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Auditor General DePasquale Says Total Administrative Chaos at Chester Upland School District Prevented Full Audit Completion

SWARTHMORE, PA – Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today said administrative chaos in the Chester Upland School District, Delaware County, prevented auditors from conducting a complete assessment of the district.

“It is rather rare to find a school district in such disarray that we are unable to complete an audit and leaves doubts about whether the district’s students are getting the education they deserve and need.” DePasquale said. “Sadly, with Chester Upland School District, there was so much information the district couldn’t provide that we were unable to come to a full conclusion on the district’s status.”

DePasquale said because of high turnover in senior management and with those charged with governance, as well as the move of the administrative offices to another location, the district’s records were often incomplete and/or inaccessible, disorganized, or could not be located. In addition, district officials did not respond to many of the auditors’ inquiries.

In December 2012, Delaware County Court ordered the district into receivership. Since that time, the district has operated under three state-appointed receivers.

The district was unable to provide auditors with the sufficient and appropriate evidence necessary to conclude on the following audit areas:

- Transportation operations,
- Financial stability,
- Construction and state retirement reimbursements, and
- Status of audit recommendations from a 2013 [audit report](#).

“The 2013 audit showed the situation in the district is so dire that there is limited hope for the future of its students unless district leadership, administrators, teachers and the community support changes to correct management breakdowns that have plagued the district for decades,” DePasquale said.

“Because of the district’s disorder, it is difficult to fully assess the Chester-Upland School District’s progress since our previous audit,” he said. “Thousands of children depend upon the district’s administrators and board to provide them with the necessary educational resources and environment for learning.”

DePasquale said while auditors were unable to complete a full review of the school district, they found that the district performed adequately in the area of administrator contract buyouts, yet failed to perform adequately in the area of bus driver vetting requirements.

“The district did not ensure that it had obtained the required credentials and criminal history clearances for all bus drivers before they transported students at the beginning of the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years,” DePasquale said.

Beginning with the 2015-16 school year, the district contracted with a company to provide transportation services. The district did not obtain, review, and maintain licenses and clearances to verify that each driver met the requirements to transport students. Instead, the district relied on its contractors to ensure that all the bus drivers were appropriately qualified.

Auditors selected 14 of the 56 drivers to determine if the district had the required background checks for the drivers. District officials had to request this information from the contractor. Upon review, auditors found the following:

- One driver's federal criminal history record had a conviction for aggravated assault. Aggravated assault is one of the offenses for which the Public School Code provides for a lifetime ban on employment as a school bus driver.
- One driver's federal criminal history record was incomplete.
- The timeliness of obtaining criminal history reports for six drivers could not be evaluated because the district was unable to provide the date the drivers started transporting district students.
- One driver did not have a Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Background clearance. The clearance was subsequently provided, but it was dated Aug. 23, 2017 — the same day auditors notified the district that it was missing.
- Seven drivers had Arrest/Conviction Report and Certification Forms dated in August 2017, which means those forms could not have been completed at time of hire, as required.
- One driver had an expired commercial driver's license with a "S" endorsement, permitting the operation of a school bus and another driver did not have a valid annual physical examination. However, valid documents were provided for both drivers after auditors notified the District.

"Protecting students traveling to and from school is just as important as providing a quality education," DePasquale said. "It is good to see that Chester Upland officials were very responsive to our review of school bus drivers, but they have a long way to go to turn this district around."

The Chester Upland School District audit report is available online at: www.PaAuditor.gov

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