

PA EdVentures



January 2025: Governor's School Breakfast Challenge, National RISE Award Winner, and Upcoming FAFSA Completion Workshops!

As we step into 2025, we are excited to highlight the second annual [Governor's School Breakfast Challenge](#), which aims to increase breakfast participation while incorporating sustainable changes that include more nutritious and local foods.

In January, PDE also announced several important grant funding opportunities, including [\\$1.6 million in Parent Pathways grants](#), which will help more PA parents meet their higher education goals and [\\$14 million in grant funding for expanded dual credit programming](#) for public institutions of higher education to expand access to dual credit programs at high schools serving significant populations of underserved students. In addition, more than [\\$4.5 million has recently been awarded to 58 career and technical centers](#) (CTCs) and school districts to help PA learners chart their own course through career and technical education programs.



From the Acting Secretary's Desk

As we are all buckling down and diligently getting back to work and school after the holiday season, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work all of our students, teachers, administrators, stakeholders, and others put in each and every day. I also want to encourage you to continue to work hard during the remainder of the school year, and during 2025 as a whole.

I am honored to work alongside all of you during my time as Interim Acting Secretary of PDE. I know 2025 will be another year of milestones and historic efforts, and I can't wait to follow along and see what's accomplished this year. As always, PDE is here to assist and happy to continue communicating with all of you. We can't wait to see all the great things our learners and school communities accomplish this year!



Artwork Created by Shippensburg Area High School Students Installed at PA Turnpike Service Plaza

In January, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission unveiled a new mural at the Blue Mountain Service Plaza, created by Shippensburg Area High School art students. This artwork marks the 17th piece created in conjunction with Art Sparks, a PCA and PA Turnpike partnership that brings student-created, locally relevant artwork to service plazas across the PA Turnpike system. Art Sparks works to provide a unique opportunity to showcase PA communities through the eyes of students who call them home.

For additional information and to view the artwork, please view this [PAcast](#).

Free FAFSA Completion Workshops in February Now Live

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has announced several in-person and online FAFSA Completion workshops to students looking for additional support in completing the 2025-2026 FAFSA.

- Robert Morris University will host an event on **February 4** from **4:30-6:30pm** at the UPMC Events Center at 6001 University Blvd, Moon Twp, PA 15180. 45-minute appointments will be available beginning at 4:30pm. More information can be found on the [Register for a FAFSA Workshop Registration form](#).
- The JCC of Greater Pittsburgh is offering a FAFSA Help and Completion night on **February 10** from **6:00-7:30pm** at the Kaufmann Building, Room 202. Light refreshments will be provided and assistance with completing the FAFSA will be provided by a PHEAA professional. More information can be found on the [FAFSA Night Registration Form](#).
- Virtual one-on-one assistance will be provided during PHEAA's FAFSA Completion Workshop on **February 19** from **5:00-7:00pm**. 30-minute sessions will be available beginning at 5:00pm. Space is limited and registration is required. For additional information and to register, please visit the [FAFSA February 19 Workshop Registration webpage](#).



Federal Government Recognizes Six STEM Teachers in Presidential Awards for Excellence

This month, the Biden Administration recognized six Pennsylvania teachers as recipients of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) and the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM). These awards honor the vital role that America's teachers and mentors play in shaping the next generation of technical leaders, including scientists, engineers, explorers, and innovators.

The teachers who were recognized include Melissa Constantino-Poruben (Avonworth School District), Renae Castelluci (West Allegheny School District), Lori Sidelinger (Chestnut Ridge School District), John Smith III (Philadelphia School District), Jeremy Tomaszewski (Haverford Township School District), and Dylan Fedell (Palisades School District). Congratulations to all!



Butler County School Police Officer Recognized with National RISE Award

Officer James Green was recently recognized with the national Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award. The RISE Award celebrates excellence among school support employees who offer essential services to PreK-12 school communities and play a vital role in providing for the welfare, safety, and success of students.

At Broad Street Elementary School, part of the Butler Area School District, Officer Green's job is to keep students and staff safe, but he goes above and beyond, making it a point to learn every student's name and make sure they feel seen and heard. Officer Green also maintains a "living yearbook" in the hallways, featuring photos from school events, and each year he decorates the hallways for the holidays with elaborate displays that have been featured in local news.

Officer Green also prioritizes students' well-beings and finds ways to meet their needs. He's given students haircuts, helped a blind student learn to play catch, and has fixed bikes that students need to travel to and from school. His role in the school exemplifies the qualities of RISE awardees and we at PDE are proud of the work he continues to do for his school.

To view the video from former United States Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona announcing Officer Green's award, please visit the [United States Department of Education Twitter/X webpage](#).

Digital Connectivity Technology Program Application Webinar

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) is opening up a second round for applications to the Capital Projects Fund: Digital Connectivity Technology Program (DCTP). The DCTP aims to increase access to technology devices where affordability has been identified as a barrier to broadband adoption and use. The PBDA will be distributing \$20 million in devices through a competitive grant process to public-facing community anchor institutions and units of local government.

Public-facing institutions include but are not limited to libraries, schools, municipalities, workforce training organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and other community anchor institutions located in areas where affordability has been identified as a barrier to broadband adoption and use.

For more information, consider joining the [CPF - Digital Connectivity Technology Program Round 2 Webinar on Wednesday, February 12, 2025](#) to learn about the program, including eligibility, how to apply, and more. For additional details, please visit the [Digital Connectivity Technology Program website](#) or contact pbda_capitalprojectsfund@pa.gov.



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