

# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

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## Gettysburg Area School District Adams County, Pennsylvania

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August 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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**EUGENE A. DePASQUALE  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Dr. Jason C. Perrin, Superintendent  
Gettysburg Area School District  
900 Biglerville Road  
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325

Mr. Kenneth Hassinger, Board President  
Gettysburg Area School District  
900 Biglerville Road  
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania 17325

Dear Dr. Perrin and Mr. Hassinger:

We have conducted a performance audit of the Gettysburg Area School District (District) for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2019, 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:

- Transportation Operations
- Nonresident Student Data
- Reimbursement for District Construction Projects
- Bus Driver Requirements
- Administrative Buyout

We also evaluated the application of best practices in the area of school safety. Due to the sensitive nature of this issue and the need for the results of this review to be confidential, we did not include the results in this report. However, we communicated the results of our review of school safety to District officials, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and other appropriate officials as deemed necessary.

The audit was conducted pursuant to Sections 402 and 403 of The Fiscal Code (72 P.S. §§ 402 and 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 bulleted areas listed above.

Dr. Jason C. Perrin  
Mr. Kenneth Hassinger  
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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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eugene A. DePasquale  
Auditor General

August 4, 2020

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

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## Background Information

School Characteristics 2018-19 School Year <sup>A</sup>	
County	Adams
Total Square Miles	182.3
Number of School Buildings	5
Total Teachers	237
Total Full or Part-Time Support Staff	121 Full-time & 29 Part-time
Total Administrators	24
Total Enrollment for Most Recent School Year	3,102
Intermediate Unit Number	12
District Career and Technical School	Gettysburg Tech Prep

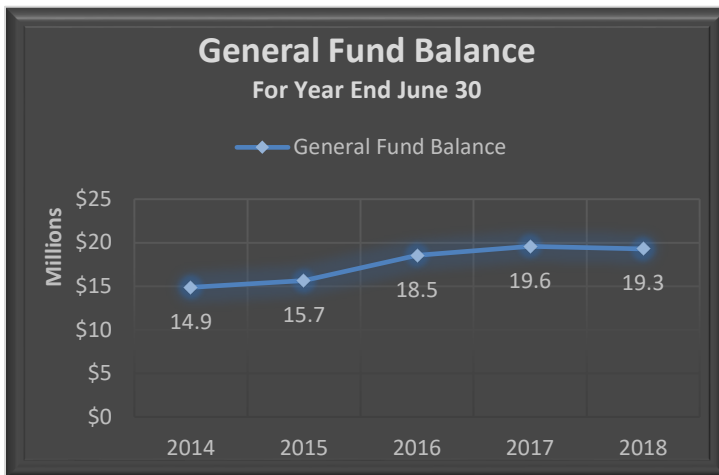
A - Source: Information provided by the District administration and is unaudited.

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

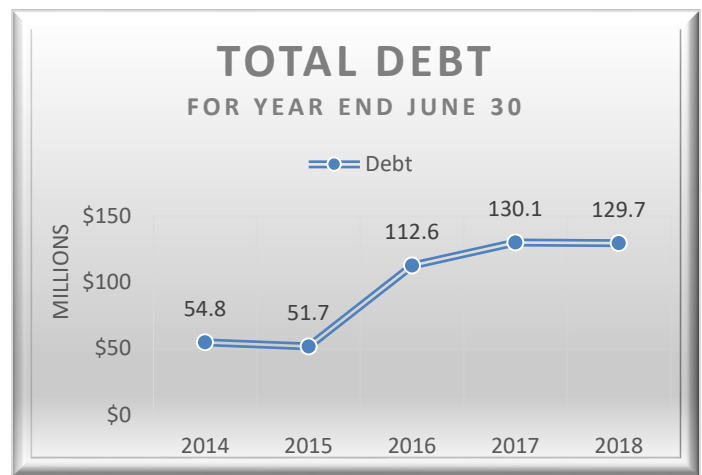
Gettysburg Area School District, in partnership with the family and community, is dedicated to excellence and committed to maximizing every student's opportunity to reach their full potential for achievement. Our purpose is to provide a safe and healthy environment in which all students can learn. We embrace our responsibility in developing a caring school community that enables all students to become active and productive members of our diverse and ever-changing global society.

## Financial Information

The following pages contain financial information about the Gettysburg Area School District (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**.

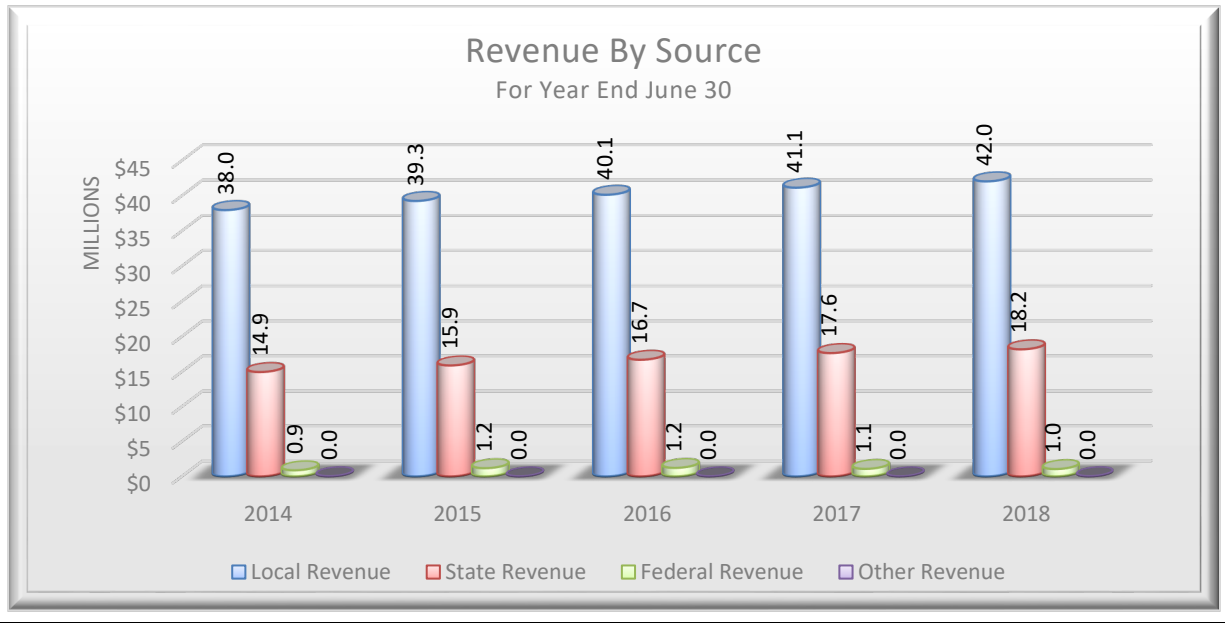
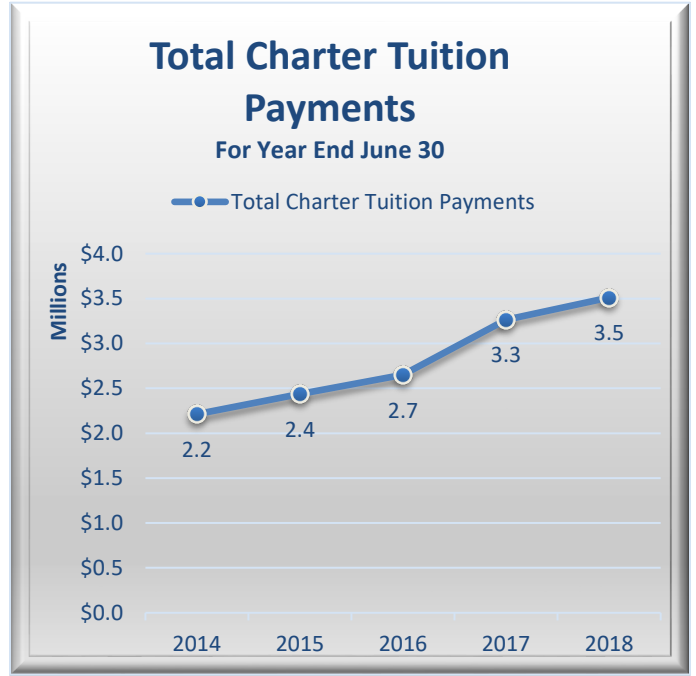
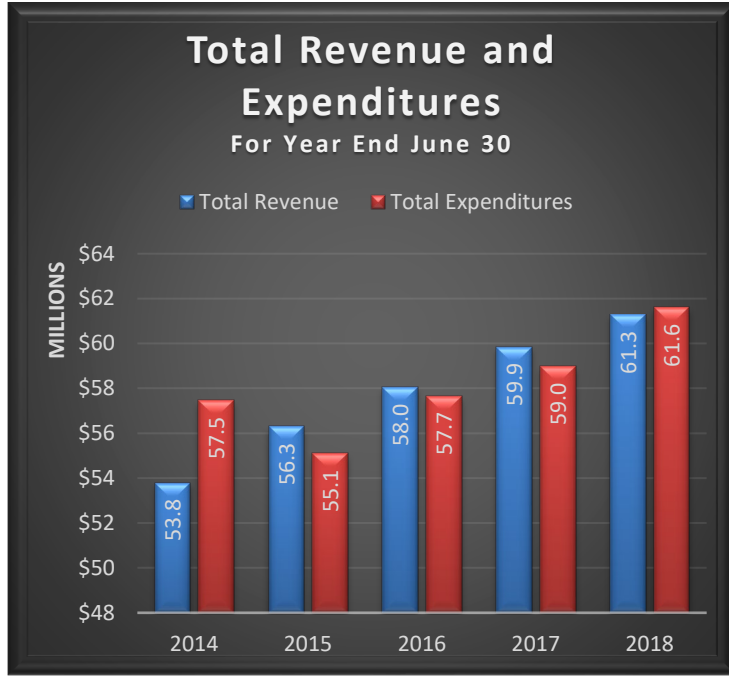


**Note:** General Fund Balance is comprised of the District's Committed, Assigned and Unassigned Fund Balances.



**Note:** Total Debt is comprised of Short-Term Borrowing, General Obligation Bonds, Authority Building Obligations, Other Long-Term Debt, Other Post-Employment Benefits, Compensated Absences and Net Pension Liability.

## Financial Information Continued

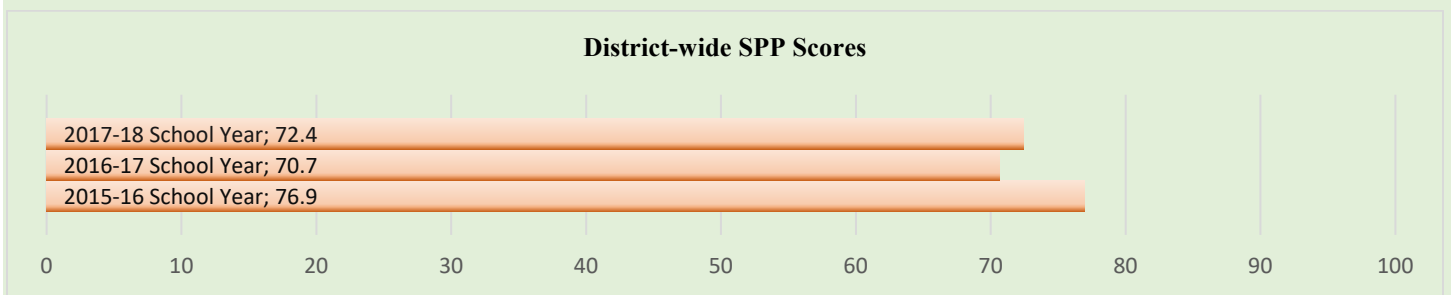


## Academic Information

The graphs on the following pages present the District-wide School Performance Profile (SPP) scores, Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores, Keystone Exam results, and 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for the District obtained from PDE's data files for the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years.<sup>1</sup> The District's individual school building scores are presented in Appendix B. These scores are provided in this audit report for **informational purposes only**, and they were not audited by our Department.

### What is a SPP score?

A SPP score serves as a benchmark for schools to reflect on successes, achievements, and yearly growth. PDE issues a SPP score annually using a 0-100 scale for all school buildings in the Commonwealth, which is calculated based on standardized testing (i.e., PSSA and Keystone exam scores), student improvement, advance course offerings, and attendance and graduation rates. Generally speaking, a SPP score of 70 or above is considered to be a passing rate.<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> PDE is the sole source of academic data presented in this report. All academic data was obtained from PDE's publicly available website.

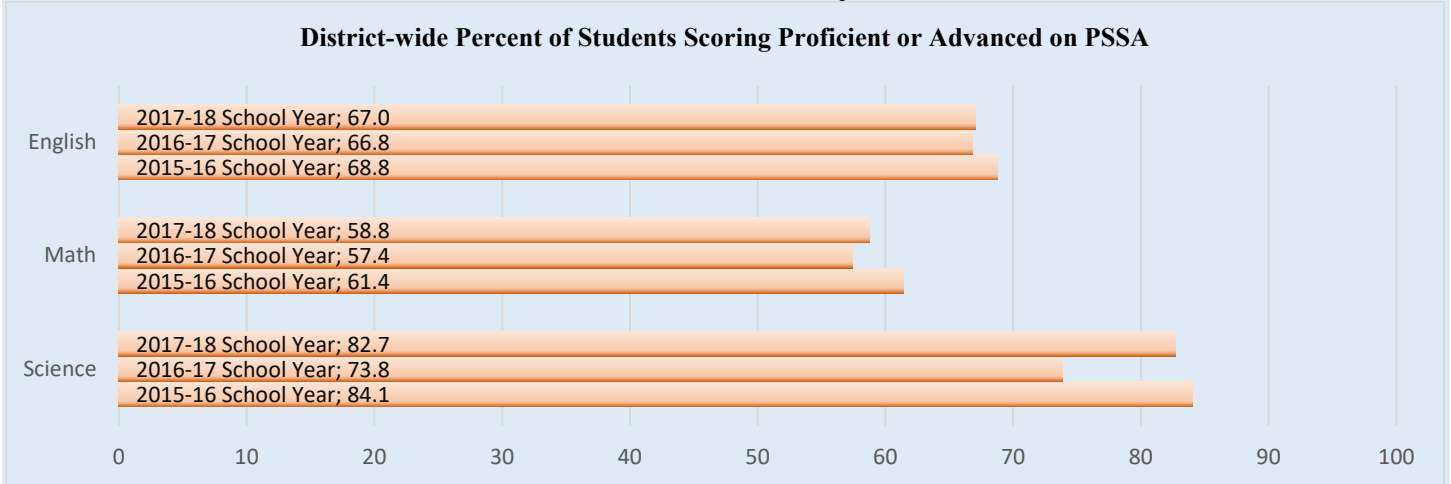
<sup>2</sup> PDE started issuing a SPP score for all public school buildings beginning with the 2012-13 school year. For the 2014-15 school year, PDE only issued SPP scores for high schools taking the Keystone Exams as scores for elementary and middle scores were put on hold due to changes with PSSA testing. PDE resumed issuing a SPP score for all schools for the 2015-16 school year.

## Academic Information Continued

### What is the PSSA?

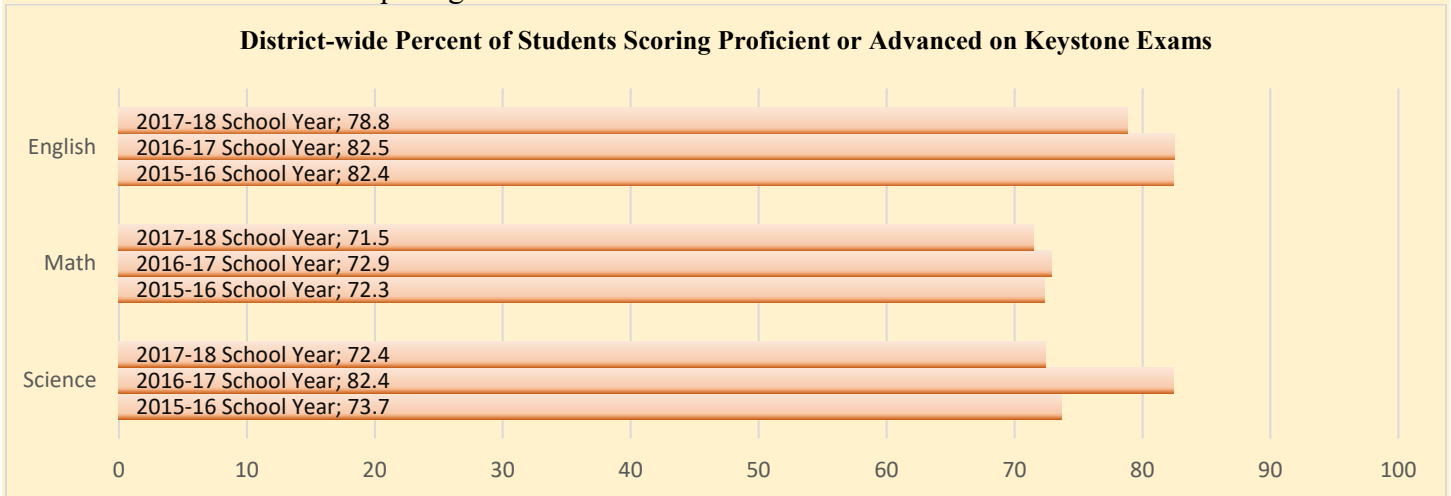
The PSSA is an annual, standardized test given across the Commonwealth to students in grades 3 through 8 in core subject areas, including English, Math and Science. The PSSAs help Pennsylvania meet federal and state requirements and inform instructional practices, as well as provide educators, stakeholders, and policymakers with important information about the state's students and schools.

The 2014-15 school year marked the first year that PSSA testing was aligned to the more rigorous PA Core Standards. The state uses a grading system with scoring ranges that place an individual student's performance into one of four performance levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The state's goal is for students to score Proficient or Advanced on the exam in each subject area.



### What is the Keystone Exam?

The Keystone Exam measures student proficiency at the end of specific courses, such as Algebra I, Literature, and Biology. The Keystone Exam was intended to be a graduation requirement starting with the class of 2017, but that requirement has been put on hold until the 2020-21 school year.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime, the exam is still given as a standardized assessment and results are included in the calculation of SPP scores. The Keystone Exam is scored using the same four performance levels as the PSSAs, and the goal is to score Proficient or Advanced for each course requiring the test.



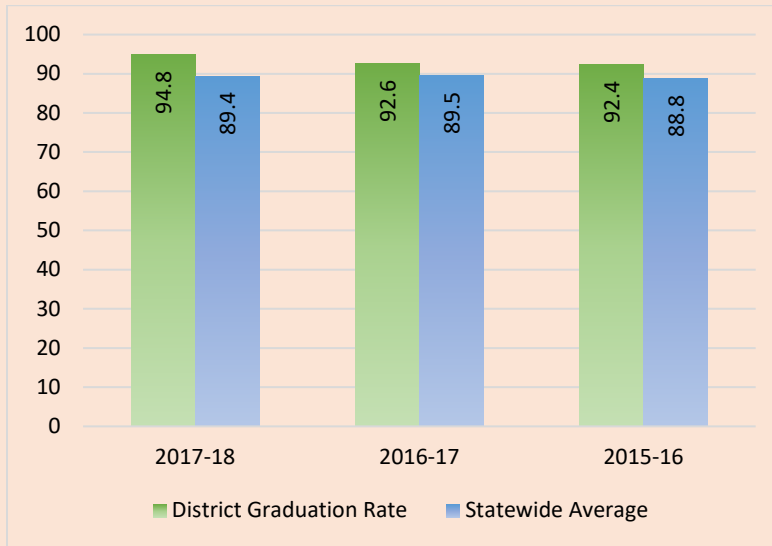
<sup>3</sup> Act 158 of 2018, effective October 24, 2018, amended the Public School Code to further delay the use of Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement until the 2021-22 school year. See 24 P.S. § 1-121(b) (1).



## Academic Information Continued

### What is a 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate?

PDE collects enrollment and graduate data for all Pennsylvania public schools, which is used to calculate graduation rates. 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. Data specific to the 4-year cohort graduation rate is presented in the graph below.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> PDE also calculates 5-year and 6-year cohort graduation rates. Please visit PDE's website for additional information:  
<http://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Cohort-Graduation-Rate-.aspx>.

## Finding

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

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

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**O**ur prior Limited Procedures Engagement of the Gettysburg Area School District resulted in no findings or observations.

## Appendix A: 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, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and other concerned entities.

Our audit, conducted under authority of Sections 402 and 403 of The Fiscal Code,<sup>5</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, 2015 through June 30, 2019. In addition, the scope of each individual audit objective is detailed on the next page.

The Gettysburg Area School District's (District) management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the District is in compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, and administrative procedures (relevant requirements).<sup>6</sup> In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the District's internal controls, including any information technology controls, if applicable, that we considered 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>5</sup> 72 P.S. §§ 402 and 403.

<sup>6</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, 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, annual financial reports, annual budgets, new or amended policies and procedures, and the independent audit report of the District's basic financial statements for the fiscal years July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2019. 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:

- ❖ Transportation Operations
- ❖ Nonresident Student Data
- ❖ Reimbursement for District Construction Projects
- ❖ Bus Driver Requirements
- ❖ School Safety
- ❖ Administrator Buyout

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 compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing transportation operations, and did the District receive the correct transportation reimbursement from the Commonwealth?<sup>7</sup>
  - To address this objective, we assessed the District's internal controls for obtaining, processing, and reporting transportation data to PDE. We randomly selected 11 of 107 vehicles used to transport District students during the 2018-19 school year. For the vehicles selected, we verified the accuracy of the data entry from odometer readings and student rosters to summary spreadsheet and verified that the District accurately calculated weighted averages and accurately reported this information to PDE and if the District was accurately reimbursed for this reported information. Our review of this objective did not disclose any reportable issues.
- Did the District accurately report nonresident students to PDE? Did the District receive the correct reimbursement for these nonresident students?<sup>8</sup>
  - To address this objective, we reviewed all 26 nonresident foster students educated by the District for the 2015-16 school year. We reviewed documentation confirming that the custodial parents or guardian were not residents of the District and confirmation that the foster parent received a stipend for caring for the student. We also verified that the District received the correct reimbursement for these students. Our review of this objective did not disclose any reportable issues.

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<sup>7</sup> See 24 P.S. §25-2541.

<sup>8</sup> See 24 P.S. §§ 13-1301, 13-1302, 13-1305, 13-1306; 22 Pa. Code Chapter 11.

- Did the District apply for PDE reimbursement of costs related to District construction projects?<sup>9</sup>
  - To address this objective, we did reviewed all PDE approved construction projects and applications for reimbursement submitted to PDE for reimbursement during the 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years.<sup>10</sup> We obtained the bond issued payment schedules and verified that the reimbursable percentage was calculated correctly and that the District was reimbursed accurately. Our review of this objective did not disclose any reportable issues.
- Did the District ensure that all bus drivers transporting District students are board approved and had the required driver’s license, physical exam, training, background checks, and clearances<sup>11</sup> as outlined in applicable laws?<sup>12</sup> Also, did the District adequately monitor driver records to ensure compliance with the ongoing five-year clearance requirements and ensure it obtained updated licenses and health physical records as applicable throughout the school year?
  - To address this objective, we assessed the District’s internal controls for maintaining and reviewing required bus driver qualification requirements. We verified that all drivers were board approved by the District. We randomly selected 48 of the 273 bus and van drivers transporting District students as of March 13, 2020.<sup>13</sup> We reviewed documentation to ensure the District complied with the requirements for bus drivers. Our review of this objective did not disclose any reportable issues.
- Did the District comply with requirements in the Public School Code and the Emergency Management Code related to emergency management plans, bullying prevention, memorandums of understanding with local law enforcement, and fire drills?<sup>14</sup> Also, did the District follow best practices related to physical building security and providing a safe school environment?
  - To address this objective, we reviewed a variety of documentation including, safety plans, evidence of physical building security assessments, anti-bullying policies, safety committee meeting minutes, and fire drill reporting data. Due to the sensitive nature of school safety, the results of our review of this objective area are not described in our audit report, but they were shared with District officials, PDE’s Office of Safe Schools, and other appropriate law enforcement agencies deemed necessary.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See 24 P.S. §§ 2574.

<sup>10</sup> The District had 11 approved applications during the 2015-16 school year and 4 approved applications for the each of the 2016-17 through 2018-19 school years.

<sup>11</sup> Auditors reviewed the required state, federal and child abuse background clearances that the District obtained from the most reliable sources available, including the FBI, the Pennsylvania State Police and the Department of Human Services. However, due to the sensitive and confidential nature of this information, we were unable to assess the reliability or completeness of these third-party databases.

<sup>12</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*.

<sup>13</sup> While representative selection is a required factor of audit sampling methodologies, audit sampling methodology was not applied to achieve this test objective; accordingly, the results of this audit procedure are not, and should not be, projected to the population.

<sup>14</sup> 24 P.S. § 13-1301-A *et seq.*, 35 Pa.C.S. § 7701, and 24 P.S. § 15-1517.

<sup>15</sup> Other law enforcement agencies include the Pennsylvania State Police, the Attorney General’s Office, and local law enforcement with jurisdiction over the District’s school buildings.

- 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 employment contract(s) comply with the Public School Code<sup>16</sup> and Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) guidelines?
  - To address this objective, we did review the contract, settlement agreement, board meeting minutes, board policies, and payroll records for the two individually contracted administrators who separated employment from the District during the period of July 1, 2015 through February 11, 2020. We reviewed the final payouts to determine if these administrators were compensated in accordance with their respective contracts. We also verified that leave payouts were not reported as eligible wages to PSERS. Our review of this objective did not disclose reportable issues.

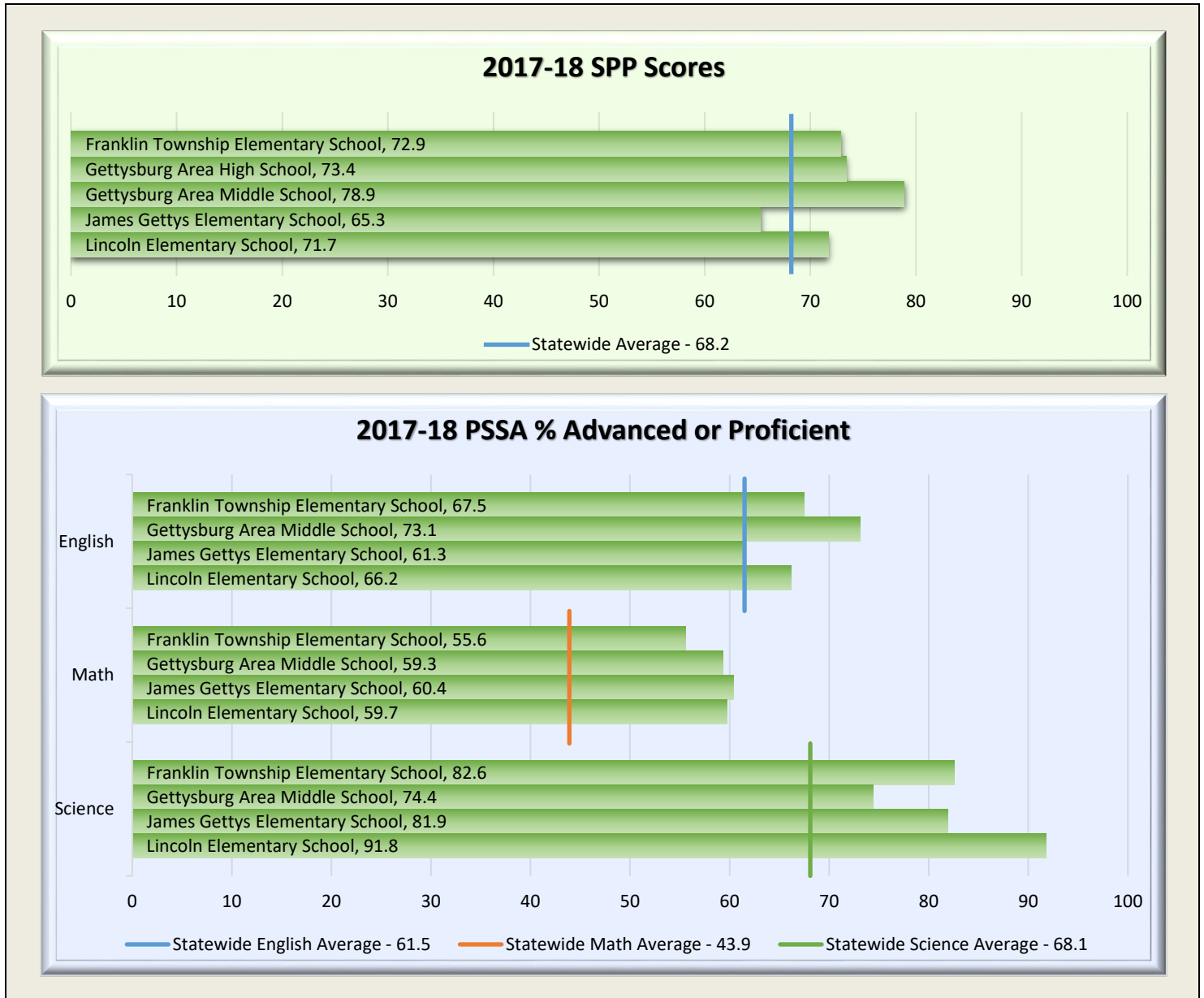
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<sup>16</sup> 24 P.S. § 10-1073(e) (v).

## Appendix B: Academic Detail by School Building

Benchmarks noted in the following graphs represent the statewide average of all public school buildings in the Commonwealth that received a score in the category and year noted.<sup>17</sup> Please note that if one of the District's schools did not receive a score in a particular category and year presented below, the school will not be listed in the corresponding graph.<sup>18</sup>

### 2017-18 Academic Data School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages

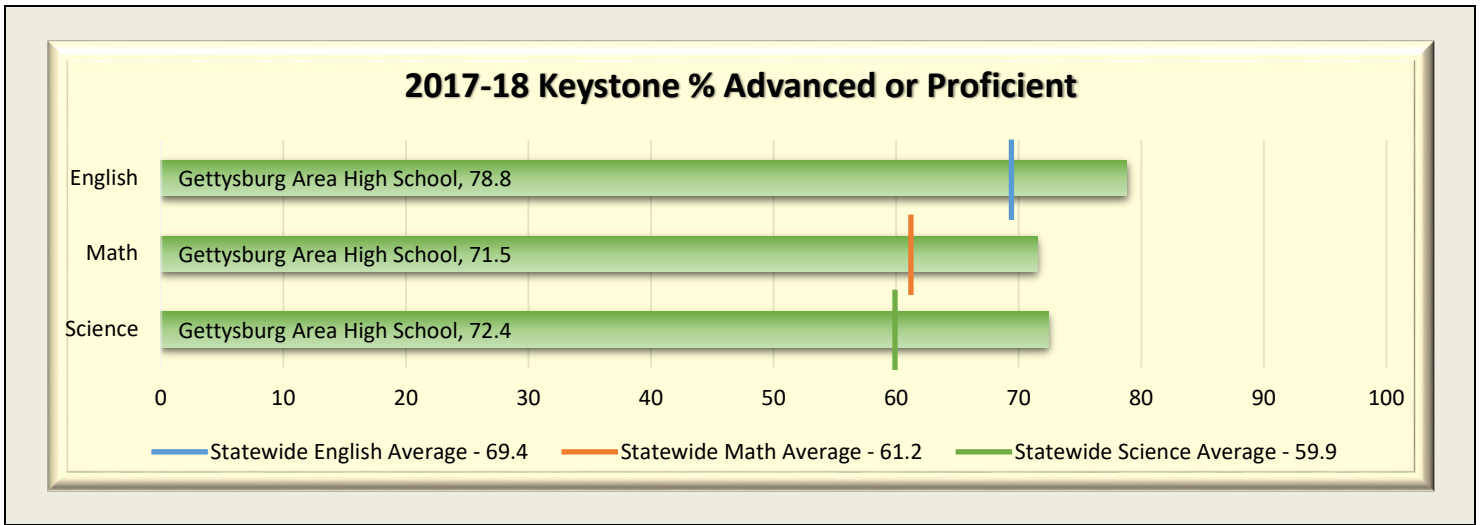


<sup>17</sup> Statewide averages were calculated by our Department based on individual school building scores for all public schools in the Commonwealth, including district schools, charters schools, and cyber charter schools.

<sup>18</sup> PDE's data does not provide any further information regarding the reason a score was not published for a specific school. However, readers can refer to PDE's website for general information regarding the issuance of academic scores.

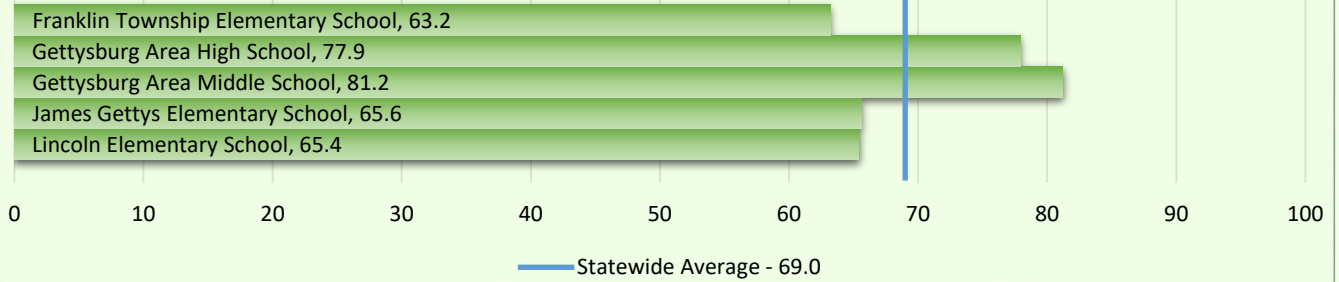


**2017-18 Academic Data**  
**School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages (continued)**

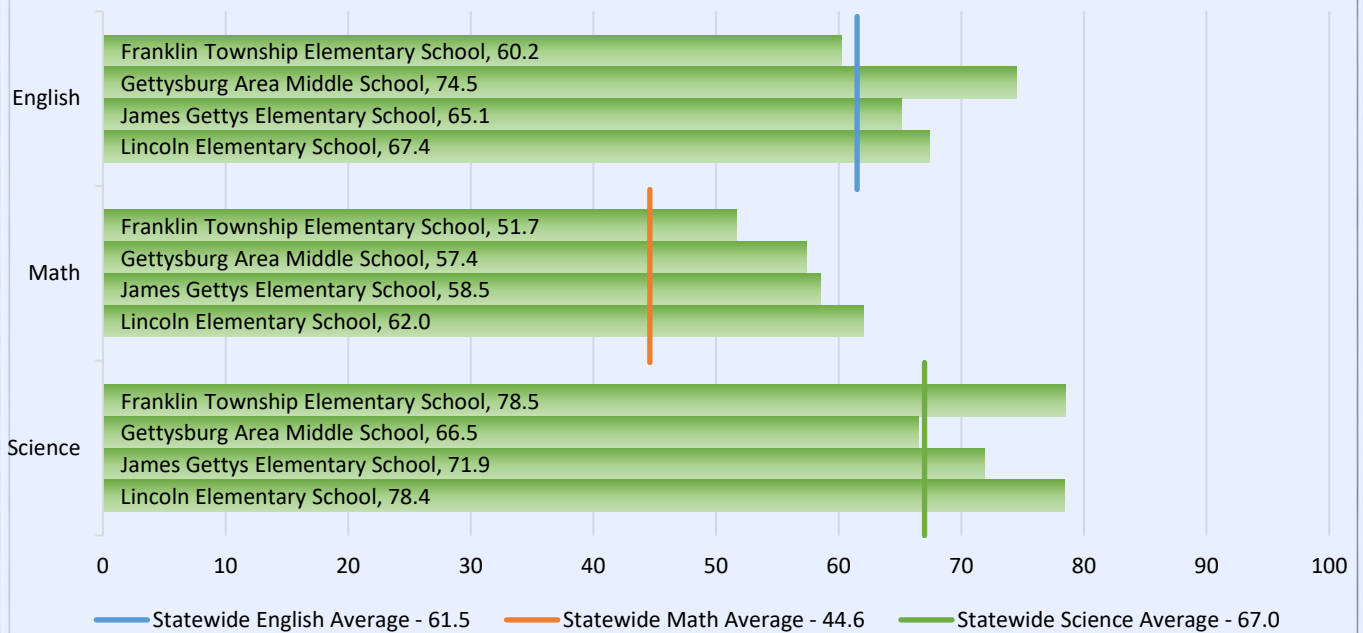


**2016-17 Academic Data**  
**School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages**

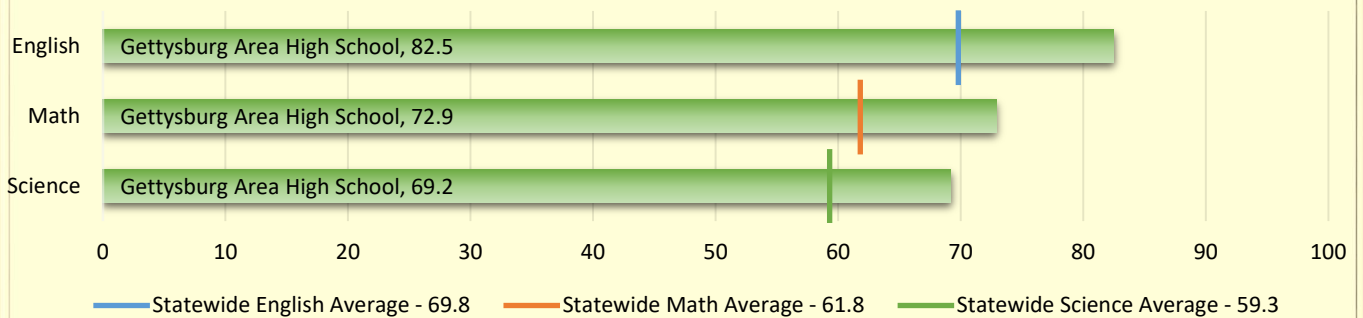
**2016-17 SPP Scores**



**2016-17 PSSA % Advanced or Proficient**

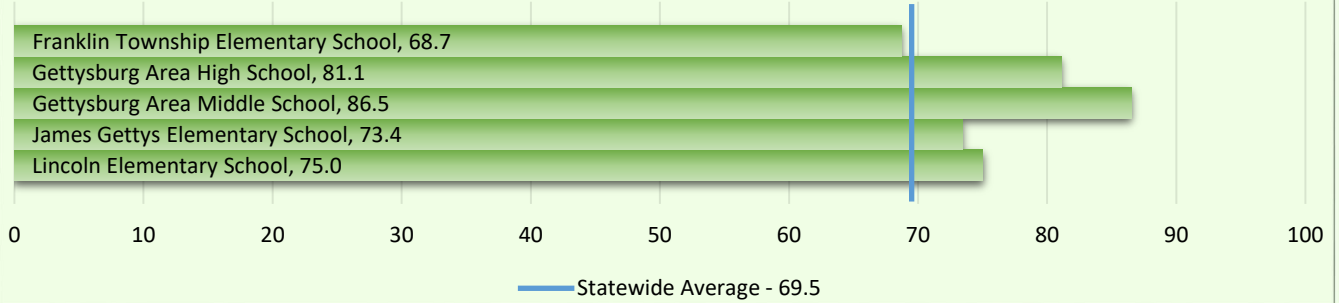


**2016-17 Keystone % Advanced or Proficient**

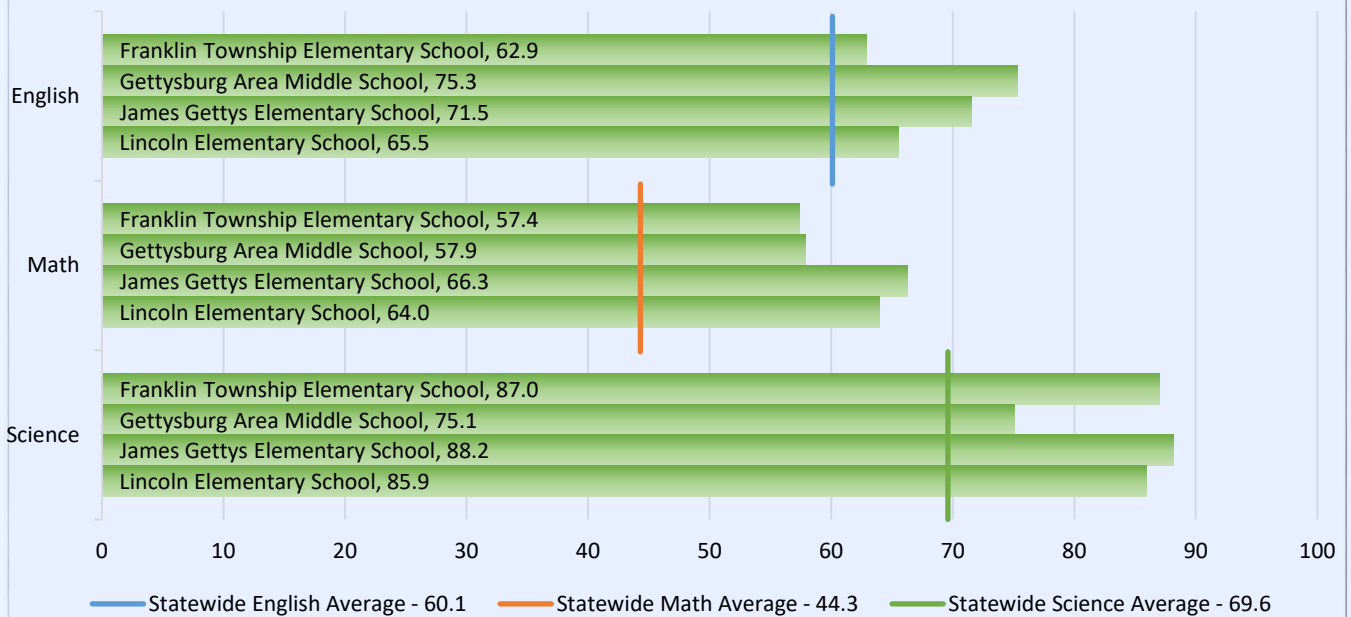


**2015-16 Academic Data**  
**School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages**

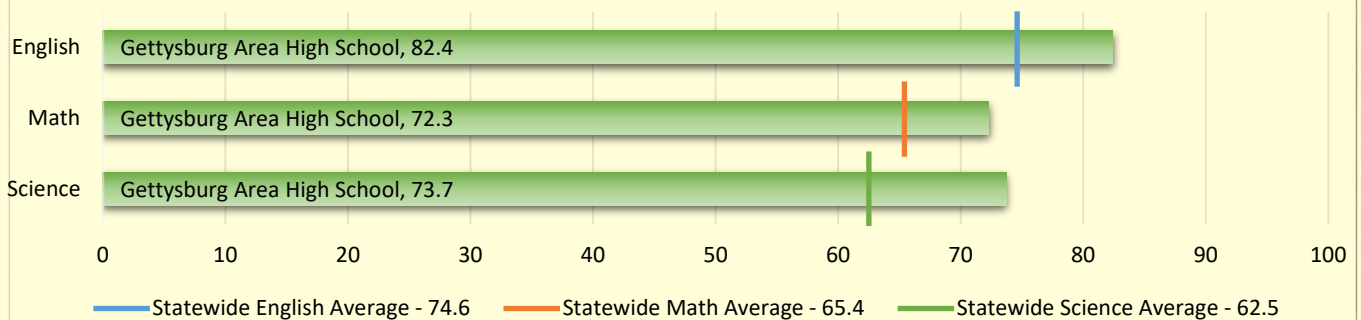
**2015-16 SPP Scores**



**2015-16 PSSA % Advanced or Proficient**



**2015-16 Keystone % Advanced or Proficient**



## **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  
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333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126

**The Honorable Joe Torsella**

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