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News for Immediate Release

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Auditor General DePasquale Finds School Bus Driver Qualification Problems

School audits in Lancaster, 27 other counties found drivers with criminal convictions, missing paperwork

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today warned school officials statewide to be extra vigilant with bus driver background checks after auditors discovered 10 drivers in various school districts who should have been banned from transporting students because of criminal convictions.

In addition to 10 criminal convictions, auditors found that since 2013, 58 school districts in 28 counties were missing driver documentation or had drivers with one or more missing certifications or criminal background checks.

“Protecting the safety of students must be a top priority for every single school in the state,” DePasquale said. “It is outrageous that my team found bus drivers with criminal records that – by law – should have precluded them from driving students.

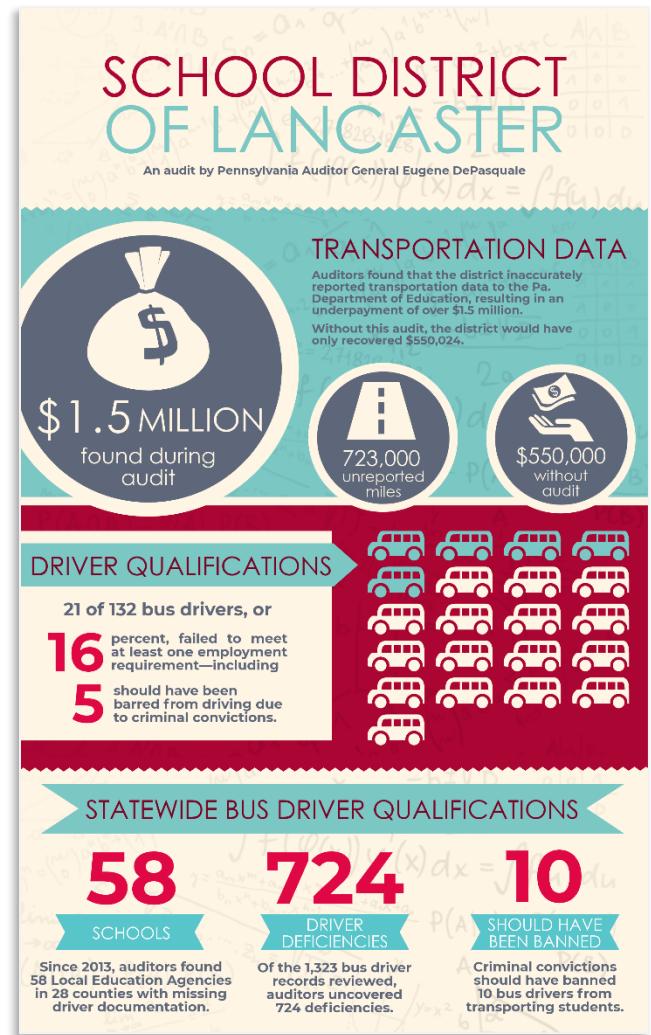
“The only way to prevent the wrong people from transporting students is for school districts to make sure all drivers are properly vetted to ensure they qualify to transport and interact with students,” DePasquale said, noting many schools that use bus contractors are under the false impression that the contractor is responsible for these checks under the Public School Code and for ensuring that operators have the proper driving credentials under the Vehicle Code.

“Let me be very clear: it is the responsibility of the schools to make sure all drivers have the appropriate qualifications and background clearances to interact with students. School officials are also charged with maintaining the driver documentation in school files,” he said.

“School district administrators: these are your students; you are responsible for their safety.”

In the case of the School District of Lancaster, which uses a contractor to transport students, auditors found 21 of 132 bus drivers — 16 percent — driving for the district as of June 15, 2017, failed to meet at least one employment requirement.

Five of those 21 bus drivers were ineligible for employment when hired based upon criminal convictions:



- One driver had a criminal conviction requiring an absolute ban on employment as a bus driver based on the Public School Code. After auditors brought this issue to the attention of district officials, the district notified the contractor and requested corrective action. The driver was removed from transporting district students.
- Three drivers had criminal convictions that barred employment until 2022, 2024, and 2025 based on 2011 Public School Code changes that required ‘look-back’ periods up to 10 years for specific offenses before being eligible for employment as a school bus driver. These three drivers no longer transport district students.
- One driver was employed for three years despite not being eligible for employment on the date of hire due to a criminal conviction requiring a look-back period. Because the look-back period was satisfied as of September 2017, the district determined this driver could remain employed.

A sixth driver in the School District of Lancaster had a criminal conviction from another state that, from the limited information listed on the documentation, appears to require an absolute ban from contact with students. Subsequently, the district obtained additional information and determined that the individual is eligible to drive, so the driver has not been relieved of bus driving duties.

“These individuals had convictions for simple assault, delivery of controlled substances, and possession of firearms without a license, and yet they were driving students,” he said. “That is absolutely ludicrous.”

In addition to the criminal convictions, 11 drivers did not have evidence of a valid driver’s license, proof of completion of school bus driver skills and safety training, and/or evidence of passing a physical examination. Another five drivers were missing criminal history clearances therefore the district could not determine if the drivers were suitable to transport students.

724 deficiencies found statewide

In addition to the School District of Lancaster, auditors found statewide that since 2013, another three school districts used bus drivers who were barred from driving students because of criminal histories:

- **Chester Upland School District, Delaware County:** One driver with an aggravated assault conviction.
- **Penn Hills School District, Allegheny County:** One driver with a felony drug conviction and one driver with an aggravated assault conviction.
- **School District of the City of Philadelphia:** One driver with aggravated assault and one driver with an arson conviction.

In those districts where auditors identified drivers that were ineligible because of criminal convictions those districts immediately removed them from transporting students.

Lancaster School District Audit Finds District is Owed \$1.5 million in Transportation Funding

The latest audit of the School District of Lancaster, which covered July 2012 to June 2016, found errors in transportation data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), resulting in the district being owed \$1,572,510.

The district failed to report to PDE:

- The accurate total miles students were transported for the 2012-13 through 2015-16 school years. The district failed to report approximately 33,000, 26,000, 319,000 and 345,000 miles traveled for the 2012-13 through 2015-16 school years, respectively.
- The accurate hours for vehicles moving in slow traffic, or an average of 15 miles-per-hour per run.
- The accurate number of secondary students transported that reside within two miles of school, known as non-reimbursable students.

The School District of Lancaster has implemented corrective action to avoid such errors in the future, and PDE is currently processing the reimbursement.

"I am pleased to report that in most – but not in all cases – where we conducted a subsequent audit, the school districts with bus driver deficiencies have moved to correct problems we identified," DePasquale said. "That said, I will follow up in future audits to ensure that nothing has fallen through the cracks."

"Problems with bus driver background checks and certifications are found across the board: in urban, suburban and rural school districts," he said. "It is imperative that school officials use due diligence in vetting and monitoring all bus drivers to ensure the safety of students."

The School District of Lancaster audit report is available online at: www.PaAuditor.gov.

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EDITOR'S NOTES:

Local Education Agencies (school districts, charter schools, intermediate units, and area vocational-technical schools) are required by the Public School Code to have the following documentation on all bus drivers:

- Valid driver's license with S-endorsement for operation of a school bus.
- Annual physical examination.
- Criminal Background Check.
- Federal Criminal History Record.
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance.
- Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Form PDE 6004.

The following list ([click the graphic for full-size version with hyperlinks](#)) shows which audits found deficiencies in bus driver records. Note that many of them corrected the deficiencies immediately and auditors verified the corrective action in subsequent audits as noted with asterisks. The lack of an asterisk indicates that a subsequent audit has not yet been conducted to verify corrective action was taken.

Bus Driver Qualifications Findings Released Between Jan. 15, 2013, and Jan. 30, 2018

County	Local Education Agency	Audit Period Begin	Audit Period End	Release Date	Drivers Reviewed	Deficiencies**	Ineligible Drivers Found
Adams	Lincoln IU 12*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	5/6/2013	35	35	0
Allegheny	Penn Hills SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2015	5/18/2016	25	25	2
	Moon Area SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2015	2/16/2017	30	2	0
	Clairton City SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2016	11/30/2017	15	15	0
	Duquesne City SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2016	12/11/2017	18	6	0
	Avonworth SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2016	1/4/2018	47	5	0
	Brentwood Borough	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	11/13/2014	9	9	0
	Sto-Rox SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2015	1/10/2018	34	32	0
	Sto-Rox SD#	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	9/13/2013	22	3	0
	Woodland Hills SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	10/28/2013	37	22	0
	Wilkinsburg Borough SD	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	12/6/2013	29	22	0
Armstrong	Lenape AVT*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	3/27/2014	5	1	0
	Apollo Ridge SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	9/18/2014	23	6	0
Beaver	Lincoln Park Performing Arts CS	7/1/2011	6/30/2014	9/21/2016	11	11	0
Bucks	Morrisville Borough SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	2/27/2015	4	3	0
	Neshaminy SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	2/27/2015	10	1	0
Cambria	Northern Cambria SD	7/1/2012	12/18/2015	2/18/2016	30	30	0
	Central Cambria SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2015	6/2/2016	42	32	0
Cameron	Cameron County SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	6/24/2013	5	2	0
Clarion	Keystone SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	3/4/2013	22	7	0
Clearfield	West Branch Area SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	2/5/2015	5	3	0
	Philipsburg Osceola Area SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2014	1/29/2016	15	15	0
Crawford	Crawford Central D.*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	4/24/2013	51	3	0
Cumberland	Camp Hill SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	12/11/2013	1	1	0
Dauphin	Millersburg Area SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2015	12/21/2016	17	17	0
Delaware	Chester Upland SD#	7/1/2006	6/30/2010	6/5/2013	38	6	0
	Chester Upland SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2016	12/5/2017	14	17	1
	Delaware County IU 25	7/1/2008	6/30/2012	8/14/2014	1	1	0
Eric	Corry Area SD#	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	6/3/2013	6	9	0
	Corry Area SD*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	6/19/2014	13	9	0
	Iroquois SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	6/24/2013	5	4	0

<u>County</u>	<u>Local Education Agency</u>	<u>Audit Period Begin</u>	<u>Audit Period End</u>	<u>Release Date</u>	<u>Drivers Reviewed</u>	<u>Deficiencies**</u>	<u>Ineligible Drivers Found</u>
Eric	Fort Leboeuf SD*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	12/6/2013	15	1	0
	Girard SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	10/16/2013	6	8	0
	North East SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2014	11/5/2015	15	2	0
	General McLane SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2015	9/8/2016	27	27	0
Fayette	Brownsville Area SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	1/15/2015	25	24	0
	Laurel Highlands SD	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	9/25/2013	54	48	0
Juniata	Juniata County SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	6/24/2013	10	2	0
Lancaster	Lancaster SD	7/1/2012	6/30/2016	1/30/2018	132	21	5
Lawrence	Ellwood City Area SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	4/3/2013	7	3	0
	Union Area SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	6/5/2013	13	12	0
	Lehigh	Allentown City SD	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	9/26/2013	25	10
Mercer	Sharon City SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	4/9/2013	5	2	0
	Lakeview SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	6/5/2013	12	8	0
	Farrell Area SD	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	6/19/2013	13	3	0
	Commodore Perry SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	2/11/2014	13	20	0
	West Middlesex Area SD#	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	12/19/2013	5	2	0
	West Middlesex Area SD#	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	12/19/2013	5	12	0
	Sharpsville Area SD*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	3/6/2014	14	5	0
	Midwestern IU 4*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	3/7/2014	6	5	0
	Hermitage SD*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	6/19/2014	11	16	0
	Montgomery	Cheltenham Township SD#	7/1/2008	6/30/2012	4/10/2014	25	2
Philadelphia	Philadelphia City SD	7/1/2008	6/30/2014	5/10/2016	49	21	2
Potter	Austin Area SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	3/19/2015	7	6	0
Schuylkill	North Schuylkill SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	6/4/2015	39	2	0
Somerset	Turkeyfoot Valley Area SD*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	4/3/2013	20	20	0
Venagno	Franklin Area*	7/1/2008	6/30/2010	4/24/2013	13	20	0
	Oil City Area SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	10/16/2014	47	14	0
	Venango Co. AVT*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	7/18/2013	33	10	0
	Valley Grove SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	5/15/2014	10	9	0
Washington	Chartiers Houston SD*	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	1/8/2015	24	24	0
Westmoreland	Hempfield Area SD	7/1/2010	6/30/2012	12/4/2014	24	11	0

Denotes deficiency not corrected in subsequent audit

* Denotes deficiency corrected in subsequent audit

** Districts must maintain records of 6 documents/clearances for each driver

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Source: Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General

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