

PARKWAY WEST CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER
ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

AUGUST 2011

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

Ms. Evelyn L. Weaver
Joint Operating Committee Chairperson
Parkway West Career and Technology Center
7101 Steubenville Pike
Oakdale, Pennsylvania 15071

Dear Governor Corbett and Ms. Weaver:

We conducted a performance audit of the Parkway West Career and Technology Center (PWCTC) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period January 15, 2009 through January 24, 2011, except as otherwise indicated in the report. Additionally, compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for the school years ended June 30, 2010 and June 30, 2009. Our audit was conducted pursuant to 72 P.S. § 403 and in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Our audit found that the PWCTC complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. However, we identified one matter unrelated to compliance that is reported as an observation. A summary of these results is presented in the Executive Summary section of the audit report.

Our audit observation and recommendations have been discussed with PWCTC's management and their responses are included in the audit report. We believe the implementation of our recommendations will improve PWCTC's operations and facilitate compliance with legal and administrative requirements. We appreciate the PWCTC's cooperation during the conduct of the audit and their willingness to implement our recommendations.

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

August 29, 2011

cc: **PARKWAY WEST CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER** Joint Operating
Committee Members



Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	1
Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology	3
Findings and Observations	6
Observation – Memorandum of Understanding Not Updated Timely	6
Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations	8
Distribution List	9



Executive Summary

Audit Work

The Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General conducted a performance audit of the Parkway West Career and Technology Center (PWCTC). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the career and technology center's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Our audit scope covered the period January 15, 2009 through January 24, 2011, except as otherwise indicated in the audit scope, objectives, and methodology section of the report. Compliance specific to state subsidy and reimbursements was determined for school years 2009-10 and 2008-09.

School Background

According to School officials, in school year 2009-2010 the PWCTC provided educational services to 640 secondary pupils through the employment of 36 teachers, 21 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 5 administrators. The operation, administration and management of the school are directed by a joint operating committee (JOC) which comprises 12 members from the following school districts:

Carlynton
Chartiers Valley
Cornell
Keystone Oaks
Montour
Moon Area
Mt. Lebanon
Quaker Valley

South Fayette Township
Sto-Rox
Upper St. Clair Township
West Allegheny

The JOC members are appointed by the individual school boards at the December meeting, each to serve a three-year term. Lastly, the PWCTC received \$516,197 in state funding in school year 2009-10.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the PWCTC complied, in all significant respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures; however, as noted below, we identified one matter unrelated to compliance that is reported as an observation.

Observation: Memorandum of Understanding Not Updated Timely. Our audit found that the Memorandum of Understanding between PWCTC and the local law enforcement agency has not been updated since August 5, 2008 (see page 6).

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations. There were no findings or observations in our prior audit.



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 January 15, 2009 through January 24, 2011, except for the verification of professional employee certification which was performed for the period July 1, 2010 through December 31, 2011.

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

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

Objectives

What is the difference between a finding and an observation?

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

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

- ✓ Were professional employees certified for the positions they held?
- ✓ In areas where the School receives state subsidy and reimbursements based on pupil membership (e.g. vocational education), did it follow applicable laws and procedures?

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

Methodology

What are internal controls?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our audit examined the following:

- Professional employee certification, and financial stability.
- Items such as meeting minutes, pupil membership records.

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

Findings and Observations

Observation

Criteria relevant to the observation:

Section 1303-A(c) of the Public School Code provides:

All school entities shall develop a memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement which sets forth procedures to be followed when an incident involving an act of violence or possession of a weapon by any person occurs on school property.

Additionally, the Basic Education Circular issued by DE entitled Safe Schools and Possession of Weapons contains a sample MOU to be used by school entities. Section VI, General Provisions item B of this sample states:

This Memorandum may be amended, expanded or modified at any time upon the written consent of the parties, but in any event must be reviewed and re-executed within two years of the date of its original execution and every two years thereafter.

Memorandum of Understanding Not Updated Timely

Our audit found that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the career and technology center and the local law enforcement agency had not been reviewed and updated since August 5, 2008.

The failure to update the MOU with the local law enforcement agency could result in a lack of cooperation, direction, and guidance between career and technology center employees and the law enforcement agency if an incident occurs on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on any public conveyance providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity. This internal control weakness could have an impact on law enforcement notification and response, and ultimately the resolution of a problem situation.

As a result of our inquiry, the director of the career and technology center obtained a re-executed MOU between the career and technology center and local law enforcement dated January 14, 2011.

Recommendations

The *Parkway West Career and Technology Center* should:

1. Continue to review, update and re-execute the MOU between the career and technology center and the local law enforcement agency.
2. Adopt a written policy requiring the administration to review and execute the MOU every two years.

Management Response

Management stated the following:

Due to numerous staffing changes in the Director's Office between June 2009 and January 2010, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was not updated in a timely manner. The MOU has now been updated and a copy of the current agreement is attached for your records.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Parkway West Career and Technology Center resulted in no findings or observations

Distribution List

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

The Honorable Tom Corbett
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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA 17120

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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.

