

PA EdVentures



October 2024: Information from the US Department of Education, New Grant Opportunities, and PA's Farm City Day!

As we move further into the school year, we're excited to share important updates and opportunities for educators and school leaders. This month, we have made multiple funding opportunities available for education stakeholders, including [\\$1.5 Million for colleges, universities, and other postsecondary schools to help combat sexual assault on campus](#) and over [\\$5 million for schools to increase STEM and computer science programming](#).

We also want to remind school administrators, faculty, and staff about a few key announcements. First, we are encouraging Pennsylvanians to make [nominations for the 2026 PA Teacher of the Year](#) now through December 16. Earlier this month, we launched [PA Firefly](#), a new voluntary and free tool to help schools track student achievement and mastery of materials taught in classrooms.

A Letter from the U.S. Secretary of Education and Director of the the CDC

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for your continued dedication to keeping students and staff safe and schools open for in-person learning. Infection rates from COVID-19, influenza, and other respiratory viruses are typically higher during the fall and winter months. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 – and to support strong school attendance so that students can safely learn in person – the U.S. Department of Education (ED), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is pleased to offer free, rapid, at-home COVID-19 tests to interested local educational agencies (LEAs).

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LEAs, including public school districts and public charter school districts, may request over-the-counter rapid antigen COVID-19 self-tests **free of charge** for their students, families, staff, and school communities. These self-tests are easy to use and can play an important role in containing the spread of the virus in schools and communities. We encourage LEAs to make use of this free COVID-19 test offering, which schools may use, for example, to stock school nurses' offices and main offices with tests; to send test kits home with students or parents; or to distribute within their communities to put these valuable safeguards in the hands of students, parents, and staff who need them.

Everyone can take steps to prevent illness from spreading and keep up consistent, regular school attendance. As respiratory virus season approaches, we remind all school and district leaders to review the latest information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses in schools, including recommendations on testing, with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website, [Preventing Spread of Infections in K-12 Schools](#). The guidance includes everyday actions that schools can take to prevent and control the spread of respiratory and stomach viruses, such as influenza and norovirus, and bacterial illness, such as strep throat.

Districts and schools are encouraged to share resources with parents on how to keep kids healthy and in school so that they benefit from in-person instruction and supportive relationships. The [CDC](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [Attendance Works](#) and the [National Association of School Nurses](#), and other organizations offer resources to help parents navigate whether to send kids to school and how to support consistent school attendance while also preventing the spread of illness. As always, districts should regularly inform parents about their health and attendance policies, and parents should speak to their pediatricians with questions about their child's health.

Additionally, the CDC recommends everyone ages 6 months and older receive updated [2024-2025 COVID-19 and flu vaccines](#). Vaccines are the best defense against viruses that can cause serious illness and are updated to protect against the viruses in communities this season. Families can go to [Vaccines.gov](#), review the CDC's webpage on [Immunizations for Respiratory Viruses Prevention](#), or talk with their child's doctor to get started.

Thank you again for all you do to provide safe and healthy learning environments for students. Our agencies remain committed to partnering with school leaders to support everyday school attendance and keep school communities healthy.

Sincerely,

Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.
U.S. Secretary of Education

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention

Additional Information Regarding Free COVID-19 Tests for LEAs

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Survey Participants Needed

Office of Gun Violence Prevention Requests Survey Participants

A cornerstone of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's (PCCD) re-established [Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#) is community outreach and collaboration. For that reason, PCCD is seeking input from community stakeholders to better understand the impact of gun violence in across Pennsylvania communities. [Please take a few minutes to fill out our survey.](#) This survey asks for your ideas about policies, programs, and how funding should be used to help reduce gun violence in Pennsylvania.

This input will be instrumental in shaping the work of the Office as its work to develop a comprehensive gun violence reduction strategy for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gets underway. Your feedback will also help inform planning efforts around how Pennsylvania can leverage federal Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) funding administered by PCCD – a funding stream that addresses the intersections of gun violence with behavioral health crises and other issues.

We appreciate your feedback in helping create a safer Commonwealth for all Pennsylvanians.



Registration Now Open for 2024 SAS Institute

Mark your calendars for December 8-11, 2024! Registration is now open for SAS Institute 2024, Purposeful Leadership: Support. Empower. Partner.

This year's SAS Institute features keynote speakers, including:

Chase Mielke, nationally recognized author, speaker, and expert on applying research-based, teacher-tested practices to improve educator well-being

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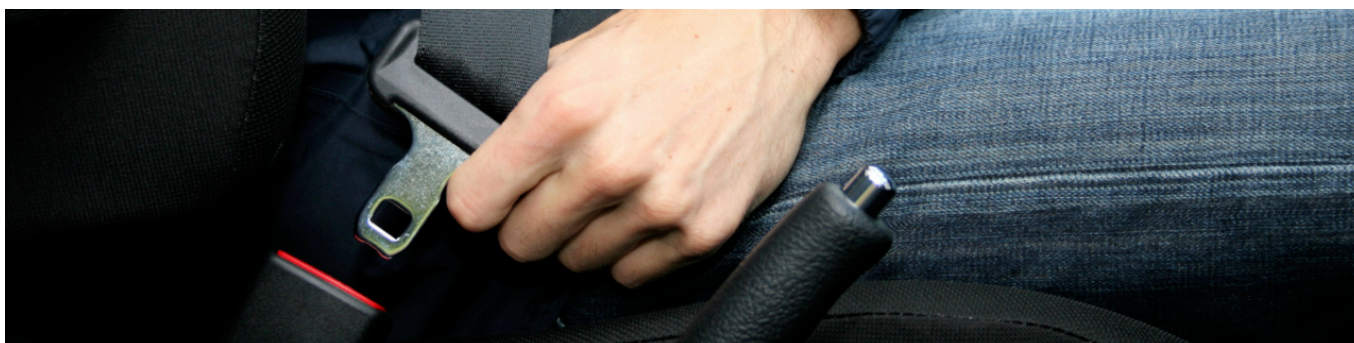
Orion Jean, 2021 TIME Kid of the Year, changemaker, author, and a passionate and engaging speaker

Michael Bonner, educator, disruptive innovator, entrepreneur, author, and motivational speaker

&

Mark Perna, acclaimed speaker, generational expert, bestselling author, and national thought leader.

This year's SAS Institute will also include new seminar and series sessions, various breakout sessions, an Act 45 course, informational tables, and special evening events. To learn more and to register, visit the [SAS Institute Registration webpage](#).



PennDOT's Innovations Challenge Now Open

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) announced its eighth annual [Innovations Challenge](#), which encourages students to use their problem-solving, creative and strategic-thinking abilities to solve real-world transportation challenges in a competition among their peers. The Innovations Challenge is open to all students in grades 9-12, regardless of their school's learning model.

For this year's challenge, students are asked to develop a cost-effective, innovative solution that can help PennDOT more effectively increase awareness of seat belt safety and change behavior to improve roadway safety.

For complete Innovations Challenge details, [visit the Innovations Challenge webpage](#). **The submission deadline is Jan. 31, 2025.**

Please share this information with all faculty members and encourage all eligible students within your school to participate.

For questions or more information, email PennDOT's Bureau of Innovations at DOTInnovations@pa.gov.



Save the Date for Farm City Day

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture will once again be hosting Farm City Day Central PA. The event will be returning to the Farm Show Complex May 7th and 8th, 2025. This event will bring students from Central PA to the Farm Show Complex to learn first-hand about agriculture and all it entails. Students will work their way through various learning stations that focus on all aspects of agriculture. Children will learn about where their food comes from and the many career opportunities that exist in agriculture.

Learning stations will have hands-on engaging activities representing all aspects of agriculture from animals and bees to forestry and vegetables and beyond. This event will give students, caregivers and teachers the opportunity to fully engage with agriculture and plant the seed for further learning and exploration in the industry.

We would love to see you and your students attend. For more information and to register your class please visit the [2025 Farm City Day School Interest Form](#). For all other questions please contact Sara Gligora at sgligora@pa.gov.

Virtual Program: "Antisemitism: Understanding and Countering this Hatred Today"

As part of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's ongoing efforts to provide resources related to the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Violations, we have been able to make a professional development series available to educators (including PDE staff) called "Echoes and Reflections." These professional development opportunities are jointly funded and endorsed by the Anti-Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem, and are offered at no cost to participants.

There is a **virtual** opportunity in this series entitled, "Antisemitism: Understanding and Countering this Hatred Today," which is being hosted by IU6 on **November 5, 2024, from 3:00pm – 5:00pm**. If you are interested in participating, please register at [the Meeting Registration webpage](#).

The entire series, with multiple virtual and in-person opportunities, is available in the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Violations Toolkit on our [SAS website](#) under the professional learning heading.

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IU6 is hoping to add a few more participants to the November 5th virtual learning opportunity, so there is still time and space available for you or others to join.

"Antisemitism: Understanding and Countering this Hatred Today" Flyer



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