



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: MIDDLE SCHOOL (Ages 10-14)

UNCOVER OK! OFFICIAL RULES & GUIDELINES 2026-2027

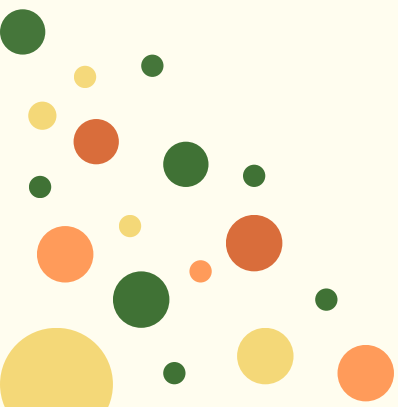
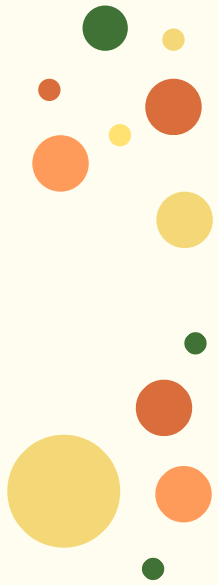


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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

UnCover Oklahoma! invites middle school students to become environmental investigators in their own schools and communities. Students choose an environmental issue that matters to them whether it's litter, pollinators, wildlife, native plants, or water quality, and dig into it! They conduct real research, collect data, identify patterns, and propose a solution that could actually work.

This competition is about more than awareness. We want students to recognize a real problem, think critically about its causes, and come up with a creative, evidence-based solution. Whether that solution takes the form of a poster, a video, a presentation, or an original invention built from recycled materials. We want to see Oklahoma students take environmental issues seriously and think like problem-solvers.

WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR!

If you participated in UnCover (Formally UpCycled) last year, welcome back! A few things have changed this year. These guidelines lay it all out, but don't hesitate to email me at education@keepok.org with questions.

1. New curriculum across 5 topics that is totally free.

UnCover now comes with curriculum including vocab, discussion prompts, activities, and more, all ready to use covering these topics: Water Quality, Wildlife & Habitat, Litter & Recycling, Native Plants, and Pollinator. Explore it and then let students dig in!

2. Registration and submission are now one step. No more registering in the fall and submitting separately in winter. There's just one form, one deadline, and longer to make a great project!

3. New timeline. Dates have shifted from past years, so double-check them in the timeline below.

4. Voting has changed. In past years, all entries were posted publicly for a week of online voting, and the top three vote-getters became finalists before judges picked a winner. This year, KOB staff select the finalists directly. Those finalists go into a public Community Favorite Award vote. The actual contest winner is chosen separately, by KOB staff.

5. More ways to show your work. UnCover used to be an invention-only contest. This year, students investigate an environmental topic and submit their findings as a poster, video, presentation, or invention - whichever format fits the project best!

CONTEST TIMELINE

Competition Opens

August 11

Competition Closes - Submissions DUE

January 31

Judging Period

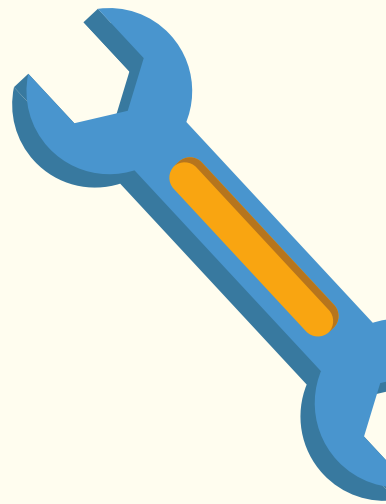
February 1-5

Community Favorite Voting

February 8-12

Winner Announced and Honored

March 2027 at the
Student Environmental Champions Awards



ELIGIBILITY & HOW TO ENTER

Middle school students in public, private, and parochial institutions, as well as those who are a part of any extracurricular group (Boy Scouts, library, etc.) and home-schooled, are eligible to participate.

- **Individual Entries:** Preferably only students who are home-schooled or in small groups submit entries as individuals.
- **Group Entries:** All other entries must be submitted by a group of **6 to 30 students**. If your group exceeds 30 students, please divide into two or more groups. Each group must complete the project and submit their entry separately, but may be represented by the same teacher or adult supervisor.

To participate in the contest, entrants must submit their project and the accompanying essay within the designated period (August 11-January 31) listed in the contest timeline.

Entrants retain ownership of their physical project. Winning pieces may be displayed at the Student Environmental Champions Awards.

By entering, participants agree that submissions may be used by Keep Oklahoma Beautiful (KOB) and its sponsors on websites and social media for public viewing. Entrants grant KOB a perpetual, exclusive license to publish, display, or otherwise use submitted photos and essays without further notice or compensation. KOB may choose not to post all submissions. By submitting, entrants agree to indemnify and hold harmless KOB and its sponsors from any claims, damages, or legal expenses related to the use of submitted materials.

PROJECT GUIDELINES

Students will choose one of the following environmental topics to investigate: litter & waste reduction, pollinators, native plants, wildlife & habitat, or water quality.

All entries must include a completed UnCover Oklahoma! Investigation Worksheet, which guides students through identifying their issue, collecting data, analyzing findings, and proposing a solution. The worksheet is available for download on the competition webpage and must be submitted alongside the main entry.

All entries also must include **an essay (400-600 words)** answering the prompt: *Explain your investigation. What environmental question did you explore, and what did you discover? How does your finding connect to your community, and why does it matter? What did you include in your poster, video, presentation, or invention, and why?*

In addition to the investigation worksheet and essay, students must submit one of the following:

- Poster or infographic
- Slideshow presentation (PDF or PowerPoint)
- Short video (3 minutes or less, submitted as an MP4 or shared link)
- Original invention built from recycled or repurposed materials, proposed as a solution to the identified issue. Must include a photo of the invention plus a written explanation of what it does, how it works, and how it addresses the environmental problem

SUBMISSION & JUDGING

SUBMISSION

- Submission of a physical project is *not required* for contest judging. To complete an entry, participants must upload a photo(s) of the project and a PDF of the essay to the provided submission link during the period outlined in the contest timeline.
- All work must be entirely original and created solely for this competition.
- Entries must not include brand names, logos, or third-party trademarks. School name and/or mascot may be included with permission.
- **Files should be named with the school name and grade (e.g., LincolnMS-7thGrade.pdf). Invention entries should include a photo of the invention plus the written explanation.**

JUDGING PROCESS

All entries will be reviewed and scored by KOB staff using the official rubric. Staff will select 3 finalists per division based on rubric scores.

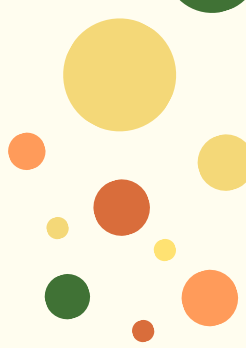
(See rubric below and in the competition folder)

Finalists from all divisions will then be shared publicly for a Community Favorite vote - a separate recognition that does not affect the main competition outcome.

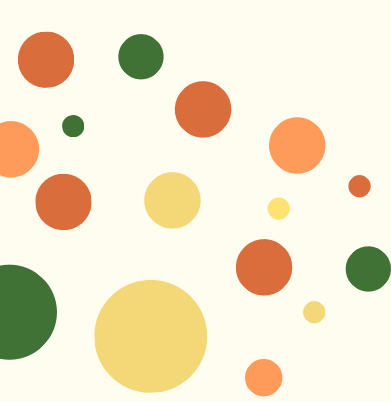
PRIZES

Finalists will be recognized with a certificate and a celebration hosted by KOB staff (details TBD). Division winners will be invited to the 3rd Annual Student Environmental Champions Awards for an awards ceremony including a free meal and a day at the venue! (Previous year's venues: Jenks Aquarium & OKC Zoo)

RUBRIC



Category	5 - Exceptional	4 - Excellent	3 - Proficient	2 - Developing	1 - Beginning
Research, Data & Analysis / 5	Research is thorough and original. Data was clearly collected firsthand (audit, survey, observation, etc.) and analyzed with strong insight. Patterns and causes are identified with specificity.	Research is solid and data collection is evident. Analysis identifies clear patterns and likely causes of the issue.	Some original research or data collection is present. Analysis is basic but shows understanding of the issue.	Research is limited or relies mostly on general knowledge. Little evidence of original data collection or analysis.	No original research or data collection is evident. The issue is described but not investigated.
Solution & Feasibility / 5	Proposed solution is creative, specific, and directly tied to the data collected. It is realistic and well-reasoned, with clear steps or logic for how it would work.	Proposed solution is clearly connected to the issue and feasible. Students explain why they believe it would work.	A solution is proposed and is generally realistic. The connection to the investigation could be stronger.	A solution is proposed but is vague, overly broad, or not well connected to the data or issue identified.	No solution is proposed, or the solution is unrealistic and disconnected from the investigation.
Presentation & Communication / 5	Entry is exceptionally clear, organized, and polished. The environmental message is compelling and the format — whether poster, video, presentation, or invention — is used with real skill.	Entry is clear and well-organized. The message is easy to follow and the chosen format is used effectively.	Entry communicates the main ideas. Organization is adequate though some parts may be unclear or underdeveloped.	Entry is difficult to follow in places. Organization or clarity needs improvement. The message is not always clear.	Entry is unclear, incomplete, or very difficult to follow. The format does not effectively communicate the investigation.
Essay Quality / 5	Essay is insightful, well-written, and fully addresses all parts of the prompt. Students articulate their findings, solution, and call to action with confidence and clarity.	Essay addresses the prompt well. Findings and proposed solution are explained clearly. Writing is organized and strong.	Essay addresses most parts of the prompt. Key ideas are present but some lack depth. Writing is mostly clear.	Essay partially addresses the prompt. Ideas are present but underdeveloped or loosely connected to the investigation.	Essay is missing, does not address the prompt, or is too brief to evaluate meaningfully.



OKLAHOMA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR SCIENCE

Below is a list of Oklahoma Academic Standards for science curriculums where incorporation of this program is compatible. **This list is not exhaustive**, and we encourage educators to expand their lessons to subjects outside of the “Earth and Human Activity” standards. More information on the Oklahoma Academic Standards of Excellence can be found on the Oklahoma State Department of Education website.

7.ESS3.3 Earth and Human Activities

Disciplinary Core Ideas: Human activities have significantly altered the biosphere, sometimes damaging or destroying natural habitats and causing the extinction of other species. But changes to Earth’s environments can have different impacts (negative and positive) on different living things. Typically, as human populations and per-capita consumption of natural resources increase, so do the negative impacts on Earth unless the activities and technologies involved are engineered otherwise.

Performance Expectations: Apply scientific principles to design a method for monitoring and minimizing human impact on the environment.

Clarification Statement: Examples of the design process include examining human environmental impacts, assessing the kinds of solutions that are feasible, and designing and evaluating solutions that could reduce that impact. Examples of human impacts can include water usage (such as the withdrawal of water from streams and aquifers or the construction of dams and levees), land usage (such as urban development, agriculture, or the removal of wetlands), and pollution (such as of the air, water, or land).

OKLAHOMA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR SCIENCE CONT.

7.ESS3.4 Earth and Human Activities

Disciplinary Core Ideas: Typically, as human populations and per-capita consumption of natural resources increase, so do the negative impacts on Earth unless the activities and technologies involved are engineered otherwise.

Performance Expectations: Construct an argument supported by evidence for how increases in human population and per-capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth's systems.

Clarification Statement: Examples of evidence include grade-appropriate databases on human populations and the rates of consumption of food and natural resources (such as freshwater, mineral, and energy). Examples of impacts can include changes to the appearance, composition, and structure of Earth's systems as well as the rates at which they change. The consequences of increases in human populations and consumption of natural resources are described by science, but science does not make the decisions for the actions society takes

Keep Oklahoma Beautiful reserves the right to change, update, or otherwise amend these rules & guidelines at any time.