



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators  
*Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools*

## Education Update January 22, 2024

### Save the Date:

### Registration Now Open for PASA's Leadership Forum!

#### Unleashing Potential: Navigating the Continuum of Creativity & Innovation in Schools

**When:** March 13-15, 2024, at the Hershey Lodge

**Featured Keynotes:** Kent Julian and Gregg Behr

**Plus:** Join us Wednesday evening for our legislative panel discussion and the next two days for cutting-edge learning sessions on the latest education innovations and learning strategies happening in Pennsylvania.

Friday's session (March 13) will be dedicated to a participant-engaged workshop on unpacking and developing a new vision of public education (benchmarking off the 180 days OR 900/990 hours, and Education 2.0 – The Future of Public Education.)

[Click here](#) to register and make hotel accommodations.

#### Connecting the Dots: School District Funding, Spending, and Budgeting

**When:** Berks County I.U. 14 on April 3 | Westmoreland I.U. 7 on April 15 | Central I.U. 10 on April 17

**Registration required**

This **no-cost** workshop is designed to encourage joint attendance by Superintendents and their CFO/Business Manager or other critical leadership staff. Participants will spend a full day discussing how to look at their school district budget to drive more effective multi-fiscal year planning. The program will include diving into the details of the Basic Education Funding and Special Education Funding and examining school district expenditure growth over time. Participants will be provided with tools and resources to map out strategies for making more accurate and thoughtful short and long-term budget decisions.

Additional topics to be discussed include the ESSER era unwind, fund balances and reserves, infrastructure needs, expenditure mandates and educational choice, resource and staff planning, as well as overarching insights on the BEF Commission's recommendations, the school funding lawsuit, and the Governor's proposed 2024-25 budget.

[Learn more and register on PASA's Website.](#)

#### Managing the Risks Webinar Series:

*Designed for Superintendents and Central Office Leaders*

**Join us for our next session:** Record Retention, Right to Know, Board Conflict of Interests, and Litigation Holds on January 30 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Gareth D. Pahowka, Attorney, Stock & Leader

Topics include records and information that must be maintained; record retention schedules; the differences between use of school district provided and personal equipment; information that can be obtained from and cautions to take when using personal equipment and with district equipment; information that can be requested from phones, computers, etc.; the redacting of information; RTKL requests, current issues and trends; managing board communications; board conflict of interests/ethics; and litigation hold procedures.

**Additional upcoming topics for the 2023-24 school year include:**

- Complex Student Issues: Avoiding Ethical and Legal Issues (February 7)
- The Pennsylvania Public Official and Employees Ethics Act – Compliance and Potential Unintended Violations (February 28, 2024)
- *Completed and available on video for those who register for the series:* How to Navigate Bias-Related Incidents as Educational Leaders; Professional Ethics and the Educator Discipline Act; Instructional Materials Selection and Red Flags; Navigating Challenging Board Members

Knowing upfront the recent issues that superintendents and school leaders are facing and the common missteps to avoid can prevent serious mistakes to future leadership success. Whether you are a new superintendent/school leader or a seasoned veteran, the updates and discussions presented by the panel of experts in this series will benefit all.

Register to attend the 2023 PASA Webinar Series “Managing the Risks”, built specifically to assist school leaders in gaining perspective and knowledge to be successful!

**Each Webinar is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.**, including time for participants to ask questions on the topics presented! Come listen and learn!

**Receive two sessions free when you sign up for the full seven-part series. (Past sessions are available as taped sessions).**

**Member: \$245; Non-Member: \$345**

[Learn more about each part of the series, costs, and how to register on PASA's website.](#)

### **New Superintendent Induction Program: Mentors for New Leaders**

PASA's New Superintendent Induction Program provides needed support and guidance for beginning Superintendents by providing an experienced superintendent mentor to help with the transition into the Superintendency. This program facilitates a working relationship between the Superintendent and an experienced Mentor that allows for open and private discussions and provides resources to sustain school system leaders.

For more information and to apply, visit [PASA's website.](#)

### **U.S.- China Pen Pal Program Seeks School Partners:**

The United State Heartland China Association is seeking school partners for its Pen Pal Program for the upcoming academic year. The U.S.-China 2023 Pen Pal Program is a unique initiative aimed at connecting students in the U.S. and China through letter writing. By connecting students from these two cultures, students can foster empathy, promote cross-cultural communication, and instill a sense of global citizenship. Through this program students can:

- Create meaningful connections that transcend borders and foster long-lasting friendships and a healthier U.S.-China relationship for generations
- Share aspects of their culture, traditions, and daily life with their pen pals in order to learn more about the two countries.
- Develop essential global leadership skills, such as communication, empathy, and adaptability.

Letter of Invitation | Pen Pal Project Outline | Promotional Poster

For more information, contact Jason Conley at [jconley@usheartlandchina.org](mailto:jconley@usheartlandchina.org).

## In Health, Safety, Equity & Learning News...

**How These Principals Nip Apathy in the Bud After Winter Break and Long Weekends** — Principal Scott Wisniewski adopted a new evening routine last year. After dinner and helping his kids tackle homework, he does what most of his students probably do every evening: scroll through Instagram. He collects all the pictures he's taken of students and teachers—in classrooms, at football practice, or award ceremonies—and posts them. As a first-time principal of Pompton Lakes High School in Passaic County, N.J., Wisniewski has been running his Instagram handle since August last year, tallying up an impressive running number of posts... It's all part of a coordinated effort to remind students about all the great things at school, and why they need to be there to join in. The pictures highlight student participation, from on the football field to raising their hands in math class. *Read the rest of the story:* ["How These Principals Nip Apathy in the Bud After Winter Break and Long Weekends"](#) (from, Education Week, 1/19/24)

**A Snapshot of Crime and Safety in Schools**— Schools are reporting less violent crime and drug use at most grade levels, the latest federal safety data show, but some key student supports have also declined. Sixty-seven public schools reported a violent crime like assault on campus in 2021-22, down from 71 percent of schools in 2017-18, the last full year before the pandemic. Nonviolent crimes like thefts fell 6 percentage points during the same period. However, 3 percent of public schools reported hate crimes in 2022, up by 1 percentage point from the prior two years. *Read the rest of the story:* ["A Snapshot of Crime and Safety in Schools"](#) (from Education Week, 1/17/24)

**SCOTUS Punts Once Again on Transgender Bathroom Access**— The U.S. Supreme Court declined to consider a case on Tuesday over an Indiana school district's policies barring transgender students from using bathrooms aligning with their gender identities. The case could have settled a growing controversy in schools over whether transgender students are entitled under Title IX to access facilities that differ from their sex assigned at birth. In deciding not to hear the case, the high court let stand an August 2023 decision by the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the Metropolitan School District of Martinsville and the student's former principal likely violated Title IX by barring transgender students from bathrooms aligning with their gender identities. That decision applies to states under the 7th Circuit's jurisdiction: Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. *Read the rest of the story:* ["SCOTUS Punts Once Again on Transgender Bathroom Access"](#) (from K-12 Dive, 1/17/24)

## In State News...

**'Pandemic Learning Loss' in Kids Noted by Over 30% of Parents: Report** — Although test scores recently showed "[modest gains](#)" after the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), a new report has revealed that parents are still observing their kids struggling with "pandemic learning loss." In fact, one in three parents in the United States have [made this observation](#). [95 Percent Group](#) — which, according to [its about page](#), is "Helping teachers provide the best possible literacy instruction is the first step in giving the next generation a bright future" — was behind [this report](#), which based

its findings on a survey of 830 parents across the country. *Read the rest of the story:* [\*\*"Pandemic Learning Loss' in Kids Noted by Over 30% of Parents: Report"\*\*](#) (from Pennlive, 1/18/24)

#### **Republicans Unite Behind Alternative Basic Education Funding Commission Report —**

Republicans who serve on the Basic Education Funding Commission unveiled their alternative report (Report #1) last week during the final meeting at the state Capitol. According to the Republican lawmakers on the commission, the report provides a roadmap to provide greater budget stability for school districts, ensure students will receive at the least the same amount as the current year's historic budget allocations, and seek to put in place greater accountability measures for hard-earned tax dollars paying for public education. Report #1 received 6 favorable votes, 6 negative votes, while 3 members of the commission abstained. A second report, which called for more than \$7 billion in new education spending, received 8 favorable votes and 7 negative votes. *Read the rest of the story:* [\*\*"Republicans Unite Behind Alternative Basic Education Funding Commission Report"\*\*](#) (from PA Senate Republicans, 1/11/24)

#### **Homelessness, Suicide Among Social and Emotional Ills Ailing PA Students, School**

**Professionals Say—** Persistent depression, homelessness, substance use, divorce, suicidal thoughts – student service professionals stressed to lawmakers in the Pennsylvania House on Wednesday that troubles weighing heavily on adults are burdens shared by school-age kids every day. A package of four bills addressing student mental health are pending in the state House including one proposal, [\*\*the School Counseling Services Act\*\*](#), that would require schools to develop a comprehensive counseling plan. The measure would also require that counselors spend at least 80% of their time engaging services to students rather than being flexed into other roles because of staffing shortages. The bills also address [\*\*mental health training\*\*](#) for high school coaches, allow mental health to be cited for [\*\*three excused absences\*\*](#) without a doctor's note and promote the availability of [\*\*suicide prevention hotlines\*\*](#) including on student ID cards. *Read the rest of the story:* [\*\*"Homelessness, Suicide Among Social and Emotional Ills Ailing PA Students, School Professionals Say"\*\*](#) (from The Tribune-Democrat, 1/18/24)

**Lawmakers Told School Guidance Counselor Reforms Needed to 'Finally Bring Pennsylvania into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'—** School guidance counselors in Pennsylvania frequently are monitoring hallways and lunchrooms or substitute teaching rather than doing the jobs they were trained to do, to the detriment of students. That was one message counselor Adam Oldham gave state lawmakers during a legislative committee meeting in the Capitol Wednesday. Mr. Oldham said the use of school counselors is far less effective than in other states and a new law is needed that would "finally bring Pennsylvania into the 21<sup>st</sup> century." *Read the rest of the story:* [\*\*"Lawmakers Told School Guidance Counselor Reforms Needed to 'Finally Bring Pennsylvania into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'"\*\*](#) (from, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 1/18/24)

**Shapiro Administration Awards \$379,000 Grant Creating New Teacher Apprenticeship Program to Address Critical Shortages In PA Schools —** The Shapiro Administration last week announced a \$379,000 grant to Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit to develop an apprenticeship program for teachers -- a first-of-its-kind effort to address staffing shortages in Pennsylvania schools and create earn-as-you-learn opportunities for individuals interested in careers as certified elementary and secondary teachers. The Departments of Labor & Industry (L&I) and Education (PDE) partnered to address Pennsylvania's teacher shortage in early 2023 by expanding the apprenticeship model in the education sector through the creation of the Certified Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program in Pennsylvania (TAP.PA). TAP.PA aims to provide training for individuals like paraprofessionals and teachers' aides who want to become certified elementary and secondary teachers. *Read the rest of the story:* [\*\*"Shapiro Administration Awards \\$379,000 Grant Creating New Teacher Apprenticeship Program to Address Critical Shortages in PA Schools"\*\*](#) (from PA Labor and Industry, 1/16/24)

**A New Initiative Creates a 'Supporting' Space for Western PA's Teachers of Color—**Pharlan Ives sat amongst dozens of teachers of color during a Teaching is My Favorite Color conference one day in 2022. Stories of the educators being perceived differently than their colleagues filled the space. Others expressed feeling isolated because very few, if any, teachers in their districts looked like them. As a Black woman who serves as the South Fayette Elementary School assistant principal, Ms. Ives wasn't surprised to hear about the experiences of other teachers of color. But she knew something had to change to help

keep the educators in the profession. Teaching is My Favorite Color is an initiative between Avonworth, Hampton Township and South Fayette school districts that works to [develop a network for educators of color](#) for professional development, mentorship and culturally-centered connection. *Read the rest of the story: [“A New Initiative Creates A ‘Supporting’ Space for Western PA’s Teachers of Color”](#)* (from Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 1/22/24)

## In National and International News...

**Superintendents Share the Lessons They’ve Learned From ESSER—and Look Ahead** School district leaders learned valuable lessons in addressing students’ needs with innovation and efficiency in recent years with the help of billions of dollars in federal pandemic relief funds, according to the four 2024 finalists for National Superintendent of the Year. It was clear from the start that the extra money was time-limited, so it was important that districts find a way to craft sustainable initiatives, the superintendents [said during a Jan. 11 panel discussion hosted by AASA, The School Superintendents Association](#), which runs the National Superintendent of the Year program. *Read the rest of the story: [“Superintendents Share the Lessons They’ve Learned From ESSER—and Look Ahead”](#)* (from EducationWeek, 1/17/24)

**Biden Admin. Says New K-12 Agenda Tackles Absenteeism, Tutoring, Extended Learning** — The Biden administration wants states and school districts to increase student attendance, adopt high-dosage tutoring, and expand summer and after-school learning as part of a new agenda for reversing declines in student achievement. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and White House Domestic Policy Advisor Neera Tanden announced on Wednesday the administration’s new “Improving Student Achievement Agenda” at a White House event with governors and state education leaders. *Read the rest of the story: [“Biden Admin. Says New K-12 Agenda Tackles Absenteeism, Tutoring, Extended Learning”](#)* (from, Education Week, 1/17/24)

**How 3 Districts Spent Down Their ARP Money—** School districts have just over eight months to spend down a collective \$122 billion from the K-12 portion of the American Rescue Plan funds directed to pandemic recovery. The historic one-time allocation is the third and last infusion of monies known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund, or ESSER I, II and III. While the total \$189.5 billion in ESSER has supported an array of COVID-19 recovery efforts such as school safety supplies, high dosage tutoring and additional reading instructors, many localities may face a fiscal cliff when the funds expire on Sept. 30. *Read the rest of the story: [“How 3 Districts Spent Down Their ARP Money”](#)* (from K-12 Dive, 1/16/24)

**Ed Dept Issues Updated ARP Late Liquidation Guidance—** The U.S. Department of Education is advising states that request an [extended spending deadline](#) for American Rescue Plan funds to explain how doing so would help accelerate students’ academic success, according to a letter issued to grantees last week. Specifically, the department encouraged the requests to explain investments in evidence-based strategies including increasing daily student attendance, providing high-quality tutoring, and expanding access to learning time before and after school and in the summer. *Read the rest of the story: [“Ed Dept Issues Updated ARP Late Liquidation Guidance”](#)* (from K-12 Dive, 1/17/24)

**AI and the Future of Public Sector Education: A 2024 Perspective—** As 2024 unfolds, the public sector’s educational sphere is experiencing a revolutionary transformation, propelled by the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This shift transcends mere technological enhancement, marking a radical redefinition of pedagogical approaches and learning experiences. This expansive exploration delves into AI-powered personalized education, a trend poised to redefine public sector learning. *Read the rest of the story: [“AI and the Future of Public Sector Education: A 2024 Perspective”](#)* (from Medium, 1/17/24)

## Key Legislation to Watch:



**HB 1367: Referred to the House Education Committee (6-12-23):** This bill adds a section to the PIAA CIPPE form about understanding mental health and resources available to the student athlete and requires coaches to take a mental health training course that must be approved by the Department of Health.

**HB 1553: Voted out of the House Education Committee (1-18-24):** This bill requires schools to include the suicide prevention hotline telephone number on student identification cards for students in grades 6-12; and, in school safety and security, further providing for school safety and security coordinator. The suicide prevention hotline telephone number provided on the student identification card must be a telephone number that can be accessed for use twenty-four (24) hours a day and seven (7) days a week by a student or other individual. The board of school directors of a school district shall work with the school safety and security coordinator under section 1309-B to implement the requirements of this section.

Notwithstanding the requirements of section 529, work with the board of school directors or equivalent personnel of a school entity to display, in any of the following locations, a national, State or local suicide prevention hotline telephone number that can be accessed 24 hours a day and seven days a week by a student or other individual:

- On the school entity's publicly accessible Internet website.
- In a conspicuous location in the school entity's counselor's office or in the office of any school employee of the school entity that is qualified to act in a counseling role.
- In a conspicuous location in the office of the principal or chief administrator of the school entity.

**HB 1519: Voted out of the House Education Committee (1-18-24):** This legislation would allow students to take three excused absences for mental health reasons without requiring a doctor's note. Providing mental health days would encourage students to take care of their mental health as they would their physical health. This bill would align Pennsylvania with Oregon and Utah which have already passed bipartisan legislation to provide students with this useful mental health tool.

**HB 1665: Voted out of the House Education Committee (1-18-24):** This legislation would create the School Counseling Services Act, which would require that schools develop a robust and comprehensive school counseling plan. The plan would ensure that academic, career planning, and social and emotional learning concerns are addressed, would include a multilevel school data review to determine student needs, and would align with guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In addition to requiring a comprehensive school counseling plan, our bill would spell out the way in which counselors spend their time, requiring that they spend at least 80% of their working time engaged in direct and indirect services to students on days that students were in school. These services could involve academic advising, career planning, social and emotional skill building, intervening with students at risk of dropping out, orienting new and transferring students, and contributing to decision-making teams and programs that directly impact students and families. Administrative responsibilities could take up no more than 20% of their time.

**HB 1848: Referred to the House Education Committee (11-14-23):** Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, this legislation would require the instructional day for public secondary schools to begin no earlier than 8:15 a.m. Further, it would require each governing board of a public school entity to inform its school community about the health and academic impacts of sleep deprivation on secondary school students and the benefits of a later school start time, and to discuss local strategies to implement a delayed school start time.

### **Legislative Updates from Last Week:**

PASA Executive Director Dr. Sherri L. Smith testified at the House Education Committee's Hearing on Student Mental Health on January 17.

[View PASA's testimony](#) | [Watch the Hearing](#)

### **Upcoming Legislative Schedule – (Subject to change)**

#### **House of Representatives:**

**Next Session:** February 6 at noon.

#### **Senate:**

**Next sessions:** February 5 at 1 p.m. (Governor's Budget Address)

#### **Senate Scheduled Session Days:**

February: 5, 6 (**Governor's Budget Address**), 7

March: 18, 19, 20

April: 8, 9, 10, 29, 30

May: 1, 6, 7, 8

June: 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

Senate **Budget Hearings** are scheduled for the following days:

February: 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29

March: 5, 6, 7

**Note: Tuesday, April 23 is Primary Election Day in Pennsylvania**

#### **House Scheduled Session Days:**

##### **House Session Schedule**

February: 6

March: 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27

April: 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 29, 30

May: 1, 6, 7, 8, 20, 21, 22

June: 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

### **On the PASA Calendar...**

January 30:	Managing the Risks: Record Retention, Right to Know, Board Conflict of Interest, and Litigation Holds
February 2:	Aspiring to Leadership Workshop (Virtual)
February 9:	Managing the Risks: Complex Student Issues: Avoiding Ethical and Legal Issues
February 15-17:	AASA National Conference on Education
February 16:	PASA State Reception at Rustic Root
February 28:	Managing the Risks: The Pennsylvania Public Official and Employees Ethics Act—Compliance and Potential Unintended Violations
March 13:	PA League of Urban Schools (PLUS) Conference (Hershey Lodge)

March 13-15:	2023 PASA Leadership Forum: Unleashing Potential: Navigating the Continuum of Creativity and Innovation in Schools (Hershey Lodge)
April 3:	Connecting the Dots: School District Funding, Spending, and Budgeting (Berks I.U.)
April 15:	Connecting the Dots: School District Funding, Spending, and Budgeting (Westmoreland I.U.)
April 17:	Connecting the Dots: School District Funding, Spending, and Budgeting (Central I.U.)
May 19-21:	Women's Caucus Annual Spring Conference at the Hershey Hotel

[Click here](#) to view the full calendar of events.