

BURRELL SCHOOL DISTRICT
WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

JANUARY 2010

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

Mr. Scott Fisher, Board President
Burrell School District
1021 Puckety Church Road
Lower Burrell, Pennsylvania 15068

Dear Governor Rendell and Mr. Fisher:

We conducted a performance audit of the Burrell School District (BSD) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period February 1, 2007 through June 18, 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 BSD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

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

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

January 15, 2010

cc: **BURRELL SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board Members

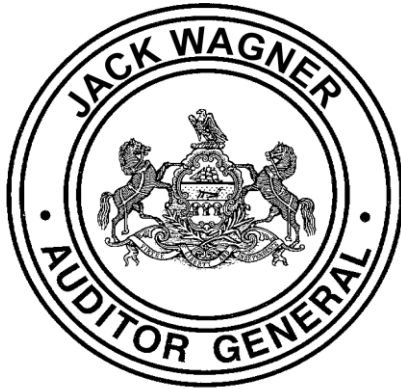


Table of Contents

	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 Burrell School District (BSD). 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 BSD in response to our prior audit recommendations.

Our audit scope covered the period February 1, 2007 through June 18, 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, 2006-07, 2005-06 and 2004-05.

District Background

The BSD encompasses approximately 27 square miles. According to 2000 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 14,848. According to District officials, in school year 2007-08 the BSD provided basic educational services to 2,023 pupils through the employment of 135 teachers, 82 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 13 administrators. Lastly, the BSD received more than \$8.9 million in state funding in school year 2007-08.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the BSD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. For the audited period, our audit of the BSD resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and

Observations. With regard to the status of our prior audit recommendations to the BSD from an audit we conducted of the 2003-04 and 2002-03 school years, we found the BSD had taken appropriate corrective action in implementing our recommendations pertaining to error in classifying a resident student (see page 7).



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 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 February 1, 2007 through June 18, 2009, except for the review of outside vendor access to the District's student accounting applications which was completed on June 1, 2009.

Regarding state subsidy and reimbursements, our audit covered school years 2007-08, 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 BSD'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:

- ✓ 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?
- ✓ Did the District follow applicable laws and procedures in areas dealing with pupil membership and ensure that adequate provisions were taken to protect the data?

- ✓ 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 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.

BSD's 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:

- Items such as Board meeting minutes, pupil membership records, and reimbursement applications.

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

Lastly, to determine the status of our audit recommendations made in a prior audit report released on November 2, 2007, we reviewed the BSD's response to DE dated January 15, 2008. We then performed additional audit procedures targeting the previously reported matters.

Findings and Observations

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

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Burrell School District (BSD) for the school years 2003-04 and 2002-03 resulted in one reported finding. The finding pertained to an error in classifying a resident student. 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 BSD Board's written response provided to the Department of Education (DE), performed audit procedures, and questioned District personnel regarding the prior finding. As shown below, we found that the BSD did implement recommendations related to the error in classifying a resident student.

<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. Finding: Error in Classifying a Resident Student Resulted in a Reimbursement Overpayment of \$6,739</i></u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perform an internal audit prior to submission of membership reports to DE to ensure all students are classified correctly. 2. DE should amend the District's membership reports and adjust the District's allocations to recover the overpayment of \$6,739. 	<p>Background:</p> <p>Our prior audit of pupil membership reports submitted to DE for the 2003-04 school year found that the reports were inaccurate. The inaccuracies resulted in an overpayment of \$6,739 in tuition for children placed in private homes.</p>	<p>Current Status:</p> <p>Our current audit found that the child accounting coordinator now performs an internal audit before submitting reports to DE.</p> <p>Based on the results of our current audit, we determined the District <u>did</u> take appropriate corrective action.</p> <p>The District's allocations were adjusted by DE. The overpayment of \$6,739 was deducted from the District's basic education funding on June 1, 2009.</p>



Distribution List

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

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

The Honorable Gerald Zahorchak, D.Ed.
Secretary of Education
1010 Harristown Building #2
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

The Honorable Robert M. McCord
State Treasurer
Room 129 - Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Senator Jeffrey Piccola
Chair
Senate Education Committee
173 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Senator Andrew Dinniman
Democratic Chair
Senate Education Committee
183 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Representative James Roebuck
Chair
House Education Committee
208 Irvis Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Representative Paul Clymer
Republican Chair
House Education Committee
216 Ryan Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Ms. Barbara Nelson
Director, Bureau of Budget and
Fiscal Management
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

Dr. David Davare
Director of Research Services
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
P.O. Box 2042
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055



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.

