



## Navigating February's Educational Outlook

As the shortest month unfolds before us, we take a moment to reflect on pivotal initiatives shaping the landscape of PDE this month. Notably, Governor Josh Shapiro has once again presented a groundbreaking budget proposal, marking the highest historic investment in our public schools. His plan also includes a transformative [Blueprint for Higher Education](#), designed to broaden access to exceptional public postsecondary schools for more Pennsylvanians.

In February, we were honored to host one of our inaugural events in the newly reopened Main Reading Room of the State Library of Pennsylvania. We orchestrated a [FAFSA Completion](#) workshop in partnership with PHEAA, extending valuable support to students and families across the Commonwealth. This endeavor aimed to empower them in navigating the intricacies of postsecondary Financial Aid, fostering opportunities for their educational journeys.

As we continue into a warmer spring season, we encourage you to [explore further](#) into our ongoing initiatives, encompassing grant funding opportunities, student-centric contests, and transformative events that are shaping the current landscape of education.



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# From the Secretary's Desk

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to connect with you all here once again! The newsletter has been a great source for sharing information, initiatives, and success stories. I'm excited to continue sharing these resources throughout the months ahead. The past year, provided us with challenges and successes – ways to rethink education in Pennsylvania, and energy to continue paving a path to success for our 1.7 million K-12 learners across the Commonwealth. This year is shaping up to be an invigorating one with a historic budget proposal, exciting events, and plenty of wins to come in the near future.

Building on last year's groundbreaking investments in public K-12 education, Governor Josh Shapiro is again proposing the highest historic investment in our public schools – more than \$1 billion to be invested equitably across counties and zip codes. The 2024-25 budget proposal also represents a commitment to rethink Pennsylvania's higher education system after decades of disinvestment that has made postsecondary education financially unattainable. This year is shaping up to be an exciting one, and I can't wait to put this fresh vision to action and continue fighting for Pennsylvania's learners – no matter their zip code or what corner of the Commonwealth they come from.



## Announcing: New School Infrastructure Upgrades & Environmental Repairs Funding

Introducing two new grant opportunities!

Under the [Public School Environmental Repairs Grant Program](#), \$75 million in grant funding is available to schools to make environmental repairs and improvements. Schools may apply for funding to abate or remediate environmental hazards including, but not limited to, lead in water sources, asbestos, and mold inside school buildings.

Eligible entities include school district, area career and technical centers (CTCs), and charter schools. Entities may apply for funding for eligible expenses incurred on or after July 1, 2023. Schools may apply using the PDE's School Construction and Maintenance Management (SCMM) system. For more information, visit [MDEP's PDE website](#) or contact [MDEP](#).

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A complementary funding opportunity for schools—the Public School Facility Improvement Grant Program—administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) under the direction of the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) will provide \$100 million for grants to school districts and area career and technical schools for eligible facility improvement projects.

DCED will accept applications for the program from **March 1 through May 31, 2024**. Eligible improvement projects include but are not limited to: roof repairs and roof replacement; installation of HVAC equipment; installation of boilers; safety projects including lead and asbestos abatement; accessibility projects; and window repairs/replacement.

Grants of up to \$5 million will be available to eligible projects. The full list of program guidelines and eligible improvement projects are available on [DCED's program listing website](#).



## Last Call for the Farm in the Classroom Competition

Submissions for the Farm in the Classroom Competition are due **Friday, March 8, 2024 by 5:00pm!** This competition, designed for middle school and high school students in Pennsylvania schools, invites teams to design, build, and test a hydroponic or aquaponic system. Those interested in learning more are invited to fill out an [Information Interest Form](#) or to view the [Farm in the Classroom Competition flyer](#).

If you have any questions, please reach out to Mr. Tommy Kuhns at [kuhnsaquaponics@gmail.com](mailto:kuhnsaquaponics@gmail.com).



## Pennsylvania Human Relations Commissions Trainings Are Now Available!

Are you looking for an informed presenter to speak to your community or organization on

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events are tailored to the specific needs of the organization and community, can be workshop or seminar style, and can count towards CEUs (for specific trainings).

PHC trainers are available to present on a variety of topics, including but not limited to:

**Civil Rights & Filing a Complaint**  
Civil Rights Law and PHRC Jurisdiction  
Disability & Reasonable Accommodation  
PHRC Overview & How to File a Complaint

**Preventing Discrimination in the Workplace and Schools**  
Bullying and Harassment Prevention  
Conflict Resolution  
Cross-cultural Communication  
Sexual Discrimination in the Workplace  
Sexual Harassment Prevention

**Bias, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**  
Bias and Hate Crimes  
Cultural Awareness and Humility  
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)  
Implicit Bias for Law Enforcement  
Intersectionality of Discrimination and Trauma  
Unconscious Bias

**and more!**

To learn more about how to schedule or collaborate on a presentation, contact [phrc@pa.gov](mailto:phrc@pa.gov) or fill out an [online PA Human Relations Commissions training request](#) at [phrc.pa.gov](http://phrc.pa.gov).



## **Student Art Contest to Raise Awareness about Tick-Borne Diseases**

All first- through sixth-grade students in Pennsylvania are invited to enter the 2024 Lyme Art Contest by creating a video or poster focusing on the theme: “Protect. Check. Remove.”

The contest is designed to help students learn how to prevent Lyme disease by educating them about ticks, including where they live, how to prevent bites, and how to remove ticks

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The **deadline for entries is 5:00pm on March 15**. [Tick-borne disease student art contest information](#) is on the [Department of Health's website](#).

For more information on preventing Lyme disease, visit the [Department of Health's website on Tickborne Diseases](#) or follow the Department of Health on [Facebook](#) and [X](#).

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