



April Showers Bring...New PDE News

This April at PDE has been a whirlwind of activity! This spring, we launched our [anti-stigma campaign to support college students' basic needs](#), asking the question, 'You Good?' and working with colleges and universities throughout Pennsylvania to better connect students with valuable resources, both on and off campus.

This month, the Governor's Office, alongside PDE, unveiled plans to announce [changes to student assessments](#) that will reduce reliance on standardized testing and prioritizing "less testing, more teaching" in public schools around Pennsylvania.

April also saw the announcement of the [2025 Teacher of the Year Finalists](#) and released new information regarding a [\\$1.5 million grant funding opportunity](#) to help schools create learning opportunities that will bolster the Commonwealth's next generation of special educators.

As we look towards the excitement of May and the end of the school year, our commitment to providing equitable educational opportunities for all learners in Pennsylvania remains unwavering. Together, we continue to build a brighter future for our students and our Commonwealth.



Updates to the Basic Education Circular (BEC)

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PDE has recently reviewed and revised its Basic Education Circular (BEC) related to access to secondary students by Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) and **military recruiters**. Salient points contained in the BEC that outline the requirements for all public secondary local education agencies (LEA) are summarized below:

Pursuant to section 8528 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), each LEA receiving federal funding must:

- Comply with a request by a military recruiter or an IHE for access to the name, address, and telephone number of each secondary school student served by the LEA, unless the parent of such student (or the student if they have attained 18 years of age) has submitted a written request to the LEA to opt out of the disclosure of such information;
- Notify parents of the students served by the LEA, or the student (if they have attained 18 years of age), of the opportunity to submit a written request to opt out of the disclosure of the student's name, address, and telephone number, unless prior written consent has been provided;
- Compile the list of student names with directory information by the first day of the academic year in which the senior students will graduate; and
- Provide military recruiters the same access to secondary school students as is provided generally to IHEs or to prospective employers of those students.

To provide parity with the access generally given to IHEs and to allow for seniors to maximize their post-graduation opportunities, LEAs are encouraged to release student directory information to military recruiters no later than November annually. Chief School Administrators are encouraged to review and update local procedures for parental notification for the coming school year, which are often contained in the student handbook.

Additionally, Chief School Administrators should consider consulting with their solicitor to determine their school entity's policy and procedure compliance with the requirements as outlined above and as contained in the Basic Education Circular.

Additional information regarding access to secondary students can be found in the [Access to Secondary Students Basic Education Circular \(BEC\)](#).



Update on Access to PDE Website

PDE has been receiving reports from various districts in the Commonwealth who are receiving Error 15 messages when trying to access education.pa.gov.

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The Commonwealth most likely has detected suspected malicious activity from a device on your network and has blocked traffic from this network for safety and security reasons. If this block was done in error, please send an email to kbazzo@pa.gov with a screenshot of the error message which includes your school network public IP address used to access the Commonwealth's website. We can whitelist the IP temporarily. If after the expiration of the whitelist, and malicious activity is detected from your network again, please send a follow up email and we will repeat the whitelist process.



Registration Now Available for Teacher Orientation on Flight 93 National Day of Learning

The Friends of Flight 93 National Memorial has invited teachers to participate in the 2024 National Day of Learning event, "Teach to Remember". This orientation, scheduled for Thursday, May 2, 2024 at 3:00pm, aims to equip teachers with resources and insights to elevate students' understanding of the events that took place on September 11, 2001. For more information and registration, please visit the [Teacher Orientation webpage](#).

State Chiefs Meet with Administration Officials at the White House



The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Bureau of Indian Education, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues

The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. In late March, Julie Kane, PDE's Policy Director, who represented PA's State School Chief, met with President Biden's Domestic Policy Council Director Neera Tanden and US Department of Education Deputy Secretary Cindy Martin regarding the shared efforts states are doing to strengthen student achievement and ensuring that children are equipped to compete in the 21st century. To learn more about this meeting, visit the official readout of the [White House Meeting with Council of Chief State School Officers webpage](#).

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PA Elementary School Named as a 2024 RAMP School

Robert D. Wilson Elementary in Waymart, PA was recently recognized as a [Recognized ASCA Model Program \(RAMP\) designation](#). The RAMP designation recognizes schools committed to delivering a comprehensive, data-informed school counseling program and an exemplary educational environment. The RAMP designation demonstrates to administrators, school boards, families and the community at large that the schools are committed to supporting the mission of the school and district. Congratulations to R.D. Wilson Elementary and the Western Wayne School District on this outstanding achievement!



Information on the Keystone Scholars Program

Keystone Scholars jumpstarts educational savings by providing a **\$100 automatic, at-birth investment for every child born to a PA family on or after January 1, 2019**. Research shows that children with college savings in their name – even if that amount is modest – are three times more likely to pursue postsecondary education and four times more likely to graduate.

Keystone Scholars sets the expectation at birth for every child in Pennsylvania to pursue some form of post-high school education, including community college, technical training, and apprenticeships, and it encourages families to start saving on their own early in the child's life.

Parents can then claim and register their account by entering a few pieces of information. Once registered, families may open their own companion PA 529 account and link their Keystone Scholars account to contribute to their savings journey.

How you can help:

- Integrate Keystone Scholars registration into your school registration process. Parents come equipped with their child's birth certificate at registration. By providing an external link to the Keystone Scholars website, parents can claim their account in minutes;

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- Encourage families to register by providing Keystone Scholars information, brochures or bookmarks.
- Assist families in claiming and registering their child’s account at pa529.com/keystone. They only need three pieces of information:
 - Child’s date of birth.
 - State File Number from child’s PA birth certificate.
 - Zip code used to file for child’s birth certificate.

We are happy to provide any outreach material you need and provide training so you can assist families in registering their account.

To learn more, visit pa529.com/keystone or contact Karen McDermott, Manager, Children’s Savings Accounts, at kmcdermott@patreasury.gov.



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