

Try it again, Uncle Sam

The 46th Annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

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Americans aren't convinced that the Common Core and federal involvement will improve education. Is it time to go back to the drawing board for school reform?

By **William J. Bushaw** and **Valerie J. Calderon**

Deep in this nation's DNA is an abiding belief in personal liberty and freedom, and, for much of our history, these values often have conflicted with national and state policies. In public education, this conflict plays out under the guise of local control, that is, who should be most responsible for the quality of public education? Should it be the local school district, which is typically governed by a board of education; or state authorities, which usually include the governor, state legislature, and a state board of education; or is public education policy ultimately the responsibility of the President and Congress?

WILLIAM J. BUSHAW is chief executive officer of PDK International, Arlington, Va. **VALERIE J. CALDERON** is senior education research consultant at Gallup, Omaha, Neb.

A careful reading of the results of the 46th annual PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools confirms what the data suggested last year: A majority of Americans do not support public education initiatives that they believe were created by or promoted by federal policy makers.

»»FOR EXAMPLE:

Over half of Americans (56%) say local school boards should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools.

Most Americans (60%) oppose the Common Core State Standards, fearing that the standards will limit the flexibility of the teachers in their communities to teach what they think is best.

Seven of 10 Americans support public charter schools, particularly when they're described as schools that can operate independently and free of regulations.

Most Americans (54%) don't believe standardized tests help teachers know what to teach.

Americans continue to assign higher grades to their local schools but far lower grades to the nation's schools in general.

Americans gave the President significantly lower grades on his performance in support of public schools.

These findings have serious consequences for this nation's system of public education. Should the federal government reduce its involvement in public education and thus risk a reduced commitment to closing the well-documented achievement gap? Do local and state education leaders have the capacity and resources to transform America's public schools — especially during a time of unprecedented social upheaval, political gridlock, and calls for reform?

TWO REPORTS

Our constructive critics have suggested that the annual PDK/Gallup poll contains too much information to digest all at once, and we agree. For that reason, we are dividing this year's PDK/Gallup poll results into two reports, one included in this issue of *Kappan* magazine followed by a second report in the October issue.

The first report shares Americans' opinions on the Common Core State Standards, student standardized testing, international comparisons, school governance, and school choice. The October report will focus on preparing and evaluating teachers, support for reforming America's schools, student well-being, and preparing students for college and careers.

After publication, both reports will be available online at pdkpoll.org.

The 2014 PDK/Gallup Poll

The PDK/Gallup poll is a scientifically based survey of 1,001 Americans 18 years and older. Because it is conducted annually and revisits many questions asked in prior years, the poll illuminates how American opinion about education changes or stays the same over time. The poll also poses new questions developed by a panel of advisers (see page 20) convened to identify emerging issues.

As in the past, PDK reports on every question asked in the poll, and we publish all questions exactly as they were asked during telephone polling in May and June 2014. While we present interpretations, we encourage readers to decide for themselves whether the responses support our analysis. Please join us on Facebook ([Facebook/pdkintl](https://www.facebook.com/pdkintl)) and Twitter ([@pdkintl](https://twitter.com/pdkintl)) to express your opinions.

The public comments



Ken Wirt

Saratoga, Calif.
Retired Silicon Valley business executive
Father of two adult children

Biggest problem: Money's one of the biggest problems facing education. That dates back to Prop 13. School funding has been reduced and reduced since then.

Common Core: I know a little bit about the Common Core. I come at this from a business point of view. Given the inadequate funding for education, it seems crazy to me that every school district in the United States would have a relatively expensive person creating a curriculum independently for their district. All of the money that you used to pay to create that curriculum could be used for something else related to education. That would be a big benefit.

Testing: There's a role for using standardized test scores in teacher evaluation, but they should not be the only measure. Different teachers are presented with different problems. Some teachers just have classes of students who are more well-prepared at the beginning of the year. You can imagine that that teachers' students are going to score much higher than somebody else's class.

International comparisons: There is a benefit. It's always good to compare how well you do compared with how others do. The point is to learn from the best, to uncover innovation and see if there is a better way to do something. You might not want to do what they're doing, but at least you'll know what they're doing.

Common Core State Standards

What a difference a year makes. Last year, almost two-thirds of Americans (62%) had never heard of the Common Core State Standards. Fast-forward to 2014, when asked how much they have heard about the Common Core, most Americans (81%) say they have heard at least a little, and nearly half (47%) said they have heard a great deal or a fair amount about it.

This isn't surprising given the controversies surrounding the standards. Initially attacked by the conservative right as an attempt to nationalize public education, others have joined in, including teacher groups. Their objections highlight concerns that teachers have not received the needed support to adjust their classroom teaching to the more rigorous standards, and these concerns are accompanied by fears that teacher and principal evaluations would be based on student test scores and could result in lower pay or being fired.

Not only are Americans claiming greater knowledge about the standards, they have also formed strong opinions.

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Responses in Tables 2-6 include only respondents who indicated some knowledge of the Common Core.

» FINDINGS

Over 80% of Americans have heard about the Common Core State Standards, with 47% indicating they have heard a great deal or a fair amount.

Most Americans first heard about the Common Core State Standards from television, newspapers, and radio; far smaller percentages said they learned about the standards through school district communications, such as web sites or newsletters or from teachers and other education professionals.

60% of Americans oppose requiring teachers in their community to use the Common Core State Standards to guide what they teach, with opposition among Republicans much higher than Democrats.

For the 33% of Americans who favor the Common Core, the most important reason is because it will help more students learn what they need to know regardless of where they go to school.

For the 60% of Americans who oppose using the Common Core, their most important reason is that it will limit the flexibility that teachers have to teach what they think is best.

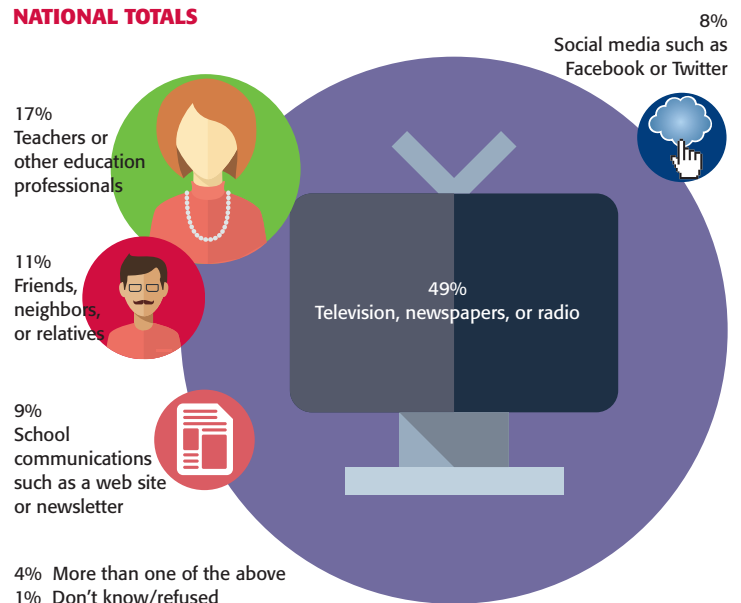
While most educators believe the new standards are challenging, 40% of Americans disagree, saying the Common Core State Standards are not challenging enough.

TABLE 1. How much, if anything, have you heard about the new national standards for teaching reading, writing, and math in grades K through 12, known as the Common Core State Standards — a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or nothing at all?

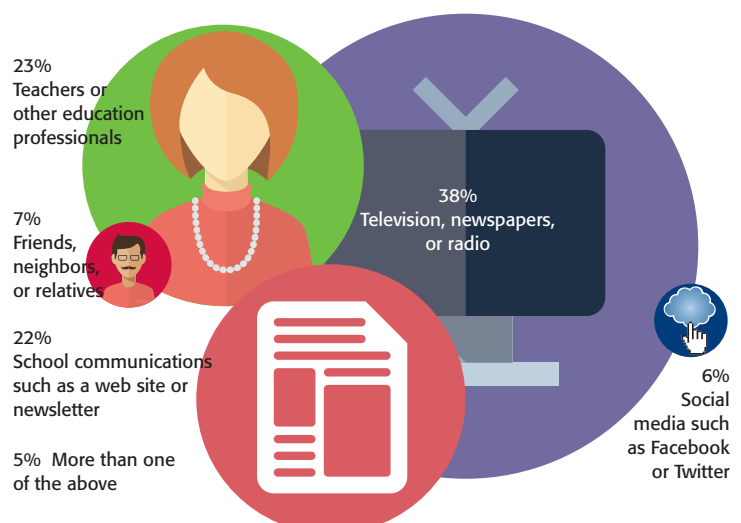
	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
A great deal	17	24	22	13	16
A fair amount	30	39	32	27	30
Only a little	34	29	29	39	35
Nothing at all	19	8	18	21	20

TABLE 2. How did you first hear about the Common Core State Standards?

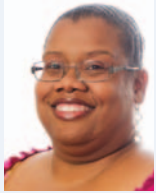
NATIONAL TOTALS



PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS



The public comments



Tiffini Smith

Detroit, Mich.
Director, corporate communications, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation
Mother of two school-age daughters

Biggest problem: The biggest problem facing schools is that a lot of the kids come to school and they're hungry, they're tired; sometimes, they're not clean. It's hard to get them focused on what they need to do at school that day when they don't know if they'll have anything to eat when they get home, and they don't know if they'll be safe that night.

Whose influence: The federal government knows what we need to teach to stay competitive worldwide, but only someone at the local level knows what's lacking and how to teach that.

Common Core: I know a fair amount about the Common Core. If the Common Core brings along a national curriculum and a national test, I see that as more of a positive. We're in a global world now. I don't have to worry just about what's going on in Detroit. I have to worry about China and Afghanistan. We need to pay attention to international comparisons. My kids will be applying for jobs and competing against students from around the world. If that person from Japan had a more rigorous curriculum than my girls did, I would feel cheated. If we don't know what everybody else is doing, how do we know where we need to improve to stay competitive?

TABLE 3. Do you favor or oppose having the teachers in your community use the Common Core State Standards to guide what they teach?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Favor	33	32	17	53	34
Oppose	60	62	76	38	60
Don't know/refused	7	6	7	9	6

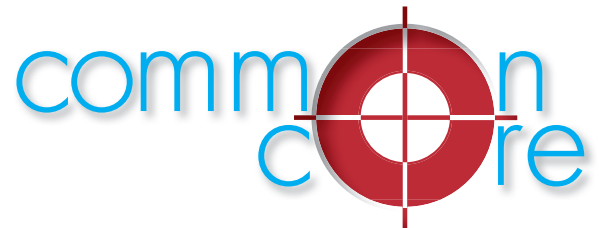
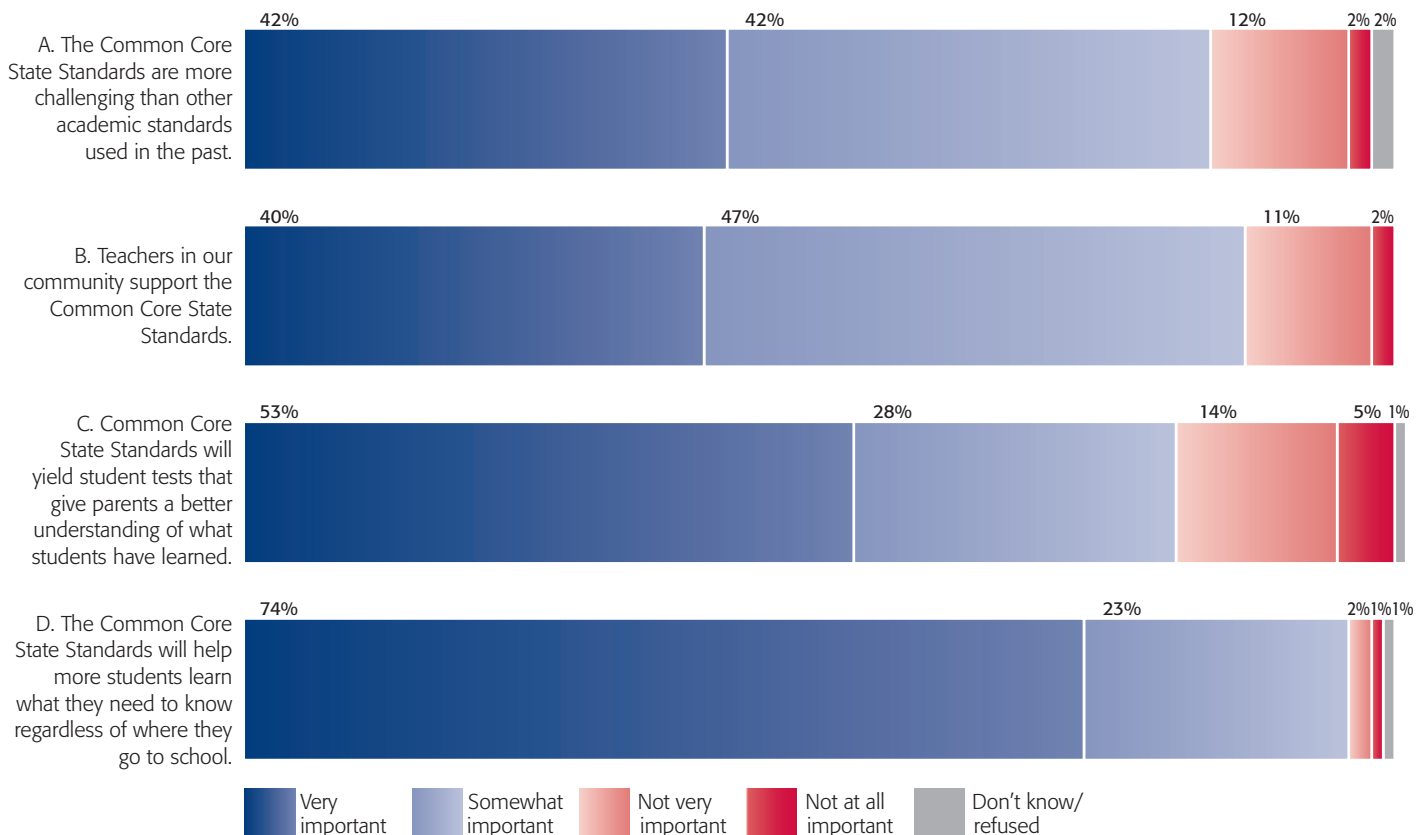


TABLE 4. Would you say that each of the following is a very important, somewhat important, not very important, or a not at all important reason that you favor the use of the Common Core State Standards to guide what teachers in your community teach? How about:

NATIONAL TOTALS

(Asked of those who **FAVOR** using the Common Core.)



Responses in Tables 2-6 include only respondents who indicated some knowledge of the Common Core.

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 5. Would you say that each of the following is a very important, somewhat important, not very important, or a not at all important reason that you oppose the use of the Common Core State Standards to guide what teachers in your community teach? How about:

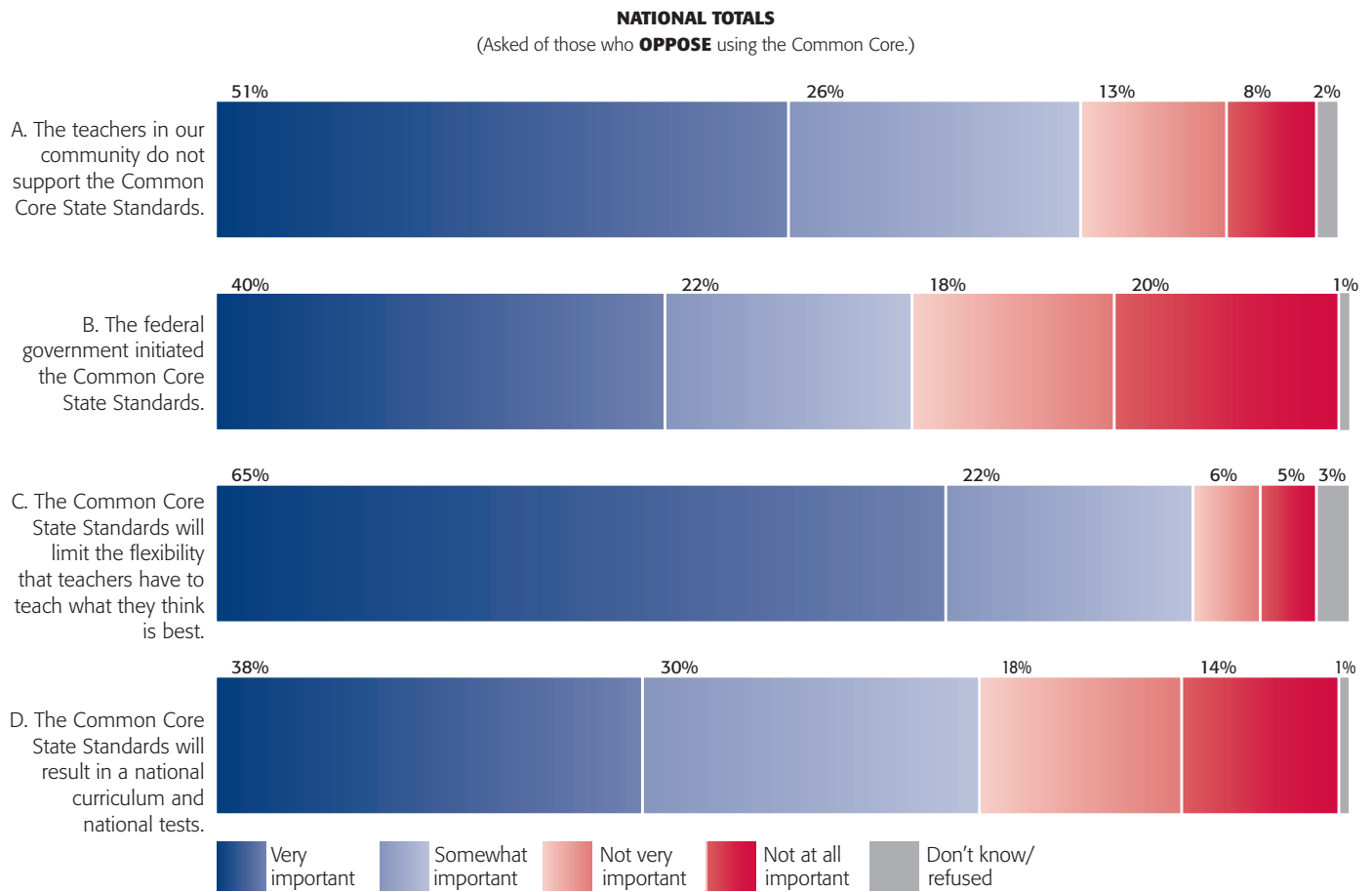
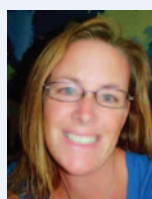


TABLE 6. In your opinion, are the Common Core State Standards too challenging for most students, not challenging enough, or are the Common Core State Standards just about right for most students?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Too challenging	18	26	22	18	16
Not challenging enough	40	40	50	25	43
Just about right	36	30	23	51	36
Don't know/refused	6	4	5	6	6

The public comments



Abby Scott Goff

St. Augustine, Fla.

Homemaker/birth assistant

Mother of two young children

Common Core: I'm mostly opposed to the Common Core. I feel like I know a fair amount about it. Mostly, I've heard about it from other parents and teachers. I haven't gotten any information from the school district.

Teachers are very frustrated with how they have to teach. One teacher who's been teaching for 18 years told me she feels like she isn't able to teach the way she was taught to teach and the way she believes she should teach. I think the Common Core limits what teachers can teach and how they can teach to an individual child.

I have a high learner who catches on pretty quickly and likes to work ahead of the group, and he's been penalized for that. He really struggled to fit into his class last year because he wasn't getting his questions answered because he was so far ahead of the rest. The teacher had to teach to the weakest link instead of teaching to all the children.

Influence: The local school board should have the greatest influence in deciding what to teach. Each school district is different. Each school has a different demographic, and each school needs to evaluate what its students need and how to best teach to them.



Communicate or modify

By William J. Bushaw

Each year, we attempt to factually report the findings of the annual PDK/Gallup poll, but we're often asked how we evaluate the results and what suggestions we would make about how educators and policy makers should respond.

Dismissing American public opinion as uninformed is not an option, and astute policy makers understand this. As difficult as it is to make policy, implementing it is much harder, particularly when a majority of Americans don't support the policy in question. Faced with this reality, thoughtful policy makers understand that they have two options when public opinion and public policy collide: They can modify policy so it's more consistent with public opinion, or they can mount a persuasive communications campaign explaining to Americans why new policy is needed, how it can move the nation forward, and how it can address individual needs.

Increased federal involvement in American public education arguably began with *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1954 ruling that said race-based segregation of public education was unconstitutional. Since then, most federal education policy making has focused on providing greater equity and opportunity within the public schools. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan often has said that improving public education is the great civil rights issue of our generation.

Yet Americans are questioning the federal role in education — a role grounded in equity but operationalized through more rigorous instructional standards, standardized tests, and sanctions on states, school districts, schools, and teachers that don't measure up.

So how do we proceed? Do we recognize and act on emerging public opinion and return more control to states and local school districts? Can we rely on them to transform public education in America while addressing persistent achievement gaps?

Or do we follow the current path, maintaining a significant federal role focused on equity in developing education policy centered on standards-based accountability — even if we know that Americans are increasingly rejecting this approach?

Returning to our original premise, we believe two actions are necessary, one based on communication, the other based on modification.

To address higher achievement and greater equity, the United States needs standards of excellence, and there is wide agreement that the Common Core State Standards offer these standards. In this case, modifying policy is not a solution. We can't return to an American system of public education based on 50 sets of education standards. Working together, education professionals through their associations, along with business and political leaders can work together to mount a nonpartisan communications campaign explaining to Americans why the Common Core State Standards are essential to the nation's future and to the success of all children. Public support for the standards is declining — we need to fight for these standards since we are losing in the court of public opinion.

Second, we need to modify — replace — how we hold education systems accountable. The oversimplified model based almost exclusively on standardized testing isn't working, and Americans know that. That's why it's losing public support.

If we want higher levels of achievement and greater levels of equity, then the American public education system must be sincere in its effort to provide a high-quality education for every child that ensures his or her future success. But evaluating how educators and systems achieve that goal can take many forms. Standardized testing can be one of the tools but it cannot be the only form of evaluation. Americans want assurance that every child has the opportunity for success and that educators and systems will be evaluated on whether we are achieving that goal. This is a much more complicated approach to accountability but it is clear that this is the only one that Americans will accept.

Let's fight for rigorous standards for all children and for a system of accountability recognizing that every child is unique, and that it is our responsibility to prepare them for success in their careers and in their lives.

Student assessment using standardized tests

We know from questions in last year's PDK/Gallup poll that fewer than one of four Americans said the increase in student testing has helped improve local public schools. This year, we posed two new questions to determine Americans' support for standardized testing.

»FINDINGS

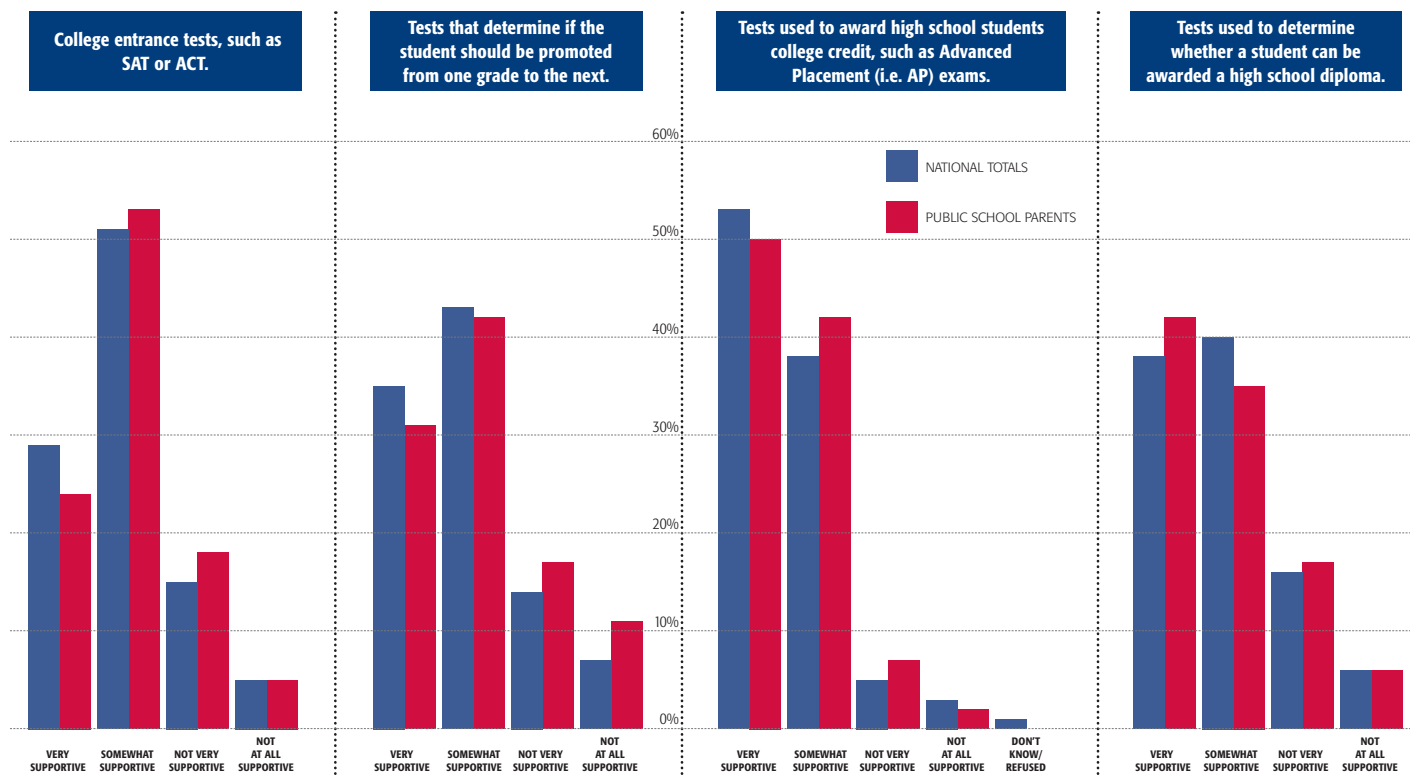
Just over half (54%) of Americans said standardized tests aren't helpful to teachers, and parents feel even more strongly about this. This belief is held uniformly regardless of political affiliation.

While most Americans (68%) are skeptical that standardized tests help teachers, they support using them to evaluate student achievement or to guide decisions about student placement, particularly to award college credit such as through Advanced Placement exams.

TABLE 7. Some teachers believe student standardized tests help them know more about their students' academic achievements. Other teachers believe that student standardized tests do not help them know what to teach. What do you think? Are student standardized tests helpful, or are they not helpful to teachers?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Standardized tests are helpful	45	31	46	45	44
Standardized tests are not helpful	54	68	52	54	55
Don't know/refused	1	1	1	1	1

TABLE 8. How supportive are you of the following types of student tests. Are you very supportive, somewhat supportive, not very supportive, or not at all supportive?



International comparisons of student achievement

For two decades, policy makers have focused on how the achievement of American children, as measured by standardized tests, compares with the achievement of children in other nations. Three different studies present international comparisons of student achievement including the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). The PISA study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has become the most well-known of the three. The latest PISA results were released in December 2013, and the announcement received considerable media attention. We wanted to know what Americans know and believe about these international comparisons of student achievement as measured by standardized tests.

FINDINGS

70% of Americans don't remember reading or hearing about the PISA test scores in December 2013.

Though Americans were unaware of the most recent release of international comparisons, half said they believed U.S. students ranked lower than students in other nations, and another 46% believed they ranked in the middle. Just 3% believed U.S. students ranked higher than students in other nations. (U.S. students ranked below average in math but posted average results in science and reading.)

About three of four Americans agree that understanding how students are taught in other countries could help improve schools in their community, but they're less certain that international test comparisons are important in helping improve U.S. schools, and they're unconvinced that test scores used for international comparisons accurately measure student achievement across nations.

TABLE 9. Do you remember reading or hearing about these test scores when they were released?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %
Yes	30	31
No	70	69

TABLE 10. How do you think students in the United States performed on this international test as compared to students in other countries? Do you think that U.S. students scored higher than students in most of the nations, U.S. student scores were in the middle of the rankings of student scores, or U.S. students scored lower than students in most of the nations.

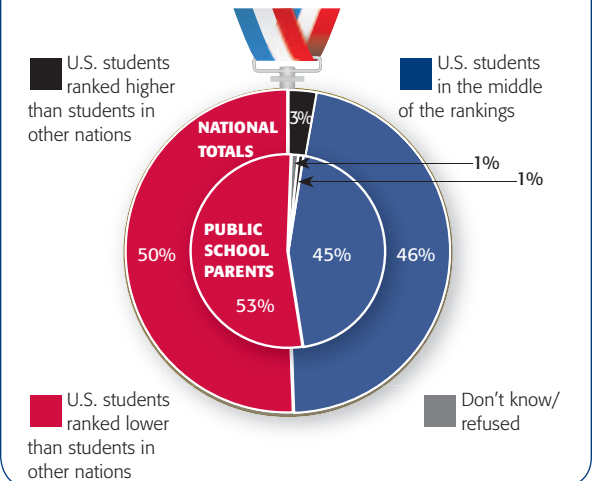


TABLE 11. Using a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about the PISA international test comparisons.

11A. International comparison tests such as PISA accurately measure student achievement across nations.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
(5) Strongly agree	8	10	5	12	7
(4)	21	17	20	23	21
(3)	43	45	38	42	48
(2)	16	14	19	14	15
(1) Strongly disagree	11	14	17	8	8
Don't know/refused	1	1	2	1	1

11B. Understanding how students are taught in other countries could help improve schools in my community.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
(5) Strongly agree	40	41	32	54	37
(4)	34	30	39	26	37
(3)	15	17	16	12	16
(2)	5	9	5	5	6
(1) Strongly disagree	5	3	8	4	4
Don't know/refused	1	0	1	0	1

11C. International test comparisons are critical to helping improve schools in this country.

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
(5) Strongly agree	17	17	17	22	15
(4)	29	31	25	35	29
(3)	29	31	26	27	33
(2)	13	12	17	9	13
(1) Strongly disagree	11	10	14	8	10
Don't know/refused	0	0	1	0	1

Governance, quality, and challenges facing America's public schools

Every year, followers of the PDK/Gallup poll carefully scrutinize the results of four questions we've asked annually for more than 20 years. The first question we ask Americans every year is what they think is the biggest problem facing the public schools in their communities. The item is first in the interview so other questions won't affect their responses. No prompts are provided.

We then ask Americans to grade schools in their communities, with a follow-up item that asks them to grade the nation's schools. We also ask parents to grade the school their oldest child attends.

For several years, we've asked Americans to grade the President's support for public education, and this year, we drew a question from the archive asking Americans whom they think should control what's taught in the public schools.

»FINDINGS

Most Americans believe the local school board should have the greatest influence in deciding what's taught in the public schools, an increase from the last time we asked this question in 2007. This is alongside a decline in the percentage of Americans who support the federal government's influence.

By far, lack of financial support continues to be the No. 1 challenge facing public schools in America. Other challenges most often mentioned were concerns about curriculum standards, student discipline, and getting and keeping good teachers.

Americans graded President Barack Obama's performance in support of public schools as the lowest recorded since he became president in 2009 and significantly lower this year compared to 2013. An equal percentage (27%) gave him an A or B and a failing grade.

50% of Americans gave the schools in their communities either an A or B, with parents awarding local schools even higher marks. These grades have remained consistent over the last few years. At the same time, Americans give the nation's schools significantly lower grades with more than 80% assigning the nation's schools a C or lower grade; no public school parents gave the nation's schools an A.

Parents continue to give high grades to the schools attended by their oldest child, although one-third of parents assign their local schools a C or lower grade.

TABLE 12. What do you think are the biggest problems that the public schools of your community must deal with?

	National totals '14 %	National totals '04 %	Public school parents '14 %
Lack of financial support	32	21	36
Concerns about education standards	9	--	9
Lack of discipline/use of drugs/fighting & gangs	9	23	9
Difficulty getting good teachers/need more teachers	8	--	10
	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Lack of financial support	21	45	33
Concerns about education standards	11	6	10
Lack of discipline/use of drugs/fighting & gangs	11	7	8
Difficulty getting good teachers/need more teachers	8	16	3

TABLE 13. Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves in your community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	'14 %	'13 %	'12 %	'11 %	'10 %
A & B	50	53	48	51	49
A	12	13	12	14	11
B	38	40	36	37	38
C	31	29	31	32	33
D	11	11	13	11	11
Fail	6	4	4	5	5
Don't know/refused	1	3	4	2	2

The public comments



Nichole Maher

Portland, Oregon
President, Northwest Health Foundation
Mother of three young children

Common Core: If we want equitable outcomes, if we want to help students reach their potentials, the Common Core is a very fair way to do it. There are many well-intended educators, but the reality is that where you go to school, your geographic location, your economic situation, and your race determines the quality of education that you receive. We have teachers teaching in the same grade in the same school but teaching in totally different ways.

There is so much resistance to this from teachers because they don't want someone telling them how to teach or how to practice their profession. I just don't think it's realistic that teachers have those expectations when most other professionals have standards that they're expected to reach if they're going to be considered good quality.

International comparisons: The reason that the United States does poorly (on international comparisons) is because of our racial achievement gap. If students of color were doing as well as white students or had the same opportunities as white students, our nation would be ranked higher. Because we allow this disparity to exist, we allow our country to rank lower.

Influence: There should be a partnership between all three levels of government — federal, state, and local — plus community-based organizations. Those organizations need a place at the table because education doesn't just happen in the classroom. Acting as if it does sets up a false pretense. Schools belong to a community and the people who live in that community need to have a say in what happens in their schools.

TABLE 14. Using the A, B, C, D, and FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

	Public school parents				
	'14 %	'13 %	'12 %	'11 %	'10 %
A & B	67	71	77	75	74
A	27	36	37	33	31
B	40	35	40	43	43
C	14	23	16	20	21
D	14	4	6	3	5
Fail	5	1	0	1	1
Don't know/refused	0	0	1	0	1

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 15. How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National totals				
	'14 %	'13 %	'12 %	'11 %	'10 %
A & B	17	19	19	17	18
A	1	1	1	1	1
B	16	18	18	16	17
C	51	53	47	51	53
D	19	19	23	23	20
Fail	10	6	7	7	6
Don't know/refused	3	3	4	3	3

TABLE 16. President Obama is continuing his second term in office. How would you grade his performance in support of public schools using the A, B, C, D, or Fail scale?

	National totals				Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	'14 %	'13 %	'12 %	'11 %	'14 %	'14 %	'14 %
A & B	27	36	37	41	3	61	24
A	5	9	10	11	0	16	2
B	22	27	27	30	3	45	22
C	29	27	25	25	26	28	31
D	16	15	17	14	22	7	16
Fail	27	18	17	15	49	2	26
Don't know/refused	2	5	4	5	0	1	3

TABLE 17. In your opinion, who should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools here — the federal government, the state government, or the local school board?

	National totals	Public school parents	Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
	'14 %	'14 %	'14 %	'14 %	'14 %
Federal government	15	12	3	28	16
State government	28	27	28	26	28
Local school board	56	60	68	45	55
Don't know/refused	1	1	1	1	1

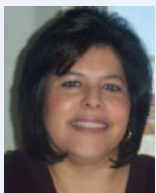
School charters and vouchers

To a degree, school choice has taken a backseat in the controversies surrounding public education. However, it remains a contentious issue, certainly among policy makers and educators.

Fourteen years ago, we wrote the question about charter schools at a time when most Americans were unfamiliar with them. For that reason, we added a descriptor indicating that “charter schools operate under a charter or contract that frees them from many of the state regulations imposed on public schools and permits them to operate independently.” We have become increasingly uncomfortable with this question because we hesitate offering explanations that can bias the response, particularly as more Americans are familiar with charter schools. For this reason, we asked half of the respondents in our random sample the legacy question with the descriptor and the other half of the respondents the more direct question: “Do you favor or oppose the idea of charter schools?” We present the results of both versions of that question below.

Similarly, we remain interested in testing Americans’ knowledge of charter schools by asking a series of questions that we first

The public comments



Deanna M. Sanchez

Hudson, Colo.
Administrative assistant, Front Range Community College
Mother of three adult children

Biggest problem: Funding. There is never enough money. This impacts our families, students, and teachers. Every year, the supply lists have more added to them. The most shocking item on the list is Kleenex. Families just don't have the money for this.

Influence: The federal government should have the greatest influence. They have access to more information than a school board or even a state. They know what's needed across the country. They look at the big picture. The local school board is just in tune with the community they're servicing.

Standardized tests: Teachers should pay attention to test scores because we're making students take the tests. I hope, at some point, that they're using the information to tailor what they are teaching, but I don't think teachers pay very much attention to them because they already have their lessons planned.

But I also don't think test results are as reliable as we would hope they would be. A lot of kids just freeze up during testing. They panic because it's a “test” so you don't really know what they know. And I don't think teachers should be evaluated based on test results. There's more to being a teacher than just one test or one day. It would be really sad for a teacher to be fired over test scores.

Charter schools: At first, I was really against charters. But now I wish I had had my kids in a charter school. I think they would have gotten a better education in a charter school than in a traditional public school. I like that charter schools are strict and that students wear uniforms. The clothes they wear can be distracting, which is a big thing when they're in middle and high school.

developed in 2006. We then completed the section on school choice by asking a question on school vouchers — the same question we've asked almost every year since 1993.

»FINDINGS

Using our legacy public charter school question, seven of 10 Americans favor the idea of charter schools, similar to approval ratings during the past several years. However, the percentage supporting public charter schools declined when we removed an explanation of charter schools from the question.

Most Americans misunderstand charter schools, believing that they can charge tuition and admit

students based on ability, and nearly half believe they can also teach religion.

More Americans believe students receive a better education at public charter schools than at other public schools.

Two-thirds of Americans oppose public school vouchers.

TABLE 18A. As you may know, charter schools operate under a charter or contract that frees them from many of the state regulations imposed on public schools and permits them to operate independently. Do you favor or oppose the idea of charter schools? (Half the sample)

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Favor	70	62	76	62	71
Oppose	29	38	24	37	28
Don't know/refused	1	0	0	1	1

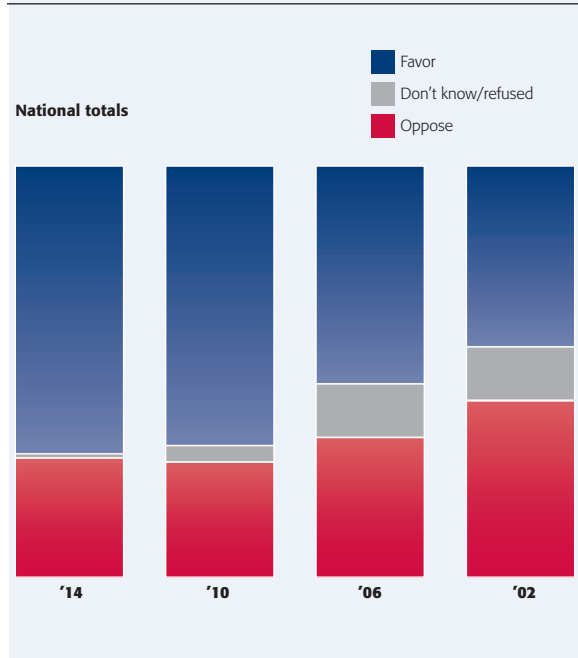


TABLE 18B. Do you favor or oppose the idea of charter schools? (Half the sample)

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Favor	63	55	73	55	60
Oppose	31	33	22	41	33
Don't know/refused	6	12	5	4	7

TABLE 19. Just from what you know or have heard about charter schools, please tell me whether each of the following statements is true or false.

19A. A charter school is a public school.

	National totals		
	'14 %	'09 %	'06 %
True	50	45	39
False	48	51	53
Don't know/refused	2	4	8

19B. Charter schools are free to teach religion.

	National totals		
	'14 %	'09 %	'06 %
True	48	46	50
False	48	47	34
Don't know/refused	4	7	16

19C. Charter schools can charge tuition.

	National totals		
	'14 %	'09 %	'06 %
True	57	57	60
False	40	39	29
Don't know/refused	3	4	11

19D. Charter schools can select students on the basis of ability.

	National totals		
	'14 %	'09 %	'06 %
True	68	71	58
False	29	25	29
Don't know/refused	3	4	13

TABLE 20. Do you believe students receive a better education at a public charter school than at other public schools?

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Public charter school	54	41	65	42	55
Other public schools	33	37	27	44	31
No difference	8	15	5	9	8
Don't know/refused	5	8	3	6	6

ADVISORY PANEL

PDK International and Gallup assembled a panel of experts to select the topics asked in the 2014 PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. PDK and Gallup express their appreciation for the guidance provided by these panel members.

Kim Anderson, director, National Education Association, Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Jean-Claude Brizard, president, UpSpring Education Group

David Cantor, senior adviser/U.S. policy and advocacy, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Jim Cibulka, president, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

Virginia Edwards, president, Editorial Projects in Education

Maria Ferguson, executive director, Center on Education Policy, George Washington University

Mark Ginsberg, dean, College of Education and Human Development, George Mason University

Robert Johnston, vice president, The Hatcher Group

Andrew Kelly, director, Center on Higher Education Reform, American Enterprise Institute

Mollie Miller, national student president, Future Educators Association

Natalie Morales, teacher, Newburgh Free Academy, Newburgh, N.Y., and PDK Emerging Leader

Katherine Oliver, assistant state superintendent, Maryland Department of Education

Connie Rath, dean, Gallup University

Steven Weber, principal, Hillsborough Elementary School, Hillsborough, N.C., and PDK Emerging Leader

Patricia Williams, president, PDK International

PDK STAFF

William J. Bushaw
Ashley Kincaid
Greg Patterson
Joan Richardson
Dan Brown

GALLUP STAFF

Shane J. Lopez
Valerie J. Calderon

TABLE 21. Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense?

	'14 %	National totals		
		'13 %	'12 %	'11 %
Favor	37	29	44	34
Oppose	63	70	55	65
Don't know/refused	0	1	1	1

	National totals '14 %	Public school parents '14 %	Rep. '14 %	Dem. '14 %	Ind. '14 %
Favor	37	37	52	23	37
Oppose	63	63	48	77	63
Don't know/refused	0	0	0	0	0

METHODS STATEMENT

Results are based on a Gallup Panel telephone study completed by 1,001 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 29 to June 20, 2014. All interviews were conducted in English. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based longitudinal panel of more than 60,000 U.S. adults that are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) phone interviews that cover landline and cell phones. Address-based sampling methods are also used to recruit panel members. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel, and members are not given incentives for participating. The sample for this study was weighted to be demographically representative of the U.S. adult population, using 2013 Current Population Survey figures. For results based on this sample, one can say that the maximum margin of sampling error is +/- 4.6, at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error accounts for the design effect from weighting. Margins of error are higher for subsamples. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting the survey can introduce error and bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

PDK ARCHIVE AND DATABASE

The PDK/Gallup poll archive includes more than 800 questions — organized by topic — asked of Americans since the first PDK/Gallup poll in 1969. Multiple year results are available when the same question was used in subsequent polls.

PDK members can access the PDK/Gallup poll archive by logging in to PDK at www.pdkintl.org. Copies of all PDK/Gallup polls are available to PDK members free at www.pdkintl.org. Nonmembers can buy previous polls for \$4.95 each.