

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

State Update

Due to the recent winter storm, the Appropriations hearings on the 2026-27 budget proposal scheduled for February 23, 2026, were canceled. See the article below for more.

The Senate will reconvene on Monday, March 16, and the House will reconvene on Monday, March 23.



Writing change: Schuylkill County rep's bill now law, requiring all students to learn cursive in Pa.

Second-grade students in Sugarloaf Twp. reviewed the steps for the cursive letter n. *Overcurve, slant, overcurve, slant, undercurve*, the students told state Rep. Dane Watro last week.

[Click here](#) for the full article.
Source: *PBS WVIA*, February 24, 2026.

Legislative budget hearings set to begin Tuesday after winter-related cancellations

Amid a winter storm warning for up to 12 inches of snow and winds gusting as high as 40 m.p.h. in Harrisburg, the first Senate Appropriations Committee hearings on the 2026-27 state budget were canceled. *New dates and times were not given for scheduled hearings regarding the Pennsylvania Department of Education budget plans*, which were to take place Monday at 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. in the North Office Building.

[Click here](#) for the full article.
Source: *Indiana Gazette*, February 22, 2026.

School Entity Duties Related to Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

[Act 47 of 2025](#) amended the Public School Code of 1949 by amending [Article XV-N](#) and adding Sections 1503-N through 1511-N, establishing statewide requirements related to Structured Literacy professional development, evidence-based reading curriculum materials, universal screening, and reading intervention for students in grades K-3.

The purpose of this communication is to provide guidance to school entities, including school districts, charter schools, cyber charter schools, regional charter schools, career and technical centers, and intermediate units, regarding implementation requirements and timelines.

Structured Literacy Professional Development

Section 1503-N requires each school entity to:

- Approve a professional development training program from the Professional Development Training Programs for Evidence-Based Reading Instruction list developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), in consultation with the Reading Leadership Council, by the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year.
- Ensure that each educator completes the approved training by the beginning of the 2028-2029 school year. Per Section 1501-N, an individual who is included within the definition of educator is responsible for providing or supervising reading instruction, intervention or coaching. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - elementary teacher
 - school reading specialist
 - reading interventionist
 - English as a second language teacher
 - special education teacher
 - literacy coach
 - principal
 - chief school administrator.
- Report, by July 31, 2027, and annually thereafter, the number of educators trained and the type of training in use through the Future Ready Comprehensive Planning Portal (FRCP).

Evidence Based Reading Curriculum Materials

School entities are required to:

- Complete the [mandatory survey](#) to report the K-3 reading curriculum materials used during the 2025-2026 school year. Submissions are due by **March 31, 2026**.
- Report, by July 31, 2027, and annually thereafter, the evidence-based reading instruction curriculum adopted by the school entity.
- Adopt an evidence-based reading curriculum for students in grades K-3 no later than the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year. An evidence-based reading curriculum material is a comprehensive program of literacy instruction that integrates Structured Literacy practices with High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Such curriculum materials must:
 - Align with Pennsylvania Academic Standards and the Science of Reading.
 - Include a logical scope and sequence for explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction.
 - Incorporate phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and content knowledge development.

Universal Reading Screening and Parent Notification

A universal reading screener is a brief assessment administered to all students in the early elementary grades to identify those at risk for reading difficulties and to guide further diagnostic assessment and intervention.

No later than the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year, school entities must:

- Screen all K-3 students three times per year, once at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, using a PDE-approved universal screener.
- Screen English learners, students with disabilities, and gifted students unless the assessment conflicts with their IEP or service plan.
- Identify students with reading deficiencies and follow these additional steps:

- The student remains identified as having a reading deficiency until the student meets or exceeds benchmark expectations using at least three data points.
- School entities must provide written or electronic notification to the parents of kindergarten students who exhibit a reading deficiency in the third screening at the end of the school year.
- School entities must provide written or electronic notification to parents of students in grades 1–3 who exhibit a reading deficiency during the school year following the identification of the deficiency including periodic updates three times per year regarding the student’s progress.

Reading Intervention Plans

Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, school entities must develop a reading intervention plan for each K-3 student identified as having a reading deficiency. Intervention plans should align with statutory requirements and integrate into existing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks.

Additional Requirements

By the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year, each school entity must:

- Designate an educator responsible for assisting each school with the implementation of evidence-based reading curriculum. Educator is defined as an individual who has completed approved professional development under section 1205.8 of the School Code and is responsible for providing or supervising reading instruction, intervention or coaching. This includes but is not limited to an elementary teacher, reading specialist, reading interventionist, English as a second language teacher, special education teacher, literacy coach, principal or chief school administrator.
- Report annually, beginning July 31, 2028, the number and percentage of K-3 students identified as having a potential reading deficiency at the beginning and end of the school year and the number of students excepted from the universal reading screening.

Implementation Timeline Overview

- **March 31, 2026**
 - Mandatory K-3 curriculum materials survey due for 2025-2026 curriculum materials
- **July 31, 2027, and annually thereafter**
 - Annual reporting of K-3 reading curriculum materials, number of educators trained, and type of trainings through the Future Ready Comprehensive Planning Portal (FRCPP)
- **By the beginning of the 2027-2028 School Year**
 - K-3 Evidence-based reading curriculum material use required
 - K-3 Universal reading screening begins
 - K-3 Reading Intervention plans required
 - K-3 Reading deficiency parental notifications required
 - School entity approved professional development training for educators begins
 - Identification of an educator responsible for assisting with curriculum material implementation
- **2028-2029 School Year**
 - Educators complete LEA's approved professional development by the beginning of the school year
 - Annual literacy reporting through FRCPP begins July 31, 2028

Additional Support

PDE, in consultation with the Reading Leadership Council and in partnership with the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and Intermediate Units, will continue to provide technical assistance and implementation support to school entities. *We encourage you to review the available guidance carefully and share it with the appropriate staff within your organization to support coordinated implementation efforts.*

Additional guidance related to **Act 47 of 2025** will be released in the near future, including a **Structured Literacy specific Frequently Asked Questions document**. If you have questions, please review [PDE’s Structured Literacy](#)

Source: Amy Lena, Deputy Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, PA Department of Education, February 23, 2026

BASIC BILL ACTIONS

- **HB 460:** - 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 and courses of study, providing for child abuse awareness and prevention.
- **Sponsor:** Rep. Mary Jo Daley (D)
- **Action Taken:** 02/13/2026 - Referred to Senate Education

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- **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

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- **SB 1188:** - An Act amending the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177, No.175), known as The Administrative Code of 1929, in powers and duties of the Department of Public Instruction and its departmental administrative boards and commissions, further providing for collective bargaining.
 - **Sponsor:** Sen. Lindsey Marie Williams (D)
 - **Action Taken:** 02/13/2026 - Referred to Senate Labor and Industry

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.)

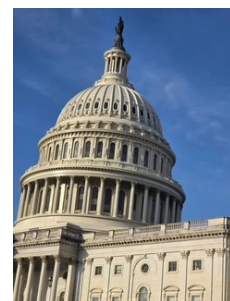
Federal Update

Live updates: DHS shutdown hits 10th day as Congress returns to DC

Lawmakers are making their way back to Capitol Hill, where they will grapple with **stalled talks** to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) ahead of Tuesday's State of the Union address.

[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *The Hill*, February 23, 2026.



COVID Relief Funds are Gone, But More States Commit to High-Impact Tutoring

In late 2024, Susanna Loeb, one of the nation's leading researchers on tutoring, had doubts about the future of a field she's worked hard to advance.

Over \$120 billion in federal [COVID relief funds](#) were expiring, leaving school leaders and tutoring providers uncertain whether programs would continue. The incoming administration was focused on slashing Department of Education spending, not issuing new grants.

[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *The 74*, February 23, 2026.

Education Department Will Send More of Its Programs to Other Agencies

The U.S. Department of Education on Monday announced it will begin offloading the management of key federal programs for school safety, community schools, educational TV programming, and family engagement as the Trump administration continues its bid to wind down the agency.

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

Source: *Education Week*, February 23, 2026.

Federal bill would provide universal free school lunch

Another attempt is being made at the federal level to establish a universal free school meals program. At the state level this week, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmore hopes to continue the state's universal free school meals program and Iowa becomes the latest state to introduce a bill banning certain additives in school meals.

[Click here](#) for full article.

Source: *FSD*, February 17, 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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The Pennsylvania Principals Association - 122 Valley Road - Enola, PA 17025
717-732-4999 - www.papprincipals.org

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