

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Southmoreland School District Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

January 2016



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Dr. John A. Molnar, Superintendent
Southmoreland School District
100 Scottie Way
Scottsdale, Pennsylvania 15683

Mr. Michael Bentz, Board President
Southmoreland School District
100 Scottie Way
Scottsdale, Pennsylvania 15683

Dear Dr. Molnar and Mr. Bentz:

We have conducted a performance audit of the Southmoreland School District (District) for the period March 19, 2013 through November 10, 2015. We evaluated the District's performance in the following areas:

- Governance
- Hiring and Separations
- School Safety
- Bus Driver Requirements

The audit 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 performed adequately in the areas listed above.

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

January 14, 2016

cc: **SOUTHMORELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board of School Directors

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Background Informationⁱ

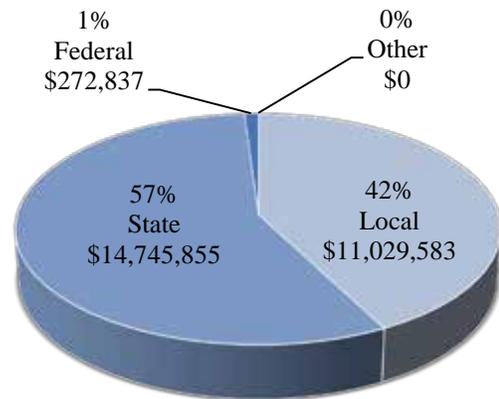
School Characteristics 2014-15 School Year ⁱⁱ	
County	Westmoreland & Fayette
Total Square Miles	43
Resident Population ⁱⁱⁱ	15,119
Number of School Buildings	4
Total Teachers	143
Total Full or Part-Time Support Staff	91
Total Administrators	12
Total Enrollment for Most Recent School Year	1,943
Intermediate Unit Number	7
District Vo-Tech School	Central Westmoreland Career and Technology Center

Mission Statement

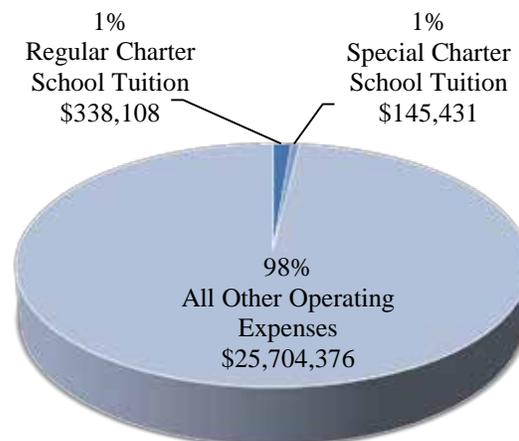
“High quality learning for all.”

Financial Information

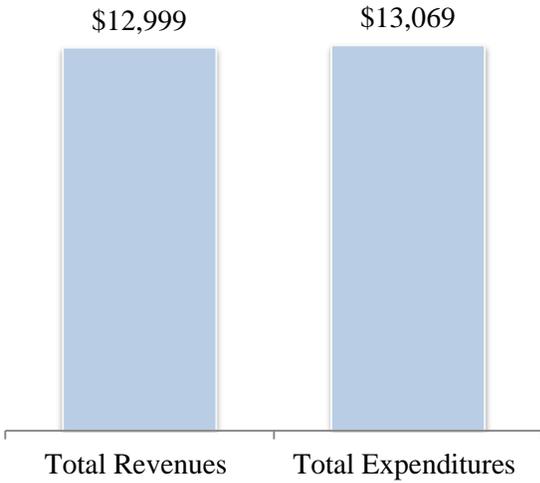
Revenue by Source for 2013-14 School Year



Select Expenditures for 2013-14 School Year

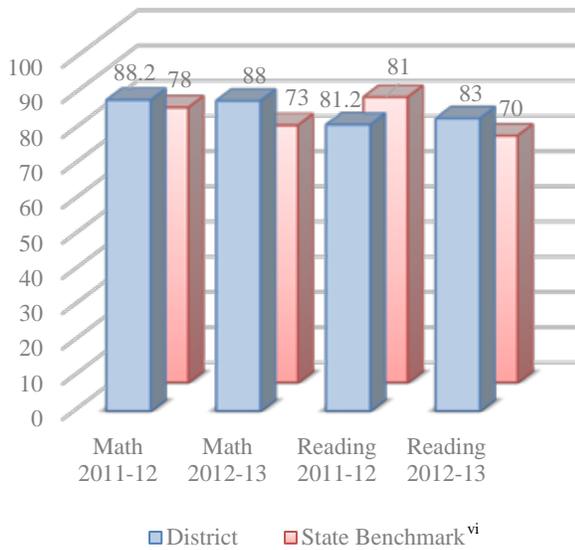


**Dollars Per Student
2013-14 School Year**



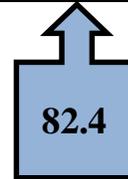
Academic Information

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 of 73% Above or Below	PSSA % School Proficient and Advanced in Reading	PSSA % Statewide Benchmark of 70% Above or Below	Federal Title I Designation (Reward, Priority, Focus, No Designation)^{ix}
Southmoreland Elementary School	90.1	93	20	84	14	No Designation
Southmoreland Middle School	84	93	20	84	14	Reward
Southmoreland Senior High School	69.8	64	9	81	11	No Designation
Southmoreland Primary Center ¹	93.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No Designation

¹ The Southmoreland Primary Center serves Kindergarten and first grade students only. PSSA scores are not applicable (N/A) to this school.

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 released on September 13, 2013, resulted in one finding. As part of our current audit, we determined the status of corrective action taken by the District to implement our prior audit recommendations. We reviewed the District's written response to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), interviewed District personnel, and performed audit procedures as detailed in each status section below.

Auditor General Performance Audit Report Released on September 13, 2013

Prior Finding: **Memorandum of Understanding with Local Law Enforcement Not Updated Timely**

Prior Finding Summary:

Our audit of the District found that it did not have a signed and updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a local law enforcement agency serving the District's schools.

Prior Recommendations:

We recommended that the District should:

1. In consultation with the District's solicitor, immediately review new requirements for MOUs and other school safety issues under the Public School Code (PSC) to ensure compliance with amended safe schools provisions enacted November 17, 2010. The District should make any necessary changes to come into complete compliance with these provisions.
2. Adopt an official Board of School Directors' (Board) policy requiring the District's administration to biennially update and re-execute all MOUs with local law enforcement agencies having jurisdiction over school property and to file a copy with PDE's Office of Safe Schools on a biennial basis, as required by law.

Current Status:

During our current audit, we found that the District did implement our prior audit recommendations. The District has a current signed MOU with the local law enforcement agency. We reviewed this MOU and found it to be in compliance with the PSC. Additionally, on November 14, 2013, the District's Board adopted a policy to biennially update and re-execute all MOUs.

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, PDE, and other concerned entities.

Our audit, conducted under authority of Section 403 of The Fiscal Code,² is not a substitute for the local annual financial audit required by the PSC 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 March 19, 2013 through November 10, 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 controls³ 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, that we consider to be significant 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 significant within the context of our audit objectives are included in this report.

² 72 P.S. § 403

³ 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:

- Governance
- Hiring and Separations
- School Safety
- 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 and administration maintain best practices in overall organizational governance?

- To address this objective, we surveyed the District's current Board, conducted in-depth interviews with the current Superintendent and his or her staff, reviewed board meeting books, District 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 LEA follow the PSC and best practices when hiring new staff?

- To address this objective, we obtained and reviewed the District's hiring policies and procedures. We selected the last three employees hired by the District during the period July 1, 2015 through November 10, 2015, and reviewed documentation to determine if the District complied with the PSC, District policies and procedures, and best practices in hiring new employees.

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 four 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 students had the required driver's license, physical exam, training, background checks, and clearances as outline in applicable laws?⁴ Also, did the District have adequate written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers?
- To address this objective, we selected 5 of the 12 bus drivers hired by the District's bus contractor during the period March 19, 2013 through August 3, 2015, and reviewed documentation to ensure the District complied with bus driver's requirements. 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, 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344(a.1), 24 P.S. § 2070.1a *et seq.*, 75 Pa.C.S. §§ 1508.1 and 1509, and 22 *Pa. Code Chapter 8.*

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, 229 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 significant 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 Adequate Yearly Progress 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} *Ibid.* 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 significant 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.