

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## State Update

*The Senate will reconvene on Monday, March 16, and the House will reconvene on Monday, March 23. Although the chambers will not be in session in Harrisburg as a whole until later in March, the coming weeks will be marked by House and Senate budget hearings. During these hearings, members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will question leaders of the Shapiro Administration regarding the details of the budget proposal.*



## STATE BUDGET PROPOSAL UPDATE

- **2026-27 Education Budget Update from the Pennsylvania Department of Education**
- Below is a an update on the **proposed 2026-27 education budget for Pennsylvania** provided by Amy Lena, Deputy Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, PA Department of Education (PDE).
- **Governor Josh Shapiro** called on the General Assembly to approve a \$50 million increase for Basic Education Funding, a \$565 million increase to the adequacy formula, and a \$50 million increase for Special Education. When added to continued K-12 education program and initiative funding, the total support for public schools across the Commonwealth totals nearly \$8.3 billion.
- **Other highlights include:**
  - Building on cyber charter reform and the cyber charter funding formula, saving school districts an estimated \$75 million annually, bringing total savings from these reforms up to \$250 million a year;
  - \$111 million for school safety and mental health support;
  - \$125 million in support to address structural and environmental concerns in school buildings, with \$25 million of that funding dedicated to the Solar for Schools program;
  - A \$2.5 million increase for teacher professional development;
  - A \$5 million increase for student teacher stipends, totaling \$35 million annually;
  - A \$14.3 million increase for CTE; and

- Expanding high-quality STEM and computer science learning programs and professional development opportunities; and
- Continuing to fully fund universal free breakfast and the program providing menstrual hygiene products at no cost to students.
- You can view a [summary of proposed budget and school district allocations](#) on PDE's website.
- **Finally, the budget also proposes new policy reforms, including:**
  - Providing more flexibility for students to meet CTE course load requirements to reduce redundancy in requirements and blend academic and technical standards, helping them graduate and enter the workforce more easily;
  - Allowing CTE students to take the NOCTI exam as soon as they finish their program, instead of waiting until they reach 12th grade; and
  - Closing an insurance loophole that allows insurers to deny reimbursement for services provided within a school.

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- ***Shapiro wants more money for education, minimum wage increase in budget proposal***
  - Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro delivered his 2026–27 budget address Tuesday before a joint session of the General Assembly, laying out a fiscally cautious but ambitious plan aimed at strengthening education, addressing housing and energy costs, and advancing key policy priorities in an election year.
  - [Click here](#) for the full article.
  - **Source: WHYY, February 4, 2026.**

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## ***Pennsylvania high schools to require new financial literacy standard***

Pennsylvania high schools will have a new graduation requirement by the beginning of the 2026-27 school year. According to Act 35 of a new state law, all students must take at least a half-credit course in personal finance in order to graduate.

[Click here](#) for the full article.  
**Source: North Penn Now, February 7, 2026.**

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## ***Universal FAFSA Completion Requirement***

Completion of the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** among Pennsylvania high school students reached a near-record high during the current 2025–2026 academic year. Last year, 57.5% of PA high school seniors completed the FAFSA, allowing them to access financial aid that can make a critical difference in their postsecondary decisions. This achievement reflects the dedication of school counselors and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), nonpublic schools, and private academic schools across the Commonwealth who prioritize financial literacy and ensure students understand the financial aid opportunities available to them as they pursue postsecondary education.

To build on this momentum, **Act 47 of 2025 established a state-wide FAFSA completion requirement. Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, all Pennsylvania high school seniors will be required to file the FAFSA unless a parent or guardian (or the student if 18 years old or older) submits a completed opt-out form.** No student may be withheld from graduation or otherwise reprimanded for failing to complete the FAFSA; rather, the intent is to ensure that every student and family is aware of available financial aid and has the opportunity to make informed postsecondary and workforce decisions.

[Click here](#) for the complete update from PDE.

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## ***Bill requiring Pa. schools to teach cursive handwriting to be presented to Gov. Shapiro***

A bill that would require all Pennsylvania schools to teach cursive handwriting now heads to Governor Josh Shapiro's desk after it was passed by the Senate on Wednesday and the House in June, according to the Pa. General Assembly.

Known as [House Bill 17](#), it was first presented to House members on Dec. 2, 2024, by [Rep. Dane Watro \(R\)](#) who represents House District 116 in Luzerne and Schuylkill counties.

[Click here](#) for the full article.

**Source:** *WNEP16*, February 5, 2026.

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## ***Shapiro proposes cutting millions of dollars from Pa. cyber schools for 3rd year***

During [his yearly budget address Tuesday](#), Gov. Shapiro called for redirecting \$250 million from cyber charter schools to traditional school districts.

[Click here](#) for the full article.

**Source:** *PENNLIVE*, February 5, 2026.

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## ***Bill that would mandate 'bell-to-bell phone-free policy' in PA schools passes state Senate***

A bill to restrict student cellphone use during the school day has passed the Pennsylvania Senate, now moving to the House for consideration.

[Senate Bill 1014](#) hopes to establish a "bell-to-bell phone-free policy" for Pennsylvania schools no later than the start of the 2027-28 school year.

[Click here](#) for the full article.

**Source:** *CBS21, WHP*, February 4, 2026.

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## ***BASIC BILL ACTIONS***

- **HB 17:** - *An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in terms and courses of study, further providing for subjects of instruction and flag code. This legislation would require school entities to provide instruction in cursive handwriting or joined italics at appropriate grade levels.*
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Dane Watro (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Presented to the Governor

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- **HB460:** - *An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in certification of teachers, further providing for child abuse recognition and reporting training; and,*

in terms of study, providing for child abuse awareness and prevention.

- **Sponsor:** Rep. Mary Jo Daley (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Third consideration and final passage

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- **HB538:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking education, prevention and response at institutions of higher education and private licensed schools, further providing for scope of article, for definitions, for education program and for follow-up; and making an editorial change.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Robert Leadbeter (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/03/2026 - Re-reported as committed Senate Appropriations

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- **HB1042:** - An Act amending Titles 61 (Prisons and Parole) and 63 (Professions and Occupations (State Licensed)) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in general administration, providing for earned vocational training and education credit; in Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, further providing for parole power and for short sentence parole; and, in powers and duties, further providing for consideration of criminal convictions.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Napoleon J. Nelson (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Re-committed to House Appropriations

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- **HB1238:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in pupils and attendance, providing for restricting possession and use by students of mobile devices.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Barbara Gleim (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Discussed during voting meeting House Education

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- **HB1375:** - An Act amending Titles 24 (Education) and 71 (State Government) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in administration and miscellaneous provisions, further providing for administrative duties of the Public School Employees' Retirement Board; and, in administration, funds, accounts and general provisions, further providing for administrative duties of the State Employees' Retirement Board.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Brett R. Miller (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/03/2026 - Laid on the table

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- **HB1648:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in pupils and attendance, further providing for definitions and providing for mental health days.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Napoleon J. Nelson (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Laid on the table

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- **HB1706:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in school health services, providing for student mental health awareness.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Mary Jo Daley (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Laid on the table

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- **HB2152:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in school safety and security, further providing for School Safety and Security Grant Program; and, in terms and courses of study, providing for delaying secondary school start times.
  - **Sponsor: Rep. Jill N. Cooper (R)**
  - **Action Taken: 02/04/2026 - Laid on the table**

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- **HB2167:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, making editorial changes to delete references to "approved private school" for the purpose of adding references to "approved special education school."
  - **Sponsor: Rep. Napoleon J. Nelson (D)**
  - **Action Taken: 02/04/2026 - Laid on the table**

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- **HB2168:** - An Act amending the act of December 19, 1990 (P.L.1372, No.212), known as the Early Intervention Services System Act, in Statewide system for provision of early intervention services, further providing for administration by Department of Education.
  - **Sponsor: Rep. Napoleon J. Nelson (D)**
  - **Action Taken: 02/04/2026 - Laid on the table**

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- **HB2169:** - An Act amending the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.343, No.176), known as The Fiscal Code, making editorial changes to delete references to "approved private school" for the purpose of adding references to "approved special education school."
  - **Sponsor: Rep. Napoleon J. Nelson (D)**
  - **Action Taken: 02/04/2026 - Laid on the table**

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- **HB2176:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in terms and courses of study, providing for social media literacy education.
  - **Sponsor: Rep. Jim Prokopiak (D)**
  - **Action Taken: 02/04/2026 H - Laid on the table**

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- **HB2197:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in pupils and attendance, further providing for attendance policy at charter, regional charter and cyber charter schools.
  - **Sponsor: Rep. Carol Kazeem (D)**
  - **Action Taken: 02/05/2026 - Referred to House Education**

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- **HB2199:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in student supports, providing for policy against gender-based bullying.
  - **Sponsor: Rep. Paul Takac (D)**
  - **Action Taken: 02/05/2026 - Referred to House Education**

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- **HR409:** - A Resolution designating March 8, 2026, as "Charter Day" and Pennsylvania's 345th birthday in Pennsylvania.

- **Sponsor:** Rep. Robert F. Matzie (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Adopted

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- **SB9:** - *An Act providing for sport activities in public institutions of higher education and public school entities to be expressly designated male, female or coed; and creating causes of action for harm suffered by designation.*
- **Sponsor:** Sen. Judy Ward (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/03/2026 - Discussed during voting meeting House Health

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- **SB116:** - *An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in terms and courses of study, providing for credit for employment at congregate care facility.*
- **Sponsor:** Sen. David G. Argall (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Referred to House Education

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- **SB375:** - *An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in certification of teachers, repealing provisions relating to CPR instruction; in school safety and security, further providing for School Safety and Security Grant Program; and, in school health services, further providing for definitions, repealing provisions relating to automatic external defibrillators, providing for AED and CPR instruction and procedure, establishing the Automated External Defibrillator Program and providing for availability and specifications of automated external defibrillators.*
- **Sponsor:** Sen. Rosemary M. Brown (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Laid on the table

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- **SB1014:** - *An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in student supports, providing for bell-to-bell phone-free policy.*
- **Sponsor:** Sen. Devlin J. Robinson (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Referred to House Education

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- **SB1090:** - *An Act providing for disclosures and safeguards relating to the use of artificial intelligence; and imposing duties on the Attorney General.*
- **Sponsor:** Sen. Tracy Pennycuick (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/04/2026 - Re-referred to Senate Appropriations

***Click on the link below for the full Education Recap.***

## **EDUCATION RECAP**

**[Click here](#) for more.**

*(A weekly report on legislative and executive actions on education-related legislation in Pennsylvania state government.)*

## **Federal Update**

### **Trump signs \$79B education funding bill into law**

The U.S. Department of Education is now — finally — funded for fiscal year 2026, as President Donald Trump Tuesday night swiftly signed into law the

compromise measure that had won final approval from the House, 217-214, earlier that afternoon.

[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *K-12 Education Dive*, February 3, 2026.



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## ***Schools race to meet web accessibility deadlines***

New federal accessibility rules for web content and mobile apps will start being enforced as early as this April — but many school districts won't be ready to comply, recent survey results show.

[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *K-12 Education Dive*, February 6, 2026.

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## ***The Federal Choice Program Is Here. Will It Help Public School Students, Too?***

All but one of the nation's 26 Republican governors [are signing their states up for the first federal program](#) that will fund private school scholarships through tax credits.

[Click here](#) for full article. (*Subscription may be required.*)

Source: *Education Week*, February 5, 2026.

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## ***How the new dietary guidelines could impact school meals***

In early January, the Department of Health and Human Services and the USDA unveiled new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, along with a new food pyramid.

[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *NPR*, February 5, 2026.

# **Pennsylvania Principals Association**

## ***Position Statement on State and Federal Education Issues***

The **Pennsylvania Principals Association (PA Principals Association)** stands in solidarity with national organizations such as the **National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAESP)** and the **National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)** in advocating for equitable, well-funded and inclusive education policies at both state and federal levels. In light of ongoing challenges and critiques directed at the education sector, we reaffirm our commitment to the following principles:

[CLICK HERE FOR POSITION STATEMENT.](#)

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