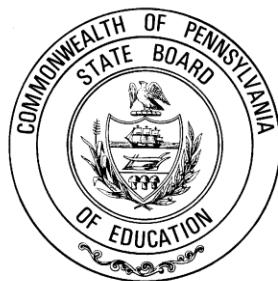


PENNSYLVANIA
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

January 2026

PENNSYLVANIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

OVERVIEW

The State Board of Education consists of 21 voting members, 10 of whom serve on the Board's Council of Basic Education and 10 of whom serve on the Board's Council of Higher Education. Seventeen members are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for overlapping terms of six years, or until their successors are appointed and confirmed. Four members of the Board are members of the General Assembly who serve as long as they hold the position of majority and minority chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees. The Chairperson of the Board and its Councils are designated by the Governor and serve at his pleasure. The 21 voting members of the board also serve as the State Board for Career and Technical Education.

The Board meets at least six times per year. Additional Council or Board meetings are held at the call of the chairpersons or at the request of a majority of members. Board committees are appointed by the chairperson of the Board to formulate policy proposals in those areas which fall within the purview of the Board. Council committees are appointed by the chairperson of each respective Council to formulate policy proposals in those areas which fall within the purview of either Council.

The Secretary of Education is the head of the Department of Education and the chief executive officer of the State Board of Education. The Secretary is a member of the executive department of the Commonwealth and is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Secretary of Education, or the Secretary's designated representative, is entitled to attend all meetings of the Board and Councils and has the right to speak on all matters before the Board and the Councils, but not to vote.

The chairperson of the Professional Standards and Practices Commission (PSPC), or a PSPC member designated by the chairperson, serves as an ex officio, non-voting member of the Board. Likewise, a member of the State Board serves in the same capacity on the PSPC.

Four student representatives serve as non-voting, advisory members of the Board – two high school students who sit on the Council of Basic Education and two postsecondary students who sit on the Council of Higher Education. Annually, two new students are selected to serve a two-year term on each respective Council. High school students are selected through an application process managed by the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils. Postsecondary students are selected to represent the various sectors of higher education in the Commonwealth on a rotating basis. Student members were added by the Board in 2008, and their participation is supported through grant funds made available by Highmark.

MEMBERSHIP

The following are listings of the State Board of Education's membership, reflecting transitions throughout the 2025 calendar year.

State Board of Education

January 2025

Ms. Karen Farmer White (Pittsburgh)
Chair, State Board of Education

Dr. Carrie Rowe
Acting Secretary of Education & Chief Executive Officer of the State Board

Council of Basic Education

Dr. A Lee Williams (Slippery Rock)
Chair, Council of Basic Education

Honorable Carol Aichele (Malvern)

Mr. Nathan Barrett (Scranton)

Ms. Naina Bhatia
Junior Student Member

Ms. Katherine Christiano (Devon)

Senator Lynda Schlegel Culver
Majority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Ms. Aarushi Dedhiya
Senior Student Member

Mr. Ernest Hadrick III (Norristown)

Dr. Jeffrey Keeling (Hadley)

Honorable Maureen Lally-Green (Mars)

Representative Peter Schweyer
Majority Chair, House Education Committee

Council of Higher Education

Honorable Pedro Rivera (Lancaster)
Chairman, Council of Higher Education

Ms. Brenna Chernich
Senior Student Member

Ms. Yadira Cupeles
Junior Student Member

Representative Bryan Cutler
Minority Chair, House Education Committee

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn (Philadelphia)

Ms. Amanda Hetrick (Titusville)

Mr. Robert Mitchell (Jefferson)

Dr. Monica Taylor (Drexel Hill)

Senator Lindsey Williams
Minority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Dr. Benjamin Wilson (Erie)

Dr. Nicole Hill
PSPC Ex-officio Member

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director

Ms. Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant

State Board of Education

July 2025

Ms. Karen Farmer White (Pittsburgh)
Chair, State Board of Education

Dr. Carrie Rowe
Acting Secretary of Education & Chief
Executive Officer of the State Board

Council of Basic Education

Dr. A Lee Williams (Slippery Rock)
Chair, Council of Basic Education

Honorable Carol Aichele (Malvern)

Ms. Julia Antunes
Junior Student Member

Mr. Nathan Barrett (Scranton)

Ms. Naina Bhatia
Senior Student Member

Ms. Katherine Christiano (Devon)

Senator Lynda Schlegel Culver
Majority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Mr. Ernest Hadrick III (Norristown)

Dr. Jeffrey Keeling (Hadley)

Honorable Maureen Lally-Green (Mars)

Representative Peter Schweyer
Majority Chair, House Education Committee

Council of Higher Education

Honorable Pedro Rivera (Lancaster)
Chairman, Council of Higher Education

Ms. Yadira Cupeles
Senior Student Member

Representative Bryan Cutler
Minority Chair, House Education Committee

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn (Philadelphia)

Ms. Amanda Hetrick (Titusville)

Mr. Robert Mitchell (Jefferson)

Dr. Monica Taylor (Drexel Hill)

Senator Lindsey Williams
Minority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Dr. Benjamin Wilson (Erie)

Dr. Nicole Hill
PSPC Ex-officio Member

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director

Ms. Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant

State Board of Education

September 2025

Ms. Karen Farmer White (Pittsburgh)
Chair, State Board of Education

Dr. Carrie Rowe
Acting Secretary of Education & Chief
Executive Officer of the Board

Council of Basic Education

Dr. A Lee Williams (Slippery Rock)
Chair, Council of Basic Education

Honorable Carol Aichele (Malvern)

Ms. Julia Antunes
Junior Student Member

Mr. Nathan Barrett (Scranton)

Ms. Naina Bhatia
Senior Student Member

Ms. Katherine Christiano (Devon)

Senator Lynda Schlegel Culver
Majority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Mr. Ernest Hadrick III (Norristown)

Dr. Jeffrey Keeling (Hadley)

Honorable Maureen Lally-Green (Mars)

Representative Peter Schweyer
Majority Chair, House Education Committee

Council of Higher Education

Honorable Pedro Rivera (Lancaster)
Chairman, Council of Higher Education

Mr. Ciaran Bilbow
Junior Student Member

Ms. Yadira Cupeles
Senior Student Member

Representative Bryan Cutler
Minority Chair, House Education Committee

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn (Philadelphia)

Ms. Amanda Hetrick (Titusville)

Mr. Robert Mitchell (Jefferson)

Dr. Monica Taylor (Drexel Hill)

Senator Lindsey Williams
Minority Chair, Senate Education Committee

Dr. Benjamin Wilson (Erie)

Dr. Nicole Hill
PSPC Ex-officio Member

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director

Ms. Stephanie Jones
Administrative Assistant

There are currently three vacancies on the State Board of Education.

INTRODUCTION

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education was created by the General Assembly in 1963 and reestablished in 1988. It is the principal administrative regulatory body for both elementary and secondary education and higher education in the Commonwealth. It has the power and duty to review and adopt regulations that govern educational policies and principles and establish standards governing the educational programs of the Commonwealth, upon recommendation of its Councils. The Board also has the authority and duty to approve or disapprove an application for the creation of a new school district, or change in the boundaries of an existing school district; establish committees of professional and technical advisors to assist the councils in performing research studies undertaken by them; manage and have custody of the State School Fund; apply for, receive and administer Federal grants, appropriations, allocations and programs within its purview; adopt policies with regard to institutions of higher education; and, adopt master plans for basic and higher education.

The State Board of Education engages in constant review and appraisal of education in the Commonwealth. The Board's evaluation takes into account such matters as educational objectives, alternative organizational patterns, alternative programs of study, and the operating efficiency of the education system. The chairperson of the State Board refers all studies and investigations to one of its Councils, and receives and places on the agenda the findings and recommendations of the Council for appropriate action by the Board.

For purposes of studying issues and developing policy proposals, the Board is divided into two councils – the Council of Basic Education and the Council of Higher Education. The Council of Basic Education has the power and duty to develop a master plan for basic education in the Commonwealth for adoption by the Board; investigate programs, conduct research studies and formulate policy programs in all educational areas not within the purview of higher education; encourage and promote such agricultural, industrial, career and technical education programs as the needs of this Commonwealth may require; and investigate and make recommendations pertaining to the work of any schools of design, schools of industrial arts or industrial schools to which the General Assembly may make an appropriation.

The Council of Higher Education has the power and duty to develop a master plan for higher education in the Commonwealth for adoption by the Board; develop standards for the approval of colleges and universities for granting of certification and degrees; develop standards for all higher education building projects involving the use of state funds or the funds of any Commonwealth instrumentality; and, investigate programs, conduct research studies and formulate policy proposals pertaining to higher education in the Commonwealth.

The Board also serves as the State Board of Career and Technical Education and, in this capacity, sets policy and promulgates regulations regarding career and technical education in Pennsylvania at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. The Board met for the first time as the State Board of Career and Technical Education in January 2020 following the passage of Act 76 of 2019 that updated terminology throughout the Public School Code of 1949 by replacing references to “vocational-technical education” with “career and technical education”. Prior to January 2020, the Board was referred to as the State Board for Vocational-Technical Education.

Much of the Board’s work occurs in meetings of its standing committees, including the Committees on Academic Standards/Chapter 4, Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness, and Career and Technical Education. Ad Hoc and Special Committees also are established from time to time to oversee special projects.

Board committees are the bodies that conduct public meetings to solicit comments, concerns and questions from members of the general public, as well as those involved in the education enterprise on a particular education regulation or issue. When the Board decides to review a current regulation or develop a new one, it typically begins the process with roundtable discussions or public hearings conducted in several locations throughout the state. The committee takes the information it learns during this exercise and develops recommendations that can take the form of a report or revised regulations.

Proposed regulations are published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Additional public comments on a proposed regulation, as well as comments received from the House and Senate Education Committees and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, are considered and, based on this stakeholder input, the Board may make further refinements to the regulation that it deems necessary in crafting a final regulation.

State Board of Education Activity: 2025

Pursuant to Section 2603-B of the Public School Code of 1949, 24 P.S. § 26-2603-B, the State Board of Education (Board) is pleased to provide a report on its activities for the 2025 calendar year.

Chapter 4 (Academic Standards and Assessment)

Academic standards establish goals for student learning and define what students should know and be able to do at specific grade levels. Academic standards do not represent a particular curriculum or instructional methodology. Rather, they provide a foundation for the development of school entities' local curriculum and serve as guideposts to which local curriculum should be aligned. The Board conducts periodic reviews of the academic standards that it has adopted in 22 Pa. Code Chapter 4 to determine if they are appropriate, clear, specific and challenging. In 2025, the Board moved forward with an effort to conduct comprehensive reviews of two sets of standards: the Academic Standards for Arts and Humanities and the Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education.

The Board finds immense value in engaging Pennsylvania educators and content experts in the standards review process. As such, in March of 2025, the Board's Academic Standards/Chapter 4 Committee appointed two external advisory committees to review the Academic Standards for Arts and Humanities and the Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education. Nominees to serve on these standards review committees were solicited through an application process administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (Department), and the Board requested that the Department serve in partnership to support this work by convening and facilitating these advisory bodies.

The Academic Standards/Chapter 4 Committee charged the standards review committees with conducting an initial examination to determine whether the standards need to be updated and, if so, to prepare recommended updates for the Committee to consider. The Academic Standards/Chapter 4 Committee further directed that the scope of work for the Health, Safety and Physical Education standards review committee include a focus on mental health.

The external standards review committees met throughout 2025. A virtual kick-off for both standards review committees was held on May 13, 2025. The Arts and Humanities review committee met in-person for the first time on July 11-12 and on July 17-18 in Harrisburg, Pa. In late summer, members of the Arts and Humanities review committee utilized a survey tool to provide additional input on their summer meeting discussions and then scheduled a virtual check-in on September 24 to discuss the survey feedback. The Arts and Humanities review committee met again in-person on October 21-22 in State College, Pa.

The Health, Safety, and Physical Education review committee met in-person for the first time on July 11-12 in Harrisburg, Pa. The Health, Safety, and Physical Education review committee also elected to utilize a survey tool to collect additional input on their summer meeting discussions and scheduled a virtual check-in on September 23 to discuss the survey feedback. On October 21-22, the Health, Safety, and Physical Education review committee convened in-person in State College, Pa. Both review committees met virtually on December 2 and intend to continue meeting through early 2026 to complete the review of their respective standards.

The Board's Academic Standards/Chapter 4 Committee anticipates receiving recommendations from the standards review committees in the spring of 2026 and will use these recommendations as the foundation for broader stakeholder outreach. The Committee will take input from all stakeholders into account in determining whether it will propose that the Board consider amending the standards.

Program of Study in General Education

In 2022, the General Assembly enacted legislation that established a Career and Technical Education Program of Study (POS) in General Education as a new pathway for high school students interested in careers in education. In creating this pathway, the General Assembly seated ongoing responsibility with the Board to evaluate the efficacy of the POS in General Education. The Board was directed to evaluate the POS within a year of it being offered and at least every three years thereafter. As established in the Public School Code, the Board's

evaluation must include enrollment and participation data disaggregated by Every Student Succeeds Act subgroups, as well as a description of the evaluation process used to reach conclusions about whether the POS in General Education is meeting its intended goals.

In May of 2025, the Board released its first report on the new POS in General Education (CIP 13.0101). The report contains data on the number of public schools that are either offering or proposing to offer the new POS in General Education, reviews the staffing guidelines established for this POS, and presents data on how many programs have developed articulations and/or dual credit agreements with local colleges and universities. Finally, the report also establishes the metrics that the Board will use to evaluate the efficacy of the POS in General Education over time and addresses how the Board will establish an initial baseline for these data points.

Delineation of Roles and Responsibilities for Higher Education

The General Assembly established a new State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) through the enactment of Act 69 of 2024. In establishing this new entity, the General Assembly directed the SBHE to consult with the Board in formulating recommendations the SBHE would make to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities of the SBHE, the Board, and the Department of Education as they pertain to higher education.

In March of 2025, the SBHE's Transfer of Authority Subcommittee submitted a set of preliminary recommendations to the Board for its review and feedback. The Board then formed a subcommittee to further study this issue and to engage with representatives of the SBHE to determine areas of joint concern and agreement. The Board's subcommittee consulted with the SBHE's Transfer of Authority Subcommittee during the spring. Following that consultation, in May of 2025, the Board adopted recommendations pertaining to the transfer of powers and duties related to higher education in Article XXVI-B of the Public School Code and pertaining to the collaborative relationship that should be established between the Board and the SBHE. These recommendations were transmitted to the SBHE for its consideration.

Review of Certification Assessment Requirements

The Board's Teacher and School Leader Effectiveness Committee undertook a new effort in 2025 to conduct a periodic review of the assessments required of candidates for educator certification. Throughout the year, the Committee worked closely with the Department's Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality (BSLTQ) to review extensive data on first-time and best attempt pass rates, assessment pass rates disaggregated by gender, race, and ethnicity, assessment costs, qualifying scores, and more. BSLTQ staff also prepared an analysis of teacher testing policies in states across the nation to identify states that mandate certification assessments with no exceptions, states that require testing for certification but that also permit alternative modes of assessment, and non-mandatory testing states. Finally, to inform the Committee's work, BSLTQ staff also convened stakeholder engagement sessions to gather input from higher education students, teachers, school administrators, and higher education faculty. Stakeholders provided feedback on the accessibility and cost of required certification assessments and on the test content and format, as well as providing their views on the role of certification testing and whether they support alternative assessment pathways. The Committee will consider all of the information it gathered throughout the year as it continues its review of certification assessments in 2026 and determines what recommendations it may offer to the Secretary of Education.

Gifted Education

The Special and Gifted Education Committee met in November of 2025 to continue its ongoing review of the regulations in 22 Pa. Code Chapter 16 that govern gifted education in the Commonwealth. The Committee previously opened the regulations for review and invited stakeholders to share their thoughts and concerns related to gifted education at a series of statewide roundtable discussions. Following that effort, the Committee adopted recommendations that were responsive to many of the concerns identified by stakeholders and that were intended to improve the delivery of gifted education services, to ensure compliance with existing requirements set forth in Chapter 16, and to provide clarity surrounding various practices.

As part of those recommendations, the Committee identified a need for additional feedback on stakeholder suggestions regarding the criteria that are used to evaluate whether a student is mentally gifted. The Committee directed the Department of Education to convene an advisory committee of school psychologists to provide input on the criteria used to evaluate a student for giftedness and to provide their professional expertise on the criteria suggested by stakeholders relative to research surrounding the appropriate use of such measures. A school psychologists advisory committee was appointed and began meeting in April of 2024.

The advisory committee's work included a review of current gifted education policies and related legal cases, an effort to connect research with pragmatic practice by conducting a literature review and an experiential review, and the employment of collaborative practices as an advisory body to discuss and reach consensus on various topics. The school psychologists advisory committee presented its recommendations on gifted evaluations to the Board's Special and Gifted Education Committee in November. The Committee will deliberate on this additional feedback and will reconvene in early 2026 to discuss whether it will issue its own recommendations on gifted identification measures.

Private School Accreditation

Under the Private Academic Schools Act, private schools may operate in Pennsylvania without state licensure if they are accredited by an organization approved by the Board. The Board's process for evaluating organizations to serve as approved accrediting organizations is set forth in the Statement of Policy on Accrediting Organizations published at 22 Pa. Code Chapter 52. That policy statement establishes that the Board will consider granting approval to accrediting organizations seeking recognition by the Board for five-year intervals and provides for existing approved accrediting organizations to apply to renew their authority. In 2025, the Board considered and acted on three applications submitted by entities seeking recognition as approved private school accrediting organizations. The Board considered an application from a new entity, the Association of Christian Schools International, as well as two renewal applications filed by the

Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools and by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.