

## What's Up With the Declining Support for Common Core?

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Thomas Petrilli wonders what's behind the recent decline in support for the Common Core State Standards, specifically:

- According to an *Education Next* poll, public approval dropped from 65 to 53 percent in the last year, with Republicans now almost evenly split – 43 percent for, 37 opposed.
- The just-released Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll found that a majority of the public, and three-quarters of Republicans, now oppose the Common Core.
- The *Education Next* poll found that support among teachers has fallen from 76 to 46 percent in the last year.

For those who support the new standards, these are troubling but not unexpected trends, says Petrilli: “After two punishing years of legislative assaults, Tea Party attacks, implementation controversies, and negative stories in conservative media, it’s a bit of a miracle that the numbers aren’t even worse.”

Still, while the Common Core “brand” is taking a beating, the basic ideas behind the standards are still popular. *Education Next's* pollsters found the level of support rose significantly when respondents were given a description of the standards without mentioning the toxic words, “Common Core.”

Petrilli believes several misconceptions are behind the declining support. Many Americans believe:

- Common Core State Standards are a federal mandate;
- Confidential student data will be sent to the federal government;
- The new standards will usurp local control over curriculum;
- CCSS will dictate decisions on textbooks and instructional materials.

These are all incorrect, but the idea of Washington’s involvement is “hard to address,” says Petrilli. “There’s no denying that there were federal incentives for adopting the standards, even if they didn’t amount to a requirement, and what’s done is done. But we surely can do a better job informing frustrated parents that they are, in fact, empowered to do something about the lousy math textbooks schools are assigning their children: they can – and should – take it up with their local school boards. Because that’s still where those decisions are made.”

As for the sharp drop in support among teachers, Petrilli believes it has a lot to do with the way the *Education Next* question was worded, including the phrase, “they will be used to hold public schools accountable for their performance.” The question conflated implementation of the standards with the controversial use of test scores as part of teacher evaluation.

“What’s Behind the Declining Support for the Common Core?” by Michael Petrilli in *The Education Gadfly*, August 20, 2014 (Vol. 14, #34),

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