

WESTERN AREA CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER
WASHINGTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

JANUARY 2010

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Mr. Fred Rockage, Joint Operating Committee Chairperson
Western Area Career and Technology Center
688 Western Avenue
Canonsburg, Pennsylvania 15317

Dear Governor Rendell and Mr. Rockage:

We conducted a performance audit of the Western Area Career and Technology Center (WACTC) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period June 22, 2007 through July 31, 2009, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for the school years ended June 30, 2008 and June 30, 2007. 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 WACTC complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

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

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

January 26, 2010

cc: **WESTERN AREA CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY 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 Western Area Career and Technology Center (WACTC). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the WACTC's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Our audit scope covered the period June 22, 2007 through July 31, 2009, 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 2007-08 and 2006-07.

School Background

According to School officials, in school year 2007-08 the WACTC provided educational services to 466 secondary pupils and 195 post-secondary pupils through the employment of 21 teachers, 20 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 4 administrators. The operation, administration and management of the school are directed by a joint operating committee (JOC) which is constituted of nine members from the following school districts:

Avella Area
Burgettstown Area
Canon-McMillan
Chartiers-Houston
Fort Cherry
McGuffey
Peters Township

Trinity Area
Washington

The JOC members are appointed by the individual school boards at the December meeting, each to serve a three year term. Lastly, the WACTC received more than \$641 thousand in state funding in school year 2007-08.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the WACTC complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. For the audited period, our audit of WACTC resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations. Our prior audit report for the 2005-06 and 2004-05 school years resulted in no findings or observations.



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 June 22, 2007 through July 31, 2009, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.

Regarding state subsidy and reimbursements, our audit covered school years 2007-08 and 2006-07.

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 WACTC'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?
- ✓ In areas where the School receives state subsidy and reimbursements based on pupil membership (e.g. vocational education), did it follow applicable laws and procedures?
- ✓ Did the School follow applicable laws and procedures in areas dealing with pupil membership and ensure that adequate provisions were taken to protect the data?

- ✓ 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?
- ✓ 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?
- ✓ Is the School taking appropriate steps to ensure school safety?

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.

WACTC 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.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to professional employee certification, state ethics compliance, and financial stability.
- Items such as meeting minutes, pupil membership records, and reimbursement applications.
- Tuition receipts and deposited state funds.

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

Findings and Observations

For the audited period, our audit of Western Area Career and Technology Center resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Western Area Career and Technology Center for the school years 2005-06 and 2004-05 resulted in no findings or observations.



Distribution List

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

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
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