SITE TOURS &
COMMUNITY MEETINGS
- 03 TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS
& CLEAR RFP'S
- 04 PARTICIPATORY PROPOSAL
EVALUATIONS
- 05 CONTRACT TERMS &
ACCOUNTABILITY

QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?



REFERENCES:

- National Center on School Infrastructure (NCSI)
- American Planning Association (APA): Public Schools & Communities Division
- Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)
- University of Maryland: Urban Studies & Planning Program
 - Dr. Ariel Bierbaum, school closure & school reuse researcher
- Kansas City Public Schools Office of Bond Planning & Construction
 - Shannon Jaxx, AICP