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### Common Core Conversations in Connecticut: Analyzing Public Testimonies

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## Abstract

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is an effort to minimize the learning gap between high- and low-achieving students in the United States by providing a set of standards all students must meet by the end of each grade level. Although 46 states already adopted the CCSS, there are varied opinions on the effectiveness of this new reform. This research examined the opinions of citizens in Connecticut using written testimonies from a public hearing that took place in Hartford on March 12, 2014. The results show that two groups express support of the CCSS: state-wide organizations and suburban administrators, who believe that the CCSS will create students who are globally competitive and better prepared for college and careers because the standards are challenging. On the other hand, suburban teachers and suburban parents are opponents of the CCSS because the standards are too rigorous and focus on test taking rather than critical thinking skills. The results of this research suggest that speakers may vary their support of the CCSS based on how they perceive the Core's effects within or outside the school.

## Introduction

### Research Question:

What are public hearing participants saying about the Common Core and how do their responses reflect the community they represent and their role within this community?

This research attempts to discover why people are pro- or anti-Common Core by looking first at who testified and what they said in regards to the new policy.

### Past Research:

Past research studied the changes caused by the implementation of curriculum standards. This research contributes by studying how citizens in Connecticut perceive the changes caused by the CCSS.

- Changes in course offerings (Alexander 2002)
- Changes in standards, comparing CCSS to previous standards (Porter et al. 2011)
- Changes in organizational systems of learning (Gutierrez 2014)

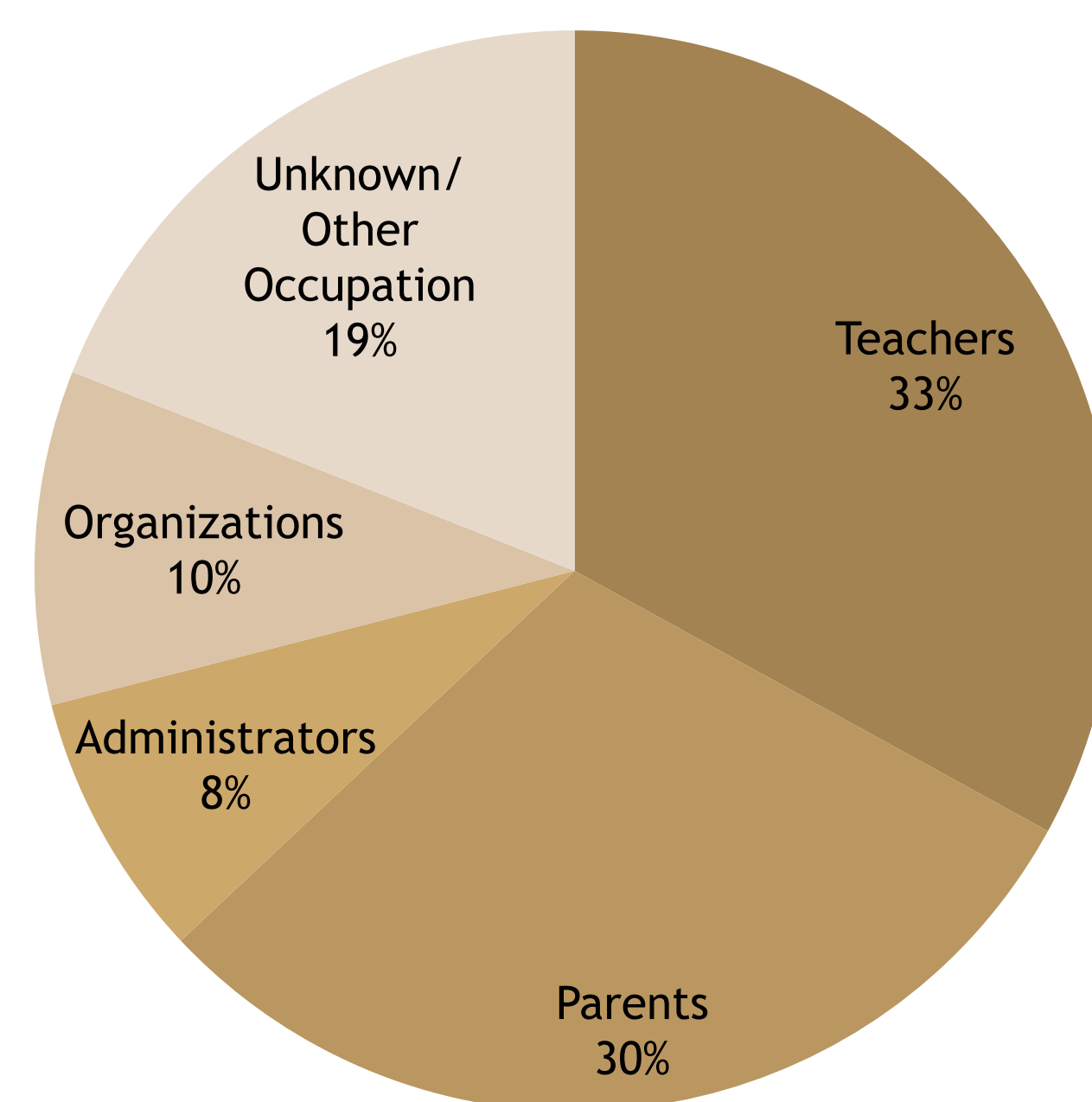
## Method

### Steps in Research Process:

1. Read testimonies
2. Code for arguments made "in favor" or "against" the CCSS
3. Record speaker role within the community, district, stance (in favor or against), and arguments
4. Analyze data to establish trends between speaker information and arguments presented

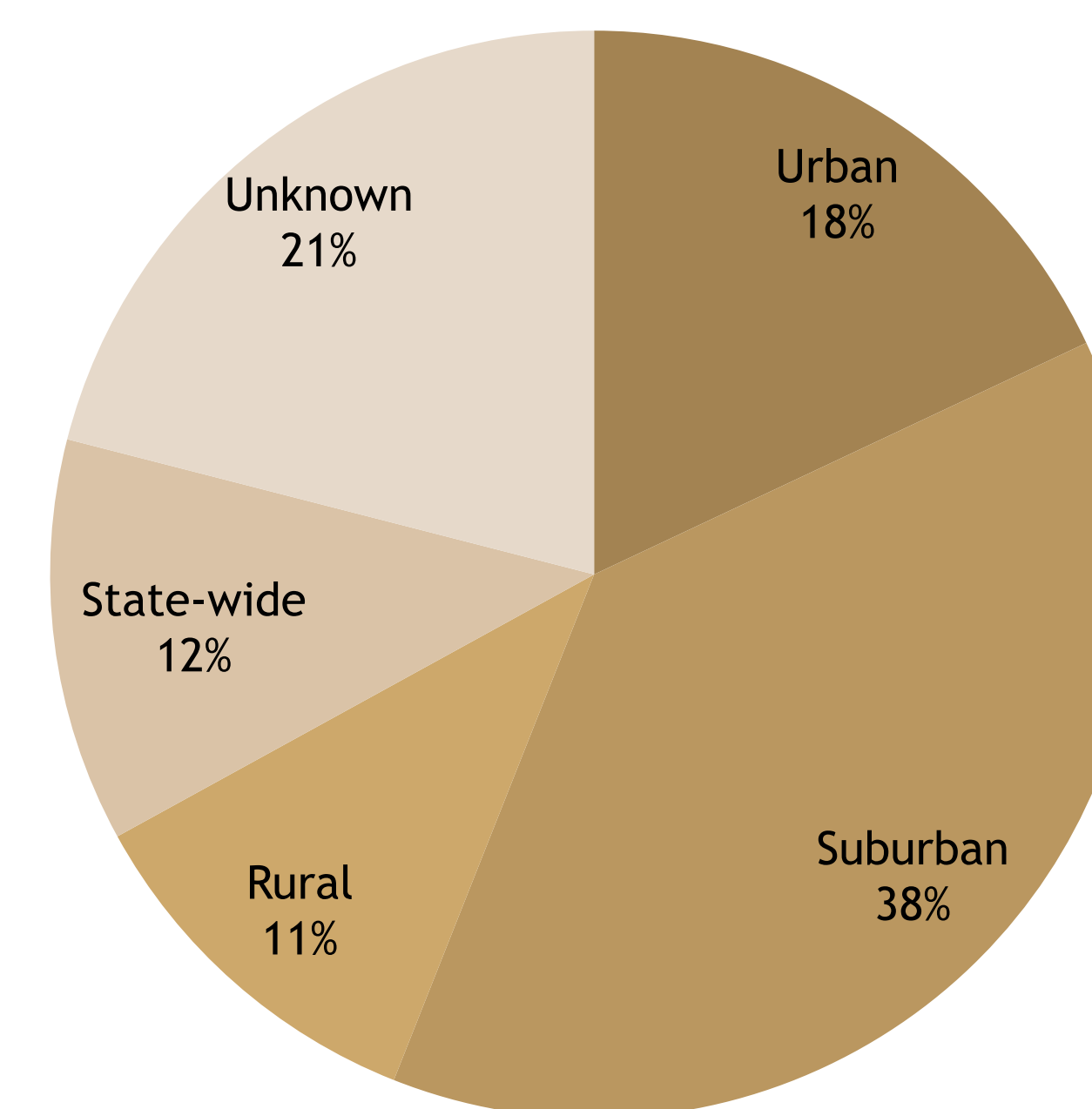
## Who testified?

Speakers by Role Within the Community



Of the 279 speakers who submitted written testimony:

Speakers by District\*



\*District lived in or represented by the speaker.

## Groups "In Favor" and "Against"

Two groups most "in favor" of the implementation of the CCSS:

- State-wide organizations (25% of speakers who made arguments "in favor" of the CCSS)
- Suburban administrators (14% of speakers)

Two groups most "against" the implementation of the CCSS:

- Suburban parents (19% of speakers who made arguments "against" the CCSS)
- Suburban teachers (18% of speakers)

## What did they say?

"Connecticut parents expect students to be held to rigorous standards with the knowledge that their daughters and sons... will be in the best position possible to achieve their professional and personal dreams."

"Moving forward with the Common Core standards is essential to keeping Connecticut competitive in the global economy."

"At a recent PTO meeting discussing the Common Core, many parents felt their children were either bored, frustrated, confused, or a combination of all three."

"My children are being taught short cuts to find answers, not critical thinking"

Table 1

Arguments "In Favor" of the CCSS

Area/Role of Speaker	College/Career Preparation	Critical Thinking	Framework	Close Achievement Gap	Global Competitiveness	Rigor
State-wide Organizations	13	4	2	3	8	8
Suburban Administration	7	3	2	1	2	7

Arguments made by state-wide organizations:

- CCSS prepares students for college and careers
- CCSS creates students who are globally competitive
- CCSS challenges students with rigor

Table 2

Arguments "Against" the CCSS

Area/Role of Speaker	Unequal Needs	Lack of Funding	Too Easy	Too Rigorous	Makes Teaching Difficult	Lack of Creativity	Teachers Not Prepared
Suburban Parents	11	3	4	19	4	11	2
Suburban Teachers	9	5	1	15	7	10	7

Arguments made by suburban parents and teachers:

- CCSS does not satisfy diverse needs of students
- CCSS is too rigorous
- CCSS encourages test taking and memorization rather than critical and creative thinking

## Community Partner

By its own mission statement, CT Parent Power is a parent-led organization that seeks to engage, educate, and mobilize parents to act on children's issues within the state. The organization informs and trains parents on how to actively defend and advance their children within the community.

For more information, visit:  
[www.ctparentpower.org](http://www.ctparentpower.org)

Or contact:  
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