

PA EdVentures



December's EdVentures: Structured Literacy Updates, CROWN Act, & More

This December, we hosted the 2025 SAS Institute, where Maddie Loring, a 4th-grade teacher at the Jefferson-Morgan School District, was [**named Pennsylvania's 2026 Teacher of the Year**](#). This month, we also recognized Ken Bonkoski, school facilities manager at Antietam School District, and Kimberly Lokhaiser, school bus driver and paraprofessional at Butler Area School District, as our [**2026 Recognizing Inspiring School Employees \(RISE\) honorees**](#).

As we approach the winter holidays, PDE is extending our warm wishes to all members of our community. This time of year offers the opportunity for reflection, gratitude, and celebration. We appreciate the unwavering dedication of our educators, administrators, and support staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the year to create enriching and nurturing environments for our learners. Thank you for all you do.

PHRC Information on the CROWN Act

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA) prohibits discrimination in Pennsylvania based on race, color, familial status, religious creed, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, disability, the use, handling, or training of support or guide animals for disability, or retaliation. The PHRA applies to discrimination in employment, housing, commercial property, education, and public accommodations.

On November 25, 2025, Governor Shapiro signed [**Act 54 of 2025**](#), known as the CROWN Act, into law. The act amended the PHRA to clarify that discrimination based on race includes traits associated with the individual's race. The act also clarified that discrimination based on religious creed includes head coverings and hairstyles historically associated with religious creeds. The law includes exceptions for rules or policies adopted for the health or safety of an employee, adopted for nondiscriminatory reasons, tailored specifically to the position, or applied equally to individuals in applicable positions.

For additional information on the CROWN Act, please see [**PHRC CROWN Protections**](#) or [**PHRC Protecciones CROWN**](#).



National World War II Museum 2026 Billy Michal Leadership Award Nominations Open

Each year, the Billy Michal Student Leadership Award is presented annually to one student from each state and the District of Columbia who embodies the American spirit in their communities.

The 51 selected student leadership award winners will travel to New Orleans June 4-7, 2026, along with a parent or chaperone, all expenses paid, to attend the 2026 American Spirit Awards, where they will represent their state at the event. Students will receive behind-the-scenes access to the Museum, participate in leadership activities with their cohort, and attend an awards ceremony to honor their accomplishments.

Nomination criteria:

- Nominees must be in grades 8–12.
- Only individual students can be nominated, not groups.
- Students cannot be nominated by a family member.
- Students must be in public, private, parochial, or home school in the United States.
- Nominations must be submitted through the Billy Michal Student Leadership Award webpage by **January 23, 2026**.

To learn more about the awards and to nominate a student, please visit the [National WWII Museum webpage](#).



Interest Form Now Live for the 2026-27 PDE Principal Induction Program

If you are a current Assistant/Vice Building or Building Principal who needs to complete principal induction to apply for your Administrative II certification, visit the [SAS PD Center](#) and complete the 2026-27 Principal Induction Interest form.

Administrators who sign up through the interest form will be notified when registration opens for the 2026-27 induction year. The induction program is one year in length, and participants will earn 80 Act 45 Continuing Education hours upon completion of the induction program.

Request for Public Input on Emotional Support Animals

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) is developing guidance for the public regarding how it will evaluate cases involving the use of emotional support animals (ESA) in education, employment, housing, and public accommodations.

Under the PHRC's current provisions, emotional support animals are recognized primarily in the context of housing accommodations, ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive equal housing opportunities. However, these provisions do not extend to other public spaces or accommodations.

The PHRC is seeking public input regarding access to public accommodations with emotional support animals specifically. Emotional support animals are not service animals like seeing eye dogs and they are not trained to do a particular task. Rather, individuals with certain disabilities have found the presence of these animals provide a significant emotional benefit.

Public accommodations are places open to the public, like stores, restaurants, amusement parks, schools, colleges, and universities.

The PHRC is looking to hear from individuals who use ESAs, advocacy groups, businesses, and other affected individuals and entities. The PHRC would like to hear about your experiences, concerns, and suggestions. Public comment will be accepted via an [online survey](#) from December 1 through December 31, 2025. The PHRC will accept comment from schools, postsecondary and higher education institutions, and libraries via email (aburman@pa.gov) until January 29, 2026.

After the one-month public input period concludes, the PHRC will develop draft guidance informed by the feedback received. Once the draft is finalized, it will be released for a public comment period before being reviewed and accepted by the Commission.

Structured Literacy Updates



Structured Literacy Updates

Act 135 of 2024

The lists and resources associated with Act 135 of 2024 are now available on the [Structured Literacy webpage on PDE's website](#). The lists include evidence-based reading curricula, intervention materials, and professional development opportunities around Structured Literacy.

A list of approved universal screeners will be forthcoming, pending a review of Act 47 of 2025.

Statewide Act 135 Rollout: Support for School Leaders

PDE is offering a webinar to support schools during the implementation of Act 135. The webinar will be recorded and offered four times over four days to accommodate busy school leaders' schedules.

The webinar will provide an overview of Act 135, an introduction to the lists and associated resources, as well as examples of how these lists and resources can begin or enhance LEAs' Structured Literacy implementation.

To register for a session:

January 6, 2026, 9:00-10:00AM

https://pattan-net.zoom.us/meeting/register/3tKKnjhCT86hqX_qQdWNqw#/registration

January 8, 2026, 1:00-2:00PM

https://pattan-net.zoom.us/meeting/register/QkFel_TSSwqaOxrosuR1eg#/registration

January 12, 2026, 10:00-11:00AM

https://pattan-net.zoom.us/meeting/register/ST_bdrWjTJGnIyyGrFUIQw#/registration

January 14, 2026, 3:30-4:30PM

https://pattan-net.zoom.us/meeting/register/7a_TF0RuQ3eHpaWxSP_sdQ#/registration

Questions or requests for additional information may be directed to the Department at: ra-edstructuredlit@pa.gov.



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