

NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS DON'T KNOW OR LIKE MUCH ABOUT COMMON CORE

With PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) testing underway in New Jersey schools, most people in New Jersey say they haven't heard much about the Common Core standards the tests are aligned with. In its most recent statewide survey of New Jersey adults, Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind finds that 55 percent say that they've heard "just a little" or "nothing" about them, with 24 percent saying that they've heard "a lot," and 20 percent saying that they've heard "some" about them. Despite the enormous coverage of the standards in the news, only 41 percent of New Jersey residents are able to correctly identify that state public schools are using them; 11 percent say that New Jersey schools aren't using them, with 47 percent saying that they're not sure. Parents are more likely to be paying attention to the Common Core in the news, and they're also more likely to disapprove of them.

This overall lack of knowledge, however, doesn't stop New Jersey from having opinions about the standards: only 17 percent say that they approve of the standards, with 38 percent disapproving, and the remaining 45 percent saying that they just don't know, or refusing to answer the question. Republicans, Democrats and independents are all equally likely to say that they approve of the standards, but Republicans a bit more likely to say that they disapprove, with 48 percent doing so, compared with just 32 percent of Democrats and 38 percent of independents. Twenty percent of people with advanced degrees also approve, compared with just 11 percent of those who never attended college. These figures are very similar to the results of a [national poll](#) on the same question released by PublicMind earlier this year, in which 17 percent of Americans said that they approve of the Common Core, and 40 percent disapprove.

"New Jersey is much like the rest of the country on Common Core: people here don't like it, but also don't really know much about it," said Dan Cassino, an associate professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson University, and an analyst for the poll. "There's a lot of misinformation about the standards out there, and people who are paying attention seem to be responding to it."

Parents of school age children say that they've heard more about the standards than New Jerseyans without children in the schools: 35 percent say that they've heard "a lot," compared with 20 percent. They're also almost twice as likely (60 percent versus 34 percent) as non-parents to know that New Jersey schools are using a Common Core aligned curriculum. They're also more likely to disapprove

of the standards, with 48 percent doing so, compared with 34 percent of those without school age children.

“Parents are much more tuned into the Common Core controversy than others,” said Cassino. “And the fact that they’re more likely to disapprove should be worrying for Common Core supporters.”

The survey also asked New Jersey residents who said that they disapprove of the standards why they disapprove. Sixty-nine percent of those who disapprove say that they don’t like Common Core because it limits the flexibility of what teachers can teach, leading them to “teach to the test.” The other explanations — opposition to federal involvement, teacher opposition and standards being too high — were each answers given by less than 10 percent of the respondents. Republicans are more likely than other groups to oppose Common Core because of the perception of federal involvement (in reality, the standards were created by a consortium of states), with 15 percent of Republicans who oppose citing it, compared with just 3 percent of Democrats. More educated respondents say that they’re more opposed because of how the standards limit teacher flexibility.

“The standardized testing movement exists largely to ensure that teachers are covering the material that they’re supposed to be covering,” said Cassino. “New Jersey has some of the best schools in the country, so it isn’t surprising that residents don’t seem to think that check on teacher autonomy is necessary.”

While fewer New Jerseyans support the standards, the largest group (42 percent) of supporters says they like Common Core because it can serve to ensure that all children get the same education, regardless of where they live. Smaller groups (19 percent and 17 percent, respectively), say that they support Common Core because it will make it easier for parents to track children’s progress, and because it will lead to higher expectations of learning.

“There are strong arguments on both sides of the issue,” said Cassino. “But for now, the arguments against Common Core seem to be winning.”

Some of the opposition to the Common Core seems to stem from distaste for standardized testing. Only 28 percent of New Jerseyans say that standardized tests are needed to measure student achievement, with 59 percent saying that there are other, more effective ways to measure progress. Interestingly, Republicans are more likely (34 percent) than Democrats (27 percent) to say that standardized testing is needed.

“Not many people think that standardized testing is a great idea,” said Cassino. “But it’s easier to talk about alternatives than to actually implement them.”

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 901 adults in New Jersey was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from February 23 through March 1. The margin of error is +/- 3.3 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Radio actualities at 201.692.2846

For more information, please call 201.692.7032

Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from February 23 through March 1 using a randomly selected sample of 901 adults in New Jersey. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 3.3 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Tables

How much have you heard about educational reform known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative?							
		Party ID			Education		
		Dem	Indp	Rep	HS or Less	Some College	College +
A lot	24	23%	23%	27%	12%	16%	31%
Some	20	17%	21%	24%	14%	20%	23%
Just a little	23	25%	22%	24%	19%	27%	23%
Nothing at all	32	34%	34%	23%	51%	36%	23%
Don't know (Vol)	1	1%	0%	2%	4%	1%	0%

How much have you heard about educational reform known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative?							
		Gender		Race		Parent	
		Male	Female	White	Non-White	Child in School	None
A lot	24	20%	27%	28%	16%	35%	20%
Some	20	20%	20%	23%	15%	20%	20%
Just a little	23	25%	22%	21%	27%	22%	24%
Nothing at all	32	34%	30%	26%	41%	22%	35%
Don't know (Vol)	1	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%

As far as you know, are New Jersey public schools using or not using the Common Core?							
		Party ID			Education		
		Dem	Indp	Rep	HS or Less	Some College	College +
Using	41	44%	32%	44%	27%	39%	47%
Not Using	11	11%	15%	10%	9%	11%	12%
Don't know (Vol)	47	45%	50%	45%	64%	49%	40%
Refused (Vol)	1	0%	3%	1%	0%	1%	1%

As far as you know, are New Jersey public schools using or not using the Common Core?							
		Gender		Race		Parent	
		Male	Female	White	Non-White	Child in School	None
Using	41	37%	44%	44%	36%	60%	34%
Not Using	11	15%	7%	8%	14%	11%	11%
Don't know (Vol)	47	47%	47%	47%	48%	28%	54%

Refused (Vol)	1	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
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From what you've heard about it, do you approve or disapprove of the new Common Core Standards Initiative? [response options rotated]							
		Party ID			Education		
		Dem	Indp	Rep	HS or Less	Some College	College +
Approve	17	20%	16%	16%	11%	16%	20%
Disapprove	38	32%	38%	48%	27%	34%	44%
Don't know (Vol)	43	46%	43%	35%	60%	49%	34%
Refused (Vol)	2	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%

From what you've heard about it, do you approve or disapprove of the new Common Core Standards Initiative? [response options rotated]							
		Gender		Race		Parent	
		Male	Female	White	Non-White	Child in School	None
Approve	17	21%	14%	15%	22%	20%	17%
Disapprove	38	35%	41%	44%	28%	48%	34%
Don't know (Vol)	43	42%	43%	40%	48%	32%	47%
Refused (Vol)	2	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%

[Respondents who disapprove of Common Core] Which of the following reasons best explains your opposition to the Core?							
		Party ID			Education		
		Dem	Indp	Rep	HS or Less	Some College	College +
Teachers in my community do not support the Core	2	4%	0%	3%	5%	5%	1%
The federal government established the standards	8	3%	7%	15%	8%	11%	8%
The standards go beyond the current expectations for what our children should know	7	9%	4%	7%	17%	4%	6%
The Core limits the flexibility of what teachers can teach and results in simply	69	74%	69%	64%	47%	70%	73%

“teaching to the test”							
Other	10	9%	13%	9%	14%	9%	10%
Don't Know/Unsure	3	2%	7%	2%	10%	2%	3%

[Respondents who disapprove of Common Core] Which of the following reasons best explains your opposition to the Core?							
		Gender		Race		Parent	
		Male	Female	White	Non-White	Child in School	None
Teachers in my community do not support the Core	2	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%
The federal government established the standards	8	11%	6%	9%	8%	8%	9%
The standards go beyond the current expectations for what our children should know	7	6%	7%	6%	9%	9%	6%
The Core limits the flexibility of what teachers can teach and results in simply “teaching to the test”	69	64%	72%	71%	64%	74%	66%
Other	10	11%	10%	10%	9%	7%	12%
Don't Know/Unsure	3	5%	3%	2%	6%	1%	5%

[Respondents who approve of Common Core] Which of the following reasons best explains your approval of the Core?						
	Party ID			Education		
	Dem	Indp	Rep	HS or Less	Some College	College +

Teachers in my community support the Core	6	11%	0%	3%	16%	6%	4%
Use of the Core will make it easier for parents to track their children's progress	19	18%	9%	28%	32%	11%	19%
The standards will make it easier for students to get the same education no matter where they live	42	43%	48%	33%	16%	50%	45%
The standards surpass the current expectations for what our children should know	17	18%	19%	14%	22%	6%	21%
Other	10	7%	8%	15%	9%	12%	8%
Don't Know/Unsure	6	3%	12%	8%	5%	14%	3%
Refused	0	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%

[Respondents who approve of Common Core] Which of the following reasons best explains your approval of the Core?							
		Gender		Race		Parent	
		Male	Female	White	Non-White	Child in School	None
Teachers in my community support the Core	6	7%	5%	5%	8%	4%	7%
Use of the Core will make it easier for parents to track their children's progress	19	16%	23%	16%	20%	18%	19%
The standards will make it easier for students to get the same education no matter where they live	42	38%	48%	40%	46%	42%	42%

The standards surpass the current expectations for what our children should know	17	22%	10%	23%	9%	17%	17%
Other	10	13%	5%	9%	10%	10%	10%
Don't Know/Unsure	6	4%	8%	7%	6%	9%	5%
Refused	0	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%

Some say standardized tests are necessary for measuring student achievement while others say there are more effective ways to measure learning in the classroom. What do you think? Are student standardized tests necessary or should schools rely on other, more effective ways?							
		Party ID			Education		
		Dem	Indp	Rep	HS or Less	Some College	College +
Necessary	28	27%	23%	34%	26%	24%	31%
Other Ways	59	62%	65%	51%	59%	66%	55%
Both	8	7%	6%	9%	7%	4%	11%
Don't Know	5	3%	5%	6%	8%	5%	3%
Refused (Vol)	0	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%

Some say standardized tests are necessary for measuring student achievement while others say there are more effective ways to measure learning in the classroom. What do you think? Are student standardized tests necessary or should schools rely on other, more effective ways?							
		Gender		Race		Parent	
		Male	Female	White	Non-White	Child in School	None
Necessary	28	32%	25%	28%	28%	27%	29%
Other Ways	59	56%	61%	56%	63%	62%	57%
Both	8	7%	9%	9%	6%	9%	8%
Don't Know	5	4%	5%	6%	3%	1%	6%
Refused (Vol)	0	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%

Exact Question Wording and Order

US1 and US2 released March 3
 NJ1 through NJ3 released March 3
 EDUC1 through EDUC5 released

Weighted sample characteristics

		All respondents N = 901; MoE = +/- 3.3
Gender	<i>Male</i>	49%
	<i>Female</i>	51%
Age	<i>18-34</i>	26%
	<i>35-59</i>	42%
	<i>60+</i>	29%
	<i>Refused</i>	2%
Race	<i>White</i>	61%
	<i>African American</i>	13%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	16%
	<i>Asian</i>	6%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	5%
Union household	<i>Self</i>	13%
	<i>Someone else</i>	10%
	<i>No/Refused/DK</i>	77%
Party (with leaners)	<i>Dem</i>	45%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	25%
	<i>Repub</i>	30%