

# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

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## Athens Area School District Bradford County, Pennsylvania

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September 2016



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Craig Stage, Superintendent  
Athens Area School District  
401 West Frederick Street, Suite 1  
Athens, Pennsylvania 18810

Mr. Robert Fauver, Board President  
Athens Area School District  
401 West Frederick Street, Suite 1  
Athens, Pennsylvania 18810

Dear Mr. Stage and Mr. Fauver:

We have conducted a performance audit of the Athens Area School District (District) for the period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2015, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objective, and methodology section of the report. We evaluated the District's performance in the following areas as further described in the appendix of this report:

- Contracting
- Administrator Contract Buy-Out
- Bus Driver Requirements
- School Safety

The audit was conducted pursuant to Section 403 of The Fiscal Code (72 P.S. § 403), 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

September 8, 2016

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

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## Background Information

School Characteristics 2014-15 School Year <sup>A</sup>	
County	Bradford
Total Square Miles	191
Resident Population <sup>B</sup>	14,779
Number of School Buildings	4
Total Teachers	143
Total Full or Part-Time Support Staff	81 FT/26 PT
Total Administrators	12
Total Enrollment for Most Recent School Year	2,111
Intermediate Unit Number	BLaST IU 17
District Vo-Tech School	Northern Tier Career Center

A - Source: Information provided by the District administration and is unaudited.

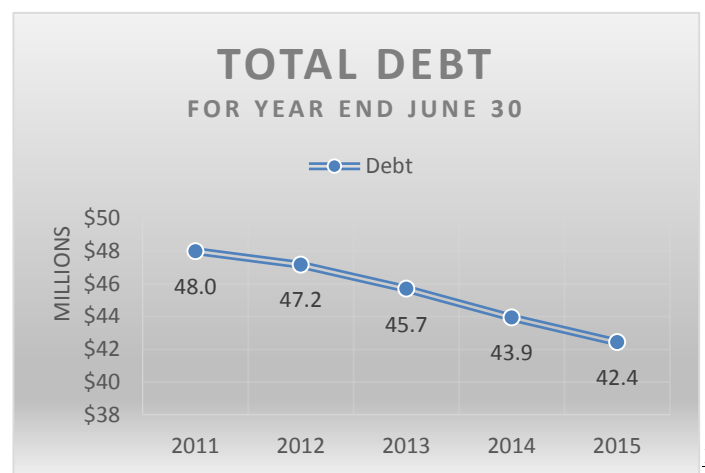
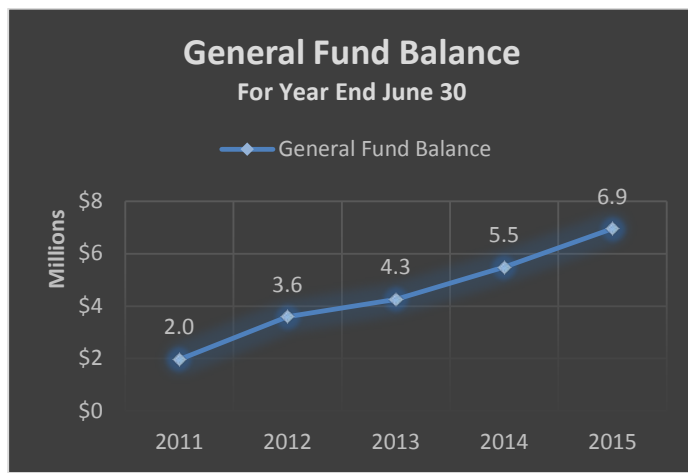
B - Source: United States Census  
<http://www.census.gov/2010census>

## Mission Statement<sup>A</sup>

"Building Foundations for Future Success."

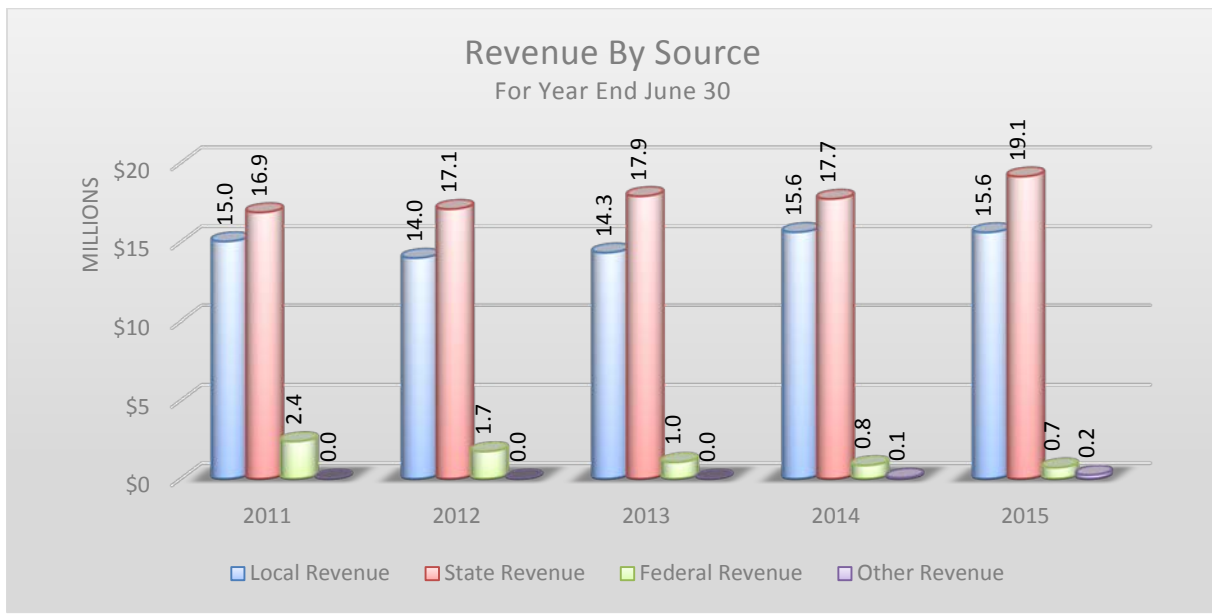
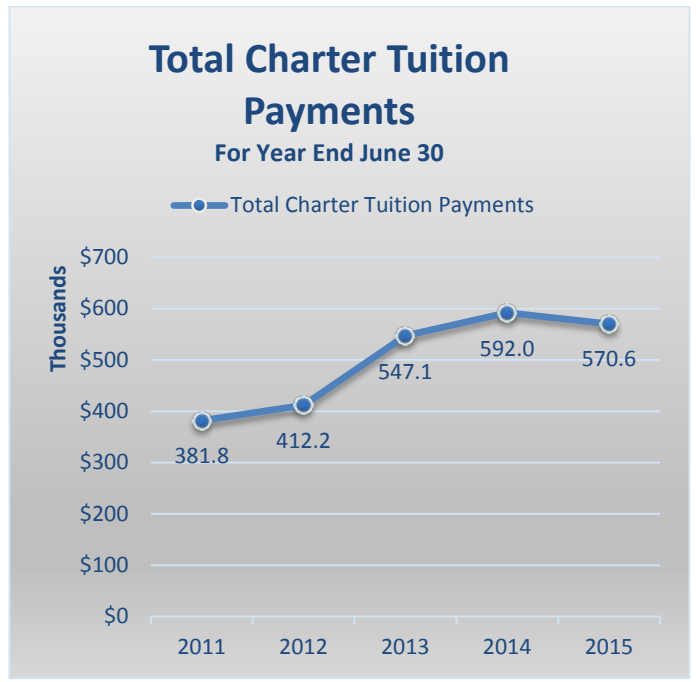
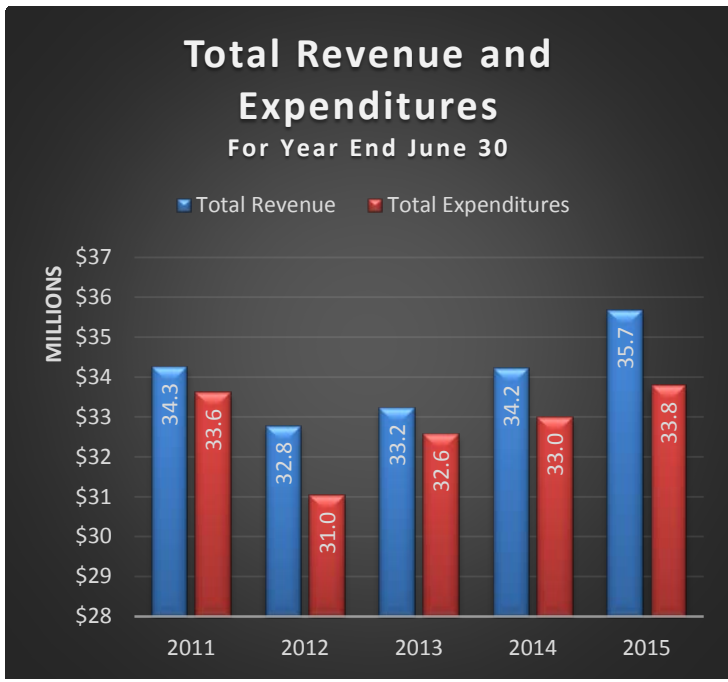
## Financial Information

The following pages contain financial information about the District obtained from annual financial data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and available on PDE's public website. This information was not audited and is presented for **informational purposes only**.



<sup>1</sup> Total Debt is comprised of Short-Term Borrowing, General Obligation Bonds, Authority Building Obligations, Other Long-Term Debt, Other Post-Employment Benefits and Compensated Absences.

## Financial Information Continued



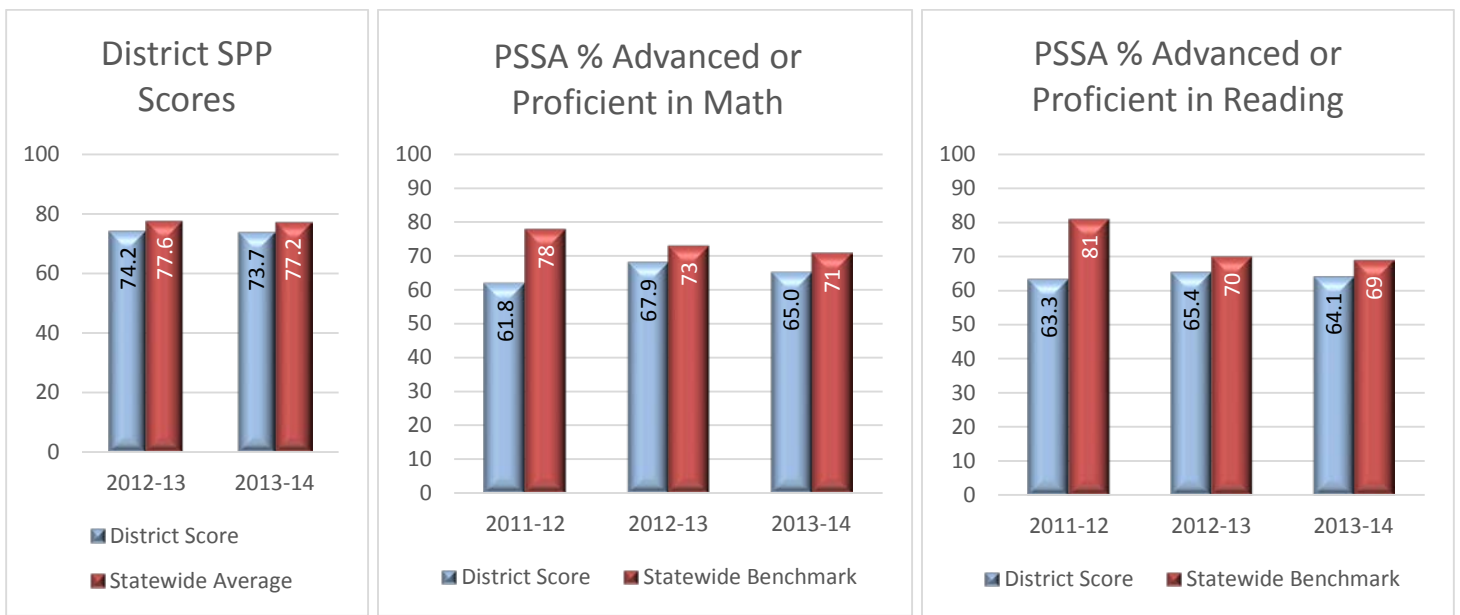
## Academic Information

The following table and charts consist of School Performance Profile (SPP) scores and Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) results for the entire District obtained from PDE's data files.<sup>2</sup> These scores are presented in the District's audit report for **informational purposes only**, and they were not audited by our Department.

SPP benchmarks represent the statewide average of all district school buildings in the Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup> PSSA benchmarks and goals are determined by PDE each school year and apply to all public school entities.<sup>4</sup> District SPP and PSSA scores were calculated using an average of all of the individual school buildings within the District. Scores below SPP statewide averages and PSSA benchmarks/goals are presented in red.

### Districtwide SPP and PSSA Scores

District	SPP Scores		PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Math			PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Reading		
	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<i>Statewide Benchmark</i>	77.6	77.2	78	73	71	81	70	69
<i>Athens Area SD</i>	74.2	73.7	61.8	67.9	65.0	63.3	65.4	64.1
<i>SPP Grade<sup>5</sup></i>	C	C						



<sup>2</sup> PDE is the sole source of academic data presented in this report. All academic data was obtained from PDE's publically available website.

<sup>3</sup> Statewide averages for SPP scores were calculated based on all district school buildings throughout the Commonwealth, excluding charter and cyber charter schools.

<sup>4</sup> PSSA benchmarks apply to all district school buildings, charters, and cyber charters. 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 and 2013-14 school years, the state benchmarks reflect the statewide goals based on annual measurable objectives established by PDE.

<sup>5</sup> The following letter grades are based on a 0-100 point system: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (59 or below).

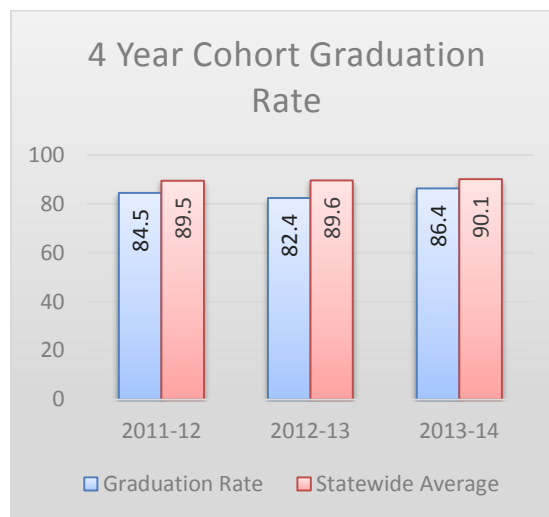
## Individual School Building SPP and PSSA Scores

The following table consists of SPP scores and PSSA results for each of the District's school buildings. Any blanks in PSSA data means that PDE did not publish a score for that school for that particular year.<sup>6</sup>

School Name	SPP Scores		PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Math			PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Reading		
	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<i>Statewide Benchmark</i>	<i>77.6</i>	<i>77.2</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Athens Area High School</i>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>53.9</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>67.5</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>64.0</b>
<i>Audrielle Lynch-Ellen Bustin Elementary School</i>	<b>76.7</b>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>70.1</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>67.6</b>
<i>Harlan Rowe Middle School</i>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>80.8</b>	N/A	<b>74.1</b>	<b>80.4</b>	N/A	<b>69.3</b>	<b>69.0</b>
<i>SRU Elementary School</i>	<b>70.1</b>	<b>66.3</b>	N/A	<b>68.4</b>	<b>57.5</b>	N/A	<b>56.5</b>	<b>55.7</b>

## 4 Year Cohort Graduation Rates

The cohort graduation rates are a calculation of the percentage of students who have graduated with a regular high school diploma within a designated number of years since the student first entered high school. The rate is determined for a cohort of students who have all entered high school for the first time during the same school year.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> PDE's data does not provide any further information regarding the reason a score was not published.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Cohort-Graduation-Rate-.aspx#.V1BFCdTD-JA>.

## **Finding**

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



## **Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations**

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**O**ur prior audit of the District resulted in no findings or observations.

## **Appendix: Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology**

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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,<sup>8</sup> 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 July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2015. In addition, the scope of each individual audit objective is detailed on the next page.

The District's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls<sup>9</sup> 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.

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<sup>8</sup> 72 P.S. § 403.

<sup>9</sup> 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:

- ✓ Contracting
- ✓ Administrator Contract Buy-Out
- ✓ Bus Driver Requirements
- ✓ School Safety

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

- ✓ Did the District ensure that its significant contracts were current and were properly obtained, approved, executed, and monitored?

To address this objective, we reviewed the District's procurement and contract monitoring policies and procedures. We obtained a list of contracts for goods and services that were in effect for the 2014-15 school year.<sup>10</sup> We judgmentally selected 6 out of 11 contracts for detailed testing. We selected both transportation contracts along with the District's contract with the Intermediate Unit. We also selected the District's food service contract, contract for professional development of staff, and the District's contract with a vendor for office supplies. Testing included a review of the procurement documents to determine if the contract was procured in accordance with the Public School Code and District policies. We also reviewed documents to determine if the District properly monitored the selected contracts. Finally, we reviewed board meeting minutes and the Board of School Directors' Statements of Financial Interest to determine if any board member had a conflict of interest in approving the selected contracts. Our review of this objective disclosed no reportable issues.

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<sup>10</sup> We did not test the completeness of this list.

- ✓ 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 did the current employment contract(s) contain adequate termination provisions?

To address this objective, we reviewed the contract, Act 93 agreements, board meeting minutes, leave, and payroll records for the three administrators who separated from employment with the District during the period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2015. Our review of this objective disclosed no reportable issues.

- ✓ Did the District ensure that bus drivers transporting District students had the required driver's license, physical exam, training, background checks, and clearances as outlined in applicable laws?<sup>11</sup> Also, did the District have adequate written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers?

To address this objective, we selected all five bus drivers hired by the District's transportation bus contractors during the period July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2016. We reviewed documentation to ensure the District complied with bus driver 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. Our review of this objective disclosed no reportable issues.

- ✓ 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. Due to the sensitive nature of school safety, the results of our review of this objective area are not described in our audit report. The results of our review of school safety are shared with District officials and, if deemed necessary, PDE.

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<sup>11</sup> 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**

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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  
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Harrisburg, PA 17126

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400 North Third Street - Box 1724  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

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Executive Director  
Pennsylvania School Boards Association  
400 Bent Creek Boulevard  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

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