

BETHLEHEM AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL  
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA  
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

OCTOBER 2011



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

Mr. David Gogel  
Joint Operating Committee Chairperson  
Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School  
3300 Chester Avenue  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18020

Dear Governor Corbett and Mr. Gogel:

We conducted a performance audit of the Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School (BAVTS) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period May 13, 2009 through April 12, 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 BAVTS complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER  
Auditor General

October 11, 2011

cc: **BETHLEHEM AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL** Joint Operating  
Committee 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 Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School (BAVTS). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the AVTS's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures; and to determine the status of corrective action taken by the BAVTS in response to our prior audit recommendations.

Our audit scope covered the period May 13, 2009 through April 12, 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.

### **School Background**

According to School officials, in school year 2009-10 the BAVTS provided educational services to 1,007 secondary pupils and 560 post-secondary pupils through the employment of 42 teachers, 44 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 8 administrators. The operation, administration and management of the school are directed by a joint operating committee (JOC) which is comprised of nine members from the following school districts:

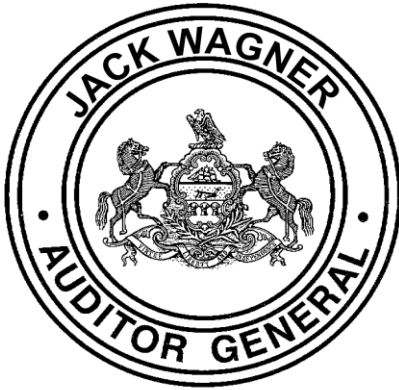
Bethlehem Area  
Northampton Area  
Saucon Valley

The JOC members are appointed by the individual school boards at the December meeting, each to serve a one year term. Lastly, the BAVTS received \$936,068 in state funding in school year 2009-10.

### **Audit Conclusion and Results**

Our audit found that the BAVTS complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, 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 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 May 13, 2009 through April 12, 2011.

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

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 BAVTS'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 payroll (e.g. Social Security and retirement), did it follow applicable laws and procedures?
- ✓ 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?
- ✓ Is the School taking appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
- ✓ 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?

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

BAVTS 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.

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 membership, pupil transportation, and comparative financial information.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to professional employee certification, state ethics compliance, and financial stability.
- Items such as meeting minutes and reimbursement applications.

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

## **Findings and Observations**

---

---

**F**or the audited period, our audit of the Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School resulted in no findings or observations.

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

---

**O**ur prior audit of the Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School resulted in no findings or observations.



## **Distribution List**

---

---

This report was initially distributed to the area vocational-technical school superintendent of record, the joint operating committee, 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  
4<sup>th</sup> 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).

