

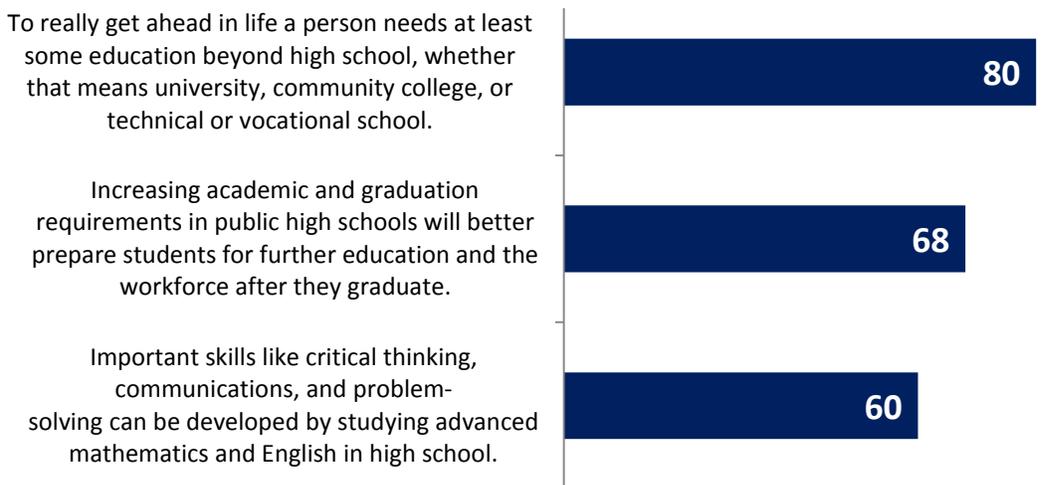
On behalf of the Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted a statewide survey of N=500 registered voters in Tennessee. The survey was conducted September 6-10, 2012 and has a margin of error of +/- 4.4%.

Conclusion: Tennessee voters are receptive to change in their state public education system. They view improving public education as the most important element of improving the state’s economy. Voters support Tennessee’s reform efforts around teacher evaluations and tenure reform, and strongly favor implementing higher standards aligned with rigorous assessments.

Public Education in Tennessee

- **Tennessee voters rank improving the quality of public education as the most important element of improving the state’s economy.** 45% of voters say education is most important to improving the economy, compared with 20% who say lowering taxes, 19% reducing regulatory burdens on business, and 9% investing in infrastructure like roads and bridges.
- The majority of voters say Tennessee public high school graduates leave school unprepared. By a margin of 53% to 43%, voters say that when it comes to having sufficient academic knowledge and skills, high school graduates are unprepared to meet the expectations they face as they take the next steps after high school.
- **To better prepare students, Tennesseans support raising academic standards.** Almost six-in-ten voters (58%) say academic requirements for students in Tennessee’s public schools should be raised, while 31% say they should be kept the same, and just 6% say they should be lowered.
- There is strong agreement that students need some kind of education beyond high school, and that raising academic requirements will better prepare them for next steps.

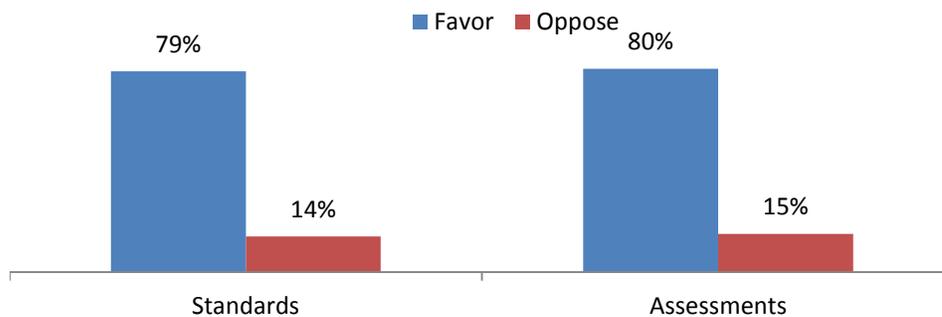
% Strongly Agree with Statement



Standards and Testing

- Forty-one percent (41%) of voters say students in Tennessee’s public schools are given about the right amount of tests. About one-fifth of voters (22%) say students in Tennessee’s public schools are given too many tests, while fifteen percent (15%) say they are not given enough tests. Another 21% is not sure.
- There is not a great deal of awareness about the Common Core State Standards, but initial impressions tend to be more positive than negative. Just about one-quarter (27%) of voters say they have heard “a lot” or “some” about the Common Core State Standards. The vast majority (72%) say they have heard “not much” or “nothing” about them.
- When provided with brief descriptions Tennessee voters overwhelmingly support implementing Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments.

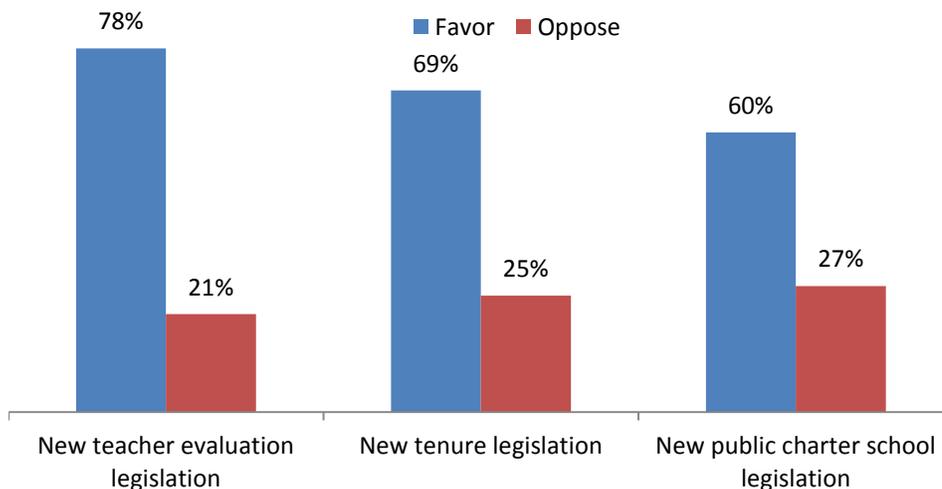
Favor/Oppose Implementing CCSS Standards & Assessments



Attitudes Toward Tennessee’s Reform Efforts

- There is majority support for recent legislation related to teacher evaluation, teacher tenure, and public charter schools. Voters were asked whether they favor or oppose some new laws related to K through 12 education that were passed in the state over the last two years.¹

Favor/Oppose Recent Legislation



¹ Full language tested:

The new teacher evaluation legislation requires that all teachers are evaluated every year on both their classroom performance and student academic achievement. Previously, only teachers with less than three years of experience were evaluated every year, while those with three or more years of experience received two evaluations over a ten year period.

The new tenure legislation requires that only highly effective teachers receive tenure, that ineffective teachers can lose tenure status, and that districts have more flexibility in the length of time to make a tenure decision and no longer have to fire a teacher who does not receive tenure. Previously, a district was required to choose between granting tenure or firing a teacher at the end of a three year probationary period.

The new public charter school legislation removes the cap on the number of charter schools allowed to operate in Tennessee and allows any student in a district with a charter school to enroll. Previously, there was a cap on the number of charter schools that were allowed to operate in the state and they had to give preference to students in failing traditional public schools, those who failed to test proficient or above on TCAP, or students who are eligible to receive federal free or reduced price lunch benefits.