Office of Professional Learning

— February 2026 Education Bulletin —

Welcome to the February 2026 edition of the **Luzerne Intermediate Unit (LIU) Office of Professional Learning's (OPL)** monthly education bulletin. The intent of this communication is to provide subscribers with:

- Professional learning opportunities offered by our department,
- Provide school leaders with educational policy support, and
- Provide tips for practicing educators.

This edition will focus on our team's experiences at the 2026 PDE SAS Institute .

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SAS Sessions Attended

Building Capacity for Generative AI in Education

This session, Building Capacity for Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education, proposed a holistic approach for educational institutions to strategically integrate the use of AI. Presenters referenced a detailed integration model, the Consortium for School Networking's K-12 Generative AI Maturity Framework, to examine this challenge across specific school spaces. These include a Systems-based Lens (leadership and policy), an Educator Lens (professional learning), and the Student Lens (curriculum and literacy).

Systems Lens: Recommendations aligned to this element leverage seven identified domains of AI integration to assess the current state of the LEA and build a roadmap of implementation, acknowledging that AI adoption often moves faster than policies and infrastructure.

CoSN Leading Education Innovation

Educator Lens: This lens focuses on building shared tool-specific mastery by establishing teacher competencies in knowledge, practice, pedagogy, and ethics, ensuring a manageable user experience for staff.

Student Lens: For students, emphasis falls on a need to define clear learning outcomes and distinguish between "AI literacy" (using the tools, or "Driving Cars") and "computer science" (understanding how AI works, or being a "Full Time Mechanic"). Key student learning should center on developing a conceptual understanding of AI and its educational, personal, societal, and environmental impacts.

The Framework can be downloaded here. As mentioned above, this model addresses AI adoption via seven domains of AI readiness including: Executive Leadership, Operational, Data, Technical, Security, Legal/Risk, and Academic AI Literacy Readiness. The call to action asks institutions to be strategic by beginning with an assessment of the current state of AI in their LEA, identify a future destination, build stakeholder teams, and prioritize phased goals to ensure a focused and sustainable integration effort.

AI Implementation Process

This workshop focused on a school's experiences as they continue to integrating AI across administrative and academic systems. The presentation team began with the foundational quote:

"Technology will never replace great teachers,
but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational."

The school's core strategy revolved around the establishment of a common language for the AI Core team and use this team to provide clear, school-wide policy. A practical application shared included emphasis for a need for the student Code of Conduct and handbook. The school's handbook informs students that "Submitting AI-Generated work as one's own is prohibited. The use of AI requires teacher approval to ensure its ethical use as a learning tool." To guide approval of daily use, a visual system was implemented in every classroom: Red (Unacceptable Use/Stop), Yellow (Caution/Use with care), and Green (Acceptable Use/Go for it!). Teachers are instructed to reference these designations on graded assignments. Parents are to be informed about the expectations for AI use in the classroom, as well.

The school also maintains a roster of acceptable AI tools , providing essential vetting information such as a functioning link, verification status, cost, subject area, and whether it is a teacher- or student-facing tool. When available, these tools are accompanied by a recorded training and usage notes. Their current list of permitted tools includes Synthesia, Diffit, Brisk, Canva, Adobe's Firefly, Khanmigo, Magic School AI, NotebookLM, and SchoolAI, among others. Regardless of which platforms are used, the leadership team emphasized that all schools conduct their own vetting across various federal technical compliance standards, student safety, and protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII). The workshop closed with examples of practical classroom use. These included the use of AI for tasks such as asking students to design a research paper and qualify/vet their references, use AI to experience different writing styles, and utilizing chatbots to engage students who are fearful of asking questions in front of the class. Helpful resources recommended include AI for Education.io and AI4K12.

Elevating Math Instruction

This session focused on the leadership moves necessary for administrators to respond to the presence or lack of math instruction that is both equitable and rigorous. Effective instructional leadership can significantly raise the quality of math teaching across a school or district, but only if leaders know exactly what to look for and how to support it. Some examples provided included:

Strategy	Leadership "Look-For"	Impact on Learning
Cognitive Demand	Are students solving non-routine problems, or just following a procedure?	Encourages perseverance and deeper conceptual understanding.
Student Discourse	Is the teacher doing the talking, or are students justifying their reasoning to peers?	Builds mathematical communication skills and uncover misconceptions.
Targeted Feedback	Do leaders provide feedback on the mathematics or just on classroom management?	Shifts the focus toward instructional rigor and teacher professional growth.

These "look-for" items help growth-based conversations go beyond surface-level observations to identify what is needed in core high-quality math teaching, ensuring that every walkthrough is an opportunity for meaningful professional growth.

STEELS

LIU 18 and AMNH: Supporting STEELS Standards

This session outlined a partnership between the Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18 (LIU 18) and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) to support Pennsylvania's STEELS Standards. This partnership was formed with the purpose of promoting student scientific literacy and providing instructors access to current research and data. The primary vehicle for this collaboration is AMNH's Seminars on Science (SoS) courses, an affordable, high-quality professional learning program for educators. These online, 6-week, asynchronous courses are co-taught by an experienced educator and a research scientist actively working in the course's related field of science. The structure is designed to strengthen teaching by uniquely combining three compatible elements: science disciplines/concepts, instructional pedagogy, and relevant instructional resources.

LIU 18's specific investment leveraged grant funded Environmental Literacy dollars to support the implementation of these standards. As noted above, the LIU partnered with AMNH in the 2024-2025 school year to offer a 3-credit graduate course on Climate Change. The design of SoS courses deliberately models a learner-centered pedagogy that emphasizes student sensemaking. This is done by asking educators, as students, to engage with the natural world by developing and testing ideas. The culminating project in the Climate Change course asked participants to design a unit of study that included the pedagogical elements the course promoted alongside a data-driven/analytical approach to learning about climate change. This design equipped teachers with the advanced content and instructional models necessary to re-imagine their practices and address the challenge of implementing the STEELS standards.

If educators are interested in creating a cohort of Luzerne IU regional teachers to take either the Climate Change Course or any other of the Seminars on Science Courses, please reach out to Dr. Rich Mackrell (rmackrell@liu18.org).

Preparing for PSSA/Keystone Exams - Online

Beginning in the spring of 2026, all students will transition to taking the PSSA and Keystone Exams online. This shift represents more than just a change in format; it requires a strategic approach to ensure students can accurately demonstrate their knowledge in a digital environment. In this session, participants explored the **DRC Online Tools Training (OTTs)**, focusing on how students navigate multiple-choice, technology-enhanced, and open-ended questions across Mathematics, Science, and ELA. By mastering these digital interfaces now, we can remove the "tech barrier" and allow students' true academic proficiency to shine through on assessment day. Samples provided included:

Strategy	Implementation Focus	Leadership Move
Tool Familiarization	Using the Equation Builder and Desmos calculators.	Model the use of these tools during faculty meetings or PLC sessions.
OTT Integration	Incorporating Online Training Tools into weekly lessons.	Encourage teachers to use "Blank OTT" screens for daily warm-ups.
Mock Scenarios	Practicing "Technology Enhanced" items (drag-and-drop, graphing).	Observe if students are struggling with the content or the interface.

It is highly recommended that all students being assessed on any PSSA or Keystone Exam be offered guided and independent opportunities to master these tools prior to the assessment date. Similar opportunities can be acquired via use of the PA Firefly Benchmark and Classroom Diagnostic Tool.

Need Support

LIU OPL Network Trainings (Feb 2026)

Did you know that the Office of Professional Learning regularly offers workshops at several locations? Areas of educator support include all core content areas, support for students with special needs, and classroom management.

All registrations are through MyLearning Plan. Visit our website at www.liu18.org and head to "Programs and Services". From here, go to "Event Registration" to find out more about these opportunities and to register.

- Math Teachers' Network (Grades 3-5), 2/12/2026
- Math Teachers' Network (Grades 6-8), 2/17/2026
- Math Teachers' Summit (Grades 9-12), 2/11/2026 & 2/26/2026*
- AI Made Simple (Elementary Educators), 2/11/2026
- School Improvement Network, 2/13/2026 & 3/6/2026 (Act 45 Credit Available)
- The Shift to Student-Led Book Study, 2/11/2026 - 3/25/2026
- Psych Network, 2/20/2026
- AI in the Secondary Classroom, 2/26/2026

We also hold monthly network meetings for Curriculum Coordinators and School Improvement Teams. School Improvement Team attendees can qualify to earn an annual maximum of 25 hours of Act 45 Credit.

*This event includes participation of partners beyond our IU region and may not roster on MyLearningPlan. Please reach out to Dr. Rich Mackrell (rmackrell@liu18.org) if you wish to learn more about this event.

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