PA EdVentures



April's EdVentures: SPEL & Structured Literacy, A250 PA Logos, FAFSA Webinar & More!

In April, Pennsylvania's 2025 Teacher of the Year, Leon Smith, was announced as the **2026 National Teacher of the Year**. Smith is a secondary teacher at Haverford High School in the School District of Haverford Township and is a dedicated leader in his community, providing professional development for the district on culturally relevant teaching, growth mindset, elements of effective lessons, belonging strategies, and supporting historically marginalized students.

This month, the Shapiro Administration awarded **over $11 million in Keystone grant funding to 27 public libraries, invested over $1.6 million in Parent Pathway grants** which help Pennsylvania parents achieve their goal of attending college and earning credentials, making postsecondary education more affordable and accessible for all learners, and announced the **opening of the PA Student Teacher Stipend application**, offering $10,000 for future educators who enter a student teaching placement and commit to working in Pennsylvania as a teacher for three years.



Spotlighting Structured Literacy through SPEL

The Success for PA Early Learners (SPEL) grant continues the state's commitment to evidence-based reading instruction grounded in the science of reading and structured literacy. Designed to strengthen early literacy outcomes statewide, SPEL provides funding, training, implementation support, and coaching.

A central feature of the grant is the adoption of Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI), an evidence-based, structured approach that intensifies Tier 1 instruction and provides aligned Tier 2 and 3 intervention. ECRI offers clear, efficient routines for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, ensuring instructional consistency across classrooms and accelerating skill acquisition for students who need additional support.

Through the SPEL Grant, participating sites receive professional learning, coaching, and implementation tools that help educators deliver ECRI with fidelity. This includes lesson templates, in-classroom coaching, modeling videos, data-based decision-making supports, and guidance for integrating ECRI within an MTSS framework. Early feedback from Pennsylvania schools indicates improved instructional consistency, stronger foundational skills instruction, and increased confidence among teachers implementing structured literacy practices.

SPEL is using ECRI routines to offer a clear pathway to building sustainable, high-quality literacy systems that support every learner!

To learn more about this grant, visit the **SPEL website**. Visit the **ECRI Introduction webpage** to learn more about ECRI overlays and to watch an ECRI Tier 2 small group lesson. SPEL is funded by a State Personnel Development Grant through the federal Office of Special Education Programs.

Join Pick Up Pennsylvania and the Greatest American Cleanup in Honor of America's 250th Anniversary

We invite residents across the Commonwealth to help showcase Pennsylvania at its best by registering for Pick Up Pennsylvania. **Registration is open!** Events scheduled from March 1 through May 31 receive free trash bags, gloves, and safety vests provided by PA Department of Environmental Protection and PennDOT, as supplies last. Events can include litter and illegal dump cleanups, community greening and beautification, special collections, and anti-litter education events.

Events must be **registered** to receive free cleanup supplies. As an added incentive, submit your event's before and after photos to Pennsylvania Resources Council's Lens on Litter for a chance to win **$500!**



FAFSA Webinar for PA Educators & Counselors

To support schools with the Universal Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) requirement in Pennsylvania for the upcoming school year, PHEAA Higher Education Access Partners will present information to educators and counselors on how to complete the

FAFSA, deadlines for completion and resources available to assist schools with FAFSA completion.

This FAFSA overview event for educators and counselors will be presented by **PHEAA**.

Please register for the webinar at the **PHEAA FAFSA Overview Webinar webpage**.



FMCSA Road Safety Art Contest

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) announces the 2026 Road Safety Art Contest. This annual competition encourages students to use their creativity and talent to raise awareness of how to stay safe on our roads around large trucks and buses. Winning artwork will best depict through original creativity how all road users—from cars, to bikers, to pedestrians—can stay safe around large trucks and buses, by staying aware of their big blind spots, long stopping distance, and wide turns. The contest is open to students in grades K-12.

Entries accepted through **June 5, 2026**. Download the **entry form** for submission details. For additional information, please visit the **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Contest webpage**.



A250PA Logo for 2026 Graduation Diplomas

PDE is proud to partner with A250PA, Pennsylvania's official commission charged with planning and coordinating the Commonwealth's commemoration, to offer use of the A250PA logo on diplomas for the Class of 2026!

To participate in this historic opportunity, local education agencies (LEAs) must register using the **A250PA Logo Request Form**. Once registered, LEAs will gain access to a resource folder that contains several logos and supporting materials that can be incorporated into graduation activities, including sample language for the commencement speech.

We hope the next generation of Pennsylvanians carry forward the values that define our country's 250th year: respect for our history, pride in our shared heritage, and the

understanding that good citizenship begins with caring for your own community. We celebrate their achievements and the bright future they represent for Pennsylvania.

Keep PA Beautiful - Young Ambassador Program

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), is seeking civic and environmental leaders in 10th -12th grade to keep Pennsylvania clean and beautiful through the Young Ambassadors of Pennsylvania program.

The Young Ambassadors program empowers young community stewards and civic leaders to become ambassadors in their community for a shared vision of a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Ambassadors will have the opportunity to train and network with industry leaders, state agencies, local media and the Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful network, and will receive a taste of life in the public service sector.

Applicants should be passionate about the environment and committed to protecting Pennsylvania's natural beauty and environmental health through volunteerism and leadership.

Applications are being accepted through June 10. Students will be chosen through a competitive application process. Students interested in applying should visit **keeppabeautiful.org** or contact Kylie McCutcheon at 724-836-4121 x114 or **kmccutcheon@keeppabeautiful.org**.



RISE Award Nominations Open

In March 2019, the Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award was created to recognize and promote the commitment and excellence exhibited by full- or part-time classified school employees who provide service to students in Pre-K through high school.

To learn more about who can be nominated and how to nominate someone, please visit the **RISE Award webpage**. Nominations can be submitted until **August 30, 2026**.

Manage your preferences | Opt Out using TrueRemove™
Got this as a forward? Sign up to receive our future emails.
View this email online.

607 South Drive | Harrisburg, PA 17120 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

emma

Subscribe to our email list.