



Commonwealth of Kentucky  
Office of the Governor

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**Lt. Gov. Abramson and State, Local Leaders Tout Success  
of ‘Close the Deal,’ Announce 2014/2015 School Participants**  
*Program challenges high school seniors to pursue additional education after graduation*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 27, 2014)** – Lieutenant Governor Jerry Abramson today joined state and local business and education leaders to launch the third round and tout the success of “Close the Deal,” a yearlong initiative that challenges high school seniors to pursue additional education after graduation.

Breathitt County, Ohio County, Livingston Central and Campbellsville Independent high schools are participating in this year’s Close the Deal program.

“The emerging economy will provide few high-paying jobs for workers with a high school education or less,” Lt. Gov. Abramson said. “Close the Deal encourages students to explore opportunities to further their education and training, whether it’s a one-year certificate, a two-year associate’s degree or a four-year college degree. More than ever, education is the key to being able to earn a sustainable income. A high school diploma is no longer enough.”

Abramson pointed to a new study of recent Kentucky high school graduates that indicates nearly 60 percent of students who did not attend postsecondary education entered Kentucky’s workforce, and earned less than \$8,000 in the year following graduation.

The “No College = Low Wages” report by Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS) shows that even three years after graduation, of the students who entered the state’s workforce who did not attend college, only one in three were working full time.

“This report gives us tangible data to support what we already know: A postsecondary degree or relevant workforce certificate is the ‘new minimum’ to meet the demands of the emerging job market,” Abramson added.

First created when Abramson was mayor of Louisville, Close the Deal is now in its third year of being expanded throughout the state.

Close the Deal provides resources and one-on-one counseling to high school counselors and administrators, and creates a partnership between the school system and local business community to help students see that education doesn’t end with a high school diploma.

“Campbellsville Independent High school is very excited to have been selected to participate in Close the Deal, and we look forward to providing our students with additional resources for college planning and career possibilities, as well as collaborating with our local businesses and elected officials,” said Principal Kirby Smith.

Stories from schools that participated during the program’s first two years indicate that the initiative is having a significant impact.

Covington Independent, for example, which participated in Close the Deal last year, more than doubled the number of seniors who committed to college, from 45 in the 2012-2013 school year to 108 in the 2013-2014 school year.

“Close the Deal was an exciting catalyst to our college and career focus for seniors,” said Renee Murray, instructional coach with Covington Independent Public Schools. “Students learned that many people cared about their postsecondary plans and were willing to help them achieve them. Close the Deal helped us create a climate that led directly to our improved college-going rate, earned college scholarships and college credits earned.”

Among other successes from last year’s participants:

- Gallatin County High School saw a 28 percent increase in the number of students who filed a FASFA from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014;
- Greenup County High School students submitted 256 college applications, and accepted 111 scholarships. Additionally, the school conducted an “Open the Deal” program for this year’s incoming freshman class; and
- Logan County High School increased from a 62.4 percent rate of college and career readiness in 2012-2013 to 100 percent in 2013-2014. In addition, students accepted \$1.35 million in scholarships in 2013-2014.

Dr. Carl Rollins, executive director of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, joined education officials at the kickoff at the Kentucky Education Center in Frankfort.

“The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) has been helping Kentucky families make informed decisions about their higher education options for decades,” Rollins said. “We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Lt. Governor Abramson's Close the Deal program, connecting students to financial aid information and resources that will allow them to pursue education and training after high school.”

“Kentucky’s goal is to ensure our students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful after they graduate high school,” said Education Commissioner Terry Holliday. “Taking the next step into postsecondary education and the workforce can be an intimidating process for students, which is why Operation Preparation and complimentary efforts like Close the Deal, which encourage partnerships between communities and their schools, are critical to ensuring students are ready for college and careers. Close the Deal has been instrumental in providing students the information and tools they need to explore postsecondary education options and gain the confidence they need to prepare for life after high school.”

The 2014 Close the Deal events will take place in October:

- Breathitt County, Oct. 7;
- Ohio County, Oct. 15;
- Campbellsville Independent, Oct. 24; and
- Livingston Central, Oct. 29

For more information about Close the Deal in Kentucky, visit [www.ltgovernor.ky.gov](http://www.ltgovernor.ky.gov).

