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Arts videos could win equipment for schools

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Take the Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge

Parents, educators and anyone who has an interest in public education in Kentucky have the opportunity to give the Department of Education feedback on the academic standards that say what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.

Last month, the Kentucky Department of Education, in cooperation with education advocacy groups across the state, kicked off the Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge, a process for collecting feedback on the English/language arts and mathematics standards teachers have been using since 2011.

“We hear a lot about the standards, but rarely hear specifics on how they could be made better,” Commissioner Terry Holliday said. “We are conducting the Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge to raise awareness of what the standards actually require students to learn and to solicit specific feedback in order to inform the Kentucky Department of Education’s regular review process of the standards that are being taught in our classrooms.”

The challenge is not a referendum on the standards, and only specific recommendations on how to change a standard will be considered in the review process.

Teachers and other education advocates in the state have worked for five years to implement the more rigorous standards that were required by Senate Bill 1 in 2009.

“We want to honor that work by reviewing the standards and tweaking them to make them stronger so that all Kentucky students will graduate with the knowledge and skills they need for college and career,” Holliday said while unveiling the challenge at Woodford County High School.

Woodford County 4th- and 5th-grade teacher Brad Clark said that over the past three years, he has seen students challenged by the standards to think more and apply what they learn.

“Are the standards perfect? No, none are,” he said. “But as an educator, I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on how we can make the standards better to meet our students’ learning needs. It’s really about how can we best prepare our students for success.”



Between now and April 30, 2015, parents, students, P-12 teachers and others can go to kentucky.statestandards.org to read the grade level standards and provide their response. The standards are searchable by subject, grade level and keyword. Participants may make suggestions on moving the standard to another grade level, splitting the standard, creating a new standard or rewriting it.

Once the challenge ends, the feedback will be posted online and a team of Kentucky educators will review the suggestions and make recommendations on any changes to the Kentucky Board of Education for its consideration, most likely in fall of 2015.

During the news conference, Holliday reiterated that the standards prescribe only the minimum of what students should be learning, and do not dictate either how they are taught or the curriculum and instructional materials

used. Those are decisions best made by the local district, school and classroom teacher, he said.

For more information on the challenge click [here](#); to participate, click [here](#).

Back to school jitters aren't just for kids

The start of a new school year doesn't bring anxiety to just students and teachers. Parents also feel anxious when their children return to school, according to a survey from the National Center for Families Learning.

The survey, conducted by Google Consumer Surveys, asked parents how they feel about the back-to-school season. Nearly half of parents (41.2 percent) admitted to feeling anxious and uneasy as a new school year begins. The parents said some of the stressors included day-to-day logistics of school, money and in-school socialization.

"As much as a teacher grades students, parents grade themselves and wonder if they're giving their child everything he or she needs to be successful," said NCFE Vice President Emily Kirkpatrick. "We want to reassure parents that implementing straightforward, consistent educational support will make a realizable difference in their children's success."

As part of its mission to help parents play a meaningful role in their child's education, NCFE, which is based in Louisville, shared these tips for parents to ease back into the school year:

Breakdown of parents' responses:

- Just over 25 percent (27.4 percent) of respondents admit it's tough transitioning from summer back into the family's school year routine.
- Nearly 25 percent of parents (23.1 percent) are concerned about the social aspects of school such as bullying and trying to fit in.
- 20.5 percent of parents point the finger at the back-to-school expenses – books, clothes, classroom fees and supplies.
- About 1 parent in 8 (11.9 percent) is worried about interacting with teachers.
- And nearly 10 percent (9.2 percent) of respondents are afraid of being asked to help with homework they don't understand.

- Teach within the time you have and learn before the school day even starts. Turn breakfast and getting ready in the morning into learning moments with activities found at the [Family Time Machine](#).
- Keep talking to your child and his or her teacher. Not only will this keep you connected to the day-to-day happenings in the classroom, you'll be able to more easily identify and deal with classroom interaction problems if they arise.
- Involve children in everyday tasks. Ask your kids to help build the grocery list or cut coupons to learn about nutrition and budgeting all at once.
- Stay on top of what your children are learning at school to guide conversations that support their learning experience and keep you connected to the classroom. To further these educational (and fun) moments, find topics related to your child's school subjects at [Wonderopolis.org](#) and incorporate a few "Did You Knows?" as conversation starters into dinnertime conversations.
- Encourage your children to teach you to give them a sense of accomplishment. Having them explain something is a great way to solidify their own understanding.



Tips for developing a strong relationship with your child's teacher

The beginning of the new school year is the perfect time to build a positive relationship with your child's teacher. Start by letting your child's educator know that you want to partner with him or her and share the responsibility for your child's academic growth.

Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Education:

- **Keep in touch.** Make sure your child's teacher has multiple ways and times of day to contact you. Provide as many ways as possible – which might include work, cell and home phone numbers and an email address if possible.
- **Mark your calendar.** Ask your child's teacher about the best ways and times to contact him or her. Keep in mind that most teachers are in the classroom all day, so after school may be the best time to call or to make an appointment.
- **Reach out.** Let the teacher know that you are there to help. Volunteer to assist with school trips or functions that might require additional adult supervision.
- **Stay informed.** Within the first few weeks after school starts, find out from the teacher if your child needs any assistance in any subject areas. Find out what resources are available at the school and what resources the teacher would recommend to help your child improve.
- **Team up.** Remember, you and the teacher have the same goals. You're both working to ensure the academic development and progress of your child. Sit down together and figure out what you can do at home to reinforce what your child's teacher is doing in the classroom.

For more advice and how to take an active role in your child's education, check out the U.S. Department of Education's [Parent Power handbook](#).

Help for parents whose children are being bullied or are bullying others

As school gets underway across the state, parents should keep an eye out for any signs that their child is being bullied or may be harassing others. Knowing the signs and communicating with your child before there's a problem is the best way to prepare.

Last year there were more than 15,000 school reports of bullying or harassment in Kentucky schools that resulted in nearly 7,000 out-of-school suspensions or expulsions. Parents, educators and community members can help lower that number for this school year by learning about how to help prevent bullying and how to respond to it.

Under state [law](#), Kentucky schools are required to “reduce physical and mental health barriers to learning.” Bullying by other students is covered by the 2008 [Kentucky General Assembly's “Golden Rule Bill”](#) or “[Bullying Bill](#),” which requires actions by school administrators when bullying takes place.

The U.S. Department of Education offers these tips for parents who know or suspect that their child is involved in bullying:

- Recognize the [warning signs](#). Although these signs could signal other issues, talk to your children if they display any sort of behavioral or emotional changes. Many times kids won't ask for help, so it is important to know what to look for. If your child is at immediate risk of harming himself or others, [get help right away](#).
- Learn [what bullying is](#) and [what it is not](#). Understanding bullying is the first step in forming a plan to prevent it or to respond to it. Many behaviors that look like bullying may be just as serious, but may require different responses.
- [Cyberbullying](#) often requires different strategies. Learn how to work with your kids to [prevent cyberbullying](#) and [how to respond](#) when it occurs.
- Learn how to [talk to your child](#) about bullying. Opening lines of communication before your child is involved in bullying makes



Northern Elementary School (Pulaski County) Family Resource Center Coordinator Beth Rowlands talks to 5th-grade students about “walking in someone else’s shoes” during the Pulaski Elementary School anti-bullying program.

it easier for him or her to tell you if something happens. It's also important to [work with a school](#) to help prevent bullying.

- If you know or suspect bullying has occurred, learn how to [find out what has happened](#) with your child. Understanding what happened can also help in communicating with school or community officials about the situation.
- If you determine bullying has occurred, learn how you and school can work together to support your child, whether they were bullied, bullied others or witnessed bullying. Learn also about [considerations for specific groups](#).
- In addition to Kentucky law, [federal laws](#) require schools to address harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex and disabilities.
- If you have worked with your child and your school and need additional assistance, [find resources to help](#).

For more information about stopping bullying in Kentucky schools see the Department of Education's [bullying website](#). The [Kentucky Center for School Safety](#) also offers an anonymous [online tip line](#) that can be used to report bullying.

For more tips from the U.S. Department of Education on how to prevent bullying and a mobile app created for parents to help prevent bullying, go to [www.stopbullying.gov](#).



Nominees sought for \$1 million teaching prize

Do you think your child has the best teacher in the world? Nominate him or her for the Global Teacher Prize, a new award to be given to an exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession. The \$1 million award from the Varkey GEMS Foundation will be announced at the Global Education and Skills Forum 2015 in Dubai.

“I want to draw attention to the achievements of teachers and the enormous impact they have on all of our lives,” Sunny Varkey, founder of the Varkey GEMS Foundation, said in a statement. “They must be returned to their rightful position as the most respected profession in society, which is properly rewarded and celebrated.”

The prize is open to working teachers who teach students below the age of 18 and to teachers in every kind of school and every country in the world.

The deadline for applications or nominations is Oct. 5.

“After all these years, one thing I know, still, the teachers matter most,” said former President Bill Clinton, honorary chairman of the Varkey GEMS Foundation.

The applications will be judged by the Global Teacher Prize Academy made up of teachers, educational experts, commentators, journalists, public officials, tech entrepreneurs, company directors and scientists from around the world.

Go to [Global Teacher Prize](#)
for more information.

Arts videos could win equipment for schools

KET is asking students to make arts-related videos as a way to integrate technology into arts and humanities education. Students could win a green screen and light kit for their school. Students can make a work of art – an art video, music video or animation or make a video about a work of art, an artist or an event. Students could even video their school play or art show.

Entries must be uploaded by a teacher to the KET School Video Project website by Nov. 21. For more information about [KET School Video Project Challenge — Arts!](#) go to the [School Video Project](#) website.