



FREEDOM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BEAVER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

MARCH 2013

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE - AUDITOR GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Ms. Kathleen Schlegel, Board President
Freedom Area School District
1701 Eighth Avenue
Freedom, Pennsylvania 15042

Dear Governor Corbett and Ms. Schlegel:

We conducted a performance audit of the Freedom Area School District (FASD) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period May 20, 2010, through August 23, 2012, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for the school years ended June 30, 2010, and June 30, 2009. Our audit was conducted pursuant to 72 P.S. § 403 and in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Our audit found that the FASD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

We appreciate the FASD's cooperation during the conduct of the audit.

Sincerely,

March 4, 2013

/s/
EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

cc: **FREEDOM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board Members



Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	1
Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology	3
Findings and Observations	6
Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations	7
Distribution List	9



Executive Summary

Audit Work

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the Freedom Area School District (FASD). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the FASD's compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Our audit scope covered the period May 20, 2010, through August 23, 2012, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objectives, and methodology section of the report. Compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for school years 2009-10 and 2008-09.

District Background

The FASD encompasses approximately 35 square miles. According to 2010 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 11,105. According to District officials, in school year 2009-10 the FASD provided basic educational services to 1,588 pupils through the employment of 118 teachers, 95 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 6 administrators. Lastly, the FASD received more than \$10.5 million in state funding in school year 2009-10.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the FASD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. We report no findings or observations in this report.

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



Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

Scope

What is a school performance audit?

School performance audits allow the 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 PA Department of Education, and other concerned

Our audit, conducted under authority of 72 P.S. § 403, is not a substitute for the local annual 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.

Our audit covered the period May 20, 2010, through August 23, 2012, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012.

Regarding state subsidy and reimbursements, our audit covered school years 2009-10 and 2008-09.

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 Pennsylvania Department of Education 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.

Objectives

What is the difference between a finding and an observation?

Our performance audits may contain findings and/or observations related to our audit objectives. Findings describe noncompliance with a statute, regulation, policy, contract, grant requirement, or administrative procedure. Observations are reported when we believe corrective action should be taken to remedy a potential problem not rising to the level of noncompliance with specific criteria.

Performance audits draw conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence. Evidence is measured against criteria, such as laws and defined business practices. Our audit focused on assessing the FASD's compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. However, as we conducted our audit procedures, we sought to determine answers to the following questions, which serve as our audit objectives:

- ✓ Were professional employees certified for the positions they held?
- ✓ In areas where the District receives state subsidy and reimbursements based on pupil membership (e.g. basic education, special education, and vocational education), did it follow applicable laws and procedures?

- ✓ Does the District have sufficient internal controls to ensure that the membership data it reported to the Pennsylvania Information Management System is complete, accurate, valid and reliable?
- ✓ Did the District, and any contracted vendors, ensure that its current bus drivers are properly qualified, and do they have written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers?
- ✓ Are there any declining fund balances that may impose risk to the District's fiscal viability?
- ✓ Did the District pursue a contract buy-out with an administrator and if so, what was the total cost of the buy-out, what were the reasons for the termination/settlement, and does the current employment contract(s) contain adequate termination provisions?
- ✓ Were there any other areas of concern reported by local auditors, citizens, or other interested parties?
- ✓ Is the District taking appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
- ✓ Did the District have a properly executed and updated Memorandum of Understanding with local law enforcement?

Methodology

Government Auditing Standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings, observations and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings, observations and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

FASD management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the District is in compliance with applicable laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Within the context of our audit objectives, we obtained an understanding of internal controls and assessed whether those controls were properly

What are internal controls?

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;
- Compliance with applicable laws, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures.

designed and implemented. Additionally, we gained a high-level understanding of the District's information technology (IT) environment and evaluated whether internal controls specific to IT were present.

Any significant deficiencies found during the audit are included in this report.

In order to properly plan our audit and to guide us in possible audit areas, we performed analytical procedures in the areas of state subsidies/reimbursement, pupil transportation, and comparative financial information.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to bus driver qualifications, professional employee certification, and financial stability.
- Items such as board meeting minutes, pupil membership records, and reimbursement applications.

Additionally, we interviewed selected administrators and support personnel associated with FASD operations.

Findings and Observations

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

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

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



Distribution List

This report was initially distributed to the superintendent of the school district, the board members, our website address at www.auditor.gen.state.pa.us, and the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
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This report is a matter of public record. Copies of this report may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 318 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. If you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter, you may contact the Department of the Auditor General by accessing our website at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us.

