

AUGUST 8, 2015

To: Interested Parties
From: Jeff Harrelson, MFour Mobile Research
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Re: **PACE/USC Rossier School of Education California Survey Results**

MFour Research and Tulchin Research recently conducted a survey among 2,411 registered California voters statewide on behalf of Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) and the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education.

This is the latest in a series of polls assessing the attitudes of California voters towards public schools and education policy. Our survey covers a lot of ground on a broad range of education issues, including measuring evolving voter perspectives relating to Common Core, as well as views on state and standardized testing.

Here we present our analysis and key takeaways extending from the survey findings.

Common Core education policy remains a mystery to California voters and opinions and opinions are highly malleable.

Although Common Core may be a significant change in state education policy, it remains a mystery to most voters. In fact 59% of voters report they know “little” to “nothing at all” about the national policy adopted by California in 2010. These figure remain largely consistent with 2014 polling data.

However, voters with children in K-12 schools report greater awareness, with 46% reporting knowing “little” to “nothing at all.”

Q24. How much would you say you know about the Common Core State Standards?	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents	2014 Voters	2013 Voters
A lot	10%	15%	12%	6%
Some	31%	39%	35%	23%
A little	27%	25%	26%	31%
Nothing at all	33%	21%	27%	40%

(Note: ranking for 2014 and 2013 was “good deal”, “a little bit”, “don’t know much”, and “don’t know anything”)

Further, opposition to Common Core generally outpaces support, particularly depending on how the question is presented. When asked to straight up approval/disapproval of the education policy, just 57% of voters were willing to offer an opinion, including 25% approving to 32% disapproving, a seven

percentage point difference.

Although awareness is greater, perceptions of Common Core policy fare no better among parents with K-12 students, with 31% approving and 38% disapproving, also a seven percentage point difference.

26A. To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the Common Core State Standards?	2015 Voters	2015 K-12 Parents
Strongly approve	3%	7%
Somewhat approve	22%	24%
Somewhat disapprove	20%	22%
Strongly disapprove	12%	16%
Have heard of the Common Core State Standards, but have no opinion	17%	16%
Have not heard of the Common Core State Standards	26%	15%

Presenting voters with a very basic summary of the public policy creates a dramatically different image of voter perspectives, with 52% of voters offering support compared with just 28% opposing. However, offering voters basic argumentation for and against again creates a much different picture, with voters registering just 24% support compared to 42% opposition.

26C. As you may know, over the past few years states have been deciding whether or not to implement the Common Core State Standards, which are national standards for reading, writing, and math. In the states that have these standards, they will be used to hold public schools accountable for their performance. To what extent do you support or oppose the use of the Common Core Standards in California?	2015 Voters
Strongly support	20%
Somewhat support	32%
Somewhat oppose	16%
Strongly oppose	12%
Unsure	19%

26D. Here is a pair of statements about California’s implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Please indicate which statement is closer to your own opinion:	2015 Voters
California should be implementing the Common Core State Standards because they provide clear and consistent expectations for what teachers are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn.	24%
California should not implement the Common Core State Standards because they represent a one-size-fits-all approach that relies too much on standardized testing and does not take into the specific needs of local communities and students.	42%
Neither	7%
Unsure	27%

Moreover, it is clear that limited awareness creates a fertile breeding ground for myths and mistruths, as voters are largely unable to distinguish facts from fiction.

Please indicate whether you believe each of the following statements about the Common Core State Standards is true or false. (2015 Voters)	True	False	Unsure
Q27. The Common Core State Standards only apply to English and mathematics.	20%	30%	49%
Q28. Common Core requires more testing than California's previous standards.	34%	17%	49%
Q29. The federal government required California to adopt the Common Core.	26%	20%	54%
Q30. The Common Core State Standards were developed by the Obama administration.	19%	25%	56%
Q31. Common Core's tests are designed to make more students fail.	12%	48%	40%
Q32. States adopting the Common Core are allowed to add content to the standards.	24%	20%	56%
Q33. Common Core limits teachers' ability to be creative in the classroom.	37%	24%	39%

As we have seen in other polls, lack of awareness is typically accompanied by apathy when it comes to positions by elected leaders as voters show little interest in a candidate’s position when it comes to Common Core.

Q34. If a candidate for president strongly supported the Common Core standards, would that make you MORE or LESS likely to support that candidate, or would it not affect your opinion much?	2015 Voters
Much more likely to support	5%
A little more likely to support	14%
No more or less likely to support	34%
A little less likely to support	13%
Much less likely to support	11%
Don't Know	23%

Voters support state/standardized testing at every grade level; oppose letting kids opt out.

California voters clearly see value in testing students, policy makers should only be mindful of the language they use when talking about testing.

As a basic public policy perception, California voters strongly believe students should be tested by the state at every grade level. However, how they describe these tests can play a role in voter perspectives. Sixty-nine percent of voters believe California should test students with state tests every year, while just 61% of voter support administering “standardized” tests every year.

Q38/Q56. California is currently transitioning to a new state/standardized testing system for students in grades 3-11. Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion? (2015 Voters)	State	Standardized
California should test students in each grade level to make sure they are progressing.	69%	61%
California should cut back on state testing and test at only certain grade levels.	15%	18%
California should not give state tests and should instead rely on teachers' evaluations of their students' performance.	8%	10%
Don't know.	8%	11%

Further, 68% of parents oppose allowing students to opt out of state testing, while 60% oppose allowing students to opt out of standardized testing.

Q45/Q63. To what extent do you support or oppose allowing parents to let their children skip taking state tests? (2015 Voters)	State	Standardized
Strongly support	7%	9%
Somewhat support	15%	18%
Somewhat oppose	25%	22%
Strongly oppose	43%	38%
Unsure	10%	14%

The following question series sheds light on what is driving these perspectives, as voters clearly see state testing as:

- “Necessary to ensure students are on track to graduate ready for college or careers” (72%).
- “Necessary to evaluate the performance of teachers and schools” (72%)
- “To identify which schools need additional support” (81%).
- “To identify which teachers need additional support” (75%).
- “To ensure students have a minimum level of achievement before graduating from high school (82%).

However, voters remain concerned that state testing can cause “teachers to narrow the curriculum” (65%).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about STATE testing? (2015 Voters)	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Q39. State testing is necessary to ensure students are on track to graduate ready for college or careers.	30%	42%	14%	6%	8%
Q40. State testing is mostly a way for testing companies to profit off our children.	13%	22%	25%	25%	15%
Q41. State tests lead teachers to narrow the curriculum to what is tested.	25%	40%	17%	4%	14%
Q42. State tests are biased against certain racial/ethnic groups.	9%	21%	23%	30%	18%
Q43. We should leave testing in the hands of teachers, schools, and districts.	21%	36%	22%	9%	13%
Q44. State tests are necessary to evaluate the performance of teachers and schools.	29%	43%	14%	7%	8%

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about STANDARIZED testing? (2015 Voters)	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure
Q57. Standardized testing is necessary to ensure students are on track to graduate ready for college or careers.	28%	41%	14%	8%	8%
Q58. Standardized testing is mostly a way for testing companies to profit off our children.	12%	22%	23%	25%	17%
Q59. Standardized tests lead teachers to narrow the curriculum to what is tested.	26%	39%	17%	5%	13%
Q60. Standardized tests are biased against certain racial/ethnic groups.	10%	23%	19%	30%	17%
Q61. We should leave testing in the hands of teachers, schools, and districts.	21%	33%	23%	13%	10%
Q62. Standardized tests are necessary to evaluate the performance of teachers and schools.	25%	41%	14%	10%	10%

In which of the following ways do you think student scores from STATE tests should be used? (2015 Voters)	Definitely should	Maybe should	Neutral	Maybe should not	Definitely should not
Q46. To identify which schools need additional support	44%	37%	13%	4%	2%
Q47. To identify which schools are failing and should be sanctioned or closed	25%	32%	22%	10%	11%
Q48. To identify which teachers need additional support	35%	40%	18%	3%	3%
Q49. To identify which teachers are effective and ineffective	36%	29%	21%	8%	6%
Q50. To identify which teachers should be dismissed or fired	26%	23%	26%	12%	13%
Q51. To ensure students have a minimum level of achievement before graduating from high school	55%	27%	15%	3%	1%

In which of the following ways do you think student scores from STANDARDIZED tests should be used?	Definitely should	Maybe should	Neutral	Maybe should not	Definitely should not
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(2015 Voters)					
Q64. To identify which schools need additional support	46%	34%	16%	3%	2%
Q65. To identify which schools are failing and should be sanctioned or closed	27%	27%	25%	12%	9%
Q66. To identify which teachers need additional support	37%	36%	21%	3%	2%
Q67. To identify which teachers are effective and ineffective	32%	31%	25%	6%	5%
Q68. To identify which teachers should be dismissed or fired	23%	24%	29%	12%	12%
Q69. To ensure students have a minimum level of achievement before graduating from high school	51%	30%	17%	2%	1%

Survey Methodology: The PACE/USC Rossier Poll was conducted August 3-23, 2015 by MFour Research and Tulchin Research and surveyed 2,411 registered California voters. The poll was conducted online and allowed respondents to complete the survey on a desktop or laptop computer, tablet or smartphone. The poll was conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the overall sample is +/- 2.9 percentage points.