

METHACTON SCHOOL DISTRICT  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA  
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

NOVEMBER 2010



The Honorable Edward G. Rendell  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Mr. Howard Jones, Board President  
Methacton School District  
1001 Kriebel Mill Road  
Norristown, Pennsylvania 19403

Dear Governor Rendell and Mr. Jones:

We conducted a performance audit of the Methacton School District (MSD) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period July 28, 2006 through September 24, 2009, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for the school years ended June 30, 2008, 2007, 2006 and 2005. 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 MSD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. We appreciate the MSD's cooperation during the conduct of the audit.

Sincerely,

/s/  
JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General

November 5, 2010

cc: **METHACTON SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board Members



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## **Executive Summary**

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### **Audit Work**

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the Methacton School District (MSD). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the District's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures; and to determine the status of corrective action taken by the MSD in response to our prior audit recommendations.

Our audit scope covered the period July 28, 2006 through September 24, 2009, 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 2007-08, 2007-06, 2005-06 and 2004-05.

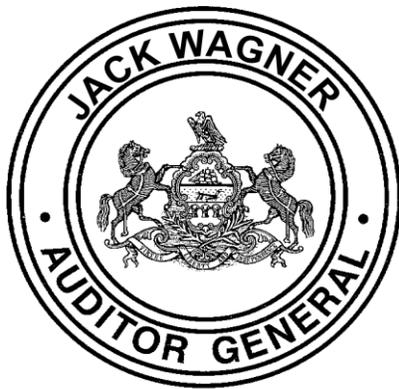
### **District Background**

The MSD encompasses approximately 32 square miles. According to the 2000 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 30,179. According to District officials, in school year 2007-08 the MSD provided basic educational services to 5,440 pupils through the employment of 431 teachers, 323 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 31 administrators. Lastly, the MSD received more than \$14 million in state funding in school year 2007-08.

### **Audit Conclusion and Results**

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

**Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations.** With regard to the status of our prior audit recommendations to the MSD from an audit we conducted of the 2003-04 and 2002-03 school years, we found the MSD had taken appropriate corrective action in implementing our recommendations pertaining to internal control weaknesses regarding bus drivers' qualifications (see page 7).



## Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

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### 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 entities.

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 July 28, 2006 through September 24, 2009.

Regarding state subsidy and reimbursements, our audit covered school years 2008-08, 2006-07, 2005-06 and 2004-05.

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 Department of Education (DE) 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 law, regulation, 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, regulations, and defined business practices. Our audit focused on assessing the MSD's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, 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:

- ✓ Are there any declining fund balances which may impose risk to the fiscal viability of the District?
- ✓ Did the District pursue a contract buyout with an administrator and if so, what was the total cost of the buy-out, reasons for the termination/settlement, and do 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 which warrant further attention during our audit?
- ✓ Is the District taking appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
- ✓ Did the District use an outside vendor to maintain its membership data and if so, are there internal controls in place related to vendor access?
- ✓ Did the District take appropriate corrective action to address recommendations made in our prior audits?

## Methodology

*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, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures.

*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 and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

MSD management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the District is in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, 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 designed and implemented.

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 membership, pupil transportation, and comparative financial information.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to bus driver qualifications, and financial stability.
- Board meeting minutes.

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

Lastly, to determine the status of our audit recommendations made in a prior audit report released on January 12, 2007, we reviewed the MSD's response to DE dated September 11, 2007. We then performed additional audit procedures targeting the previously reported matters.

## **Findings and Observations**

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**F**or the audited period, our audit of the Methacton School District resulted in no findings or observations.

## Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Methacton School District (MSD) for the school years 2003-04 and 2002-03 resulted in one reported observation. The observation pertained to internal control weaknesses regarding bus drivers' qualifications. As part of our current audit, we determined the status of corrective action taken by the District to implement our prior recommendations. We analyzed the MSD Board's written response provided to the Department of Education, performed audit procedures, and questioned District personnel regarding the prior observation. As shown below, we found that the MSD did implement recommendations related to internal control weaknesses regarding bus drivers' qualifications.

<i>School Years 2003-04 and 2002-03 Auditor General Performance Audit Report</i>		
<i>Prior Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation Status</i>	
<p><u><i>I. Observation: Internal Control Weaknesses Regarding Bus Drivers' Qualifications</i></u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a process to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether prospective and current employees of the District or the District's transportation contractor(s) have been charged with or convicted of crimes that, even though not disqualifying under state law, affect their suitability to have direct contact with children.</li> <li>Implement written policies and procedures to ensure the District is notified when drivers are charged with or convicted of crimes that call into question their suitability to continue to have direct contact with children and to ensure that the District considers on a case-by-case basis whether any conviction of a current employee</li> </ol>	<p><b>Background:</b></p> <p>Our prior audit found that neither the District nor the District's transportation contractors had written policies or procedures in place to ensure that they were notified if current employees charged with or convicted of serious criminal offenses which should be considered for the purpose of determining an individual's continued suitability to be in direct contact with children. We considered this lack of written policies and procedures to be an internal control weakness that could result in the continued employment of individuals who may pose a risk if allowed to continue to have direct contact with children.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b></p> <p>Our current found that the District complied with our prior recommendations by adopting Board Policy No. 810.2, which states at Section 3:</p> <p>District drivers and/or the district's transportation contract carriers shall be responsible to inform the District in writing at the beginning of each school year whether or not they or any of their employees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have been charged with, subsequent to approval as a District bus driver, with a criminal offense that would bar their employment as bus drivers or contracted service providers.</li> <li>Were charged with a crime deemed serious under the criteria established by law.</li> <li>Have been charged with or convicted of crimes that affect their suitability to have direct contact with students.</li> </ol>

<p>should lead to an employment action.</p>		<p>We commend the District's corrective actions in response to our observation. We believe the policy could be further strengthened by requiring that the District be informed in writing more frequently, e.g. quarterly, and by requiring that drivers and contractors inform the District of any individual violations as soon as they are aware of them.</p>
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## **Distribution List**

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This report was initially distributed to the superintendent of the school district, the board members, our website address at [www.auditorgen.state.pa.us](http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us), and the following:

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