

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Middletown Area School District Dauphin County, Pennsylvania

July 2015



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General
Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Dr. Lori Suski, Superintendent
Middletown Area School District
55 West Water Street
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

Ms. Barbara Layne, Board President
Middletown Area School District
55 West Water Street
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

Dear Dr. Suski and Ms. Layne:

Our performance audit of the Middletown Area School District (District) evaluated the application of best practices in the areas of academics, governance, safety, and other operational areas as noted. In addition, this audit determined the District's compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures (relevant requirements). This audit covered the period August 12, 2011 through April 27, 2015, except as otherwise stated and was conducted pursuant to Section 403 of The Fiscal Code and in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Our audit found that the District effectively applied best practices in the areas listed above. In addition, we determined that the District complied in all material respects, with relevant requirements.

We appreciate the District's cooperation during the course of the audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eugene A. DePasquale".

Eugene A. DePasquale
Auditor General

July 16, 2015

cc: **MIDDLETOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board of School Directors

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Executive Summary

Audit Work

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the District. Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the District's compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Our audit scope covered the period August 12, 2011 through April 27, 2015, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objectives, and methodology section of the report. Compliance specific to state subsidies and reimbursements was determined for the 2009-10 school year.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the District complied, in all material respects, with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Our audit resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations. There were no findings or observations in our prior audit report.

Background Informationⁱ

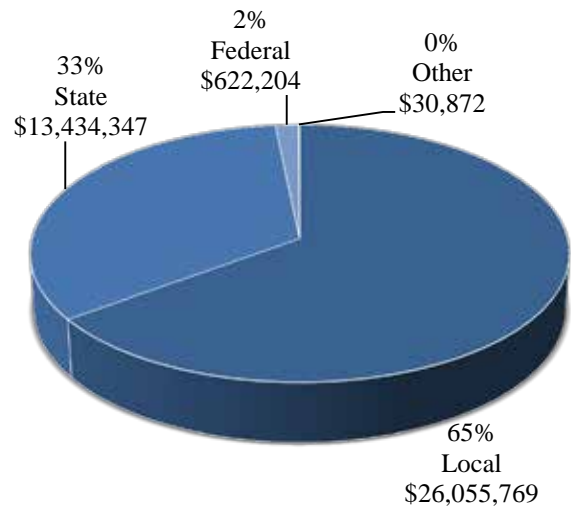
School Characteristics 2014-15 School Year ⁱⁱ	
County	Dauphin
Total Square Miles	17.23
Resident Population ⁱⁱⁱ	18,076
Number of School Buildings	5
Total Teachers	194
Total Full or Part-Time Support Staff	112
Total Administrators	17
Total Enrollment for Most Recent School Year	2,293
Intermediate Unit Number	15
District Vo-Tech School	Dauphin County Technical School

Mission Statement

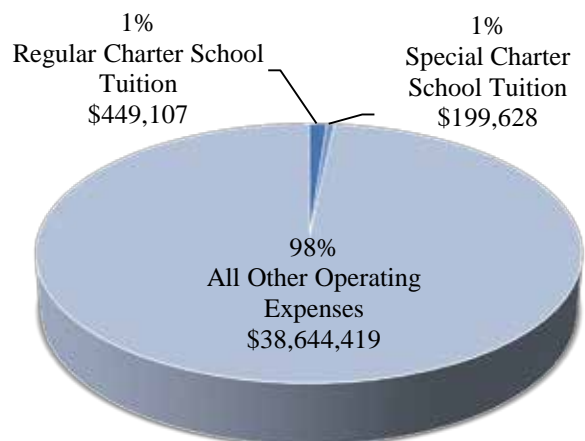
The mission of the District is to educate students so that they value learning, are socially responsible, and are prepared to lead productive and successful lives.

Financial Information

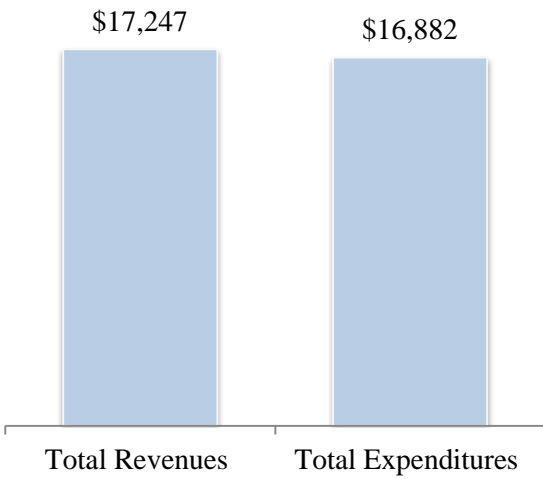
Revenue by Source for 2013-14 School Year



Select Expenditures for 2013-14 School Year

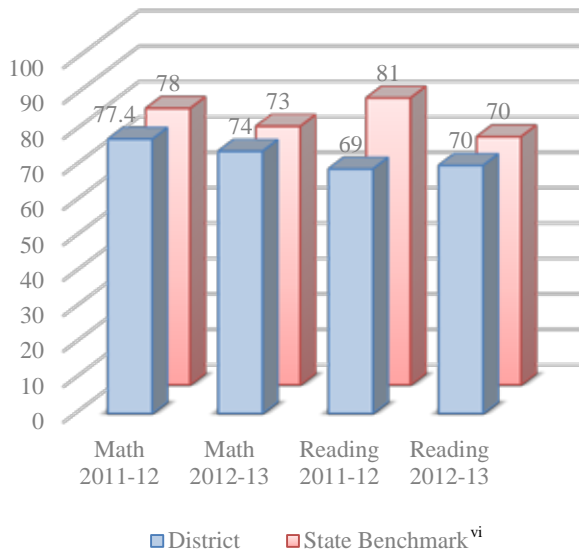


**Dollars Per Student
2013-14 School Year**



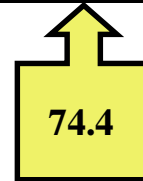
Academic Information

Percentage of District Students Who Scored "Proficient" or "Advanced" on 2011-12 and 2012-13 PSSA^{iv v}



District's 2012-13 SPP Score^{vii}

A	B	C	D	F
90-100	80-89.9	70-79.9	60-69.9	<60
▲	▲	■	▼	▼



**Individual Building SPP and PSSA Scores^{viii}
2012-13 School Year**

School Building	SPP Score	PSSA % School Proficient and Advanced in Math	PSSA % Statewide Benchmark Proficient and Advanced in Math	PSSA % School Proficient and Advanced in Reading	PSSA % Statewide Benchmark Proficient and Advanced in Reading	Federal Title I Designation (Reward, Priority, Focus, No Designation)^{ix}
Fink Elementary School	81.1	72	73	70	70	No Designation
Kunkel Elementary School	77.2	81	73	71	70	No Designation
Robert Reid Elementary School	69.7	68	73	62	70	No Designation
Middletown Area Middle School	85.4	81	73	70	70	N/A
Middletown Area High School	61.2	58	73	80	70	N/A

Findings and Observations

For the audited period, our audit of the District resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the District resulted in no findings or observations.

Appendix: Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

School performance audits allow the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General to determine whether state funds, including school subsidies, are being used according to the purposes and guidelines that govern the use of those funds. Additionally, our audits examine the appropriateness of certain administrative and operational practices at each local education agency (LEA). The results of these audits are shared with LEA management, the Governor, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and other concerned entities.

Our audit, conducted under authority of Section 403 of The Fiscal Code¹, is not a substitute for the local annual financial audit required by the Public School Code of 1949, as amended. We conducted our audit in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit.

Scope

Overall, our audit covered the period August 12, 2011 through April 27, 2015. In addition, the scope of each individual audit objective is detailed on the next page.

While all districts have the same school years, some have different fiscal years. Therefore, for the purposes of our audit work and to be consistent with PDE reporting guidelines, we use the term *school year* rather than fiscal year throughout this report. A school year covers the period July 1 to June 30.

The District's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls² to provide reasonable assurance that the District is in compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures (relevant requirements). In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the District's internal controls, including any information technology controls, as they relate to the District's compliance with relevant requirements that we consider to be material within the context of our audit objectives. We assessed whether those controls were properly designed and implemented. Any deficiencies in internal controls that were identified during the conduct of our audit and determined to be material within the context of our audit objectives are included in this report.

¹ 72 P.S. § 403

² Internal controls are processes designed by management to provide reasonable assurance of achieving objectives in areas such as: effectiveness and efficiency of operations; relevance and reliability of operational and financial information; and compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Objectives/Methodology

In order to properly plan our audit and to guide us in selecting objectives, we reviewed pertinent laws and regulations, board meeting minutes, academic performance data, financial reports, annual budgets, and new or amended policies and procedures. We also determined if the District had key personnel or software vendor changes since the prior audit.

Performance audits draw conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence. Evidence is measured against criteria, such as laws, regulations, third-party studies, and best business practices. Our audit focused on the District's efficiency and effectiveness in the following areas:

- ü Academics
- ü Governance
- ü Administration Contract Buy-outs
- ü Membership
- ü School Safety
- ü Bus Driver Requirements

As we conducted our audit procedures, we sought to determine answers to the following questions, which served as our audit objectives:

- ü Did the LEA's Board of School Directors (Board) and administration maintain best practices in governing academics and student achievement by developing and executing a plan to improve student academic performance at its failing school buildings?
 - o To address this objective, we considered a variety of the District and school level academic results for the 2007-08 through 2012-13 school years to determine if the District had schools not meeting statewide academic standards established by PDE.³ Since underperforming schools were identified, we selected one of two underperforming schools for further review. This review consisted of conducting interviews with the Superintendent and any other designated employees and reviewing required School Improvement Plans and School Level Plans to determine if the selected underperforming schools have established goals for improving academic performance, are implementing goals, and are appropriately monitoring the implementation of these goals.
- ü Did the LEA's Board and administration maintain best practices in overall organizational governance?

³ Academic data for the District and its school buildings included a five year trend analysis of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results from the 2007-08 through 2011-12 school years. Pennsylvania System of School Assessment results in Math and Reading for the "all students" group for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years. School Performance Profile scores for the 2012-13 school year, and federal accountability designations (i.e. Priority, Focus, Reward, and No Designation) for Title 1 schools for the 2012-13 school year. All of the academic data standards and results we examined originated with PDE.

- To address this objective, we surveyed the District’s current Board, conducted in-depth interviews with the current Superintendent and her staff, reviewed board meeting books, policies and procedures, and reports used to inform the Board about student performance, progress in meeting student achievement goals, budgeting and financial position, and school violence data to determine if the Board was provided sufficient information for making informed decisions.
- Ü Did the District pursue a contract buy-out with an administrator, if it did, what was the total cost of the buy-out, what were the reasons for the termination/settlement, and did the current employment contract(s) contain adequate termination provisions?
- To address this objective, we reviewed the contract and settlement agreement for the only administrator who retired between August 12, 2011 and April 27, 2015. We also reviewed board meeting minutes, board policies, and payroll records to ensure the District abided by the employment contract and termination provisions.
- Ü Did the LEA ensure that the membership data it reported in the Pennsylvania Information Management System was accurate, valid, and reliable?
- To address this objective, we reconciled all four of the non-resident foster students in the District to the amount of subsidy received by the District for the 2009-10 school year to ensure accurate subsidy amounts.
- Ü Did the District take appropriate actions to ensure it provided a safe school environment?
- To address this objective, we reviewed a variety of documentation including, safety plans, training schedules, anti-bullying policies, and after action reports. In addition, we conducted on-site reviews at three out of the District’s five school buildings (one from each education level) to assess whether the District had implemented basic safety practices.
- Ü Did the District ensure that bus drivers transporting District children at the time of the audit have the required driver’s license, physical exam, training, background checks, and clearances as outlined in applicable laws?⁴ Also, did the District have written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers?
- To address this objective, we selected 5 of 29 bus drivers hired by either the District or District bus contractor(s) during the period from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015, and reviewed documentation to ensure the District complied with bus driver hiring requirements for each of the drivers. We also determined if the District had written policies and procedures governing the hiring of bus drivers and if those procedures were sufficient to ensure compliance with bus driver hiring requirements.

⁴ 24 P.S. § 1-111, 24 P.S. § 2070, 67 P.S. § 71.1, 22 PA Code Chapter 8, and 23 PA C.S. § 58-6354.

Distribution List

This report was initially distributed to the Superintendent of the District, the Board of School Directors, and the following stakeholders:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf

Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Pedro A. Rivera

Secretary of Education
1010 Harristown Building #2
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

The Honorable Timothy Reese

State Treasurer
Room 129 - Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Mrs. Danielle Mariano

Director
Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Management
Pennsylvania Department of Education
4th Floor, 333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dr. David Wazeter

Research Manager
Pennsylvania State Education Association
400 North Third Street - Box 1724
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Mr. Lin Carpenter

Assistant Executive Director for Member Services
School Board and Management Services
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
P.O. Box 2042
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 231 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov

ⁱ Source: School district, PDE, and U.S. Census data.

ⁱⁱ Source: Information provided by the District administration.

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: United States Census <http://www.census.gov/2010census>

^{iv} PSSA stands for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), which is composed of statewide, standardized tests administered by PDE to all public schools and the reporting associated with the results of those assessments. PSSA scores in the tables in this report reflect Reading and Math results for the “All Students” group for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years.

^v PSSA scores, which are Pennsylvania’s mandatory, statewide academic test scores, are issued by PDE. However, the PSSA scores issued by PDE are collected by an outside vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC). The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General and KPMG issued a material weakness in internal controls over PDE’s compilation of this academic data in the Single Audit of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2014, citing insufficient review procedures at PDE to ensure the accuracy of test score data received from DRC.

^{vi} In the 2011-12 school year, the state benchmarks reflect the AYP targets established under No Child Left Behind. In the 2012-13 school year, the state benchmarks reflect the statewide goals based on annual measurable objectives established by PDE.

^{vii} SPP stands for School Performance Profile, which is Pennsylvania’s new method for reporting academic performance scores for all public schools based on a scale from 0% to 100% implemented in the 2012-13 school year by PDE.

^{viii} *Id.* Additionally, federal Title I designations of Priority, Focus, Reward, and No Designation are new federal accountability designations issued by PDE to Title I schools only beginning in the 2012-13 school year. Priority schools are the lowest 5%, focus schools are the lowest 10%, and reward schools are the highest 5% of Title I schools. All Title I schools not falling into one of the aforementioned percentage groups are considered “No Designation” schools. The criteria used to calculate the percentage rates is determined on an annual basis by PDE.

^{ix} Title I Federal accountability designations for Title I schools originate from PDE and are determined based on the number of students at the school who receive free and/or reduced price lunches. School lunch data is accumulated in PDE’s CN-PEARS system, which is customized software developed jointly with an outside vendor, Colyar, Inc. The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General and KPMG issued a material deficiency in internal controls over the CN-PEARS system in the Single Audit of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2014.