

PALMERTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
CARBON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA  
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

JANUARY 2012



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

Mr. Barry Scherer, Board President  
Palmerton Area School District  
680 Fourth Street  
Palmerton, Pennsylvania 18071

Dear Governor Corbett and Mr. Scherer:

We conducted a performance audit of the Palmerton Area School District (PASD) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period November 4, 2009 through November 22, 2011, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidy and 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 PASD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

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

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General

January 31, 2012

cc: **PALMERTON AREA 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 Palmerton Area School District (PASD). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the District's compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures; and to determine the status of corrective action taken by the PASD in response to our prior audit recommendations.

Our audit scope covered the period November 4, 2009 through November 22, 2011, 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.

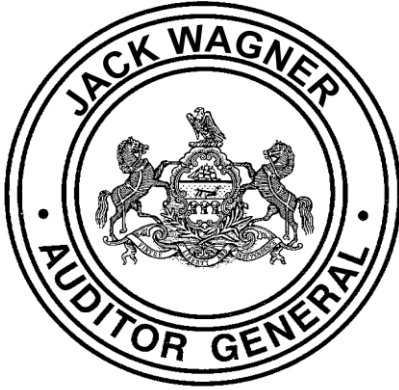
### **District Background**

The PASD encompasses approximately 56 square miles. According to 2010 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 14,033. According to District officials, in school year 2009-10 the PASD provided basic educational services to 2,068 pupils through the employment of 136 teachers, 77 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 14 administrators. Lastly, the PASD received more than \$10.5 million in state funding in school year 2009-10.

### **Audit Conclusion and Results**

Our audit found that the PASD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, 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 or observations included in our 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 November 4, 2009 through November 22, 2011, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period July 1, 2011 through September 13, 2011.

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

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 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 statute, regulation, policy, 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 and defined business practices. Our audit focused on assessing the PASD's compliance with applicable state laws, 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:

- ✓ Were professional employees certified for the positions they held?
- ✓ Does the LEA have sufficient internal controls to ensure that the membership data it reported to the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) is complete, accurate, valid and reliable?

- ✓ Did the District, and any contracted vendors, ensure that its current bus drivers are properly qualified, and does it have written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers?
- ✓ Are there any declining fund balances that may impose risk to the District's fiscal viability?
- ✓ Did the District pursue a contract buyout with an administrator and if so, what was the total cost of the buy-out, what were the reasons for the termination/settlement, and does 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?
- ✓ Is the District taking appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
- ✓ Did the District have a properly executed and updated Memorandum of Understanding with Local Law Enforcement?
- ✓ Were votes made by the District's Board members free from apparent conflicts of interest?

## 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, 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 conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions based on our audit objectives.

PASD management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the District is in compliance with applicable laws, 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. Additionally, we gained a high-level understanding of the District's information

technology (IT) environment and evaluated whether internal controls specific to IT were present.

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 transportation, and comparative financial information.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to bus driver qualifications, professional employee certification, state ethics compliance, and financial stability.
- Items such as Board meeting minutes.

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

## **Findings and Observations**

---

---

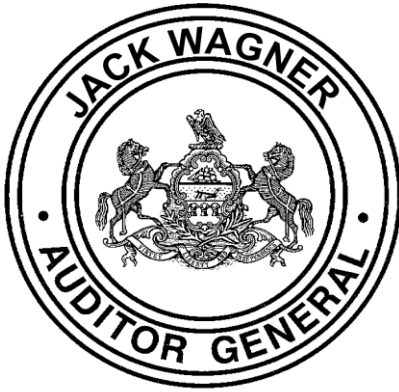
**F**or the audited period, our audit of the Palmerton Area School District resulted in no findings or observations.

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

---

---

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



## **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](http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us), and the following:

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

The Honorable Ronald J. Tomalis  
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

Ms. Nichole Duffy  
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](http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us).

