

PA EdVentures



January EdVentures: Advancing Education Summit, RISE Award Nominations, Highlighting Structured Literacy & More!

In 2026, we're continuing to champion all learners to chart their own course and give them the opportunity to succeed. This month, Secretary Rowe visited Red Lion Area School District's annual STEAM Ahead event to highlight the [50% increase in CTE and STEM funding](#) under the Shapiro Administration.

This month also began the third annual [Governor's School Breakfast Challenge](#), which aims to increase breakfast participation while incorporating sustainable changes that include more nutritious and local foods. [Discover how some teachers in PA are highlighting the importance of free breakfast every day!](#)



From the Secretary's Desk

In Pennsylvania, literacy is not simply one initiative among many; it is foundational to everything that follows, from academic success to economic opportunity to civic participation. When students struggle to read, it becomes a barrier that quietly compounds over time, limiting access to content, confidence, and possibility. When students do read well, doors open.

That is why the Shapiro administration and the Department of Education have made structured literacy, grounded in the science of reading, a central focus of our work. Structured literacy reflects what decades of research and the lived experience of educators tell us: Unlike spoken language, reading must be intentionally and explicitly taught. And when instruction is explicit, systematic, and responsive to how the brain learns to read, more

students succeed, including students with dyslexia, multilingual learners, and those who have historically been underserved.

This new section of EdVentures, *Highlighting Structured Literacy*, will highlight how that work is coming to life across the Commonwealth. Here you will find examples from classrooms, districts, and educator preparation programs, along with practical resources, emerging insights, and lessons learned. Our goal is not just to share information, but to build shared understanding and momentum around one of the most important commitments we can make to Pennsylvania's learners: ensuring every student has the opportunity to become a confident, capable reader.

C. Rowe

ADVANCING EDUCATION TOGETHER SUMMIT

JULY 30
2026

HARRISBURG, PA

Third Annual PDE Advancing Education Together Summit Save-the-Date

The Offices of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) and Postsecondary and Higher Education (OPHE) announce the Third Annual PDE Advancing Education Together Summit. This year's Summit will be held on July 30, 2026. Sponsored by the Offices of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) and Postsecondary and Higher Education (OPHE), this summit brings together LEA administrators and higher education deans from EPPs for a day of learning and collaboration.

Registration information will be released at a later time. Please visit the [Summit website](#) for updates and additional information.

Student Lyme Art Contest Now Open

The **Pennsylvania Department of Health** announced the opening of the 2026 Student Lyme Disease Prevention Art Competition. Students in grades one through six across the Commonwealth are invited to submit a poster or short video around the theme "Protect. Check. Remove," a winner will be chosen from each category. The deadline for submissions is 11:59 PM on March 13, 2026, more information can be found on the [Department of Health's Tickborne Diseases webpage](#).

Pennsylvania has one of the highest annual counts of Lyme disease cases in the nation, underscoring the importance of tick awareness and prevention across the Commonwealth. The annual contest helps Pennsylvania's students learn how to avoid Lyme disease by educating them about ticks, including where they live, how to prevent bites, and how to remove ticks that do bite.

Officials from the **Departments of Health (DOH), Education (PDE), Environmental Protection (DEP), and Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** encourage students to participate in the contest and help raise awareness about how Pennsylvanians can protect themselves from Lyme disease.

Finalists will be notified by e-mail and will be invited to an award ceremony at the State Capitol in May.



Modern Classroom Math Project and Second Step Student Wellbeing Project

The Modern Classrooms Math Project (MCMP) and American Institutes for Research (AIR®) are partnering with districts to study MCMP—an innovative program designed to improve late elementary and middle school math outcomes by implementing curriculum-embedded, competency-based learning. Select districts may be able to join a **free math project for students in grades 4 – 8**.

To participate in the MCMP for the 2026-27 academic year, districts must utilize either Eureka Math Squared® or Illustrative Mathematics®.

Participating districts will receive:

- Year-round one-on-one coaching and site visits;
- 16 hours of professional development for teachers in summer 2026;
- Modern Classroom Project curriculum materials aligned with either Eureka Math Squared® or Illustrative Mathematics®;
- A \$1,600 stipend for each participating educator. We invite you to schedule a 30-minute meeting to discuss whether this upcoming cohort (Summer 2026) would be a good fit district's goals and needs.

At this time, the program is inviting districts to schedule [a 30-minute meeting](#) to discuss whether this upcoming cohort (Summer 2026) would be a good fit district's goals and needs.

Thanks to a federally funded research initiative led by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), districts may be offered the chance to join the Second Step® Middle School Program—absolutely free for Grades 6–8. This program empowers students and staff with a well-being learning curriculum, valuable support, and national recognition.

Participating schools receive:

- Full access to the Second Step® curriculum
- Stipends for staff
- Support from AIR's research team
- A chance to contribute to a national study on student well-being and social-emotional learning

If you're interested, please [book a virtual meeting with the AIR team](#).

For questions, please contact secondstepms@air.org. Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a lasting impact on your students.



Litter Hawk Youth Award Program Information

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is excited to announce that the Litter Hawk Youth Award Program is back!

This year's theme is **Celebrate America250 – Keep It Beautiful**, inviting Pennsylvania students in grades K–6 to share their creativity and inspire pride in our communities as we approach America's 250th anniversary.

Whether through art, writing, or video, these young leaders show us how powerful their voices can be. Please help us promote this opportunity to schools, youth groups, and families in your network.

Winners will be announced in April 2026 in coordination with an awards ceremony at the PA State Capitol Building! All winners and their families, guardians and teachers are welcome to attend. Special guests will include representatives from the Department of Environmental Protection and America250PA.

The program deadline is January 31, 2026. Contest details and application can be found at the [Litter Hawk Youth Award Program - Keep PA Beautiful webpage](#).

Together, we can lift up the next generation of environmental stewards.

Educator Effectiveness Annual Report Now Available

The Educator Effectiveness Annual Report (EEAR) was released for LEAs to complete for the 2024-2025 school year. This state required report collects the aggregate totals for the three areas of evaluation under Act 13: Classroom Teachers, Principals, and Non-Teaching Professionals. The report can be completed within the Future Ready Comprehensive Planning Portal (FRCPP). **The due date for this report is February 28, 2026.**

For questions regarding Act 13 please visit the [Act SAS site and toolkit](#). A step-by-step presentation on the completion of the EEAR can be found under the "Professional Development" tab on the Act 13 SAS site. For questions regarding Act 13 or completing the EEAR please contact RA-PDE-Evaluation@pa.gov.



Information & Submissions for Rise Awards Now 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](#). The 2026 Nomination period will open on February 1. Nominations can be submitted until **August 30, 2026**.

FREE Act 48 Webinars for Educators & Nurses on Tourette Syndrome

The PA Tourette Syndrome Alliance is excited to offer free professional training for Educators and Nurses in February 2026! Gain valuable insights into Tourette syndrome, co-occurring conditions, effective classroom strategies, and more—all while earning Act 48 credits.

Webinar Options:

- **Educator choices:**
 - Feb 16, 2026 | 9:00–11:00 AM (2 hours)
 - Feb 18, 2026 | 7:00–8:00 PM (1 hour)
- **Nurses:**
 - Feb 16, 2026 | 9:00–11:00 AM (2 hours)

What's included:

- Expert-led training with engaging content
- Tools, resources, and one-year website access
- A powerful “experience having a tic” exercise
- Strategies for supporting students with TS
- Q&A session

Register now by selecting the correct webinar at the [Support for Schools Webinar Sign-Up webpage](#).

Need a custom training for your school? The PA Tourette Syndrome Alliance offers in-person and virtual Act 48-accredited sessions and Peer Anti-bullying In-Services as well. Contact us at 1-800-990-3300 or email Sherrie at sherrie@patsainc.org with your questions.



Highlighting Structured Literacy

What is structured literacy? Structured literacy is defined as “systematic, explicit instruction that provides a strong core of foundational skills in English.” It integrates **listening, speaking, reading, spelling, and writing**, and emphasizes the **structure of language** across the **speech sound system** (phonology), the **writing system** (orthography), the **structure of sentences** (syntax), the **meaningful parts of words** (morphology), the **relationships among words** (semantics), and the **organization of spoken and written discourse**.

In the first-ever Highlighting Structured Literacy section, PDE invites you to read [Secretary Rowe's Substack on structured literacy](#), what it means for schools and administration, and provides an in-depth overview to orient you on all things structured literacy in PA.



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