

Released:
Wednesday, February 11, 2015

Contact:
PATRICK MURRAY
732-263-5858 (office)
732-979-6769 (cell)
pdmurray@monmouth.edu
Follow on Twitter: @PollsterPatrick

NEW JERSEY WANTS MORE SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY, BUT NOT STANDARDIZED TESTS

Awareness of Common Core and PARCC low, but negative

West Long Branch, N.J. – Most New Jerseyans want more accountability from their local schools, but few residents believe that standardized tests provide an accurate gauge of either student or teacher performance. The *Monmouth University Poll* also finds few Garden State residents have been paying close attention to the implementation of Common Core standards and the related PARCC test, but those who have heard a lot about these changes are decidedly negative.

Overall, 53% of New Jerseyans say that better measures are needed to hold their local schools accountable for how well they educate students. This compares to 39% who say appropriate measures are already in place. The number who say better measures are needed is down from 63% in an August 2011 poll and similar to 55% in October 2006. There is general agreement that better measures are needed among public school parents (54%) and other residents (53%) alike, as well as among majorities of Democrats (51%), Republicans (53%) and independents (56%).

The call for better accountability measures comes at the same time most New Jerseyans say their local schools are performing well. Fully 6-in-10 give an excellent (21%) or good (40%) rating to their local schools, while 24% say they are only fair and 8% say they are poor. Positive ratings of local schools come from 71% of parents and 59% of other residents. The 61% overall positive rating for local schools is similar to ratings given in the past few years.

“New Jerseyans like their public schools, but they still want more accountability. They are not quite convinced, though, that standardized tests provide an accurate picture of educational outcomes,” said Patrick Murray, director of the independent Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, N.J.

New Jersey recently replaced the decade-old NJ ASK test with the newly introduced PARCC evaluation that is being used by a number of other states and is aligned to Common Core standards. Just 3-in-10 (30%) New Jerseyans have heard about the PARCC test, including 58% of public school parents and 24% of other residents. While most of those aware of the PARCC (51%) have no opinion on the decision to replace NJ ASK with the new test, 36% think this was a bad idea and just 11% think it was a good idea.

Few (13%) residents aware of the PARCC have a positive opinion of the test, with the remainder split between a neutral (45%) or negative (41%) opinion. Among public school parents who have heard of the PARCC, 53% hold a neutral opinion, 39% are negative and just 8% are positive. Among the 1-in-7 New Jerseyans who have heard *a lot* about the PARCC test, fully 6-in-10 (60%) have a negative view, while just 21% are positive and 19% are neutral. Among those who have heard only *a little* about the PARCC, 72% have a neutral opinion.

The PARCC is designed to measure educational attainment related to new national Common Core standards. Just over half (52%) of New Jerseyans have heard about the Common Core, including 67% of public school parents and 50% of other residents. Opinion on the Common Core is divided. Among those aware of the new standards, 42% have a neutral opinion, 37% have a negative opinion, and 19% have a positive opinion. Among public school parents, 45% have a neutral opinion, 39% have a negative opinion, and 15% have a positive opinion. Among the 1-in-4 New Jerseyans who have heard *a lot* about the Common Core, most (52%) hold a negative view of it, while 27% have a neutral opinion and just 20% have a positive opinion.

The stated purpose of the Common Core is to prepare students for college and careers. Among New Jersey residents aware of the Common Core, just 23% believe the new educational standards will make students better prepared for life after high school. Another 31% say the Common Core will actually make students less prepared and 39% say the new standards will have no effect on college and workplace readiness.

“The more people have heard about the Common Core and the PARCC the less they like it. Most New Jerseyans, though, have not been paying close attention yet or are taking a neutral position. We’ll see which way opinion goes as the tests are administered in the coming months,” said Murray.

The poll also found that Garden State opinion is divided over the amount of standardized testing in schools today. A 40% plurality say there is too much testing, 33% say it is the right amount, and just 17% say there is too little testing. A majority (54%) of public school parents say there is too much standardized testing in schools today.

Just 1-in-3 Garden State residents feel that the standardized tests used in New Jersey schools do an excellent (5%) or good (31%) job accurately measuring students’ abilities. Furthermore, 3-in-10 say

these tests are an excellent (6%) or good (25%) gauge of the job teachers are doing in the classroom. Most say the tests do an only fair (41%) or poor (19%) job assessing student achievement and a similar number say they do an only fair (37%) or poor (26%) job evaluating teacher performance. These results are similar to a poll taken in August 2011.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone with 805 New Jersey adults from January 30 to February 2, 2015. The total sample has a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, New Jersey.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. How would you rate the job your local schools are doing – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Excellent	21%	19%	18%	30%	8%	26%	25%	34%	18%
Good	40%	37%	43%	39%	37%	42%	41%	37%	41%
Only fair	24%	28%	23%	17%	34%	20%	20%	18%	25%
Poor	8%	8%	8%	10%	13%	5%	8%	10%	8%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	7%	8%	5%	8%	7%	6%	1%	8%

TREND:	<i>Excellent/ Good</i>	Excellent	Good	Only Fair	Poor	(VOL) Don't know	(n)
February 2015	61%	21%	40%	24%	8%	7%	(805)
September 2014	60%	21%	39%	24%	9%	7%	(802)
April 2014	63%	24%	39%	22%	9%	6%	(803)
February 2014	61%	22%	39%	22%	10%	7%	(803)
December 2013	60%	20%	40%	23%	12%	5%	(802)
September 2013	62%	24%	38%	21%	7%	9%	(783)
April 2013	59%	21%	38%	27%	9%	5%	(806)
February 2013	64%	24%	40%	20%	7%	9%	(803)
December 2012	61%	21%	40%	23%	7%	9%	(816)
September 2012	61%	27%	34%	21%	10%	8%	(805)
July 2012	61%	22%	39%	20%	11%	8%	(803)
April 2012	63%	23%	40%	21%	7%	8%	(804)
February 2012	68%	26%	42%	16%	8%	8%	(803)
October 2011	60%	21%	39%	20%	13%	7%	(817)
August 2011	63%	19%	44%	26%	6%	5%	(802)
May 2011	63%	24%	39%	22%	10%	6%	(807)
December 2010	64%	24%	40%	23%	8%	5%	(2864)

2. Do you think appropriate measures are in place to hold your own local schools accountable for how well they educate students or are better measures needed?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Appropriate measures in place	39%	38%	36%	43%	32%	45%	37%	45%	37%
Better measures needed	53%	51%	56%	53%	57%	48%	54%	54%	53%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	11%	8%	4%	11%	7%	9%	1%	10%

TREND:	February 2015	August 2011	Oct 2006
Appropriate measures in place	39%	29%	39%
Better measures needed	53%	63%	55%
(VOL) Don't know	9%	7%	7%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	805	802	803

3. Have you heard or not heard about the new educational standards called the "Common Core" that are being used in public schools across the country starting this year? [*If HEARD: Have you heard a lot or just a little?*]

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Heard a lot	27%	22%	29%	34%	22%	28%	30%	45%	24%
Heard a little	25%	25%	26%	27%	19%	29%	26%	22%	26%
Not heard	47%	53%	44%	39%	58%	41%	43%	33%	49%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%

[QUESTIONS 4 & 5 WERE ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD AT LEAST A LITTLE ABOUT THE COMMON CORE; n=481, moe=+/-4.5%]

4. Is your general opinion of the Common Core positive, negative, or neutral? [Is that very or somewhat positive/negative?]

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT		AWARE COMMON CORE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No	Lot	Little
Very positive	8%	8%	9%	5%	14%	5%	6%	7%	8%	13%	2%
Somewhat positive	11%	15%	9%	6%	21%	7%	9%	8%	12%	7%	15%
Neutral	42%	46%	41%	36%	37%	51%	37%	45%	41%	27%	58%
Somewhat negative	14%	12%	11%	25%	11%	13%	16%	10%	15%	13%	15%
Very negative	23%	16%	27%	27%	17%	21%	28%	29%	22%	39%	6%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	2%	3%	2%	0%	3%	3%	2%	3%	1%	4%

5. Do you think the Common Core will make students better prepared for college and the workplace, will it make them less prepared, or will it have no effect either way?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT		AWARE COMMON CORE	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No	Lot	Little
Better prepared	23%	32%	16%	19%	28%	22%	20%	22%	23%	21%	24%
Less prepared	31%	26%	33%	34%	27%	24%	39%	33%	30%	40%	21%
No effect	39%	32%	45%	39%	39%	46%	32%	37%	40%	35%	43%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	10%	6%	9%	5%	8%	9%	8%	8%	4%	12%

6. Is the amount of standardized testing in schools today the right amount, too much, or not enough?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Right amount	33%	33%	31%	39%	43%	29%	31%	34%	33%
Too much	40%	39%	43%	37%	28%	44%	44%	54%	37%
Not enough	17%	18%	16%	16%	25%	16%	13%	9%	19%
(VOL) Don't know	10%	9%	11%	7%	5%	11%	12%	3%	11%

[QUESTIONS 7 AND 8 WERE ROTATED]

7. What kind of job do you think the standardized tests used in New Jersey schools do at accurately measuring STUDENTS' abilities – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Excellent	5%	4%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%
Good	31%	27%	31%	32%	36%	28%	29%	35%	29%
Fair	41%	46%	39%	37%	42%	43%	38%	34%	42%
Poor	19%	18%	20%	20%	14%	18%	22%	26%	18%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	1%	6%

TREND:	February 2015	August 2011
Excellent	5%	6%
Good	31%	29%
Fair	41%	39%
Poor	19%	20%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	6%
Unwtd N	805	802

8. What kind of job do you think the standardized tests used in New Jersey schools do at accurately measuring the job TEACHERS are doing – excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Excellent	6%	8%	4%	8%	8%	5%	4%	2%	6%
Good	25%	27%	20%	26%	30%	24%	22%	19%	26%
Fair	37%	36%	42%	31%	41%	39%	33%	36%	38%
Poor	26%	23%	28%	32%	18%	25%	33%	40%	24%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	6%	7%	3%	4%	6%	7%	3%	7%

TREND:	February 2015	August 2011
Excellent	6%	4%
Good	25%	27%
Fair	37%	41%
Poor	26%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	8%
Unwtd N	805	802

9. Have you heard or not heard about the new PARCC test that is being used in New Jersey public schools this year? [If HEARD: Have you heard a lot or just a little?]

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No
Heard a lot	15%	10%	15%	26%	14%	13%	17%	27%	13%
Heard a little	15%	17%	15%	12%	15%	15%	15%	31%	11%
Not heard	69%	73%	68%	61%	69%	71%	67%	42%	75%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	2%

[QUESTIONS 10 & 11 WERE ASKED OF THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD AT LEAST A LITTLE ABOUT THE PARCC TEST; n=263, moe=+/-6.1%]

10. Is your general opinion of the PARCC test positive, negative, or neutral? [Is that very or somewhat positive/negative?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT		AWARE PARC TEST	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No	Lot	Little
Very positive	5%	4%	4%	8%	5%	3%	6%	5%	4%	7%	3%
Somewhat positive	8%	4%	13%	3%	20%	4%	2%	3%	10%	14%	2%
Neutral	45%	58%	39%	40%	45%	52%	41%	53%	42%	19%	72%
Somewhat negative	9%	4%	10%	13%	5%	13%	8%	9%	9%	7%	10%
Very negative	32%	27%	33%	36%	21%	28%	42%	30%	33%	53%	10%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	3%	1%	0%	4%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	3%

11. New Jersey schools used to give a standardized test called N.J. ASK, but they are now switching to the PARCC test which is being used by a number of states. Overall, do you think replacing N.J. ASK with the PARCC is a good idea or bad idea, or do you have no opinion?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT		AWARE PARC TEST	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No	Lot	Little
Good idea	11%	8%	15%	8%	17%	10%	8%	10%	12%	14%	8%
Bad idea	36%	29%	36%	48%	22%	44%	40%	34%	38%	53%	20%
No opinion	51%	61%	49%	42%	59%	44%	52%	55%	49%	30%	73%
(VOL) Opposed to all standardized tests	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
(VOL) Refused	1%	2%	0%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%

The Monmouth University Poll was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from January 30 to February 2, 2015 with a statewide random sample of 805 adult residents, including 605 contacted via live interview on a landline telephone and 200 via live interview on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey questionnaire design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)			
38% Dem	49% Male	28% 18-34	64% White
43% Ind	51% Female	39% 35-54	12% Black
19% Rep		33% 55+	15% Hispanic
			9% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			COMMUNITY TYPE			PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT		AWARE COMMON CORE		AWARE PARC TEST	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Urban	Stable town	Expanding suburb	Yes	No	Lot	Little	Lot	Little
Unweighted N	805	283	342	162	172	298	335	109	693	260	221	131	132
moe	3.5%	5.8%	5.3%	7.7%	7.5%	5.7%	5.4%	9.4%	3.7%	6.1%	6.6%	8.6%	8.5%

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues that affect them. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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