PA EdVentures



September's EdVentures: Operation Safe Stop, Migratory Students Webinar, Drug-Free Calendar Contest & More!

In September, PDE celebrated the **Governor's Breakfast Champions at Lincoln Financial Field**, which recognized the top ten schools with the greatest participation in the Governor's School Breakfast Challenge. We also announced **grants totaling $7.3 million awarded to schools to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables** to improve children's diets using fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

We visited several school districts to see how the Shapiro Administration's historic investments in public education and funding innovative ways for students to engage in learning. At **Baldwin-Whitehall School District, funds have allowed the school to add new American Sign Language (ASL) course work and expand Pre-K programs for children and families**. Meanwhile, **Somerset County's Career & Technical Education relies on state funding to prepare learners for high-demand fields like aircraft maintenance and forestry technology**. When learners are encouraged to chart their own course, they are given the opportunity to thrive across all learning environments.



Highlighting Structured Literacy: Focus on Phonics - What does direct, explicit, and systematic phonics instruction mean?

Direct, explicit, and systematic phonics instruction means that students are intentionally taught the relationships between sounds in spoken language and the letters or letter patterns

that represent those sounds in print. It is **direct** because the teacher clearly teaches the skill rather than expecting students to discover it on their own. It is **explicit** because the teacher explains the concept, models how to use it, provides guided practice, checks for understanding, and gives immediate corrective feedback. It is **systematic** because phonics skills are taught in a planned, sequential, and cumulative order, moving from simpler sound-spelling patterns to more complex patterns and regularly reviewing previously taught skills.

Example of what this looks like:
A teacher might introduce the digraph **sh** by saying, “Today we are learning that the letters **s** and **h** work together to spell one sound, /sh/. Watch as I read this word: **sh-i-p**, **ship**.” The teacher models blending several words with **sh**, such as **shop**, **shut**, and **fish**. Students then practice reading the words with the teacher, read them independently, spell dictated words using **sh**, and apply the pattern in a short decodable sentence such as, “The fish is in the shop.” Throughout the lesson, the teacher provides correction, practice, and review so students connect the phonics pattern to both reading and spelling

For more information, watch the **PaTTAN Literacy Initiative Quick Pick: Components of a Phonics Lesson**.

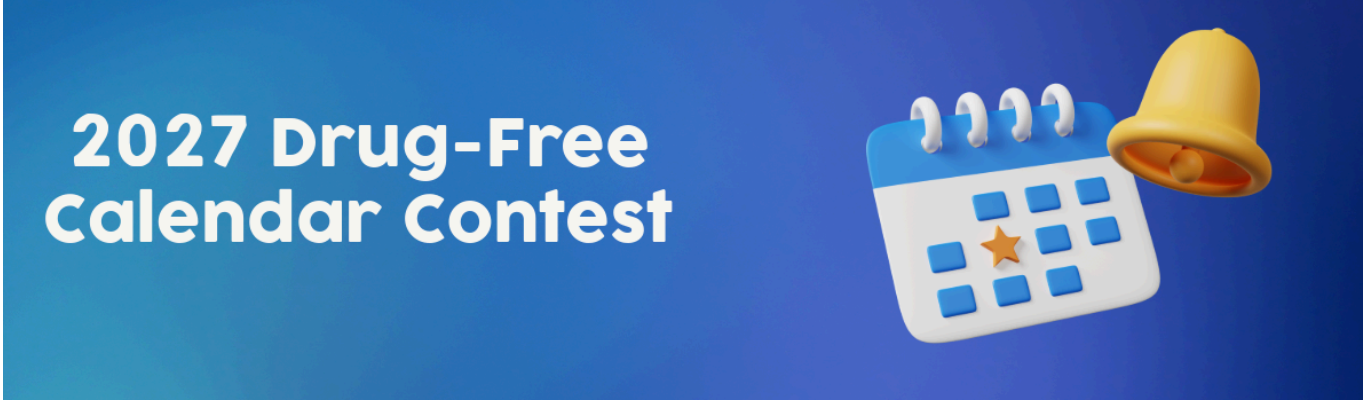
How PA's Migrant Education Program and MSIX Can Support LEAs & Migratory Students Webinar

The Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program (PA MEP) invites LEA administrators, student services staff, counselors, registrars, and other school professionals to learn how the program can help identify and support migratory students. Held on **Monday, October 5 from 10-11 AM**, the session is designed both for LEAs that already serve migratory students and for those that have limited familiarity or no current relationship with the PA MEP.

Participants will receive a practical overview of the PA MEP, including how the program helps LEAs identify potentially eligible students, connect families with educational and community resources, reduce barriers to school participation, and support student engagement and attendance. Migratory students face unique challenges, such as frequent moves, interrupted schooling, and other circumstances due to the culture of migrancy, and the PA MEP can serve as an important partner in helping LEAs address attendance concerns and promote educational continuity.

A central focus of the session will be the Migrant Student Information eXchange (MSIX), a national information-sharing database that gives authorized users access to important educational and enrollment information for eligible migratory students who may have attended schools in multiple states. Participants will learn how MSIX can support timely enrollment, improve records coordination, help identify gaps, reduce delays caused by missing information, and provide school staff with a clearer picture of a student’s educational history. By attending, LEA personnel will gain practical tools, resources, contacts, and a better understanding of how PA MEP and MSIX can work together with LEAs to support student attendance, academic progress, and successful transitions between schools.

To register, please visit the **How Pennsylvania's Migrant Education Program and MSIX Can Support LEAs and Migratory Students Webinar webpage**.



2027 Drug-Free Calendar Contest

As part of National Drug Prevention Month, the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General is sponsoring the 30th Annual Drug-Free Calendar Contest.

Every fifth-grade student from across the Commonwealth is invited and encouraged to submit their artwork for consideration to be in the 2027 Drug-Free Calendar. Students must create an original illustration that includes a drug-free message of their choice.

For more information, please refer to the official **Office of Attorney General Drug-Free Calendar Contest submission guidelines**.

All entries must be mailed to the following address, postmarked by **October 30, 2026:**
Office of Attorney General
Calendar Contest
16th Floor, Strawberry Square
Harrisburg, PA 17120

For any additional information, please contact **contests@attorneygeneral.gov** or **717-574-5794**.

Drug-Free Calendar Contest Form & Guidelines



10th Annual Innovations Challenge Now Open

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) announced its 10th annual **Innovations Challenge**, which encourages students to use their problem-solving, creative and strategic-thinking abilities to solve real-world transportation challenges in a competition among their peers. The Innovations Challenge is open to all students in grades 9-12, regardless of their school's learning model.

For this year's challenge, students are asked to develop an innovative solution that helps prevent overheight vehicles from striking Pennsylvania's bridges and tunnels. The proposal should focus on identifying potential hazards before a collision occurs while improving safety, protecting infrastructure, and minimizing disruptions to travelers and local communities.

For complete Innovations Challenge details, visit the **Innovations Challenge webpage**. The submission deadline is **January 29, 2027**.

Please share this information with all faculty members and encourage all eligible students within your school to participate.

For questions or more information, email PennDOT's Bureau of Strategic Business Operations at **DOTInnovations@pa.gov**.

Operation Safe Stop & National School Bus Safety Week

Operation Safe Stop is a proactive approach to educate the motoring public that passing a stopped school bus, when children are loading or unloading, is both dangerous and illegal. Law enforcement agencies, school transportation providers, pupil transportation associations, and PennDOT have combined their efforts to raise public awareness about the potential consequences, and reduce the occurrence of illegal school bus passes.

National School Bus Safety Week is October 19–23, 2026, and PennDOT will commence with Operation Safe Stop on **Wednesday, October 21, 2026**. PennDOT encourages school districts to participate in continued support to ensure children are transported to and from school safely.

To learn more about how to participate, use the **2026 Operation Safe Stop Participation Booklet** and complete the included participant form. The form can be faxed to PennDOT's Driver Safety Division at **(717) 705-1131** or you can email your information to **rapdopersafestop@pa.gov**. If you have any further questions regarding Operation Safe Stop, please call Robert Krovic at **(717) 214-9394.**



2028 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year Nominations are Open

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) encourages Pennsylvanians to nominate an outstanding educator to be the Commonwealth's 2028 Teacher of the Year.

"Pennsylvania is home to some of the best and brightest educators in the nation, who serve their learners and communities with compassion, integrity, and fidelity," **said Secretary of Education Dr. Carrie Rowe.** "The Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year exemplifies what it

means to be an excellent educator—to inspire young minds, embrace learners' unique potential, and shape the future of our Commonwealth."

The Teacher of the Year program celebrates excellence in teaching and honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions to learners in Pennsylvania. **Teacher of the Year Nominations** will be accepted until December 11, 2026.

Pick Up Pennsylvania Community Improvement & Litter Free School Programs

Pick Up Pennsylvania is the Commonwealth's largest community improvement program. Each fall, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful holds Pick Up Pennsylvania in support of the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup to prevent litter from reaching our waterways. Events scheduled from September 1 through November 30 receive free trash bags, gloves, and safety vests provided by support from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and PennDOT, as supplies last. Events must be registered at **2026 Pick Up Pennsylvania** to receive free cleanup supplies.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is proud to sponsor the 2026 Pennsylvania Resources Council, Gene Capaldi Lens on Litter photo contest, Before and After category. Participants are eligible for a monetary prize of $500. One adult and one student winner will be awarded. To qualify, submissions to Lens On Litter in the before and after category, must be a Pick Up Pennsylvania registered and reported event. Register your event with Pick Up Pennsylvania here: **2026 Pick Up Pennsylvania**. Enter the Lens On Litter contest at **Lens on Litter Contest - PRC webpage**.

Questions about Pick Up Pennsylvania can be answered by Sara Majorsky, **smajorsky@keeppabeautiful.org** or Heather Manhart, **hmanhart@keeppabeautiful.org**. For phone inquiries, please call **724-836-4121**.

For additional information, including sample social media posts, a press release, videos, and flyers (in English and Spanish) can be found in a Promotional Toolkit at this link: **Supplies & Resources - Keep PA Beautiful**.

Litter Free School Program

Schools in Pennsylvania can keep their school grounds litter free with Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's Litter Free School Zone Program. The program encourages hands-on activities to teach environmental stewardship and responsibility and can be combined with a lesson on how litter affects animals, people, water quality, or economics. Responsibilities include planning two litter sweeps per school year and can include supporting activities like creating and caring for pollinator and rain gardens. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful provides a Litter Free School Zone sign and supplies of gloves and vests! For more information or to complete an application visit the **Litter Free School Zone - Keep PA Beautiful webpage.**

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.