

# School Counselor UPDATES

Pennsylvania  
Department of Education

## January 2026

### CHANDRA PA SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to **Diana Chandra** on being named the **Pennsylvania School Counselor of the Year** by the **Pennsylvania School Counselor Association** during its annual conference. Chandra is a middle school counselor at **Camp Hill Middle School**.



In addition, **Representative Tarah Probst, 189<sup>th</sup> District**, was recognized as **Legislator of the Year**; **Mrs. Jenna Hopkins, Principal, Robinson Elementary School in the Fort LeBouef School District** received the **Administrator Appreciation Award**; **Dr. Todd Whitman, Shippensburg University**, was honored as **Counselor Educator of the Year**; and **Dr. Greg Bisignani, Independence Health System**, was recognized as **Advocate of the Year**. Congratulations to all!



PENNSYLVANIA  
SCHOOL  
COUNSELORS  
ASSOCIATION



Pennsylvania  
Department of Education

**Skills That Matter: Employability and the New CEW Standards**

Two sessions are being offered through PaTTAN.  
Act 48 hours are available.

February 5 3:00-4:15 PM; [Registration is required](#)  
February 6 10-11:15 AM; [Registration is required](#)



**How PVAAS Data Supports Decisions in MTSS Tier 2 and Tier 3 Programming**

Live Broadcast: 1/13/26 | Time: 9:00 am | [Registration Required](#)

**Using PVAAS Projections with Purpose: Guiding Course Recommendations and Supports**

Live Broadcast: 1/28/26 | Time: 9:00 am | [Registration Required](#)



SAVE THE DATE



2026  
January 14, 2026  
May 6, 2026



SAVE THE DATE  
MARCH 13, 2026  
PSCA VIRTUAL SPRING CONFERENCE  
STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFO

CONFERENCES

Spring Virtual Conference  
March 13, 2026

SYMPOSIUMS

PDE/PSCA (VIRTUAL):  
February 16, 2026

PDE/PSCA (VIRTUAL):  
April 17, 2026



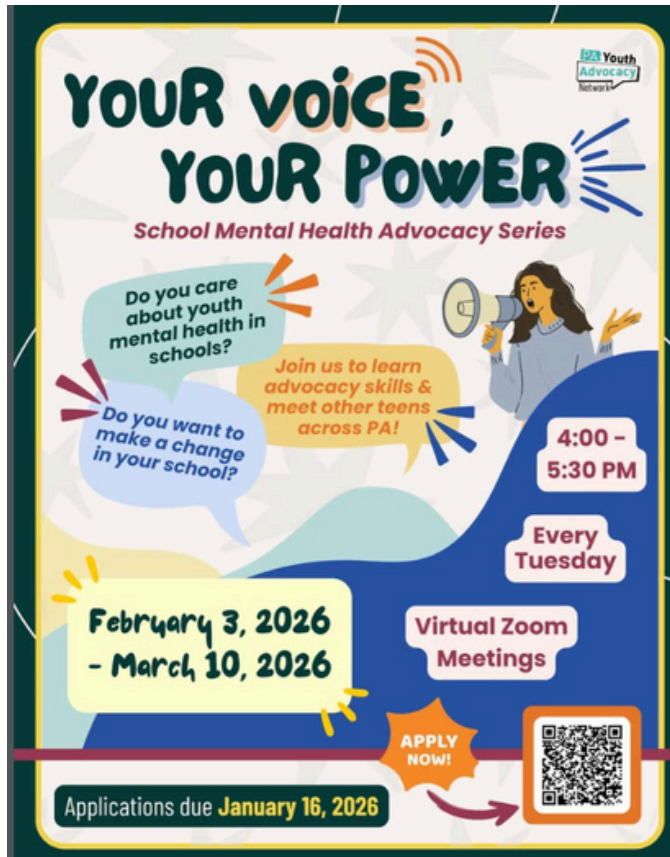
[info@paschoolcounselor.org](mailto:info@paschoolcounselor.org)



833-770-1546



<https://www.paschoolcounselor.org/>



The [PA Youth Advocacy Network](#) is hosting a six-week, virtual series for high school students across Pennsylvania to learn advocacy skills and work in teams to advance a youth-led policy agenda. This year, the series will close with a virtual round table with changemakers, where participants will put their learning into practice sharing advocacy recommendation on real Pennsylvania priorities and programs.

- The series will take place over 6 weeks, every Tuesday 4-5:30 PM (February 3rd - March 10th).
- No previous advocacy experience is required
- \$150 stipend available for each participant who completes the program and attends all sessions
- Learn more by reading about [last year's session](#).

Reach out to [payouthadvocacy@gmail.com](mailto:payouthadvocacy@gmail.com) with any questions or concerns.

**EdSource** has released a podcast, “**How a small rural school district is setting an example for school counseling statewide.**” Read more about the work of this award winning school counselor in “**Leveraging LCFF Funding to Implement Comprehensive School Counseling: A Case Study of Livingston Union School District**” published by the **UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools**.

# ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT



Each year, the **Billy Michal Student Leadership Award** is presented annually to one student from each state and the District of Columbia who embodies the American spirit in their communities.

The 51 selected student leadership award winners will travel to New Orleans June 4-7, 2026, along with a parent or chaperone, all expenses paid, to attend the **2026 American Spirit Awards**, where they will represent their state at the event. Students will receive behind-the-scenes access to the Museum, participate in leadership activities with their cohort, and attend an awards ceremony to honor their accomplishments.

Nomination criteria:

- Nominees must be in grades 8–12.
- Only individual students can be nominated, not groups.
- Students cannot be nominated by a family member.
- Students must be in public, private, parochial, or home school in the United States.
- Nominations must be submitted through the [Billy Michal Student Leadership Award webpage](#) by **January 23, 2026**.

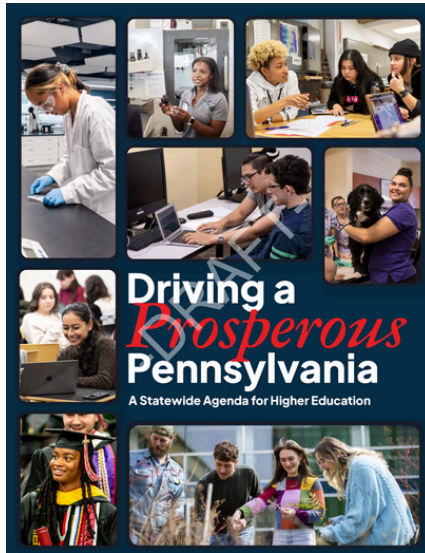
To learn more about the awards and to nominate a student, please visit the [National WWII Museum webpage](#).





# COLLEGE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**Pennsylvania's State Board of Higher Education (SBHE)** is charged with adopting a strategic plan that will provide direction and coordination to support Pennsylvania colleges and universities to fully meet the needs of the **Commonwealth**. **SBHE** has now released the draft strategic plan, entitled **Driving a Prosperous Pennsylvania: A Statewide Agenda for Higher Education**. The [draft plan is available for review; public comment will be accepted](#) until January 20, 2026, 5:00 p.m. EST.



**PHEAA** is hosting several free webinars to assist college-bound students and their families in correctly completing and submitting the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®)**.

**FAFSA Overview**—Line by Line PHEAA Access Partners will present an overview of the 2026-27 FAFSA process to guide students and families through a step-by-step process of filing the FAFSA and PA State Grant applications. Register for these webinars at [pheaa.org/virtual](https://pheaa.org/virtual).

- Wednesday, January 14 6:00–7:00 PM (ET)
- Wednesday, March 11 6:00–7:00 PM (ET)

**FAFSA Completion Workshop**-- PHEAA Access Partners will provide one-on-one support with completing the 2026-27 FAFSA. Sessions are approximately 30 minutes long. Registration is required for these events as space is limited.

- Thursday, January 22 5:00-7:00 PM (ET) [Register for this session.](#)
- Tuesday, April 21 5:00-7:00 PM (ET) [Register for this session.](#)



**Remake Learning Days** is gearing up for another great year! Consider how your school can get involved, secure fun CEW artifacts and engage your entire community in hands-on learning!

**Remake Learning Days (RLD)** is an innovative statewide learning festival held each year from May 1-23, 2026, that provides hands-on learning experiences for families and youth, fostering a sense of preparedness and a means of introducing learning resources within communities. Remake Learning Days events are open to the public, and families, schools, and after school organizations are encouraged to share the RLD events to their networks.



As K-12 students participate in RLD events that are part of the **Career Ready PA Backpack Challenge** (look for the backpack logo!), the students can earn badges for their career readiness portfolio *after they complete PDE's digital artifact survey*. If a school has at least 100 students who earn badges, then they will receive a banner from PDE for their efforts in meeting the **Backpack Challenge!** [Be sure to register!](#)

**Career Ready PA** will award ten (10) \$1000 awards to schools who host a festival event (one in each region). Host participants will be required to complete a participation plan, ensuring the event reaches its goal of addressing the current and newly revised **Career Education and Work Standards** by providing a hands-on learning event during the Remake Learning Days festival between May 1-23, 2026. The host/s should partner with the Career Ready PA liaison and one or more community organization/s (e.g., a business, a state agency, a community non-profit, museum, library). [Applications are due by January 23, 2026.](#)

*Strength in numbers.*

## PVAAS

Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System

PVAAS provides Pennsylvania educators a free, web-based tool to determine—grade by grade, subject by subject—whether all students have opportunities for learning. Explore interactive reports that **look back** at student achievement and growth, and **look forward** with projections for future assessments.

- ✓ **Peer-reviewed**, documented methodology
- ✓ **Not another test** – uses existing student data and state assessments
- ✓ **Longitudinal data** for LEA/district, school, student groups, teacher and student levels

**Data You Can Trust**

A time-tested, statistically robust modeling approach for deep insights into student growth

**Linking Student Data**

Statewide data that captures a student's "data story," across time and across schools and districts

**Easy-to-Read Reports**

Data visualizations that reveal patterns and trends across grades, subjects, and student groups

**Interactive Tools**

Customizable views to surface the specific data needed to make local decisions

**Get started now at [pvaas.sas.com](https://pvaas.sas.com)**

Brought to you by **Pennsylvania Department of Education** through **sas**

Last Updated June 2024.

If you are wondering how to incorporate data into your school counseling program, PVAAS has you covered. This is a game-changing resource that can assist in course advising, graduation pathways, targeted interventions, and more. [Review this resource to learn more about benefits for school counselors.](#)

### Professional Learning

A range of PVAAS statewide training opportunities are provided each school year to Pennsylvania's educators. These are offered through a variety of methods, including webinars, virtual 1:1 sessions, in-person conference sessions, e-Learning, and videos.

- To schedule a virtual 1:1 sessions, click on the [PVAAS Virtual Data Consultation link](#).
- For more information, use visit the [Professional Learning webpage](#) or contact the PVAAS Statewide Team phone: 717-606-1911 or email: [pdepvaas@ui13.org](mailto:pdepvaas@ui13.org).

### Support and Assistance

For answers to questions regarding statewide support or professional learning, please contact the PVAAS Statewide Team via phone: 717-606-1911 or email: [pdepvaas@ui13.org](mailto:pdepvaas@ui13.org).

***The publication's content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the PDE, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the PDE.***

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