

# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

---

## Bristol Township School District Bucks County, Pennsylvania

---

January 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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

**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Dr. Melanie Gehrens, Superintendent  
Bristol Township School District  
5 Blue Lake Road  
Levittown, Pennsylvania 19057

Mr. James Morgan, III, Board President  
Bristol Township School District  
5 Blue Lake Road  
Levittown, Pennsylvania 19057

Dear Dr. Gehrens and Mr. Morgan:

We have conducted a performance audit of the Bristol Township School District (District) for the period July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2020, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objective, and methodology section of the report. We evaluated the District's performance in the following areas as further described in Appendix A of this report:

- Transportation Operations
- Nonresident Student Data
- Bus Driver Requirements

We also evaluated the application of best practices and determined compliance with certain legal and other requirements in the area of school safety, including compliance with fire and security drill requirements. Due to the sensitive nature of this issue and the need for the results of this review to be confidential, we did not include the full results in this report. However, we communicated the full results of our review of school safety to District officials, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and other appropriate officials as deemed necessary.

The audit was conducted pursuant to Sections 402 and 403 of The Fiscal Code (72 P.S. §§ 402 and 403), and in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings 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.

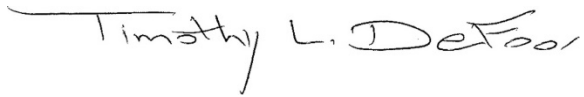
Our audit identified areas of noncompliance and significant internal control deficiencies in the areas of transportation operations, nonresident student data, and bus driver requirements as detailed in the first three findings of this report. We also identified noncompliance and deficiencies in the reporting of fire and security drill data to PDE, which is detailed in Finding No. 4 of this report. A summary of the results is presented in the Executive Summary section of this report.

Dr. Melanie Gehrens  
Mr. James Morgan, III  
Page 2

Our audit findings and recommendations have been discussed with the District's management, and their responses are included in the audit report. We believe the implementation of our recommendations will improve the District's operations and facilitate compliance with legal and other relevant requirements.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the start of the name.

Timothy L. DeFoor  
Auditor General

December 27, 2021

cc: **BRISTOL TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board of School Directors

# Table of Contents

---

---

	Page
Executive Summary .....	1
Background Information .....	3
Findings .....	8
Finding No. 1 – The District’s Failure to Implement an Adequate Internal Control System Led to Inaccurate Transportation Data Reported to PDE Resulting in a Net Underpayment of \$55,248 .....	8
Finding No. 2 – The District’s Failure to Implement an Adequate Internal Control System Led to Inaccurate Nonresident Student Data Reported to PDE Resulting in an Underpayment of \$44,957 .....	13
Finding No. 3 – The District Failed to Comply with Provisions of the Public School Code and Associated Regulations by Not Maintaining Complete Records for and Properly Monitoring Its Contracted Drivers .....	18
Finding No. 4 – The District Failed to Conduct All Required Monthly Fire Drills in Accordance with the Public School Code and to Document All Required Security Drills .....	26
Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations .....	31
Appendix A: Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology .....	33
Appendix B: Academic Detail .....	38
Distribution List .....	42

## Executive Summary

---

### Audit Work

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the Bristol Township School District (District). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the District's application of best practices and compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, 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 July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2020, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objectives, and methodology section of the report (see Appendix A). Compliance specific to state subsidies and reimbursements was determined for the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years.

### Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found areas of noncompliance and significant internal control deficiencies as detailed in the four findings in this report.

#### **Finding No. 1: The District's Failure to Implement an Adequate Internal Control System Led to Inaccurate Transportation Data Reported to PDE Resulting in a Net Underpayment of \$55,248.**

We found that the District did not implement an adequate internal control system over the input, calculation, and reporting of regular transportation data. The failure to implement internal controls led to multiple inaccuracies in the transportation data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Consequently, the District received \$55,248 less than it was entitled to in regular transportation reimbursements for the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years (see page 8).

#### **Finding No. 2: The District's Failure to Implement an Adequate Internal Control System Led to Inaccurate Nonresident Student Data Reported to PDE Resulting in an Underpayment of \$44,957.**

We found that the District failed to implement adequate internal controls over the identification, categorization and reporting of nonresident student data resulting in a \$44,957 underpayment from PDE. This underpayment was caused by the District inaccurately reporting the number of nonresident foster students educated by the District during the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years (see page 13).

#### **Finding No. 3: The District Failed to Comply with Provisions of the Public School Code and Associated Regulations by Not Maintaining Complete Records for and Properly Monitoring Its Contracted Drivers.**

The District failed to meet its statutory obligations related to the employment of individuals having direct contact with students during the 2020-21 school year by not maintaining complete and updated records for all drivers transporting students. Specifically, we found 24 drivers with missing and/or expired clearances and driver credentials. We also found that the District's Board of School Directors did not approve any drivers employed by its transportation contractors. We determined that the District did not implement sufficient internal controls to meet these obligations (see page 18).

#### **Finding No. 4: The District Failed to Conduct All Required Monthly Fire Drills in Accordance with the Public School Code and to Document All Required Security Drills.**

Our review of the District's fire and security drill data found that most of the District's six schools failed to conduct and/or accurately report all of their required monthly fire drills in the 2018-19 and

2019-20 school years, as required by the Public School Code. Furthermore, our review disclosed that not all school buildings maintained documentation to support that a school security drill was conducted during the first 90 days of both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Finally, we found that the District inaccurately reported drill data to PDE. Consequently, the District's Superintendent inappropriately attested to the accuracy of the drill data in the PDE required report and certification statement (see page 26).

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

With regard to the status of our prior audit recommendations, we found that the District partially implemented our recommendations pertaining to the District's financial position (see page 31).

## Background Information

School Characteristics 2020-21 School Year*	
County	Bucks
Total Square Miles	17.11
Number of School Buildings	6
Total Teachers	448
Total Full or Part-Time Support Staff	1,025
Total Administrators	33
Total Enrollment for Most Recent School Year	6,036
Intermediate Unit Number	22
District Career and Technical School	Bucks County Technical High School

\* - Source: Information provided by the District administration and is unaudited.

## Mission Statement\*

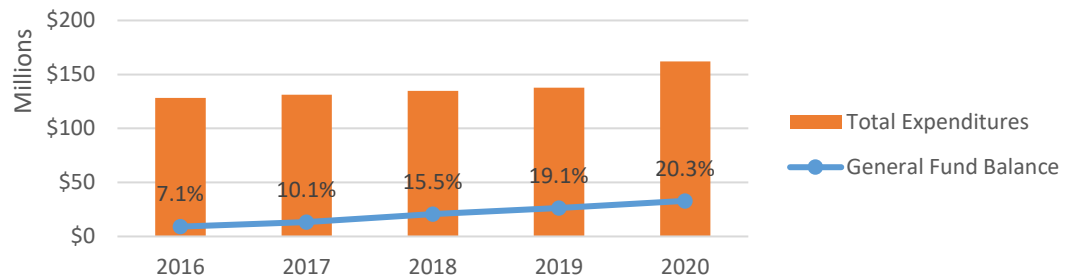
Bristol Township School District will prepare and empower our students to be productive, competitive members in an ever-changing global society.

## Financial Information

The following pages contain financial information about the Bristol Township School District obtained from annual financial data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and available on PDE's public website. This information was not audited and is presented for **informational purposes only**.

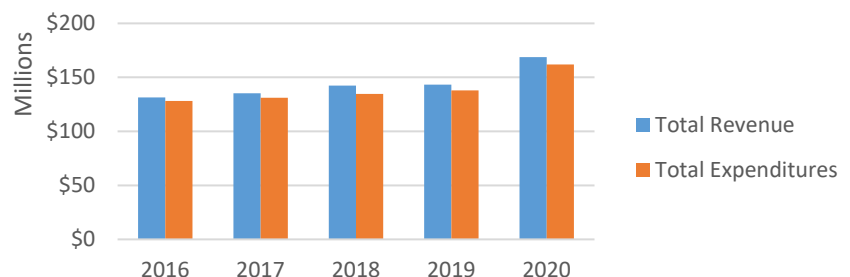
### General Fund Balance as a Percentage of Total Expenditures

	General Fund Balance
2016	\$9,106,324
2017	\$13,254,479
2018	\$20,830,795
2019	\$26,275,123
2020	\$32,961,767



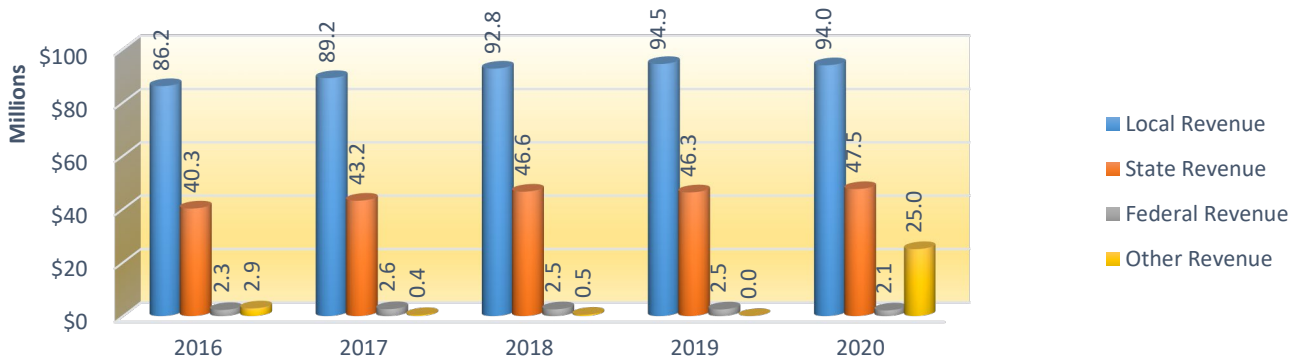
### Revenues and Expenditures

	Total Revenue	Total Expenditures
2016	\$131,562,509	\$128,161,660
2017	\$135,347,554	\$131,199,398
2018	\$142,365,754	\$134,789,438
2019	\$143,278,582	\$137,834,254
2020	\$168,708,349	\$162,021,707

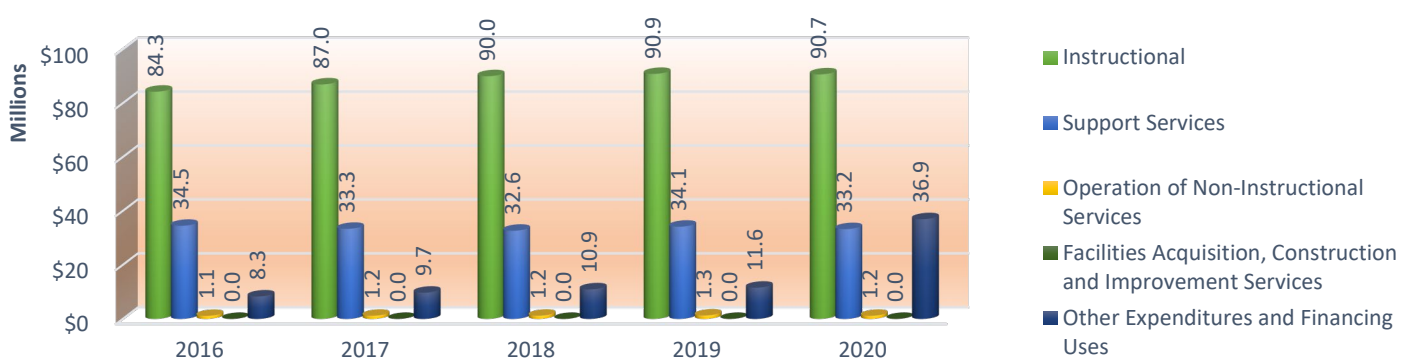


## Financial Information Continued

### Revenues by Source

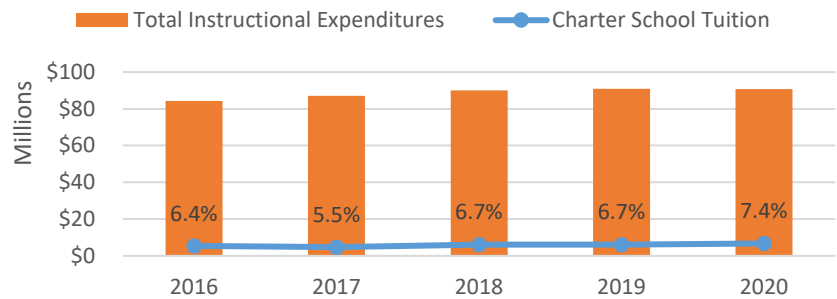


### Expenditures by Function

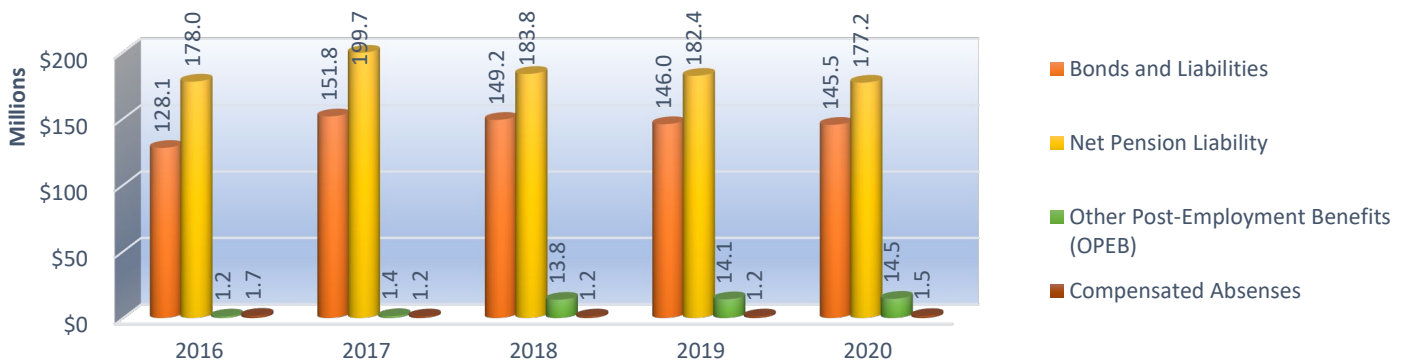


### Charter Tuition as a Percentage of Instructional Expenditures

	Charter School Tuition	Total Instructional Expenditures
2016	\$5,394,220	\$84,275,884
2017	\$4,759,442	\$86,978,301
2018	\$6,065,704	\$90,022,487
2019	\$6,126,489	\$90,871,059
2020	\$6,732,390	\$90,698,964



### Long-Term Debt



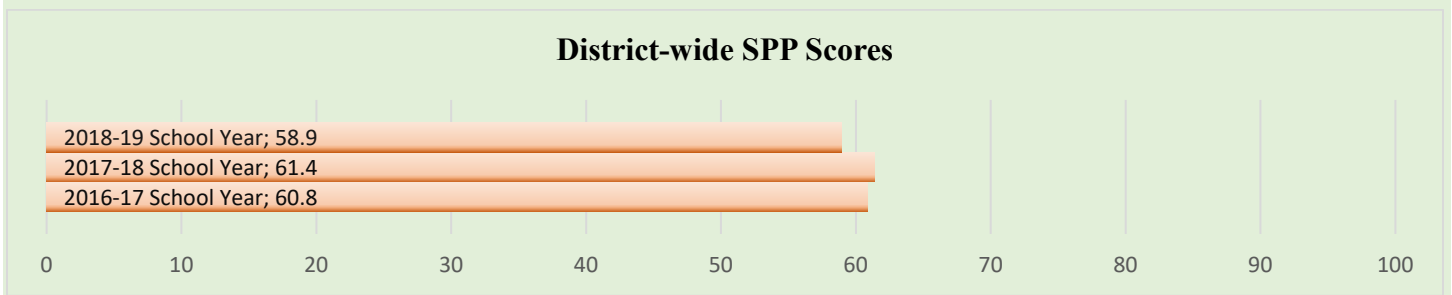


## Academic Information<sup>1</sup>

The graphs on the following pages present the District-wide School Performance Profile (SPP) scores, Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores, and Keystone Exam results for the District obtained from PDE's data files for the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the District's 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates are presented for the 2017-18 through 2019-20 school years.<sup>3</sup> The District's individual school building scores are presented in Appendix B. These scores are provided in this audit report for **informational purposes only**, and they were not audited by our Department.

### What is a SPP score?

A SPP score serves as a benchmark for schools to reflect on successes, achievements, and yearly growth. PDE issues a SPP score annually using a 0-100 scale for all school buildings in the Commonwealth, which is calculated based on standardized testing (i.e., PSSA and Keystone exam scores), student improvement, advance course offerings, and attendance and graduation rates. Generally speaking, a SPP score of 70 or above is considered to be a passing rate.



<sup>1</sup> PDE is the sole source of academic data presented in this report. All academic data was obtained from PDE's publicly available website.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the PSSA and Keystone Exam requirements were waived for the 2019-20 school year; therefore, there is no academic data to present for this school year.

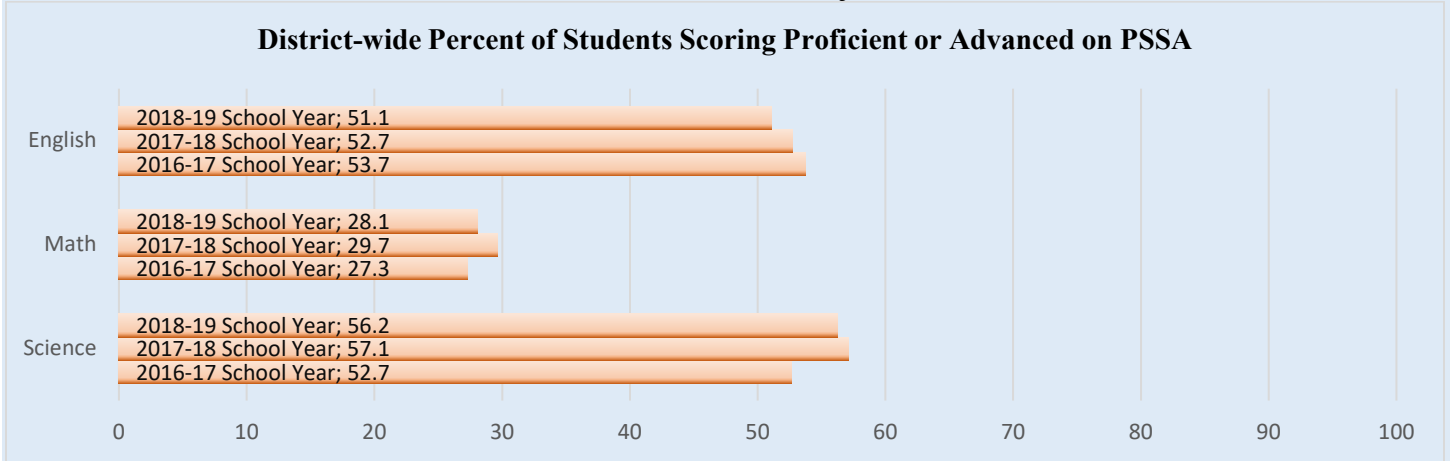
<sup>3</sup> Graduation rates were still reported for the 2019-20 school year despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Academic Information Continued

### What is the PSSA?

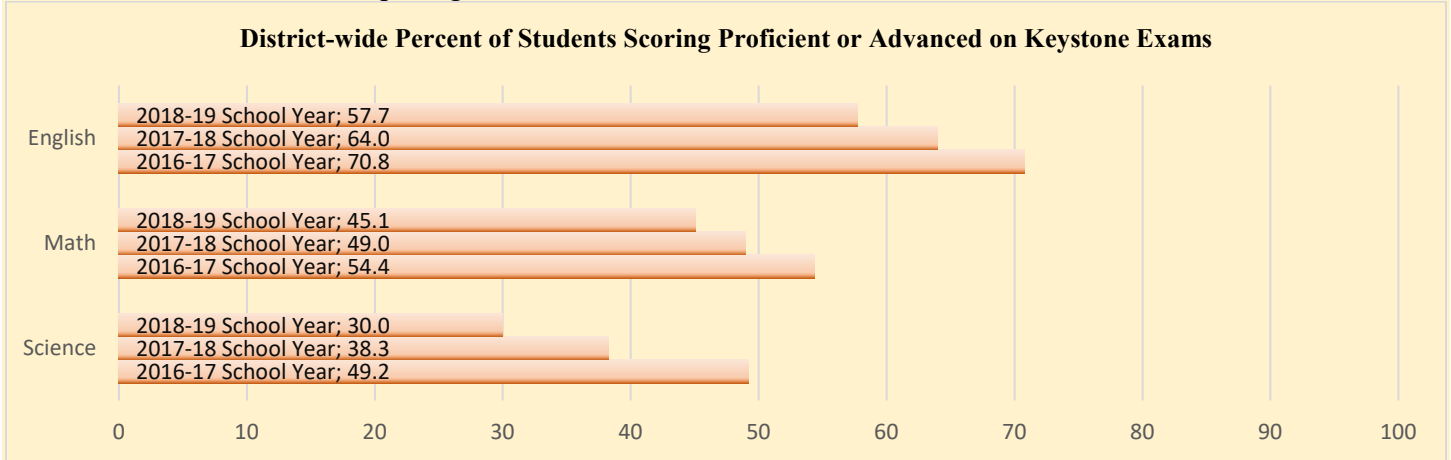
The PSSA is an annual, standardized test given across the Commonwealth to students in grades 3 through 8 in core subject areas, including English, Math and Science. The PSSAs help Pennsylvania meet federal and state requirements and inform instructional practices, as well as provide educators, stakeholders, and policymakers with important information about the state's students and schools.

The 2014-15 school year marked the first year that PSSA testing was aligned to the more rigorous PA Core Standards. The state uses a grading system with scoring ranges that place an individual student's performance into one of four performance levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The state's goal is for students to score Proficient or Advanced on the exam in each subject area.



### What is the Keystone Exam?

The Keystone Exam measures student proficiency at the end of specific courses, such as Algebra I, Literature, and Biology. The Keystone Exam was intended to be a graduation requirement starting with the class of 2017, but that requirement has been put on hold until the 2020-21 school year.<sup>4</sup> In the meantime, the exam is still given as a standardized assessment and results are included in the calculation of SPP scores. The Keystone Exam is scored using the same four performance levels as the PSSAs, and the goal is to score Proficient or Advanced for each course requiring the test.

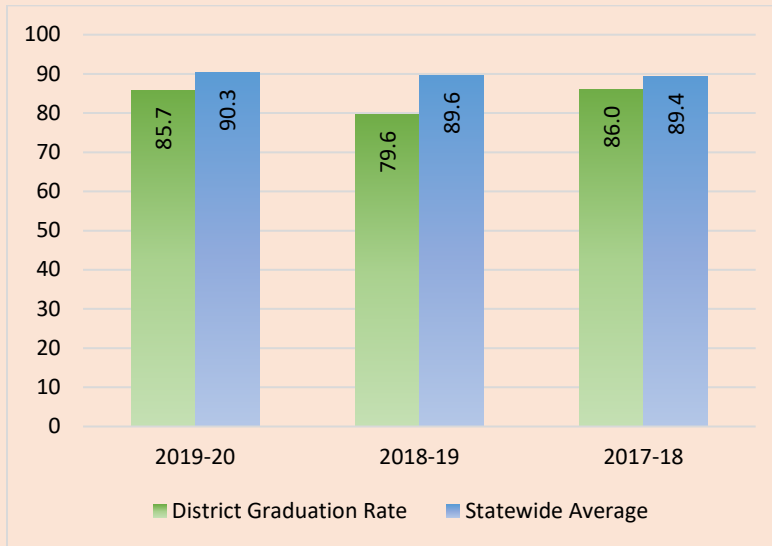


<sup>4</sup> Act 158 of 2018, effective October 24, 2018, amended the Public School Code to further delay the use of Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement until the 2021-22 school year. See 24 P.S. § 1-121(b)(1). Please refer to the following link regarding further guidance to local education agencies (LEAs) on Keystone end-of-course exams (Keystone Exams) in the context of the pandemic of 2020: <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/Pages/Keystone-Exams.aspx>

## Academic Information Continued

### What is a 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate?

PDE collects enrollment and graduate data for all Pennsylvania public schools, which is used to calculate graduation rates. Cohort graduation rates are a calculation of the percentage of students who have graduated with a regular high school diploma within a designated number of years since the student first entered high school. The rate is determined for a cohort of students who have all entered high school for the first time during the same school year. Data specific to the 4-year cohort graduation rate is presented in the graph below.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> PDE also calculates 5-year and 6-year cohort graduation rates. Please visit PDE's website for additional information: <https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/CohortGradRate/Pages/default.aspx>.

## Findings

### Finding No. 1

### The District's Failure to Implement an Adequate Internal Control System Led to Inaccurate Transportation Data Reported to PDE Resulted in a Net Underpayment of \$55,248

#### *Criteria relevant to the finding:*

#### **Student Transportation Subsidy**

Section 2541(a) of the Public School Code (PSC) states, in part: "School districts shall be paid by the Commonwealth for every school year on account of pupil transportation which... have been approved by the Department of Education... an amount to be determined by multiplying the cost of approved reimbursable pupils transportation incurred by the district by the district's aid ratio.

In determining the formula for the cost of approved reimbursable transportation, the Secretary of Education may prescribe the methods of determining approved mileages and the utilized passenger capacity of vehicles for reimbursement purposes..." See 24 P.S. § 25-2541(a).

We found that the Bristol Township School District (District) did not implement an adequate internal control system over the input, calculation, and reporting of regular transportation data. The failure to implement internal controls led to multiple inaccuracies in the transportation data the District reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Consequently, the District received \$55,248 less than it was entitled to in regular transportation reimbursements for the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Background**

School districts receive two separate transportation reimbursement payments from PDE. The **regular** transportation reimbursement is broadly based on the number of students transported, the number of days each vehicle was used for transporting students, and the number of miles that vehicles are in service, both with and without students. The **supplemental** transportation reimbursement is based on the number of nonpublic school and charter school students transported. The errors identified in this finding pertain to the District's **regular** transportation reimbursement.

Since the above listed components are integral to the calculation of the District's transportation reimbursements, it is essential that the District properly record, calculate, and report transportation data to PDE. Therefore, the District should have a strong system of internal control over transportation operations that should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Segregation of duties.
- Comprehensive written procedures.
- Training on PDE reporting requirements.

It is also important to note that the Public School Code (PSC) requires that all school districts annually file a sworn statement of student transportation data for the prior and current school years with PDE in order to be eligible for transportation reimbursement.<sup>7</sup> The sworn statement includes the Superintendent's signature attesting to the accuracy

<sup>6</sup> The District received \$6,328,916 in regular transportation reimbursements for the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years.

<sup>7</sup> See 24 P.S. § 25-2543.

*Criteria relevant to the finding (continued):*

**Sworn Statement and Annual Filing Requirements**

Section 2543 of the PSC, which is entitled, “Sworn statement of amount expended for reimbursable transportation; payment; withholding” of the PSC states, in part: “Annually, each school district entitled to reimbursement on account of pupil transportation shall provide in a format prescribed by the Secretary of Education, data pertaining to pupil transportation for the prior and current school year. . . . The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) may, for cause specified by it, withhold such reimbursement, in any given case, permanently, or until the school district has complied **with the law or regulations** of the State Board of Education.” (Emphases added.) See 24 P.S. § 25-2543.

**Education Agencies (LEA) on how to complete the PDE-1049. The PDE-1049 is the electronic form used by LEAs to submit transportation vehicle data annually to PDE.**

<http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Teachers-Administrators/Pupil%20Transportation/eTran%20Application%20Instructions/PupilTransp%20Instructions%20PDE%201049.pdf> (accessed September 9, 2021)

**Pupils Assigned** – Report the greatest number of pupils assigned to ride this vehicle at any one time during the day. Report the number of pupils assigned to the nearest tenth. The number cannot exceed the seating capacity. If the number of pupils assigned changed during the year, calculate a weighted average or a sample average.

of the reported data. Because of this statutorily required attestation, the District should ensure it has implemented an adequate internal control system to provide the Superintendent with the confidence needed to sign the sworn statement.

**Regular Transportation Reporting Errors**

As stated above, the regular transportation reimbursement is based on several components that are reported by a school district to PDE for use in calculating the district’s annual reimbursement amount. PDE guidelines state that districts are required to report the number of days a vehicle is in service, the number of students assigned to each vehicle, as well as the miles per day that each vehicle travels with and without students. If the number of students assigned and/or the miles traveled changes during the school year, districts are required to calculate and report an average.

***Errors in Mileage and the Number of Students Transported for the 2019-20 school year***

The District’s failure to accurately calculate and report the miles traveled and students transported during the 2019-20 school year for most vehicles used to transport students resulted in a \$100,410 underpayment. These vehicles transported students for seven months of the school year beginning in September, but stopped transporting students in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The District inaccurately calculated data based on vehicles transporting students for more than seven months.

While the errors we found in the 2019-20 school year resulted in a substantial underpayment, we also found errors in the other years of our audit period that resulted in overpayments. These errors are described in further detail below.

***Errors in Mileage for the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years.***

We found that the District inaccurately calculated and reported mileage data for vehicles in each year of the audit period. The primary reason for these errors was the District inaccurately combined activity run mileage with regular run mileage even though PDE requires them to be reported separately.<sup>8</sup> The District’s failure to accurately calculate and report activity run mileage resulted in the District over reporting mileage data.

We also found that the District made isolated clerical errors when reporting mileage and student averages data to PDE during the audit period. A secondary review of the mileage and student averages calculated each year may have revealed these errors prior to reporting the data to PDE.

<sup>8</sup> Activity runs are also referred to as late runs in PDE reporting guidelines.

*Criteria relevant to the finding (continued):*

Daily Miles With - Report the number of miles per day, to the nearest tenth, that the vehicle traveled with pupils. If this figure changed during the year, calculate a weighted average or sample average.

Daily Miles Without - Report the number of miles per day, to the nearest tenth, that the vehicle traveled without pupils. If this figure changed during the year, calculate a weighted average or sample average.

Activity Run

For students who stay after the end of the school day and are transported home on an “Activity Run” sometimes referred to as a “late run” the eTran systems allows entry of this information by checking the “Activity Run” box. Three data boxes will appear to enter the “Daily Miles With”, “Daily Miles Without” and “Number of Days” for the late run service only.

The following table shows the number of vehicles the District reported inaccurately to PDE and the associated over/(under) payment in transportation reimbursement.

Bristol Township School District Transportation Reimbursement Over/(Under) Payments		
School Year	Number of Vehicles With Reporting Errors <sup>9</sup>	Over/(Under) Payment
2016-17	20	\$ 12,565
2017-18	22	\$ 13,680
2018-19	14	\$ 18,917 <sup>10</sup>
2019-20	96	(\$100,410)
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>(\$ 55,248)</b>

**Significant Internal Control Deficiencies**

Our review revealed that the District did not have an adequate internal control system over its regular transportation operations. Specifically, we found that the District did not do the following:

- Ensure that an employee other than the employee who calculated the transportation data reviewed the data before it was reported to PDE.
- Ensure that all employees involved in the calculation and reporting of transportation data are adequately trained on PDE requirements.
- Develop comprehensive written procedures for accurately calculating and reporting transportation data to PDE.

All of the above internal control deficiencies led to the reporting errors we identified and resulted in the District being inaccurately reimbursed during each year of the audit period. The cumulative effect of the errors we identified and the District missing out on more than \$55,000 it was eligible to receive during the audit period highlights the need for strong internal controls over the transportation data reporting system.

Future Reimbursement Adjustment: We provided PDE with reports detailing the reporting errors we found related to the regular transportation reimbursements. We recommend that PDE adjust the District’s future transportation reimbursements by the \$55,248 that we identified as a net underpayment.

<sup>9</sup> In the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years, the District reported 97, 100, 100, and 98 total vehicles, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> The amount of the over payment in transportation reimbursement is affected by the difference between reported and audited mileage and student averages. Therefore, many minor errors can result in a smaller overpayment than a few large errors.

## Recommendations

The *Bristol Township School District* should:

1. Develop and implement an internal control system over its regular and supplemental transportation operations. The internal control system should include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - All personnel involved in regular and supplemental transportation data reporting are trained on PDE's reporting requirements.
  - A review of transportation data is conducted by an employee other than the employee who prepared the data before it is submitted to PDE.
  - Comprehensive written procedures are developed to ensure accurate reporting of the regular and supplemental transportation data.
2. Review the reports submitted to PDE for the 2020-21 school year to determine if similar errors were made and submit revisions if needed.

The *Pennsylvania Department of Education* should:

3. Adjust the District's future transportation reimbursement to resolve the \$55,248 net underpayment for regular transportation reimbursements.

## Management Response

District management provided the following response:

*Cause of the Problem:*

District misinterpretation of mileage rules. Insufficient internal controls as they relate to maintaining documentation.

*Corrective Action*

Management partially disagrees and partially agrees with the findings.

Management disagrees with the findings as they relate to errors reported during the 2019-2020 school year related to the COVID-19 pandemic were already identified by the School District and pending resolution with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Additional errors reported related to lack of review are more accurately described as a lack of documentation of the review that occurred.

Management agrees with the findings regarding errors in mileage for the 2016-2017 through 2019-2020 reporting years as they relate to activity miles reported. It is important to note that these miles account for less than 1% of the School District's entire transportation subsidy.

*Response to Recommendation #1:*

Bristol Township School District will develop written procedures to ensure that all data collected is complete and accurate as it relates to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

- The School District will also identify the procedures in which accurate supporting documentation needs to be maintained so support its subsidy calculation such as monthly transportation data, bus rosters, odometer readings, and summary data calculations.
- The Business Manager will review the transportation subsidy form and underlying data for accuracy and maintain documentation of the review. Supporting documentation for the subsidy form will be maintained in a secure location.
- All School District employees involved with data collection, verification and reporting will be trained on how the data is collected, documented, and reported to PDE.

*Response to Recommendation #2:*

The transportation subsidy reports to be submitted to PDE for the 2020-2021 school year will be reviewed for similar errors and revised as necessary.

**Auditor Conclusion**

While the District may have been aware of the calculation errors in the 2019-20 school year, it had not taken any steps to correct those errors with PDE prior to the start of our audit. We are pleased that the District intends to implement corrective actions to address our recommendations. We will review the District's corrective actions during our next audit of the District.



## Finding No. 2

## The District's Failure to Implement an Adequate Internal Control System Led to Inaccurate Nonresident Student Data Reported to PDE Resulting in an Underpayment of \$44,957

### *Criteria relevant to the finding:*

The State Board of Education's regulations and PDE guidelines govern the classifications of nonresident children placed in private homes based on the criteria outlined in the PSC.

### **Payment of Tuition**

Section 1305(a) of the PSC provides for Commonwealth payment of tuition for nonresident children placed in private homes as follows:

"When a non-resident child is placed in the home of a resident of any school district by order of court or by arrangement with an association, agency, or institution having the care of neglected and dependent children, **such resident being compensated for keeping the child**, any child of school age so placed shall be entitled to all free school privileges accorded to resident school children of the district, including the right to attend the public high school maintained in such district or in other districts in the same manner as though such child were in fact a resident school child of the district." (Emphasis added.) See 24 P.S. § 13-1305(a).

We found that the District failed to implement an adequate internal control system over the identification, categorization, and reporting of nonresident student data resulting in a \$44,957 underpayment from PDE. This underpayment was caused by the District inaccurately reporting the number of nonresident foster students educated by the District during the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years.<sup>11</sup>

**Background:** School districts are entitled to receive Commonwealth paid tuition for educating certain nonresident students. For a district to be eligible to receive Commonwealth paid tuition, the District must ensure that the student has met all four eligibility components:

- 1) The student's parent/guardian must not be a resident of the educating district.
- 2) The student must have been placed in the private home of a resident within the district by order of the court or by arrangement with an association, agency, or institution.<sup>12</sup>
- 3) The district resident must be compensated for the care of the student.
- 4) The student must not be in pre-adoptive status.

These students are commonly referred to as "foster students." It is the responsibility of the educating district to obtain the required documentation to correctly categorize and accurately report these students that the district educated to PDE. Further, the district must obtain updated documentation for each year that the district reports a student as a nonresident.

Because school districts can be eligible for additional revenue for educating nonresident students, it is essential for districts to properly identify, categorize, and report nonresident students that it educated to PDE. Therefore, school districts should have a strong system of internal controls over this process that should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Training on PDE reporting requirements.

<sup>11</sup> The District received \$330,712 in reimbursements for educating nonresident students during the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the applicable county children and youth agency.

*Criteria relevant to the finding  
(continued):*

Section 2503(c) of the PSC specifies the amount of Commonwealth-paid tuition on behalf of nonresident children placed in private homes by providing, in part:

“Each school district, regardless of classification, which accepts any non-resident child in its school under the provisions of section **one thousand three hundred five** . . . shall be paid by the Commonwealth an amount equal to the tuition charge per elementary pupil or the tuition charge per high school pupil, as the case may be . . .” (Emphasis added.) See 24 P.S. § 25-2503(c).

Subsection (a) of Section 11.19 (relating to Nonresident child living with a district resident) of the State Board of Education’s regulations provides as follows, in part.

“A nonresident child is entitled to attend the district’s public schools if that child is fully maintained and supported in the home of a district resident as if the child were the residents own child and if the resident receives no personal compensation for maintaining the student in the district. Before accepting the child as a student, the board of school directors of the district shall require the resident to file with the secretary of the board of school directors either appropriate legal documentation to show dependency or guardianship or a sworn statement that the child is supported fully without personal compensation or gain, and that the resident will assume all personal obligations for the child relative to school requirements and intends to so keep and fully support the child continuously and not merely through the school term.” See 22 Pa. Code § 11.19(a).

- Written internal procedures to help ensure compliance with PDE requirements.
- Reconciliations of source documents to information reported to PDE.

### Foster Student Reporting Errors

We found that the District made a total of 37 reporting errors during the audit period. The reporting errors involved 30 students, some of whom were inaccurately reported in multiple years. The following table details the number of students that the District inaccurately reported and the resulting over/under payment to the District.

Bristol Township School District Foster Student Data		
School Year	Number of Students Inaccurately Reported	Over / (Under) Payment <sup>13</sup>
2016-17	5	\$15,908
2017-18	13	(\$31,844)
2018-19	12	(\$34,119)
2019-20	7	\$ 5,098
<b>Totals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>(\$44,957)</b>

Of the 30 distinct students inaccurately reported to PDE, some were inaccurately reported as foster students and the District was overpaid as a result of these reporting errors. Additionally, the District failed to report multiple foster students educated by the District for reimbursement. The failure to accurately report eligible foster students for reimbursement led to the District not receiving all of the reimbursement it was eligible to receive.

The primary reason the District did not receive all the Commonwealth reimbursement it was eligible to receive was the failure to report foster students educated by the District to PDE. The District did report some foster students accurately during the audit period; however, it failed to report the majority of foster students and this led to the cumulative underpayment. The District experienced turnover in the role responsible for identifying, categorizing, and reporting foster students, and the fact that some eligible foster students were accurately reported while others were not highlights the need for the District to implement a strong system of internal controls over this process.

<sup>13</sup> The amount of the over/(under) payment is based on the total number of eligible days as compared to the number of days reported, not the number of students reported in error.

The District received Commonwealth reimbursement it was not eligible to receive when it inaccurately reported students as foster students who did not meet the eligibility criteria. The District also inaccurately reported some students as foster students who were adopted and became District residents and therefore were ineligible. Additionally, several foster students were educated by the District but placed in foster homes outside the District. When a foster student is not residing within the educating district, the educating District must invoice tuition costs to the district where the student's foster home is located. The District did not invoice other districts as required and, therefore, received no reimbursement for educating these students.

### **Significant Internal Control Deficiencies**

The District did not have adequate internal controls over the identification, categorization, and reporting of foster student data. The District relied solely on one employee to categorize and report foster students. This employee was not adequately trained on PDE requirements and the documentation needed to demonstrate compliance with the eligibility criteria. The information was reported to PDE without a review by a District official sufficiently knowledgeable on PDE reporting requirements. The District also did not reconcile the data ultimately reported to PDE to source documents to ensure each foster student met the eligibility requirements and was reported correctly. Finally, the District did not have written policies and procedures to assist its employees in accurately identifying a foster student by obtaining the required documentation needed to support this categorization.

**Future Reimbursement Adjustment:** We provided PDE with documentation detailing the reporting errors we identified for the audit period. We recommend that PDE adjust the District's future subsidy reimbursement amount by the \$44,957 that we calculated as an underpayment.

### **Recommendations**

The *Bristol Township School* District should:

1. Develop and implement an internal control system governing the process for identifying and reporting foster student data. The internal control system should include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - All personnel involved in the identification, categorization, and reporting of nonresident data are trained on PDE's reporting requirements.
  - A review of nonresident data is conducted by an employee other than the employee who prepared the data before it is submitted to PDE.

- Clear and concise written procedures are developed to document the categorization and reporting process for nonresident student data.
2. Perform a reconciliation of the foster student data to source documents before reporting to PDE.
  3. Invoice tuition costs for students educated in the District whose foster families reside within another district.

The *Pennsylvania Department of Education* should:

4. Adjust the District's future reimbursements to resolve the underpayment of \$44,957.

### **Management Response**

District management provided the following response:

#### *Cause of the Problem:*

Inadequate internal controls over the identification, categorization, and reporting of foster student data.

The District relied solely on one employee to categorize and report foster students.

Information was reported to PDE without a review by a District official sufficiently knowledgeable on PDE reporting requirements.

District did not have written policies and procedures to assist its employees in accurately identifying a foster student by obtaining the required documentation needed to support this categorization.

#### *Corrective Action:*

District personnel responsible for making residency determinations, reviewing determinations, and reporting to PDE will be required to attend and/or participate in training and professional development opportunities in order to stay abreast of accurate reporting practices and procedures.

An internal control system will be established for identifying, categorizing and reporting nonresident student data. This includes verification of the natural parent's resident district, verification of the subsidy received by Foster parents, and verification of the coding for foster identification.

The district is moving to a central registration system which will allow better oversight of the registration process for nonresident students. The district will also update its 1305 form for all new registrations.

**Auditor Conclusion**

We are pleased that the District plans to implement corrective actions to address our recommendations. We will review the District's corrective actions during our next audit of the District.

## Finding No. 3

# The District Failed to Comply with Provisions of the Public School Code and Associated Regulations by Not Maintaining Complete Records for and Properly Monitoring Its Contracted Drivers

*Criteria relevant to the finding:*

### Internal Control Standards

*Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (also known as the Green Book), issued by the Comptroller General of the United States in September 2014, provides a framework for management to establish and maintain an effective internal control system. Principle 10, *Design Control Activities*, Attribute 10.03, states, in part, “Management designs appropriate types of control activities for the entity’s internal control system. Control activities help management fulfill responsibilities and address identified risk responses in the internal control system. . . .” See Section 10.3 of the Green Book.

### Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

Chapter 23 (relating to Pupil Transportation) of the State Board of Education’s regulations, among other provisions, provides that the board of directors of a school district is responsible for the selection and approval of eligible operators who qualify under the law and regulations. See, in particular, 22 Pa. Code § 23.4(2).

The District failed to meet its statutory obligations related to the employment of individuals having direct contact with students during the 2020-21 school year by not maintaining complete and updated records for all drivers transporting students. Specifically, we found 24 drivers with missing and/or expired clearances and driver credentials. We also found that the District’s Board of School Directors (Board) did not approve any drivers employed by its transportation contractors. We determined that the District did not implement sufficient internal controls to meet these obligations.

By not adequately maintaining and monitoring driver qualifications, the District could not ensure that its own drivers, as well as its contracted drivers, were properly qualified and cleared to transport students as required by state laws and regulations (see criteria box) or that the District followed its own board policies. Finally, we noted that the District’s board policy regarding contracted services does not include the legal requirement to renew background clearances every five years.

### Background

#### *Importance of Internal Controls*

Several state statutes and regulations establish the minimum required credentials for school bus and van drivers including, among others, the PSC and the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL). The District’s Board is responsible for the selection and approval of eligible school bus and van operators who qualify under the laws and regulations.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the District should have a strong internal control system over its driver review process that should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Documented review of all driver credentials prior to Board approval.
- Monitoring of driver credentials to ensure current clearances, licenses, and physicals are on file.
- Monitoring who is driving buses and vans each day throughout the school year to ensure all drivers have been authorized by the Board.

<sup>14</sup> See 22 Pa. Code § 23.4(2).

*Criteria relevant to the finding (continued):*

Section 111 of the PSC requires state and federal criminal background checks and Section 6344(b) of the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) requires a child abuse clearance. *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111 and 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344(b), as amended. Additionally, administrators are required to maintain copies of all required clearances. *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111(b) and (c.1) and 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344(b.1).

Furthermore, both the PSC and the CPSL now require recertification of the required state and federal background checks and the child abuse clearance every 60 months (or every five years). *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111(c.4) and 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344.4.

With regard to criminal background checks, Sections 111(b) and (c.1) of the PSC require prospective school employees who have direct contact with children, including independent contractors and their employees, to submit a report of criminal history record information obtained from the Pennsylvania State Police, as well as a report of Federal criminal history record information obtained from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111(b) and (c.1).

Moreover, Section 6344(a.1) and (b)(1) of the CPSL require school employees to obtain a Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance to certify whether an applicant is named in the Statewide database as an alleged perpetrator in a pending child abuse investigation or as the perpetrator of a founded report or an indicated report. *See* 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344(a.1) and (b)(1).

- Clear and concise written policies and procedures.
- Training on driver qualification and clearance requirements for employees responsible for driver records.

### ***Driver Employment Requirements***

Regardless of whether they hire their own or use contracted drivers, school districts are required to verify and have on file a copy of the following documents for each employed or contracted driver *before* he or she can transport students with Board approval:

1. Driver qualification credentials,<sup>15</sup> including:
  - a. Valid driver's license (commercial driver's license if operating a school bus).
  - b. Valid school bus endorsement card, commonly referred to as an "S" card, indicating completion of skills and safety training (if operating a school bus).
  - c. Annual physical examination (if operating a school bus).
2. Criminal history reports/clearances:
  - a. State Criminal History Clearance (Pennsylvania State Police [PSP] clearance).
  - b. Federal Criminal History Clearance, based on a full set of fingerprints (FBI clearance).
  - c. PA Child Abuse History Clearance.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that all three clearances must be obtained every five years.<sup>17</sup>

### **Inadequate Internal Controls Resulted in Incomplete Records**

The District utilizes its own employees and two transportation contractors, one primary and one secondary, to provide bus and van drivers (drivers) to transport students.

#### ***Incomplete Driver List***

We reviewed driver information for the 2020-21 school year. The District provided a list of 100 drivers transporting students as of May 10, 2021, including 42 District employees and 58 contracted drivers. We evaluated the completeness of that list by comparing it with information from the District's payroll system and both contractors. We found that the District failed to include 16 drivers on its list, consisting of 6 drivers from the

<sup>15</sup> Pennsylvania's Vehicle Code, 75 Pa.C.S. §§ 1508.1 (relating to Physical examinations) and 1509 (relating to Qualifications for school bus driver endorsement).

<sup>16</sup> This clearance is from the state Department of Human Services.

<sup>17</sup> 24 P.S. § 1-111(c.4) and 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344.4.

*Criteria relevant to the finding  
(continued):*

As for contracted school bus drivers, Section 111(a.1)(1) specifies that bus drivers employed by a school entity through an independent contractor who have direct contact with children must also comply with Section 111 of the PSC. *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111(a.1)(1). *See also* CPSL 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344(a.1)(1).

Pursuant to Section 111(c.4) of the PSC, administrators are required to review the background clearances and determine if the clearance reports disclose information that may require further action. *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111(c.4).

Administrators are also required to review the required documentation according to Section 111(g)(1) of the PSC. This section provides that an administrator, or other person responsible for employment decisions in a school or institution under this section who willfully fails to comply with the provisions of this section commits a violation of this act, subject to a hearing conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and shall be subject to a civil penalty up to \$2,500. *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111(g)(1).

Section 111(e) of the PSC lists convictions for certain criminal offenses that require an absolute ban to employment. Section 111(f.1) to the PSC requires that a **ten, five, or three** year look-back period for certain convictions be met before an individual is eligible for employment. (Emphasis added.) *See* 24 P.S. § 1-111(e) and (f.1).

primary contractor and all 10 drivers from the secondary contractor. Consequently, we determined the District's driver list was not complete.

We then requested the District's personnel files for 50 of the 100 drivers from the District's list, plus we added the 16 drivers not on the District's list to our testing population. In total, we reviewed 66 driver files to determine whether the District complied with driver and background clearance requirements, including the maintenance and monitoring of required documentation during our review period.

The results of our procedures disclosed internal control weaknesses related to the District obtaining, reviewing, and monitoring qualifications and clearances for District-employed and contracted drivers. The internal control weaknesses we identified are described in the following narrative.

*Incomplete Driver Records for District Employed Drivers*

During our initial review, we found four drivers with missing or expired clearances and driver credentials. The District's Transportation Department is responsible for handling driver credentials, while the District's Human Resources Department is responsible for clearances. District officials attributed these errors to administrative error on the part of the employees who monitor driver credentials and clearances.

*Incomplete and Missing Records for Contracted Drivers*

During discussions with District officials, we were informed that the District has **not** maintained or reviewed any driver credentials or background clearances for drivers from its secondary contractor. Therefore, there were no records for us to review. Furthermore, the District obtains and reviews **only** FBI clearances for drivers from its primary contractor. Consequently, the District's personnel files for these contracted drivers were incomplete. Furthermore, given that the PSP clearances were not obtained for its primary contractor, the District did not meet the minimum legal requirements for its bus driver background checks.

During the audit, both contractors provided information to the District for our review. Even after the contractors supplied information, we found 20 drivers (13 from the primary contractor and 7 from the secondary contractor) had at least one documentation deficiency, as noted below:

- Two drivers had missing driver's licenses.
- One driver had a missing physical card, and another driver had an expired physical card.
- Two drivers had missing "S" endorsement cards, and four other drivers had expired "S" endorsement cards.



*Criteria relevant to the finding  
(continued):*

Section 8.2 of Title 22, Chapter 8 (relating to Criminal Background Checks) of the State Board of Education regulations requires, in part, “(a) School entities shall require a criminal history background check **prior to hiring an applicant or accepting the services of a contractor**, if the applicant, contractor or contractor’s employees would have direct contact with children.” (Emphasis added.) See 22 Pa. Code § 8.2(a).

**PDE Guidance Document**

See also PDE’s “Clearances/Background Check” web site for current school and contractor guidance (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Educators/Clearances/Pages/default.aspx>).

**District Policies**

The District’s Policy No. 810, *Transportation*, states, in part:

“A school bus driver shall not be employed until s/he has complied with the mandatory background check requirements for criminal history and child abuse and the contractor has evaluated the results of that screening process.”

The District’s Policy No. 818, *Contracted Services*, states, in part:

“Independent contractors and their employees shall not be employed until each has complied with the mandatory background check requirements for criminal history and child abuse and the district has evaluated the results of that screening process.”

- Eight drivers had missing PSP clearances, and another three drivers had expired PSP clearances.
- Six drivers had missing FBI clearances, and another five drivers had expired FBI clearances.
- Eight drivers have missing Child Abuse clearances, and another four drivers had expired Child Abuse clearances.

District officials acknowledged that the District relies on its contractors to determine if their drivers are qualified and suitable for direct contact with students, including ensuring that all driver qualifications and background clearances are current and valid. The District worked with its contractors to obtain the missing documentation. However, even after our follow up review, the District still did not have updated credentials for all contracted drivers.

*Failure to Board Approve Contracted Drivers*

The requirement to Board approve drivers is designed to provide the public with assurance that District administration has determined that authorized drivers have the required qualifications and clearances on file *prior to* employment. The District has a process in place to Board approve District employed drivers when they are initially hired and at a change in employment (i.e., new salary amount). We found that the Board approved all District employees on its list of drivers. However, the District acknowledged that it does **not** have a process in place to approve contracted drivers. As such, none of the contracted drivers were Board approved, as required. The Board relied on District administration to monitor and ensure **all** drivers were qualified to transport students.

*No Written Review Procedures and Insufficient Monitoring Process*

The District did not have a standardized review process and ongoing monitoring procedures to ensure that all drivers, both District-employed and contracted, having direct contact with children were properly qualified prior to and throughout employment. The lack of a standardized process and insufficient monitoring, which are important internal controls, resulted in missing and expired documentation. While the District indicated that it monitored District-employed drivers, our testing procedures found incomplete driver records. District officials acknowledged that contracted driver records were not obtained, reviewed, or monitored, with the exception of FBI clearances for its primary contractor. The District relied on its contractors to ensure that their drivers were properly qualified throughout employment. The results of our audit show that this reliance was ineffective and not in compliance with state law since all required documentation was not immediately available from the contractors.

## **Noncompliance With and Outdated Board Policies**

During our review, we noted that District Policies No. 810, *Transportation* and No. 818, *Contracted Services*, were both adopted in August 2011 and last revised in June 2012 and October 2015, respectively. Together, these policies require that both District-employed and contracted drivers comply with the mandatory background check requirements for criminal history and a child abuse clearance. Policy No. 818 requires the District to evaluate clearances for contracted drivers. By failing to have complete and updated records for all drivers upon our initial review, including missing and expired background clearances, the District did not comply with its own policies.

Additionally, the 2012 and 2015 revisions to the District's transportation and contracted services policies did not incorporate all the significant changes to laws and regulations that were made to the PSC and the CPSL related to the requirement to obtain updated clearances every five years.

### **Conclusion**

The District and its Board did not meet their statutory obligations to ensure that drivers were qualified and eligible to transport students. Specifically, the District and its Board did not comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and PDE guidance documents by failing to have the Board approve **all** drivers and by not obtaining, reviewing, and monitoring all required driver qualifications and clearances. Finally, the District failed to update its relevant board policies.

Ensuring that ongoing qualification and clearance requirements are satisfied are a vital student protection obligation and responsibility placed on the District and its Board. The ultimate purpose of these requirements is to ensure the safety and welfare of students transported on school buses and vans. The use of contractors to provide student transportation does not alleviate the District from its responsibility to ensure compliance with requirements for driver qualifications and background clearances. It is vitally important that clearances include both the complete official PSP clearance results and the official FBI clearance since there could be some convictions that are not captured in one or the other of the two background checks.

### **Recommendations**

The *Bristol Township School District* should:

1. Implement verifiable internal control procedures with a documented review process to ensure that only qualified and authorized individuals are driving for the District.

These procedures should ensure:

- a. All required qualifications and clearances are obtained, reviewed, and on file at the District prior to individuals being presented to the Board for approval and/or transporting students.
  - b. All driver qualification and clearance documentation is monitored to ensure continued compliance with requirements, including the requirement to obtain updated clearances **every five years**.
2. Comply with all applicable laws and regulations to obtain, review, and maintain required qualifications and background clearances for all individuals that have direct contact with students, whether District employed or contracted. The maintenance of background clearances should include the official FBI clearance obtained by the District ***and*** the complete PSP clearance results.
  3. Ensure that all drivers, both District-employed and contracted, are presented to the Board for approval in a timely manner.
  4. Promptly update the Board's policies for transportation and contracted services to address the requirement to obtain updated clearances **every five years**.

### **Management Response**

District management provided the following response:

#### *Cause of the Problem:*

Overreliance on third parties to track and maintain documentation of driver clearances and credentials. Insufficient internal controls over the processing and maintenance of driver clearances and credentials.

#### *Corrective Action:*

Bristol Township School District has driver clearances and credentials available for all of its drivers. The School District agrees and the audit has demonstrated that reliance on a transportation contractor is insufficient for having clearances and credentials readily available. The School District does not feel that at any time it had unqualified or unverified drivers and attributes the lack of documentation during the audit to high turnover among key staff of its transportation contractors and unavailability of those staff during summer hours while the audit was taking place.

#### Response to Recommendation #1:

The District will create a written set of internal control procedures for driver clearances and credentials.

- All new drivers hired by contractors will be added to the School District's internal database for tracking clearances and qualifications. Clearances and qualifications will be held onsite in a secure location at the District administration office.
- Driver qualifications and clearances will be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are kept up to date.

Response to Recommendation #2:

All qualifications and background clearances for contracted employees will be maintained at the District administrative office in accordance with internal control procedures developed above.

Information to be tracked and maintained as follows:

To be supplied annually:

- Pennsylvania Driver License for Van Driver of School Bus Driver License for Bus Driver.
- Physical Exam Certificate
- Bus Driver physical exam form.
- Certificate on Completion of school bus driver's training.

To be supplied every five years:

- Act 34 Criminal Record Check
- Act 151 Criminal Record Check
- Act 114 FBI Fingerprint Report

Response to Recommendation #3:

Contracted drivers will be included with the District's existing personnel processing procedures to ensure that they are included in regular Board meetings. Procedures will be established as part of the internal control procedures developed above.

Response to Recommendation #4:

All board policies are reviewed per PSBA recommendations and changes incorporated where appropriate. While the policy may not explicitly state that clearances need to be updated every five years, it is common practice and currently well understood by the School District's personnel department that they need to be. Board policies will be further reviewed for appropriateness.

### **Auditor Conclusion**

We are pleased that the District plans to implement corrective actions to address our recommendations. We continue to recommend that the District update its board policies to reflect the current clearance renewal timeframe as provided for in the PSC. We will review the District's corrective actions during our next audit of the District.

## Finding No. 4

### The District Failed to Conduct All Required Monthly Fire Drills in Accordance with the Public School Code and to Document All Required Security Drills

#### Criteria relevant to the finding:

Section 1517(a) of the PSC requires:

“Except as provided under subsection (a.1), in all school buildings of school entities where fire-escapes, appliances for the extinguishment of fires, or proper and sufficient exits in case of fire or panic, either or all, are required by law to be maintained, fire drills shall be periodically conducted, **not less than one a month**, by the teacher or teachers in charge, under rules and regulations to be promulgated by the chief school administrator under whose supervision such school entities are. In such fire drills, the pupils and teachers shall be instructed in, and made thoroughly familiar with, the use of the fire-escapes, appliances and exits. **The drill shall include the actual use thereof, and the complete removal of the pupils and teachers**, in an expeditious and orderly manner, by means of fire-escapes and exits, from the building to a place of safety on the grounds outside.” (Emphases added.) See 24 P.S. § 15-1517(a) (as amended by Act 55 of 2017, effective November 6, 2017).

Our review of the District’s fire and security drill data found that most of the District’s six schools failed to conduct and/or accurately report all of their required monthly **fire drills** in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, as required by the PSC.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, our review disclosed that not all school buildings maintained documentation to support that a school **security drill** was conducted during the first 90 days of both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.<sup>19</sup> Finally, we found that the District inaccurately reported drill data to PDE. Consequently, the District’s Superintendent inappropriately attested to the accuracy of the drill data in the PDE required report and certification statement.

#### Reporting Requirements

As detailed in the criteria box, the PSC requires that each school building perform a fire drill each and every month while school is in session. The PSC further mandates that each school also conduct a security drill within the first 90 days of the school year. According to the PSC, districts are permitted to substitute a maximum of two additional security drills in place of two monthly fire drills after the first 90 days of the school year. Both fire and security drill data must be reported annually to PDE through the *Fire Evacuation and Security Drill Accuracy Certification Statement* (ACS) report.

In an effort to help prepare students and staff for potential emergency situations, the mandatory fire and security drill requirements of the PSC should be closely followed by all school entities across the Commonwealth. To determine compliance with drill requirements, we requested and reviewed the 2018-19 and 2019-20 fire and security drill data reported to PDE for the District’s six school buildings, along with supporting documentation to evidence the reported drills. We reviewed the months of September 2018 through May 2019 and September 2019 through February 2020 since drills are required to be conducted with students and staff present.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 24 P.S. § 15-1517(a) (as amended by Act 55 of 2017, effective November 6, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> 24 P.S. § 15-1517(a.1) (as last amended by Act 39 of 2018, effective July 1, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Drills were not required for March, April, and May of 2020 due to the mandatory, statewide closing of schools because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Criteria relevant to the finding (continued):*

Section 1517(a.1) of the PSC requires:

“Within ninety (90) days of the commencement of the school year after the effective date of this subsection and within ninety (90) days of the commencement of each school year thereafter, each school entity shall conduct one school security drill per school year in each school building in place of a fire drill required under subsection (a). After ninety (90) days from the commencement of each school year, each school entity may conduct two school security drills per school year in each school building in place of two fire drills required under subsection (a).” See 24 P.S. § 15-1517(a.1) (as last amended by Act 39 of 2018, effective July 1, 2018).

Further, Sections 1517(b) and (e) of the PSC also require:

“(b) Chief school administrators are hereby required to see that the provisions of this section are faithfully carried out in the school entities over which they have charge.”

“(e) On or before the tenth day of April of each year, each chief school administrator shall certify to the Department of Education that the emergency evacuation drills and school security drills herein required have been conducted in accordance with this section.” See 24 P.S. § 15-1517(b) and (e) (as last amended by Act 55 of 2017, effective November 6, 2017).

## **Fire and Security Drill Weaknesses**

Our review found that none of the District’s six school buildings in the 2018-19 school year and only one of the six school buildings in the 2019-20 school year performed **all required fire and security drills** and correctly reported the drills to PDE. Fire and security drill deficiencies include missed drills, date and documentation discrepancies, and reporting errors. In addition, the 2018-19 ACS report was filed on September 3, 2019, after the due date of July 31, 2019.

### *Missed and Inaccurately Reported Fire Drills*

We found that all six school buildings in the 2018-19 school year and four of six buildings in the 2019-20 school year missed and/or inaccurately reported fire drills. In 2018-19, three of six schools with fire drill deficiencies missed at least three drills, and two of the six schools did not provide any documentation to support the fire drills reported upon initial testing. In 2019-20, two of six schools missed one fire drill.

### *Undocumented and Inaccurately Reported Security Drills*

All six school buildings in the 2018-19 school year failed to maintain adequate documentation to support that security drills reported to PDE were conducted. In 2018-19, all six schools reported security drills on the ACS report filed with PDE for the month of September. However, none of the schools were able to provide documentation to support that a security drill was actually conducted. We also found one instance where the District reported a fire drill on its ACS but documented the drill as a security drill on its supporting documentation.

In the 2019-20 school year, we found one of six schools reported a security drill for the month of September but could not provide documentation to support that the drill was conducted.

## **Inconsistent Reporting**

As part of our review, we compared the ACS reports filed with PDE to other available supporting documentation to determine the accuracy of the data reported. We found inconsistencies and errors that resulted in the inaccurate reporting described above, such as:

- Date discrepancies between the ACS report and the District’s supporting drill logs.
- Drills reported on the ACS report filed with PDE as not being conducted, but the District produced supporting drill logs to the contrary.
- Drills reported on days when school was closed for students.
- The wrong drill type reported to PDE.

*Criteria relevant to the finding  
(continued):*

Fire Drill Accuracy Certification Statements must be electronically submitted to PDE by July 31 following the end of a school year. Within two weeks of the electronic PIMS submission, a printed, signed original must be sent to PDE's Office for Safe Schools.

The 2018-19 and 2019-20 *Fire Evacuation and Security Drill Accuracy Certification Statement* that the chief school administrator was required to sign and file with PDE states, in part:

"I acknowledge that 24 PS 15-1517 requires that... fire drills shall be periodically conducted, not less than one a month... under rules and regulations to be promulgated by the district superintendent under whose supervision such schools are... District superintendents are hereby required to see that the provisions of this section are faithfully carried out in the schools over which they have charge. I certify that drills were conducted in accordance with 24 PS 15-1517 and that information provided on the files and summarized on the above School Safety Report is correct and true to the best of my knowledge ...."

District officials acknowledged a general lack of administrative oversight on individual schools' conducting and documenting fire and security drills, resulting in undocumented drills and improper reporting of drill types and drill dates. There were no standardized procedures for recording and reporting drills at the building level.

The PSC requires the chief school administrator to ensure that all requirements of Section 1517 are "faithfully carried out in the schools over which they have charge."<sup>21</sup> Given the concerns noted in the reporting of both fire and security drills, it is evident that the Superintendent did not fulfill this mandate.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is vitally important that the District's students and staff regularly participate in fire and security drills throughout the school year as required by the PSC. Building-level documentation should be maintained to support that all required drills occurred. Further, it is essential that the District accurately report fire and security drill data to PDE pursuant to its reporting requirements and guidance, and that the data has been double-checked for accuracy by properly trained and knowledgeable personnel.

## **Recommendations**

The *Bristol Township School District* should:

1. Conduct security and fire drills in compliance with the PSC requirements for all future school years.
2. Maintain detailed documentation of every fire and school security drill conducted at each school building in order to accurately report annual data to PDE.
3. Require building principals and other senior administrative personnel to verify drill data before submitting the ACS report to PDE.
4. Ensure all personnel in charge of completing and submitting ACS reports are trained on PDE's reporting requirements and guidance, and that the chief school administrator is aware of his/her fire and security drill obligations and certification statement requirements.

---

<sup>21</sup> 24 P.S. § 15-1517(b).



## **Management Response**

District management provided the following response:

### *Cause of the Problem:*

Inadequate internal controls over the verification and reporting of security and fire drills.

District did not have written policies and procedures to assist its employees in identifying needed drills, performing those drills, and reporting those drills to the appropriate level of management.

District did not have adequate procedures to verify and document completion of security and fire drills.

### *Corrective Action:*

The School District agrees with most of the findings as it relates to the number and reporting of drills performed and lack of adequate documentation of the drills that were performed. The District has put procedures in place to ensure all security and fire drills are performed in their entirety and in compliance with PSC, are documented, and are reported correctly to the Department of Education.

### Response to Recommendation #1:

Security and fire drills will be conducted by the School District in compliance with the PSC requirements for all future years.

### Response to Recommendation #2:

The School District recently implemented a new fire and security drill compliance software, NAVIGATE©, to alert and assist District administration. The software has a documentation and reporting component in line with PDE requirements.

### Response to Recommendation #3:

The School District recently implemented a new fire and security drill compliance software, NAVIGATE©, to alert and assist District administration. This software contains all of the necessary signoffs and verifications for administrative personnel to ensure security and fire drills are being completed.

Response to Recommendation #4:

The School District will complete all necessary training with administrative personnel to ensure that security and fire drills are performed in their entirety and in compliance with PSC, documented, and reported correctly to the Department of Education.

**Auditor Conclusion**

We are pleased that the District intends to implement corrective actions to address all of our recommendations. We will review the District's corrective actions during our next audit of the District.

## Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

---

Our prior audit of the Bristol Township School District (District) released on February 4, 2016, resulted in one finding, as described below. As part of our current audit, we determined the status of corrective action taken by the District to implement our prior audit recommendations. We interviewed District personnel and performed audit procedures as detailed in each status section below.

### Auditor General Performance Audit Report Released on February 4, 2016

---

**Prior Finding:**                    **The District's General Fund Balance Decreased by Over \$9.6 Million from June 30, 2010 through June 30, 2014**

Prior Finding Summary: During the prior audit, we found the General Fund Balance decreased from \$14.3 million on June 30, 2010 to \$4.7 million on June 30, 2014. The following contributed to the decline.

1. Total expenditures exceeded total revenues (operational deficit) for all five years reviewed.
2. The District's actual expenditures exceeded budgeted expenditures for the 2013-14 school year, which was a violation of Section 609 of the Public School Code.
3. The District approved unbalanced budgets for the last seven consecutive fiscal years up to and including the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016.
4. Debt service payments increased significantly.

Prior Recommendations: We recommended that the District should:

1. Continue the process of monitoring and evaluating expenditures on a monthly basis and ensure that actual expenditures are kept within budgetary limits, as well as, not exceed revenue at year end.
2. Implement a multi-year plan (recommended 3-5) that is evaluated annually and adjusted accordingly to the most current actual revenue and expenditure data to reverse the historical trend of expenditures exceeding revenues.
3. Implement written balanced budgeting procedures to better address and plan for future projected costs. These procedures should address, but not be limited to, increased the Public School Employees' Retirement rate contributions, unfunded special education mandated costs, and reduction of charter school funding.
4. Continue to use historical data when preparing annual budgets, as well as reviewing and adjusting its multi-year financial plan to help reduce the financial impact of large unanticipated expenditure increases or revenue shortfalls.

Current Status:

The District partially implemented our recommendations. Actual expenditures were within budget and did not exceed revenues for the five year period from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2020. A three year financial forecast was updated for the 2019-20 school year using historical data dating back to the 2013-14 school year and projecting through the 2022-23 school year. However, the District did not implement written balanced budgeting procedures as recommended. We continue to recommend that the District develop written budgeting procedures to complement Board approved budgeting policies. The District's General Fund balance increased during the audit period, and the District's balance was \$32.9 million as of July 1, 2020.

---

## Appendix A: Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

---

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 (PDE), and other concerned entities.

Our audit, conducted under authority of Sections 402 and 403 of The Fiscal Code,<sup>22</sup> is not a substitute for the local annual financial 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. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings 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.

Our audit focused on the District's effectiveness and/or compliance with applicable statutory provisions and related regulations in the areas of Transportation Operations, Nonresident Student Data, Bus Driver Requirements, and School Safety, including fire and security drills. The audit objectives supporting these areas of focus are explained in the context of our methodology to achieve the objectives in the next section. Overall, our audit covered the period July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2020. The scope of each individual objective is also detailed in the next section.

The District's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal control to provide reasonable assurance that the District's objectives will be achieved.<sup>23</sup> *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (also known as and hereafter referred to as the Green Book), issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, provides a framework for management to establish and maintain an effective internal control system. The Department of the Auditor General used the Green Book as the internal control analysis framework during the conduct of our audit.<sup>24</sup> The Green Book's standards are organized into five components of internal control. In an effective system of internal control, these five components work together in an integrated manner to help an entity achieve its objectives. Each of the five components of internal control contains principles, which are the requirements an entity should follow in establishing an effective system of internal control. We illustrate the five components and their underlying principles in Figure 1 on the following page.

---

<sup>22</sup> 72 P.S. §§ 402 and 403.

<sup>23</sup> District objectives can be broadly classified into one or more of the following areas: effectiveness of operations; reliability of reporting for internal and external use; and compliance with applicable laws and regulations, more specifically in the District, referring to certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, and administrative procedures.

<sup>24</sup> Even though the Green Book was written for the federal government, it explicitly states that it may also be adopted by state, local, and quasi-government entities, as well as not-for-profit organizations, as a framework for establishing and maintaining an effective internal control system. The Green Book is assessable at <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-704G>

**Figure 1: Green Book Hierarchical Framework of Internal Control Standards**

Principle	Description
<b>Control Environment</b>	
1	Demonstrate commitment to integrity and ethical values
2	Exercise oversight responsibility
3	Establish structure, responsibility, and authority
4	Demonstrate commitment to competence
5	Enforce accountability
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	
6	Define objectives and risk tolerances
7	Identify, analyze, and respond to risks
8	Assess fraud risk
9	Identify, analyze, and respond to change

Principle	Description
<b>Control Activities</b>	
10	Design control activities
11	Design activities for the information system
12	Implement control activities
<b>Information and Communication</b>	
13	Use quality information
14	Communicate internally
15	Communicate externally
<b>Monitoring</b>	
16	Perform monitoring activities
17	Evaluate issues and remediate deficiencies

In compliance with generally accepted government auditing standards, we must determine whether internal control is significant to our audit objectives. We base our determination of significance on whether an entity’s internal control impacts our audit conclusion(s). If some, but not all, internal control components are significant to the audit objectives, we must identify those internal control components and underlying principles that are significant to the audit objectives.

In planning our audit, we obtained a general understanding of the District’s control environment. In performing our audit, we obtained an understanding of the District’s internal control sufficient to identify and assess the internal control significant within the context of the audit objectives. Figure 2 represents a summary of the internal control components and underlying principles that we identified as significant to the overall control environment and the specific audit objectives (denoted by an “X”).

**Figure 2 – Internal Control Components and Principles Identified as Significant**

Principle →	Internal Control Significant ?	Control Environment					Risk Assessment				Control Activities			Information and Communication			Monitoring	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
General/overall	Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Transportation	Yes				X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	
Nonresident Student Data	Yes				X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X		
Bus Drivers	Yes										X		X			X	X	
Safe Schools	No																	

With respect to the principles identified, we evaluated the internal control(s) deemed significant within the context of our audit objectives and assessed those controls to the extent necessary to address our audit objectives. The results of our evaluation and assessment of the District's internal control for each objective is discussed in the following section.

## **Objectives/Scope/Methodology**

In order to properly plan our audit and to guide us in selecting objectives, we reviewed pertinent laws and regulations, the District's annual financial reports, annual General Fund budgets, and the independent audit reports of the District's basic financial statements for the July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2020 fiscal years. We conducted analytical procedures on the District's state revenues and the transportation reimbursement data. We reviewed the prior audit report and we researched current events that possibly affected District operations. We also determined if the District had key personnel or software vendor changes since the prior audit.

Performance audits draw conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence. Evidence is measured against criteria, such as laws, regulations, third-party studies, and best business practices. Our audit focused on the District's effectiveness in four areas as described below. As we conducted our audit procedures, we sought to determine answers to the following questions, which served as our audit objectives.

## **Transportation Operations**

- Did the District ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing transportation operations, and did the District receive the correct transportation reimbursement from the Commonwealth?<sup>25</sup>
  - ✓ To address this objective, we assessed the District's internal controls for obtaining, inputting, processing and reporting regular transportation data (vehicle data) to PDE. We reviewed all 96 vehicles operated by the District and its primary contractor and used to transport District students to and from school during the 2019-20 school year. Additionally, we reviewed all 34 vehicles used for activity run transportation during the 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years, respectively.<sup>26</sup> For each vehicle tested, we obtained and reviewed odometer readings, bus rosters and school calendars. We determined whether the District accurately calculated and reported sample average data to PDE and if the District was accurately reimbursed.
  - ✓ Additionally, we assessed the District's internal controls for obtaining, inputting, processing, and reporting supplemental transportation data (nonpublic school and charter school students) to PDE. We reviewed requests for transportation for all 3,632 nonpublic school students and all 896 charter school students reported to PDE as transported by the District during the four-year audit period to determine whether the student data numbers were accurately data reported to PDE.

**Conclusion:** The results of our procedures identified areas of noncompliance and significant internal control deficiencies related to the reporting of regular transportation data. Our results are detailed in Finding No. 1 beginning on page 8 of this report.

---

<sup>25</sup> See 24 P.S. § 25-2541(a).

<sup>26</sup> Activity run are vehicles used to transport students outside of regular student instruction.

## **Nonresident Student Data**

- Did the District accurately report nonresident students to PDE? Did the District receive the correct reimbursement for these nonresident students?<sup>27</sup>
  - ✓ To address this objective, we assessed the District’s internal controls over input, processing residency status, and reporting nonresident foster students to PDE. We reviewed all 20 nonresident foster students reported to PDE as educated by the District during the 2016-17 through 2019-20 school years. We reviewed documentation to verify that the custodial parent or guardian was not a resident of the District and to determine whether the foster parent(s) received a stipend for caring for the student. We then determined whether the District received the correct reimbursement for these nonresident students.

**Conclusion:** The results of our procedures identified areas of noncompliance and significant internal control deficiencies relating to the reporting of nonresident student data. Our results are detailed in Finding No. 2 beginning on page 13 of this report.

## **Bus Driver Requirements**

- Did the District ensure that all bus drivers transporting District students are board approved and had the required driver’s license, physical exam, training, background checks, and clearances<sup>28</sup> as outlined in applicable laws?<sup>29</sup> Also, did the District adequately monitor driver records to ensure compliance with the ongoing five-year clearance requirements and ensure it obtained updated licenses and health physical records as applicable throughout the school year?
  - ✓ To address this objective, we assessed the District’s internal controls for reviewing, maintaining, and monitoring the required bus driver qualification documents. We determined if all drivers were Board approved by the District. We selected 66 of 116 bus and van drivers transporting students as of May 10, 2021. Fifty drivers were selected randomly while the remaining 16 drivers were selected due to a higher risk of noncompliance.<sup>30</sup> We reviewed documentation to ensure the District complied with qualification and clearance requirements for the bus drivers selected for testing. We also determined if the District had monitoring procedures to ensure that all drivers had updated clearances, licenses, and physicals.

**Conclusion:** The results of our procedures identified areas of noncompliance and significant internal control deficiencies related to the maintenance and monitoring of driver records. Our results are detailed in Finding No. 3 beginning on page 18 of this report.

---

<sup>27</sup> See 24 P.S. §§ 13-1301, 13-1302, 13-1305, 13-1306; 22 Pa. Code Chapter 11.

<sup>28</sup> Auditors reviewed the required state, federal, and child abuse background clearances that the District obtained from the most reliable sources available, including the FBI, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Department of Human Services. However, due to the sensitive and confidential nature of this information, we were unable to assess the reliability or completeness of these third-party databases.

<sup>29</sup> PSC 24 P.S. § 1-111, CPSL 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344(a.1), PSC (Educator Discipline) 24 P.S. § 2070.1a *et seq.*, State Vehicle Code 75 Pa.C.S. §§ 1508.1 and 1509, and State Board of Education’s regulations 22 Pa. Code Chapter 8.

<sup>30</sup> The drivers not randomly selected were chosen because they were not identified by the District on the initial list of 100 drivers provided to us upon request. Therefore, the combined selection of drivers is not representative of the population, and the results of this audit procedure are not, and should not be, projected to the population.



## **School Safety**

- Did the District comply with requirements in the Public School Code and the Emergency Management Code related to emergency management plans, bullying prevention, and memorandums of understanding with local law enforcement?<sup>31</sup> Also, did the District follow best practices related to physical building security and providing a safe school environment?
  - ✓ To address this objective, we reviewed a variety of documentation including, but not limited to, safety plans, training agendas, anti-bullying policies, risk and vulnerability assessments, and memorandums of understanding with local law enforcements.

**Conclusion:** Due to the sensitive nature of school safety, the results of our review for this objective are not described in our audit report, but they were shared with District officials, PDE's Office of Safe Schools, and other appropriate law enforcement agencies deemed necessary.

- Did the District comply with the fire and security drill requirements of Section 1517 of the Public School Code?<sup>32</sup> Also, did the District accurately report the dates of drills to PDE and maintain supporting documentation to evidence the drills conducted and reported to PDE?
  - ✓ To address this objective, we obtained and reviewed the fire and security drill records for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. We determined if security drills were held within the first 90 days of each school year for each building in the District and if monthly fire drills were conducted in accordance with requirements. We also obtained the *Accuracy Certification Statement* that the District filed with PDE and compared dates reported to supporting documentation.

**Conclusion:** The results of our procedures for this objective are detailed in Finding No. 4 beginning on page 26 of this report.

---

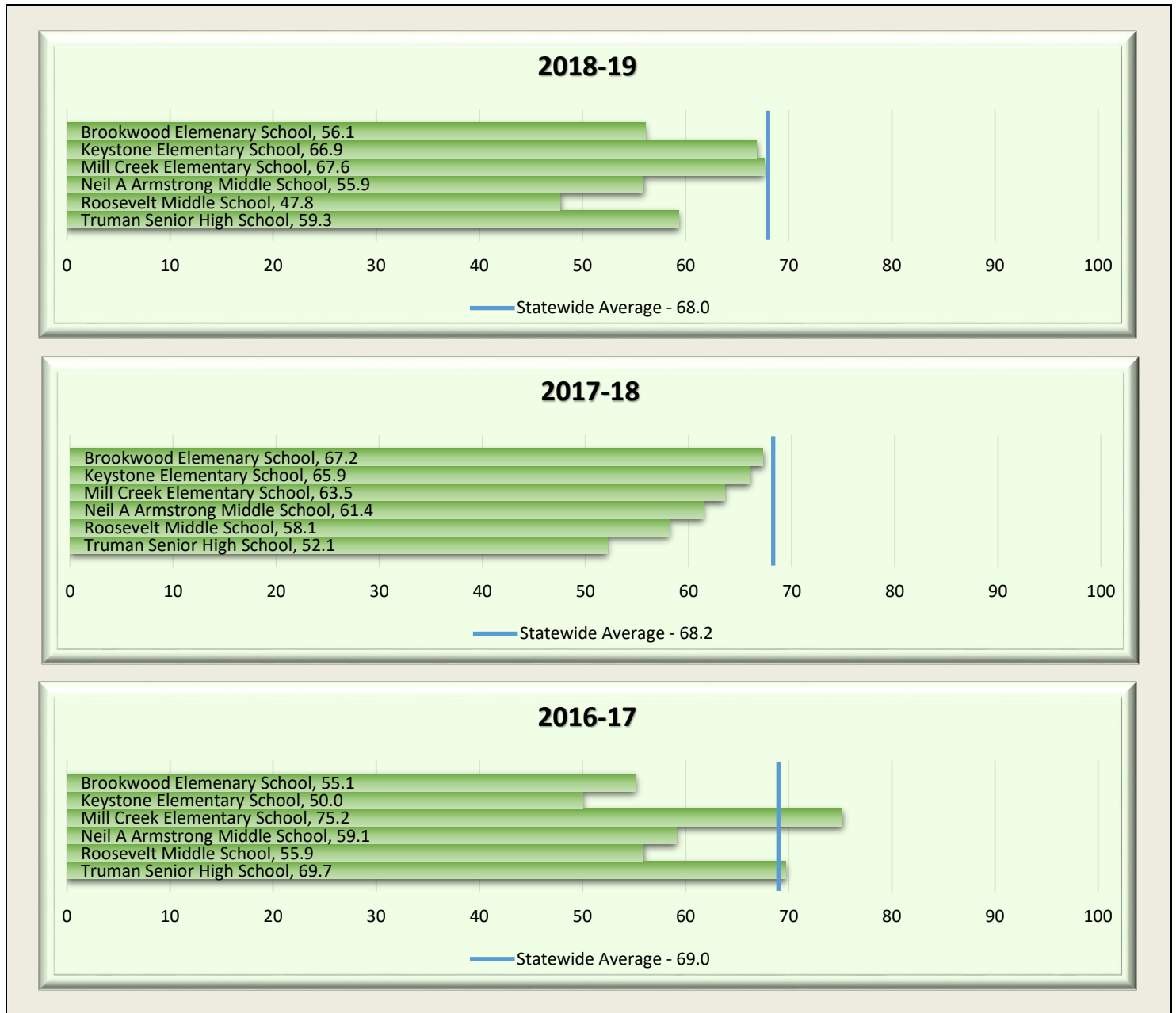
<sup>31</sup> Safe Schools Act 24 P.S. § 13-1301-A *et seq.*, Emergency Management Services Code 35 Pa.C.S. § 7701.

<sup>32</sup> Public School Code (Fire and Security Drills) 24 P.S. § 15-1517.

## Appendix B: Academic Detail

Benchmarks noted in the following graphs represent the statewide average of all public school buildings in the Commonwealth that received a score in the category and year noted.<sup>33</sup> Please note that if one of the District's schools did not receive a score in a particular category and year presented below, the school will not be listed in the corresponding graph.<sup>34</sup>

### SPP School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages

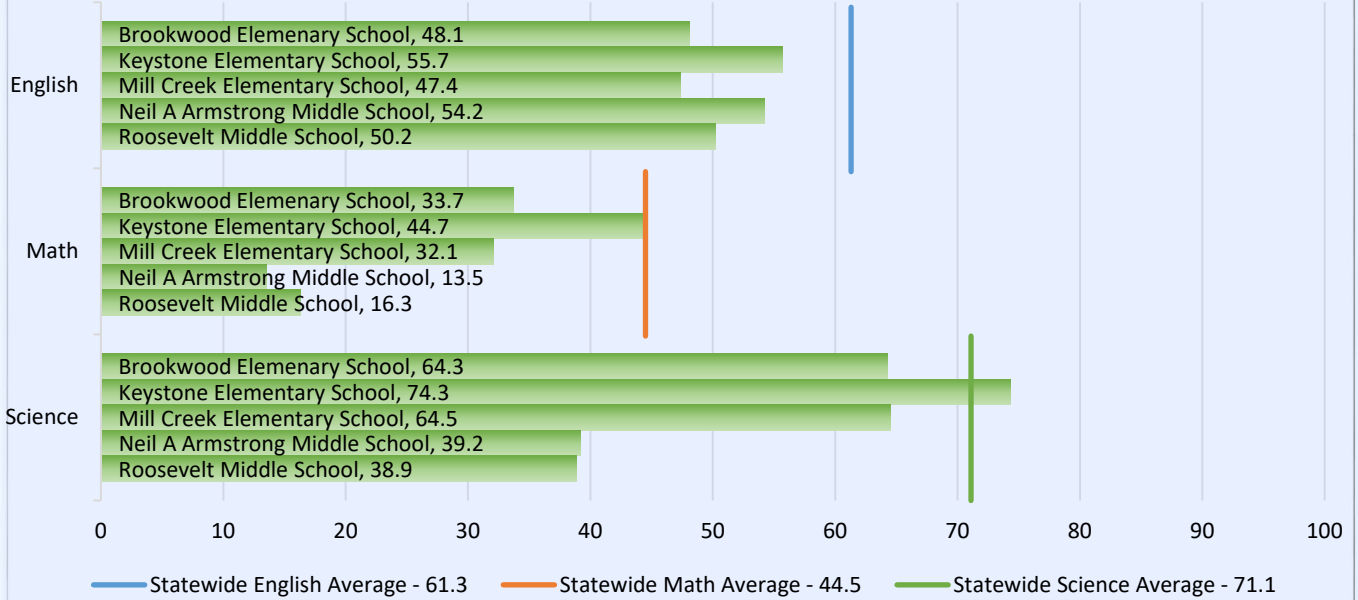


<sup>33</sup> Statewide averages were calculated by our Department based on individual school building scores for all public schools in the Commonwealth, including district schools, charters schools, and cyber charter schools.

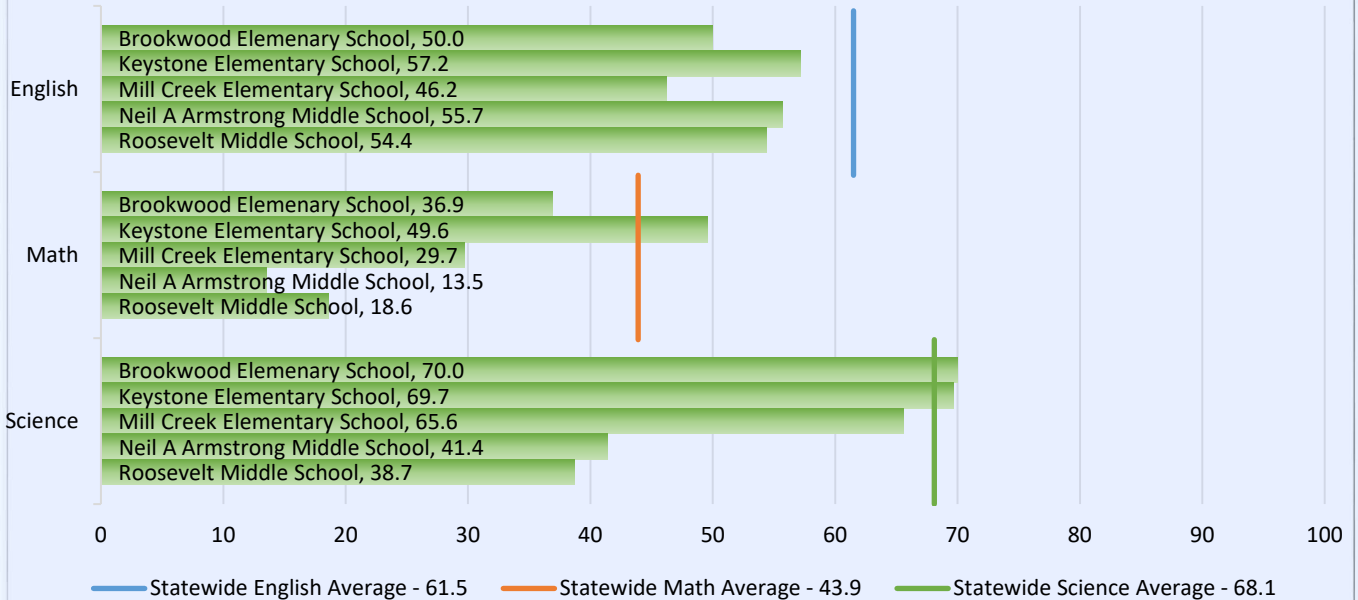
<sup>34</sup> PDE's data does not provide any further information regarding the reason a score was not published for a specific school. However, readers can refer to PDE's website for general information regarding the issuance of academic scores.

**PSSA Advanced or Proficient Percentage  
School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages**

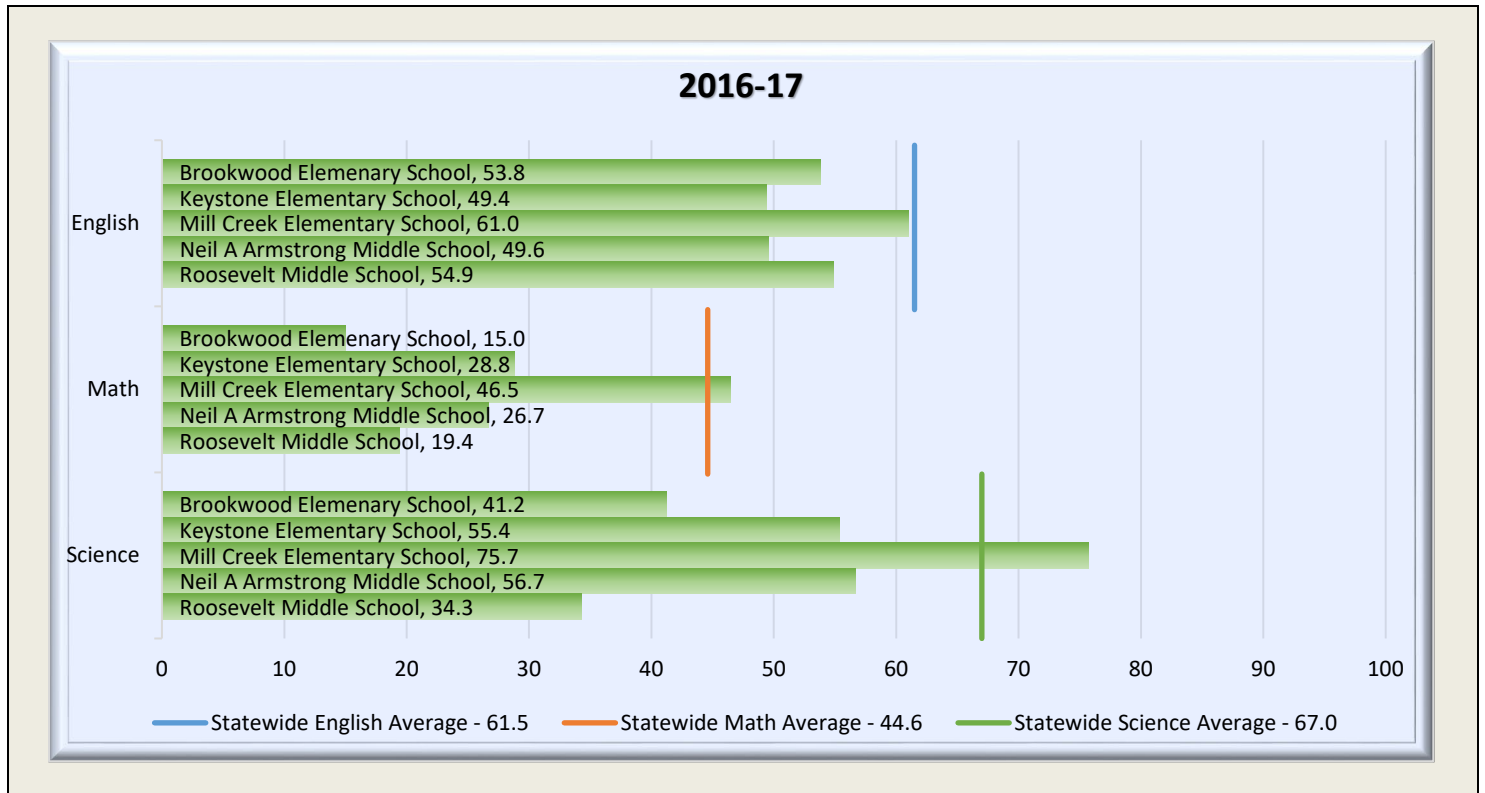
**2018-19**



**2017-18**

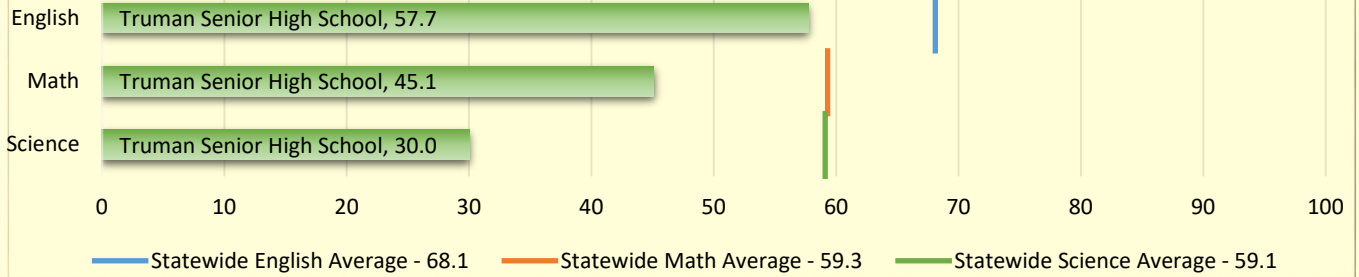


**PSSA Advanced or Proficient Percentage  
School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages (continued)**

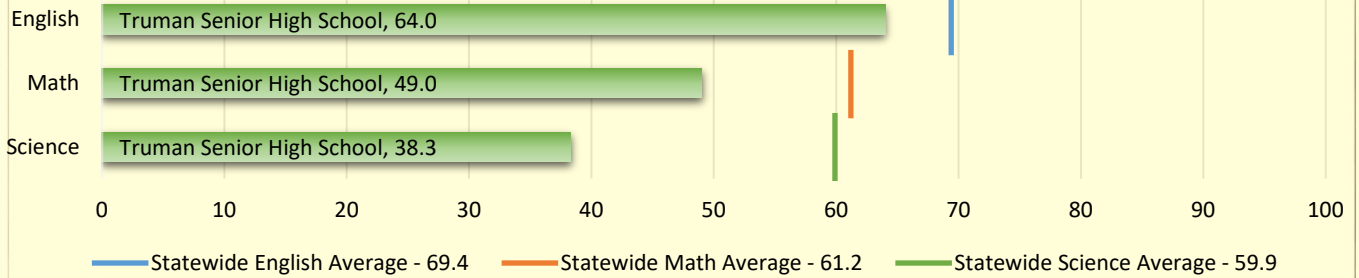


**Keystone Advanced or Proficient Percentage  
School Scores Compared to Statewide Averages**

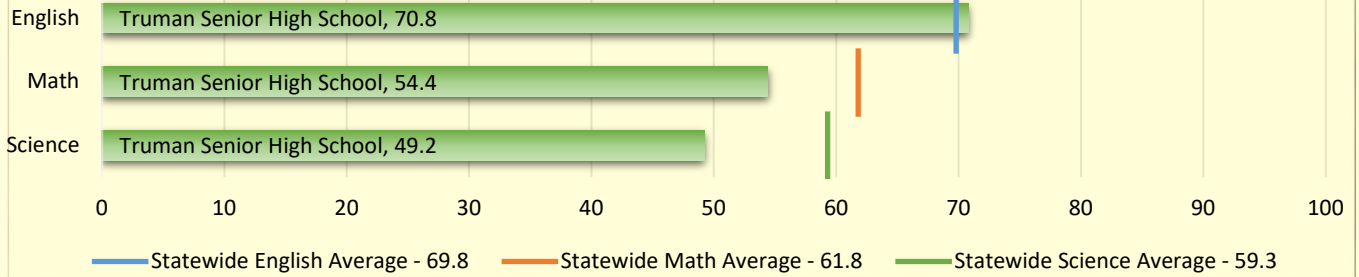
**2018-19**



**2017-18**



**2016-17**



## **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 Noe Ortega**  
Secretary of Education  
1010 Harristown Building #2  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126

**The Honorable Stacy Garrity**  
State Treasurer  
Room 129 - Finance Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

**Ms. Jessica Sites**  
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. Nathan Mains**  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania School Boards Association  
400 Bent Creek Boulevard  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov). Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: [News@PaAuditor.gov](mailto:News@PaAuditor.gov).