



To: Interested Parties
From: Karen Nussle, Executive Director
Date: November 11, 2014
Subject: Post-Election Analysis II: Common Core Opponents on the Fringes

Last Wednesday, the day after the election, I wrote that Common Core State Standards seem to have had little-to-no effect on the vast majority of state and federal races. It was, by and large, a net zero-change election insofar as the politics of Common Core are concerned. Now that the dust has settled, we have an opportunity to provide a much clearer analysis of the lay of the land as it pertains to the Standards.

After every election, a torrent of postmortem analysis ensues, and a handful of explicatory notions begin to gain currency. This year is no different. A week after Election Day, there is broad agreement among political analysts that the Republican Party's historic Election Day success can be credited, in no small measure, to its meticulous efforts to crowd out dogmatic and divisive ideologues in favor of candidates with broad appeal and a capacity to govern.

"This time, party officials pushed bad candidates out, recruited and coached contenders with broad appeal," reported Philip Rucker and Robert Costa of *The Washington Post*. "Looming large were the ghosts of combustible campaigns of past: Todd Akin, Richard Mourdock, Ken Buck, Christine O'Donnell, Sharon Angle."

"Ohio Gov. John Kasich (R) got 26 percent of the African American vote," writes *The Washington Post's* Jennifer Rubin. "Maybe *his* formula is the one to look to as a model to expand the GOP. (He expanded Medicaid and continued to implement Common Core.)"

With respect to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), one of the most striking pictures to emerge in the wake of the elections is the extent to which anti-CCSS elected leaders appear to be political outliers.

Even amidst a Republican wave, candidates elected to statewide governing positions largely resisted pressure to call for repeal of the Standards:

- 86% of Governors in pro-Common Core states have not expressed interest in repealing the Standards (38 of 44 Governors)
- 90% of state Superintendents in Common Core states have not taken steps to repeal the Standards (40 of 44 Superintendents)
- Among the 44 states with Common Core on the books, only six Governors and three State Superintendents have sought to repeal it

These statistics demonstrate quite conclusively that, far from being a political loser, support for Common Core does not jeopardize a candidate’s political prospects. If the notion that voters are clamoring to elect candidates who oppose uniformly high academic standards were true, it would be reflected in the makeup of Governorships and State Superintendents. But after two national elections, including the most recent GOP wave election, statewide officials bent on repealing the Standards are in the minority.

WHERE THEY STAND ON REPEAL OF COMMON CORE				
	Governors		State Superintendents	
	Pro-Repeal	Have Not Called For Repeal	Have Not Called For Repeal	Pro-Repeal
AL		Robert Bentley	Thomas Bice	
AZ	Doug Ducey			Diane Douglas
AR		Asa Hutchinson	Tony Wood	
CA		Jerry Brown	Tom Torlakson	
CO		John Hickenlooper	Robert Hammond	
CT		Dan Malloy	Stefan Pryor	
DE		Jack Markell	Mark Murphey	
FL		Rick Scott	Pam Stewart	
GA		Nathan Deal		Richard Woods
HI		David Ige	Kathryn Matayoshi	
ID		Butch Otter	Sherri Ybarra	
IL		Bruce Rauner	Christopher Koch	
IA		Terry Branstad	Brad Buck	
KS		Sam Brownback	Brad Neuenswander	
KY		Steve Beshear	Terry Holliday	
LA	Bobby Jindal		John White	
ME	Paul LePage		James Rier	
MD		Larry Hogan	Lillian Lowery	
MA		Charlie Baker	Mitchell Chester	
MI		Rick Snyder	Michael Flanagan	
MS	Phil Bryant		Carey Wright	
MO		Jay Nixon	Chris Nicastro	
MT		Steve Bullock	Denise Juneau	
NV		Brian Sandoval	Dale Eriquiaga	
NH		Maggie Hassan	Virginia Barry	
NJ		Chris Christie	David Hespe	
NM		Susana Martinez	Hannah Skandera	
NY		Andrew Cuomo	John King, Jr.	
NC		Pat McCrory	June Atkinson	
ND		Jack Dalrymple	Kirsten Baesler	
OH		John Kasich	Richard Ross	
OR		John Kitzhaber	Rob Saxton	
PA		Tom Wolf	Carolyn Dumaesq	
RI		Gina Raimondo	Deborah Gist	
SC	Nikki Haley			Molly Spearman
SD		Dennis Daugaard	Melody Schopp	
TN		Bill Haslam	Kevin Huffman	
UT		Gary Herbert	Joel Coleman	
VT		Peter Shumlin*	Rebecca Holcombe	
WA		Jay Inslee	Randy Dorn	
WV		Earl Ray Tomblin	Michael Martirano	
WI	Scott Walker		Anthony Evers	
WY		Matt Mead	Jillian Balow	
MN		Mark Dayton	Brenda Cassellius	
		Common Core State	* Race not yet called	
		Partial-Common Core State		

The fact is, voters continue to overwhelmingly support higher education standards and increased accountability, despite the onslaught of attacks against Common Core orchestrated by activists in both parties. Politically, support for uniform high standards is a net plus among *both* Republicans and Democrats capable of articulating the case for them.

On Election Day, the Collaborative for Student Success asked a survey question of 1000 voters (39% Republican, 38% Democrat, 23% Independent/Did Not Indicate) across the country: “do you approve or disapprove of educational standards in math and English that identify what a child should know in both subjects by the end of each school grade so that student achievement may be measured from school to school and state to state?”

By a greater than two-to-one margin, 62% to 27%, voters approved (35% strongly approve, 26% somewhat approve, 11% somewhat disapprove, 16% strongly disapprove).

Republicans and independents supported the standards by 28-point margin: 59%-31%; support among Democrats is even higher at 68% to 21%.

And even while some conservative candidates have distanced themselves from the issue, interstate standards remain very popular among every voting bloc, including voters who describe themselves as “very conservative,” Tea Party backers and born-again Christians.

As I noted the day after the election, gubernatorial incumbents that strongly support CCSS won Tuesday in 12 states (NV, TN, SD, OH, IA, CA, NM, ID, NH, MI, CT, OR) most of them with comfortable-to-strong margins.

And of the 36 gubernatorial races voted on this past Tuesday, Common Core was a notable factor in only four races, and among those four races (CO, NY, PA, AZ), the candidate who was most supportive of Common Core prevailed in three of them (CO, NY, PA).

Regardless of what you call it, the notion of raising academic expectations and having them be comparable across state lines is perhaps the most consequential education reform of the past quarter century. Implementation of that notion – broadly known as the Common Core State Standards – has not always been easy. But the Standards have demonstrated remarkable political resilience because, fundamentally, the public supports higher education standards and increased accountability that prepare students to be successful after high school.

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