

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Spring-Ford Area School District Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

April 2015



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0018
Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General
Twitter: @PAAuditorGen
www.PaAuditor.gov

EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Mr. Mark Dehnert, Board President
Spring-Ford Area School District
851 South Lewis Street
Royersford, Pennsylvania 19468

Dear Governor Wolf and Mr. Dehnert:

We conducted a performance audit of the Spring-Ford Area School District (District) to determine its compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures (relevant requirements). Our audit covered the period January 6, 2012 through September 26, 2014, except as otherwise stated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidies and reimbursements was determined for the school years ended June 30, 2011 and June 30, 2012. Our audit was conducted pursuant to Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 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 relevant requirements.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eugene A. DePasquale".

Eugene A. DePasquale
Auditor General

April 1, 2015

cc: **SPRING-FORD AREA 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 Spring-Ford Area School District (District) in Montgomery County. Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the District's compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Our audit scope covered the period January 6, 2012 through September 26, 2014, except as otherwise stated in the audit scope, objectives, and methodology section of the report. Compliance specific to state subsidies and reimbursements was determined for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years.

District Background

The District encompasses approximately 44 square miles. According to 2010 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 47,368. According to District officials, the District provided basic educational services to 7,748 pupils through the employment of 593 teachers, 908 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 31 administrators during the 2011-12 school year. The District received \$22.3 million in state funding in the 2011-12 school year.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the District complied, in all significant respects, with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Our audit resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations. Our prior audit did not include any findings or observations.

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 Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 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 January 6, 2012 through September 26, 2014, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period January 23, 2012 through August 26, 2014.

Regarding state subsidies and reimbursements, our audit covered the 2010-11 and 2011-12 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 certain relevant 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 audit objectives:

- ✓ Were professional employees certified for the positions they held?
 - To address this objective, auditors reviewed and evaluated certification documentation for all 56 teachers that did not have permanent certificates, were newly hired, or changed assignment at the time of our audit.

- ✓ Did the District ensure that bus drivers transporting District children at the time of the audit have the necessary license, physicals, training, background checks, and clearances as outlined in 24 P.S. § 1-111, 24 P.S. § 2070, 67 P.S. § 71.1, 22 *PA Code Chapter 8*, and 23 PA C.S. § 58-6354, and did they have written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers?

To address this objective:

- The auditors initially selected the nine (9) newest drivers out of the fourteen (14) “new drivers” from the current school year and worked backwards to the last time the Bureau of School Audits audited the District and reviewed bus driver compliance. Auditors ensured that all of the new drivers not reviewed during the previous audit were selected for review and included both district-employed and contractor-employed drivers, as appropriate.
 - The auditors also requested copies of the written policies and procedures governing the hiring of bus drivers to determine that these processes included requesting background checks and clearances.
- ✓ 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 for the most current year available?

To address this objective:

- The auditors randomly selected 20 out of the 7,748 total registered students for the 2011-12 school year (five (5) resident, five (5) non-resident, five (5) parochial, and five (5) area vocational-technical schools) from the vendor software listing and verified that each child was appropriately registered with the District.

- In addition, the auditors randomly selected 2 out of 31 school terms reported on the Summary of Child Accounting and verified the school days reported on the Instructional Time Membership Report and matched them to the School Calendar Fact Template.
- ✓ Did the District take appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
 - To address this objective, the auditors reviewed a variety of documentation including safety plans, training schedules, anti-bullying policies, and after action reports to assess whether the District followed best practices in school safety and 24 P.S. Sect. 13-1302, 1302.1A, 13-1303.1, and 13-1303 A. Generally, the auditors evaluate the age of the plan, whether it is being practiced through training and whether the school has an after action process for trying to improve on the results of its training exercises.

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 certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures (relevant requirements). In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the District's internal controls, including any information technology controls, as they relate to the District's compliance with relevant requirements 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 controls 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.

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 certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

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, and comparative financial information.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to pupil membership, bus driver qualifications, professional employee certification, and financial stability.
- Items such as board meeting minutes and policies and procedures.

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

Findings and Observations

For the audited period, our audit of the Spring-Ford Area School District resulted in no findings or observations.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Spring-Ford Area School District did not include any findings or observations.

Distribution List

This report was initially distributed to the Superintendent of the District, the Board of School Directors, and the following stakeholders:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Pedro A. Rivera
Acting Secretary of Education
1010 Harristown Building #2
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Christopher B. Craig, *Esq.*
Acting State Treasurer
Room 129 - Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Ms. Lori Graham
Acting Director
Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Management
Pennsylvania 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

Mr. Lin Carpenter
Assistant Executive Director for Member Services
School Board and Management Services
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
P.O. Box 2042
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 231 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.