

YOU BELONG!

ATTENDANCE MATTERS



**STUDENT VOICE
IN ACTION
CONTEST PACKET**





You Belong! Attendance Matters: Student Voice in Action

The *You Belong! Attendance Matters: Student Voice in Action* contest, presented in partnership with the Student Technology Leadership Program (STLP), invites K-12 public school students across the Commonwealth to explore what helps students feel connected to school, keep going when things get difficult and feel that they belong.

This year, students are challenged to investigate one big question: What keeps you connected? Students may listen to the experiences of their peers, explore data and patterns, conduct research, or combine approaches to discover what strengthens belonging, persistence, and connection to school. Students will then choose the format that best communicates what they discover.

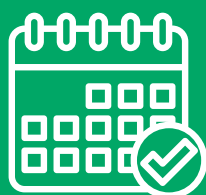
The contest elevates student voice and provides the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), schools and districts with authentic student perspectives that can help inform the statewide *You Belong! Attendance Matters* campaign and broader school connectedness efforts.

The contest is open to students in Kentucky public schools across all settings, including virtual programs, alternative and residential environments, and justice-connected facilities. Students with a wide range of experiences, communication needs, and linguistic backgrounds, including multilingual learners, are encouraged to participate.

Who Can Participate

- K-12 students statewide
- Submissions grouped by grade bands: K-5, 6-8, 9-12
- Individual students, small groups, classes, and schoolwide teams are welcome
- Each district may submit one final entry per grade band.

All students featured in videos or photos must have appropriate media release permissions.



Ready to participate?
Register by October 28, 2026.
Register online: [Contest Registration](#)





INVESTIGATE THE BIG QUESTION



TELL A STORY

Best for projects that communicate an experience, message, or perspective.

- Digital Storytelling
- Photovoice or Photo Essay
- Video
- Podcast or Audio Story
- Multimedia Mash-Up

SHOW IT VISUALLY

Best for projects that communicate through images, graphics, or visual data.

- Digital Photography
- Infographic
- Poster or Digital Poster
- Motion Graphics or Animation

WHAT
KEEPS YOU
CONNECTED?

BUILD SOMETHING

Best for projects that create an interactive, technical, or functional product.

- Scratch Coding
- 3D Design
- Digital Music Composition or Manipulation
- Screen Capture or Tutorial

DESIGN & CREATE

Best for projects focused on original design, branding, art, or communication products.

- Logo Design
- Graphic Design
- Book Cover or Publication Design
- Line & Brush or Digital Art
- Shape & Layer Design

Every project should:

- Begin with a clear question or purpose
- Show evidence of investigation
- Clearly communicate what was discovered
- Demonstrate student creativity and voice
- Explain why the discovery matters
- Identify a recommendation, idea, action or next step
- Follow submission, digital citizenship, and media release requirements

READY TO CHOOSE YOUR PATH?

See pages 7-12 for
project descriptions,
requirements and
examples.

PROJECT RUBRIC

Student Voice in Action

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS		CRITERIA			GUIDELINES FOLLOWED
 ACCESS & SUBMISSION		- Project is submitted in the correct format. - All links/files are accessible to judges. - All required submissions components are included, including the final product and a separate references/credits page.			☐ ☐ ☐
 DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP		- Student work is original and follows KDE/STLP-aligned integrity expectations. - Media and sources are appropriately credited, and copyrighted materials are used only with permission. - If AI is used, it is clearly identified and credited when applicable, and required media release permissions are in place.			☐ ☐ ☐
AREA	BEGINNING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXEMPLARY	TOTAL POINTS
QUESTION & PURPOSE	0-5 The question or purpose is missing, unclear or off-topic. Little evidence is provided of what the student wanted to learn or why the topic was investigated.	6-10 The project includes a question or purpose, but it is broad, unclear or underdeveloped. Some focus is evident, but the project does not clearly establish what is being explored or why the investigation matters.	11-15 The project presents a clear and relevant question or purpose. It clearly communicates what is being explored and generally maintains focus throughout the investigation and final product.	16-20 The project begins with a clear, meaningful, and focused question or purpose. It establishes a compelling reason for the investigation and maintains a strong sense of purpose throughout the project. The question reflects authentic curiosity.	____ / 20
INVESTIGATION & EVIDENCE	0-6 Little or no meaningful investigation is evident. Evidence is missing, inappropriate, unreliable, or largely disconnected from the question or purpose. The project relies primarily on unsupported opinion or information without demonstrating meaningful inquiry.	7-12 The project demonstrates some investigation, but the evidence is limited, uneven, or only partially connected to the question or purpose. The investigation may lack depth, rely heavily on a single source or approach, or provide limited explanation of how the evidence supports the project.	13-18 The project demonstrates an appropriate investigation that addresses the question or purpose. Relevant evidence is gathered and used to support the project. The investigation demonstrates a clear effort to explore the topic through student voice, data, research, or another appropriate approach.	19-25 The project demonstrates a thoughtful, purposeful investigation that meaningfully addresses the question or purpose. Relevant evidence is gathered and used effectively through one or more appropriate approaches, such as student voice, data, research, or other credible sources. The investigation demonstrates depth, careful consideration of evidence, and a clear connection between the evidence and the question.	____ / 25
DISCOVERY & INSIGHT	0-5 The project provides little evidence of meaningful discovery or learning. Findings are missing, unclear, or largely disconnected from the investigation. The project primarily presents information or opinions without demonstrating what was discovered.	6-10 The project communicates some findings from the investigation, but the learning or meaning is limited, unclear, or underdeveloped. The project may primarily present information without clearly explaining what was discovered or what can be learned from it.	11-15 The project communicates clear findings that connect to the investigation. It demonstrates what was learned and provides some explanation of what the findings mean or why they matter.	16-20 The project demonstrates meaningful learning that clearly grows from the investigation. It communicates what was discovered and shows thoughtful interpretation, connections, or insights about the topic. The project goes beyond simply presenting information and demonstrates a clear understanding of what the discovery means and why it matters.	____ / 20

PROJECT RUBRIC (continued)

Student Voice in Action

AREA	BEGINNING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXEMPLARY	TOTAL POINTS
TECHNOLOGY & CREATIVITY	0-5 The project demonstrates limited use of technology or creative approaches. The final product provides limited support for communicating ideas and discoveries, and creative choices may be unclear, incomplete, or only loosely connected to the project.	6-10 The project uses technology or creative approaches, but choices may be limited, inconsistent, or only partially purposeful. The final product communicates some ideas and discoveries, but creative choices have limited impact on how the project is communicated.	11-15 The project uses technology or creative approaches purposefully. The final product demonstrates thoughtful choices that effectively communicate ideas and discoveries. Creative choices support the project's message and help communicate the thinking behind the work.	16-20 The project uses technology or creative approaches in purposeful and imaginative ways. The final product demonstrates thoughtful choices that effectively communicate ideas and discoveries. Creative choices add meaning, interest, or impact to the project and help bring the thinking behind the work to life.	____ / 20
IMPACT & RECOMMENDATION	0-4 The project provides little evidence of consideration of impact or next steps. A recommendation, idea, action, or next step is missing, unclear, or disconnected from the findings.	5-8 The project provides some consideration of why the discovery matters or what could happen next, but the connection to the findings is limited or underdeveloped. The recommendation, idea, action, or next step may be general or only partially supported by the project.	9-11 The project explains why the discovery matters and identifies a relevant recommendation, idea, action, or next step. The proposed response is connected to the findings and demonstrates consideration of how the discovery could make a difference.	12-15 The project clearly explains why the discovery matters and thoughtfully considers how it could make a difference. It offers a meaningful recommendation, idea, action, or next step that is connected to the findings. The project demonstrates an understanding of how the work could contribute to positive change.	____ / 15

Judges Feedback:

TOTAL SCORE

/ 100



Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION

Awards, Integrity Expectations & Final Notes

Awards & Recognition

Awards will be given for:

- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place (Elementary K-5)
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place (Middle School 6-8)
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place (High School 9-12)



All entries may be featured in future STLP showcases and district technology celebrations, KDE's statewide *You Belong! Attendance Matters* campaigns, toolkits, or school connectedness resources.

Integrity & Use of AI

All entries must follow KDE- and STLP-aligned integrity expectations:

- Student work must be original.
- Plagiarism is not permitted.
- Copyrighted material may not be used without permission.
- AI-generated images, video clips or text may be used, but must be:
 - Clearly identified
 - Accurately credited in the separate reference document
- Used to supplement, not replace, meaningful student creativity
- All media sources must be credited in the reference document
 - Students must have appropriate media release permissions through Infinite Campus

Reference Page Requirement

Every project must include a separate credits/reference page (Word or Google Doc) listing:

- Student creators
- Tools used, including AI tools
- Media sources, including royalty-free libraries, original photos, graphics, and other materials

Optional Opportunity: Take Your Project Further!

Projects submitted for the *You Belong! Attendance Matters* contest may also be eligible for an additional entry into the Creative Digital Arts (CDA) through STLP. Participation in CDA is not required for the *You Belong! Attendance Matters* contest. Students and advisors who are interested in this additional opportunity are encouraged to review CDA requirements and submission procedures to determine whether their project qualifies.

Explore CDA requirements and rubric information: [Creative Digital Arts Website](#)

For questions about CDA as it relates to the *You Belong! Attendance Matters* contest, please contact Amy Newsome at amy.newsome@education.ky.gov.

Register for
Contest by
October 28, 2026

Final Submissions
to KDE:
December 18, 2026

Winners will be
celebrated live at:
STLP State
Championship
April 21, 2027

EXPLORE PROJECT PATHWAYS

Use the following pages to learn more about each project option, including what students should create and what each entry should demonstrate.

Digital Photography

Create an original photograph that communicates something discovered about belonging, connection, attendance or persistence.

Entries should:

- Use photography intentionally to communicate an idea, message, or discovery.
- Demonstrate thoughtful composition, framing, and visual choices.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and how the photograph communicates the discovery.
- Reflect original perspective and intentional creative choices.
- Avoid staged imagery that misrepresents an experience or uses identifiable students without appropriate permission.

The photograph should do more than show something interesting. It should help the viewer understand something discovered through the investigation.

Photojournalism

Use original photographs and supporting text or captions to tell a story about belonging, connection, attendance or persistence.

Entries should:

- Tell a clear story through photographs.
- Use captions or other supporting information to provide context.
- Communicate an authentic perspective.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and what was discovered.
- Use original photographs and demonstrate intentional choices in composition and storytelling.
- Avoid staged imagery that misrepresents an experience or includes identifiable students without appropriate permission.

The photographs and words should work together to communicate the discovery.

Digital Storytelling

Create an original digital story using a combination of digital media, such as images, text, narration, music, sound effects, or video, to communicate an idea, message, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Communicate a clear message or story.
- Connect the story to the question and investigation.
- Demonstrate intentional creative and technical choices.
- Include a brief explanation of what was investigated and discovered.
- Use media responsibly and appropriately.

PROJECT PATHWAYS (CONTINUED)

Infographic

Create an original visual representation of information, ideas or discoveries related to belonging, connection, attendance or persistence.

Entries should:

- Communicate information clearly and visually.
- Use data, information, or research appropriately.
- Demonstrate thoughtful organization, design, and visual hierarchy.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and the discovery represented.
- Credit sources when information or data comes from outside sources.

Motion Graphics

Create an original animated graphic that communicates an idea, feeling, message, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Use motion intentionally to communicate the message.
- Demonstrate thoughtful design, timing, and visual choices.
- Clearly communicate the idea or discovery.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and how the motion graphic communicates the discovery.

Multimedia Mash-Up

Combine multiple forms of media to communicate an idea, message, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Possible media may include:

- Animation
- Audio
- Images
- Interactive elements
- Text
- Video
- Digital design

Entries should:

- Combine at least three forms of media in a purposeful way.
- Demonstrate intentional creative choices.
- Clearly communicate the discovery.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated, the process used, and what was discovered.

PROJECT PATHWAYS (CONTINUED)

Scratch Coding

Use Scratch to create an original interactive project that communicates an idea, story, discovery, or solution related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Demonstrate original coding and design.
- Use interactivity purposefully.
- Communicate a clear message or discovery.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and how the project communicates the discovery.

3D Design

Create an original three-dimensional digital model or design that represents an idea, solution, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Demonstrate intentional design decisions.
- Clearly communicate the idea or discovery.
- Show evidence of original creativity and construction.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and what was discovered.

Shape & Layer Design

Create an original digital composition using shapes, layers, and other digital design tools to communicate an idea, message, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Demonstrate purposeful use of shapes, layers, arrangement, scale, rotation, and other design elements.
- Communicate a clear idea or message.
- Reflect original creative decisions.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and the discovery communicated through the design.

Logo Design

Create an original logo that communicates an idea connected to belonging, connection, attendance or persistence.

Entries should:

- Communicate a clear idea visually.
- Demonstrate thoughtful use of typography, shapes, imagery, and composition.
- Be original and intentionally designed.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and how the logo represents the discovery.

PROJECT PATHWAYS (CONTINUED)

Line & Brush Design

Create an original digital artwork using lines, brushes, and digital drawing tools to communicate an idea or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Be original and intentionally created.
- Demonstrate intentional use of line, shape, texture, and composition.
- Clearly communicate an idea connected to the investigation.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and the discovery communicated through the artwork.

Manipulated Image

Create an original digital composition by intentionally manipulating an original image or images to communicate an idea or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Demonstrate meaningful manipulation and creative decision-making.
- Clearly communicate the idea or discovery.
- Identify significant outside images or assets, when applicable.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and the discovery.

Screen Capture

Create an original screen-based digital product that communicates an idea, message, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Demonstrate intentional design and organization.
- Communicate information clearly.
- Reflect meaningful original creation rather than simply presenting unmodified existing content.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and what was discovered.

PROJECT PATHWAYS (CONTINUED)

Digital Music Manipulation

Create an original musical work using digital tools, including loops or samples when appropriate, to communicate an idea or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Demonstrate meaningful student composition and manipulation.
- Use loops, samples, or other assets responsibly and transparently.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and what was discovered.
- Credit outside or pre-made assets when applicable.

Digital Music Composition

Create an original digital music composition that communicates an idea, feeling, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Demonstrate original musical decision-making.
- Use digital tools as a means of composition rather than a replacement for creativity.
- Communicate a clear connection to the investigation.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and what was discovered.

Book Cover

Create an original digital book cover that communicates a story, idea, or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Entries should:

- Communicate a clear central idea.
- Demonstrate thoughtful use of typography, imagery, and composition.
- Reflect original creative decisions.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and how the design communicates the discovery.

PROJECT PATHWAYS (CONTINUED)

You Belong Poster

Create a poster that communicates a clear, student-centered message about belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Requirements

- May be created digitally, by hand and digitized, or through a combination of approaches.
- Size: 8.5 × 11 inches or 11 × 17 inches.
- Communicate a clear, engaging message appropriate for a school or community setting.
- Demonstrate intentional design choices that support the message.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and how the poster communicates the discovery.
- Reflect original creativity.
- QR codes or links may be included when appropriate

The poster should be something a school could realistically use to communicate the importance of belonging, connection, and showing up.

You Belong Video

Create a short video that communicates a clear message or discovery related to belonging, connection, attendance, or persistence.

Requirements

- Length: 15–30 seconds.
- Be original and intentionally created.
- May include live action, animation, interviews, narration, music, text, or other appropriate media.
- Communicate a clear, memorable message.
- Include a brief explanation of the question investigated and how the video communicates the discovery.
- Demonstrate original creativity.

The strongest videos will communicate a meaningful idea quickly and leave the viewer with something to think about.