

School Counselor UPDATES

Pennsylvania
Department of Education

February 2026

THANK YOU SCHOOL COUNSELORS!

School Counselors across the Commonwealth amplify student success by *supporting each and every student to achieve their potential, provide safe spaces, identify and coordinate resources, and support students to a variety of postsecondary options after high school.* Your hard work and diligence does not go unnoticed. **Thank you!**



2026 State School Counselors of the Year



Congratulations to **Adam Oldham**, High School Counselor at **Big Spring High School**, who represented Pennsylvania school counselors at the recent 2026 School Counselor of the Year festivities by the **American School Counselor Association.**



As of December 2025, in Pennsylvania

Of 684 qualifying schools, 22% earned a place on the 2025 AP School Honor Roll.¹

AP SCHOOL HONOR ROLL AWARD	PERCENT OF QUALIFYING PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS	PERCENT OF ALL QUALIFYING SCHOOLS: US AND CANADA
 Platinum	3%	8%
 Gold	4%	7%
 Silver	7%	11%
 Bronze	8%	10%

Congratulations to the **150 Pennsylvania high schools** named to the 2025 AP School Honor Roll – an achievement that recognizes schools whose AP programs are delivering strong results for students while broadening access to advanced coursework.

This recognition reflects a commitment to building a strong college-going culture, expanding opportunities for students to earn college credit, and strengthening readiness. [Read the list of high schools.](#)

Ding...ding...ding...ding. It is New Year's Eve, but the sounds are not from revelers. Rather, before heading out for the night, I have once again made the rookie (despite over two decades as a school counselor) mistake of checking my email. The messages ring through in quick succession from students and parents, as my inbox comes alive with last-minute college application panic. The questions are usually surface-level and ones that I have answered repeatedly, often to the same inquirer. Regardless of how many times I have warned against waiting until the final hours for submission, these are teenagers (and anxious parents). **Forbes** has published [Amplifying Student Success: Systemic Issues In High School Counseling.](#)



Keystone Scholars jumpstarts educational savings by providing a \$100 scholarship for every child born to a PA family in 2019 and later for future education. The scholarship can be used between the ages of 18-29 for post-high school technical, collegiate, apprenticeship, and credentialing educational expenses.

Keystone Scholars has three primary goals:

1. Help parents maintain high expectations for their child’s future education.

2. Cultivate a future-focused identity in children.

Research shows that children with college savings in their name are three times more likely to pursue postsecondary education and four times more likely to graduate.

3. Prompt parents to start saving as early as possible to give funds the longest time to grow.

Criteria for Placement into: Advanced Grade 6 Math

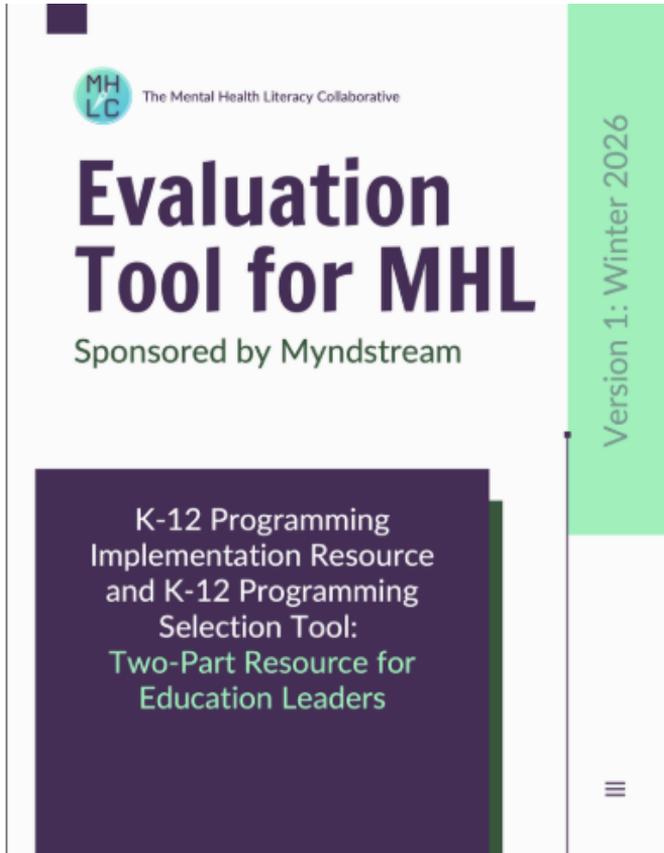
Data Source	Criteria (Target) for Each Data Source
Benchmark assessment score	Cut score to correspond to 5th Advanced
PVAAS Projection to Grade 5 Math Advanced	Probability greater than 70%
PVAAS Projection to Grade 6 Math Advanced	Probability greater than 70%
PSSA Math score – Grades 3 & 4	Advanced
PSSA ELA score – Grade 4	Proficient
Grade 5 final exam	85% or higher
Teacher Recommendation	Affirmative / Yes

Decisions about students’ course placements are critical to their successful academic path. A multi-step decision-making process for individual student course placements ensures that there is uniformity, consistency, transparency, and specificity to how students are placed in certain courses.

To that end, **PVAAS** offers a resource, [PVAAS Projections in Action: Optimizing Course Placement Decisions](#).

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Senators stressed the need for federal solutions to address a mental health crisis tied to social media and technology use among children and teens during a recent hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. [K-12 Dive](#) shares the [updates](#).



The Mental Health Literacy Collaborative has released a [two-part resource](#), which includes the K-12 Programming Implementation Resource and the K-12 Programming Selection Tool. The Resource offers foundational information about mental health literacy (MHL); support for implementation of K-12 MHL programming, guidance about using the K-12 Programming Selection Tool, Implementation Stages for MHL Education, project references, and additional resources.

The **Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP)** has launched a [Family Learning Series](#) for family members, loved ones, and friends supporting someone with a substance use disorder. This free video series can be shared by providers as a starting point for families to understand treatment and recovery, set healthy boundaries, support children when a parent has a substance use disorder, care for their mental and emotional health, and connect to prevention, treatment, and recovery supports in Pennsylvania.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A [recent study by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research](#) found two key takeaways:

- Attendance is still important for students' learning. Both grades and standardized test scores go up with higher attendance, and down with lower attendance.
- School climate and culture is connected to attendance—even more so today than pre-pandemic—which shows that **schools can and do influence students' attendance.**

K-12 Dive offers a brief on this topic.

American teenagers, on average, are spending less time on homework than they did a generation ago—and the decline has steepened since the pandemic. The homework slide, happening since at least the early '90s, accelerated between 2021 and 2023, according to [Monitoring the Future](#), an ongoing national research project that tracks behaviors of teens and others. [Education Week](#) shares the story.



[Schoolsafety.gov](#) has released an issues brief, [Guidance and Resources to Prevent Bullying and Support Student Mental Health.](#)



Each year, **The Jed Foundation (JED)** honors one high school student and one college student for doing outstanding work to create communities of care in their schools. **Student Voice of Mental Health Award** recipients are advocates raising mental health awareness by leading thoughtful, impactful initiatives; increasing connection and belonging; encouraging their peers to reach out for help; and building support systems for youth mental health and suicide prevention in their school or campus communities. Please share with your students who are 16 or older. [The deadline to apply is February 20 at 11:59 p.m. ET.](#)



The Jed Foundation

The World Economic Forum has published [The Future of Jobs Report](#). As noted in the preface, “Transformational breakthroughs, particularly in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), are reshaping industries and tasks across all sectors. These technological advances, however, are converging with a broader array of challenges, including economic volatility, geoeconomic realignments, environmental challenges and evolving societal expectations. In response, this fifth edition of the Future of Jobs Report expands its focus, offering a comprehensive analysis of the interconnected trends shaping the global labour market.”

PHEAA and **PDE** have partnered to offer a [financial aid resource](#) that outlines programs, eligibility, and required steps to complete.

The Higher Ed Immigration Portal has [created a College Corner](#), identified as a space for K-12 college counselors assisting undocumented students with the goal of supporting access to college pathways.

CareerReadyHQ
BY BRITBBOUND

**DISCOVER.
LEARN.
LEAD.**

For career-connected learning professionals: access resources, identify work-based learning providers, and explore career readiness policies nationwide.



CareerReadyHQ is provided by **Britebound** (previously **American Student Assistance**) provides a variety of linkages, networks, and information related to career readiness across the country:

- **Network:** A unified directory of organizations and employers offering work-based learning opportunities—such as internships, job shadows, and apprenticeships— to help decision-makers find, compare, and connect with providers.
- **Library:** A curated, searchable, and filterable database of high-quality resources to inform and support educators, practitioners, and decision-makers working to advance career readiness for young people.
- **Compass:** An interactive map highlighting state career readiness policies, active nonprofits in the space, and regional initiatives shaping the career readiness landscape across the U.S.

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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