

MERCER COUNTY CAREER CENTER
MERCER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

APRIL 2011

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Mr. David DeForest
Joint Operating Committee Chairperson
Mercer County Career Center
776 Greenville Road
Mercer, Pennsylvania 16137

Dear Governor Corbett and Mr. DeForest:

We conducted a performance audit of the Mercer County Career Center (MCCC) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period April 17, 2009 through November 30, 2010, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidy reimbursements was determined for the school years ended June 30, 2010 and June 30, 2009. 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 MCCC complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

We appreciate the MCCC's cooperation during the conduct of the audit and their willingness to implement our recommendations.

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

April 13, 2011

cc: **MERCER COUNTY CAREER CENTER** Joint Operating Committee Members

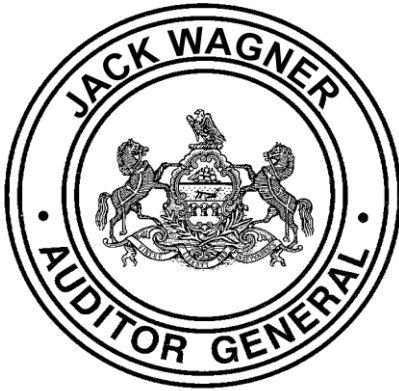


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Executive Summary

Audit Work

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

Our audit scope covered the period April 17, 2009 through November 30, 2010, 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 2009-10 and 2008-09.

School Background

According to school officials, in school year 2007-08 the MCCC provided educational services to 569 pupils through the employment of 20 teachers, 29 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 3 administrators. The operation, administration and management of the school are directed by a joint operating committee (JOC) which comprises 10 members from the following school districts:

Commodore Perry	Lakeview
Greenville Area	Mercer Area
Grove City Area	Reynolds
Hermitage	Sharpsville Area
Jamestown Area	West Middlesex Area

The JOC members are appointed by the individual school boards at the December meeting, each to serve a three-year term. Lastly, the MCCC received \$630,226 in state funding in school year 2009-10.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the MCCC 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. There were no findings and observations noted in the prior audit report.



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 April 17, 2009 through November 30, 2010, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period March 1, 2010 through October 28, 2010.

Regarding state subsidy and reimbursements, our audit covered school years 2009-10 and 2008-09.

While all LEAs 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 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 MCCC'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 objectives:

- ✓ Were professional employees certified for the positions they held?
- ✓ Does the School ensure that Joint Operating Committee members appropriately comply with the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act?
- ✓ Are there any declining fund balances which may impose risk to the fiscal viability of the School?

- ✓ Did the School 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 School taking appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
- ✓ Did the School use an outside vendor to maintain its membership data and if so, are there internal controls in place related to vendor access?

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.

MCCC management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the School 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 meeting minutes, pupil membership, and related party transactions.

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

Findings and Observations

For the audited period, our audit of the Mercer County Career Center resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Mercer County Career Center resulted in no findings or observations.



Distribution List

This report was initially distributed to the career center's superintendent of record, the joint operating committee, our website address at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us, and the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
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The Honorable Ronald J. Tomalis
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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.

