

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.



School officials say Gov. Shapiro's proposed budget should include more education funding

While Gov. Josh Shapiro's recently proposed budget for Pennsylvania includes education funding increases, it needs to target more money for schools facing rapidly rising costs as they struggle to properly educate students, education officials say.

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

Source: *Republican Herald*, February 17, 2026.

Pa. schools must teach cursive writing under bill signed by Shapiro

Gov. [Josh Shapiro](#) on Wednesday signed [a bill](#) that will require a cursive handwriting curriculum in all Pennsylvania public schools.

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

Source: *PENNLIVE*, February 12, 2026.

Shapiro Administration to Serve Meals to Students Across Pennsylvania Once Again this Summer, Looking for Organizations that Want to Help

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is looking for organizations who want to help the Shapiro Administration provide nutritious meals to children in low-income areas across the Commonwealth during the summer months through the Department's Summer Food Service Program. **New sponsors must apply by May 1, 2026.**

Participating organizations must be year-round, not-for-profit entities, which include **schools**, local, municipal or county governments, libraries, churches, fire and police stations, residential summer camps, and national youth sports programs.

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

Source: PA Department of Education Newsroom, February 10, 2026.

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.

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:** 02/11/2026 - Approved by the Governor; 02/11/2026 - Act No. 2 of 2026.

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- **HB 1500:** *An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in preliminary provisions, providing for Cyber Charter School Funding and Policy Council and further providing for advertising and sponsorships; in pupils and attendance, further providing for exceptional children and education and training; in charter schools, further providing for definitions, for funding for cyber charter schools, for powers and duties of department and for assessment and evaluation, providing for fund balance limits, further providing for cyber charter school requirements and prohibitions,*

providing for cyber charter school fund balance accountability, further providing for establishment of cyber charter school, for cyber charter school application, for enrollment and notification, for enrollee wellness checks and for applicability of other provisions of this act and of other acts and regulations and providing for cyber charter school moratorium; and, in reimbursements by Commonwealth and between school districts, further providing for extraordinary special education program expenses.

- **Sponsor:** Rep. Mary Isaacson (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/09/2026 - Discussed during public hearing House Democratic Policy

- **HB 1596:** - An Act amending the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of 1971, in sales and use tax, further providing for exclusions from tax.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Ann Flood (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/12/2026 - Discussed during public hearing House Republican Policy

- **HB 2206:** - 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, providing for purchase of firearm detection technology.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Joe Hogan (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/09/2026 - Referred to House Education

- **HB 2209:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in miscellaneous provisions relating to institutions of higher education, providing for communism and socialism education.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Brian C. Rasel (R)
- **Action Taken:** 02/11/2026 - Referred to House Education

- **HB 2217:** - 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 recess and lunch periods.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Danielle Friel Otten (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/12/2026 - Referred to House Education

- **HB 2218:** - An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, providing for comprehensive school counseling services.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Mandy Steele (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/12/2026 - Introduced

[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

Partial government shutdown drags on amid immigration oversight battle

Lawmakers and the White House offered no signs of compromise Sunday in their battle over oversight of federal immigration officers that has led to a pause in funding for the Department of Homeland Security.



[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *PBS News*, February 15, 2026.

Here are 7 education priorities fresh on the mind of governors in 2026

From funding and early learning to AI safety and protection from immigration enforcement, the K12 prerogatives of state leaders in 2026 blend the old and new.

[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *District Administration*, February 11, 2026.

New Trump Admin. Guidance Says Teachers Can Pray With Students

President Donald Trump last fall [promised new legal guidance](#) from the U.S. Department of Education that would ensure [“total protection” for the right to pray in public schools](#).

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

Source: *Education Week*, February 10, 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 (NASSP)** 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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