



WEST ALLEGHENY SCHOOL DISTRICT
ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

JULY 2013

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE - AUDITOR GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL





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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

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

Ms. Debra Mirich, Board President
West Allegheny School District
P.O. Box 55
Imperial, Pennsylvania 15126

Dear Governor Corbett and Ms. Mirich:

We conducted a performance audit of the West Allegheny School District (District) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period April 1, 2010 through November 12, 2012, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidies 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 District complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

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

Sincerely,

July 11, 2013

/s/
EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

cc: WEST ALLEGHENY SCHOOL DISTRICT Board of School Directors

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Executive Summary

Audit Work

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the West Allegheny School District (District). 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 District in response to our prior audit recommendations.

Our audit scope covered the period April 1, 2010 through November 12, 2012, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objectives, and methodology section of the report. Compliance specific to state subsidies and reimbursements was determined for the 2009-10 and 2008-09 school years.

District Background

The District encompasses approximately 62 square miles. According to 2010 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 20,453. According to District officials, the District provided basic educational services to 3,225 pupils through the employment of 249 teachers, 151 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 19 administrators during the 2009-10 school year. Lastly, the District received \$11,454,086 in state funding in the 2009-10 school year.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the District 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. With regard to the status of our prior audit recommendations to the District from an audit released on December 29, 2010, we found that the District had taken appropriate corrective action in implementing our recommendations pertaining to a certification deficiency (see page 6).

Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

Scope

What is a school performance audit?

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, 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 1, 2010 through November 12, 2012, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period March 31, 2010 through September 30, 2012.

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

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 Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) 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 District'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?
- ✓ Did the District have sufficient internal controls to ensure that the membership data it reported to PDE through the Pennsylvania Information Management System was complete, accurate, valid, and reliable?

- ✓ In areas where the District received transportation subsidies, were the District and any contracted vendors in compliance with applicable state laws and procedures?
- ✓ Did the District, and any contracted vendors, ensure that their current bus drivers were properly qualified, and did they have written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers?
- ✓ Were there any declining fund balances that may pose a risk to the District's fiscal viability?
- ✓ 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?
- ✓ Did the District take appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
- ✓ Did the District have a properly executed and updated Memorandum of Understanding with local law enforcement?
- ✓ Were there any other areas of concern reported by local auditors, citizens, or other interested parties?
- ✓ Did the District take appropriate corrective action to address recommendations made in our prior audit?

Methodology

Government Auditing Standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our results and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our results and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The District's 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. In conducting our audit, we

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.

obtained an understanding of the District's internal controls, including any information technology controls, as they relate to the District's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant agreements and administrative procedures 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 control 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.

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 and reimbursements, pupil transportation, pupil membership, and comparative financial information.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to pupil transportation, pupil membership, bus driver qualifications, professional employee certification, financial stability, reimbursement applications, tuition receipts, and deposited state funds.
- Items such as board meeting minutes and policies and procedures.

Additionally, we interviewed select administrators and support personnel associated with the District's operations.

Lastly, to determine the status of our audit recommendations made in a prior audit report released on December 29, 2010, we performed additional audit procedures targeting the previously reported matters.

Findings and Observations

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

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the West Allegheny School District (District) released on December 29, 2010, resulted in one reported finding. The finding pertained to a certification deficiency. As part of our current audit, we determined the status of corrective action taken by the District to implement our prior recommendations. We performed audit procedures and interviewed District personnel regarding the prior finding. As shown below, we found that the District did implement recommendations related to the certification deficiency.

Auditor General Performance Audit Report Released on December 29, 2010

Finding: **Certification Deficiency**

Finding Summary: Our prior audit of the District found that one teacher was assigned to a teaching position with a lapsed certificate. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality confirmed the deficiency. Therefore, the District was subject to subsidy forfeitures of \$2,019 and \$3,091 for the 2009-10 and 2008-09 school years, respectively.

Recommendations: Our audit finding recommended that the District:

Put procedures in place to ensure teachers are not assigned without valid certification.

We also recommended that PDE:

Adjust future District allocations to recover the subsidy forfeitures of \$5,110.

Current Status: During our current audit, we found that the District did implement our recommendations. The teacher previously cited in our prior audit report now has a permanent certificate. No additional certification deficiencies were found by our current audit.

PDE withheld \$5,110 from the District on June 1, 2011.

Distribution List

This report was initially distributed to the Superintendent of the District, the Board of School Directors, our website at www.auditor.gen.state.pa.us, and the following stakeholders:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
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The Honorable William E. Harner
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1010 Harristown Building #2
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