

FREEDOM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BEAVER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

DECEMBER 2010

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

Mrs. Kathleen Schlegel, Board President
Freedom Area School District
1701 Eighth Avenue
Freedom, Pennsylvania 15042

Dear Governor Rendell and Mrs. Schlegel:

We conducted a performance audit of the Freedom Area School District (FASD) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period August 28, 2008 through May 20, 2010, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for the school years ended June 30, 2008 and June 30, 2007. Our audit was conducted pursuant to 72 P.S. § 403 and in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Our audit found that the FASD complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

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

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

December 13, 2010

cc: **FREEDOM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board Members



Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	1
Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology	3
Audit Findings and Observations	6
Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations	7
Distribution List	9



Executive Summary

Audit Work

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the Freedom Area School District (FASD). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the District's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures; and to determine the status of corrective action taken by the FASD in response to our prior audit recommendations.

Our audit scope covered the period August 28, 2008 through May 20, 2010, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objectives, and methodology section of the report. Compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for school years 2007-08 and 2006-07.

District Background

The FASD encompasses approximately 35 square miles. According to 2000 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 11,129. According to District officials, in school year 2007-08 the FASD provided basic educational services to 1,630 pupils through the employment of 119 teachers, 104 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 7 administrators. Lastly, the FASD received more than \$11.2 million in state funding in school year 2007-08.

Audit Conclusion and Results

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

Status of Prior Audit Findings and

Observations. With regard to the status of our prior audit recommendations to the FASD from an audit we conducted of the 2005-06 and 2004-05 school years, we found the FASD had taken appropriate corrective action in implementing our recommendations pertaining to unmonitored vendor access system access and logical access control (see page 7).



Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

Scope

What is a school performance audit?

School performance audits allow the Department of the Auditor General to determine whether state funds, including school subsidies, are being used according to the purposes and guidelines that govern the use of those funds. Additionally, our audits examine the appropriateness of certain administrative and operational practices at each Local Education Agency (LEA). The results of these audits are shared with LEA management, the Governor, the PA Department of Education, and other concerned entities.

Our audit, conducted under authority of 72 P.S. § 403, is not a substitute for the local annual audit required by the Public School Code of 1949, as amended. We conducted our audit in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Our audit covered the period August 28, 2008 through May 20, 2010, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period June 1, 2009 through April 30, 2010.

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

While all districts have the same school years, some have different fiscal years. Therefore, for the purposes of our audit work and to be consistent with Department of Education (DE) reporting guidelines, we use the term school year rather than fiscal year throughout this report. A school year covers the period July 1 to June 30.

Objectives

What is the difference between a finding and an observation?

Our performance audits may contain findings and/or observations related to our audit objectives. Findings describe noncompliance with a law, regulation, contract, grant requirement, or administrative procedure. Observations are reported when we believe corrective action should be taken to remedy a potential problem not rising to the level of noncompliance with specific criteria.

Performance audits draw conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence. Evidence is measured against criteria, such as, laws, regulations, and defined business practices. Our audit focused on assessing the FASD's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. However, as we conducted our audit procedures, we sought to determine answers to the following questions, which serve as our audit objectives:

- ✓ Were professional employees certified for the positions they held?
- ✓ Is the District's pupil transportation department, including any contracted vendors, in compliance with applicable state laws and procedures?
- ✓ Are there any declining fund balances which may impose risk to the fiscal viability of the District?

- ✓ Did the District pursue a contract buyout with an administrator and if so, what was the total cost of the buy-out, reasons for the termination/settlement, and do the current employment contract(s) contain adequate termination provisions?
- ✓ Were there any other areas of concern reported by local auditors, citizens, or other interested parties which warrant further attention during our audit?
- ✓ Is the District taking appropriate steps to ensure school safety?
- ✓ Did the District use an outside vendor to maintain its membership data and if so, are there internal controls in place related to vendor access?
- ✓ Did the District take appropriate corrective action to address recommendations made in our prior audits?

Methodology

What are internal controls?

Internal controls are processes designed by management to provide reasonable assurance of achieving objectives in areas such as:

- Effectiveness and efficiency of operations;
- Relevance and reliability of operational and financial information;
- Compliance with applicable laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures.

Government Auditing Standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings, observations and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

FASD management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the District is in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Within the context of our audit objectives, we obtained an understanding of internal controls and assessed whether those controls were properly designed and implemented.

Any significant deficiencies found during the audit are included in this report.

In order to properly plan our audit and to guide us in possible audit areas, we performed analytical procedures in the areas of state subsidies/reimbursement, pupil membership, pupil transportation, and comparative financial information.

Our audit examined the following:

- Records pertaining to pupil transportation, bus driver qualifications, professional employee certification, and financial stability.
- Items such as Board meeting minutes.

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

Lastly, to determine the status of our audit recommendations made in a prior audit report released on January 30, 2009, we reviewed the FASD's response to DE dated December 10, 2009. We then performed additional audit procedures targeting the previously reported matters.

Findings and Observations

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

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Freedom Area School District (FASD) for the school years 2005-06 and 2004-05 resulted in one reported finding. The finding pertained to unmonitored vendor system access and logical access control weaknesses. As part of our current audit, we determined the status of corrective action taken by the District to implement our prior recommendations. We analyzed the FASD Board’s written response provided to the Department of Education, performed audit procedures, and questioned District personnel regarding the prior finding. As shown below, we found that the FASD did implement our recommendations related to the finding.

<i>School Years 2005-06 and 2004-05 Auditor General Performance Audit Report</i>		
<i>Prior Recommendations</i>	<i>Implementation Status</i>	
<p><u><i>1. Finding: Unmonitored Vendor System Access and Logical Access Control Weaknesses</i></u></p> <p>1. Generate monitoring reports (including firewall logs) of vendor and employee access and activity on its system. Monitoring reports should include the date, time and reason for access change(s) made and who made the change(s). The District should review these reports to determine that the access was appropriate and that data was not improperly altered. The District should also ensure it is maintaining evidence to support this monitoring and review.</p> <p>2. Perform reconciliations between system generated membership and attendance reports and manually kept membership and attendance records to ensure that any unauthorized changes within the system would be detected in a timely</p>	<p>Background:</p> <p>Our prior audit found the District uses software purchases from an outside vendor for its critical student accounting applications (membership and attendance). The software vendor has remote access into the District’s network servers.</p> <p>During our prior audit, we determined that a risk existed that unauthorized changes to the District’s data could occur and not be detected because the District was unable to provide supporting evidence it was adequately monitoring all vendor activity in its system.</p>	<p>Current Status:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The District now generates monitoring reports and reviews them. 2. A monthly reconciliation is performed between manual records and computer records. 3. Documentation is now sent to the information technology (IT) department to remove terminated employees. 4. The District developed IT policies and procedures. 5. The District has developed policies to control the activities of the vendor. 6. All employees are required to sign the Acceptable Use Policy. 7. Passwords are required to be changed every 90 days. <p>Based on the results of our current audit, we determined the District did take corrective action.</p>

<p>manner.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Maintain documentation to evidence that terminated employees are properly removed from the system in a timely manner.4. Develop policies and procedures to require written authorization when adding, deleting, or changing a userID.5. Establish separate IT policies and procedures for controlling the activities of vendors/consultants and have vendor sign this policy, or require the vendor to sign the District's Acceptable Use Policy6. Require all employees to sign the District's Acceptable Use Policy.7. Implement a security policy and system parameter settings to require all users, including the vendor, to change their passwords on a regular basis (i.e., every 30 days). Also, the District should maintain a password history that will prevent the use of a repetitive password (e.g., last ten passwords).		
---	--	--

Distribution List

This report was initially distributed to the superintendent of the school district, the board members, our website address at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us, and the following:

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

The Honorable Thomas E. Gluck
Acting Secretary of Education
1010 Harristown Building #2
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

The Honorable Robert M. McCord
State Treasurer
Room 129 - Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Senator Jeffrey Piccola
Chair
Senate Education Committee
173 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Senator Andrew Dinniman
Democratic Chair
Senate Education Committee
183 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Representative James Roebuck
Chair
House Education Committee
208 Irvis Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Representative Paul Clymer
Republican Chair
House Education Committee
216 Ryan Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Ms. Barbara Nelson
Director, Bureau of Budget and
Fiscal Management
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

Dr. David Davare
Director of Research Services
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
P.O. Box 2042
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

This report is a matter of public record. Copies of this report may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 318 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. If you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter, you may contact the Department of the Auditor General by accessing our website at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us.

