

LACKAWANNA TRAIL SCHOOL DISTRICT
WYOMING COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

MARCH 2011

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

Mr. Daniel Naylor, Board President
Lackawanna Trail School District
P.O. Box 85
Factoryville, Pennsylvania 18419

Dear Governor Corbett and Mr. Naylor:

We conducted a performance audit of the Lackawanna Trail School District (LTSD) to determine its compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures. Our audit covered the period July 14, 2008 through January 29, 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 LTSD 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 LTSD's management and their responses are included in the audit report. We believe the implementation of our recommendations will improve LTSD's operations and facilitate compliance with legal and administrative requirements. We appreciate the LTSD's cooperation during the conduct of the audit and their willingness to implement our recommendations.

Sincerely,

/s/

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

March 4, 2011

cc: **LACKAWANNA TRAIL SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board 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 Lackawanna Trail School District (LTSD). Our audit sought to answer certain questions regarding the District's compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, grant requirements, and administrative procedures.

Our audit scope covered the period July 14, 2008 through January 29, 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 LTSD encompasses approximately 74 square miles. According to 2000 federal census data, it serves a resident population of 8,650. According to District officials, in school year 2007-08 the LTSD provided basic educational services to 1,232 pupils through the employment of 100 teachers, 69 full-time and part-time support personnel, and 10 administrators. Lastly, the LTSD received more than \$8.8 million in state funding in school year 2007-08.

Audit Conclusion and Results

Our audit found that the LTSD 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 of the LTSD's records found that the current Memorandum of Understanding between the LTSD and local law enforcement agencies was last signed August 9, 2007, and has not been updated (see page 6).

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations. Our prior audit for the school years 2005-06 and 2004-05 resulted in no findings or observations.



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 July 14, 2008 through January 29, 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 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 LTSD'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:

- ✓ In areas where the District receives state subsidy and reimbursements based on pupil membership (e.g. basic education, special education, and vocational education), did it follow applicable laws and procedures?
- ✓ In areas where the District receives state subsidy and reimbursements based on payroll (e.g. Social Security and retirement), did it follow applicable laws and procedures?

- ✓ 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?
- ✓ Is the District's pupil transportation department, including any contracted vendors, in compliance with applicable state laws and procedures?
- ✓ Does the District ensure that Board members appropriately comply with the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act?
- ✓ Are there any declining fund balances which may impose risk to the fiscal viability of the 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 take appropriate corrective action to address recommendations made in our prior audits?

Methodology

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

LTSD 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.

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.

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 bus driver qualifications, state ethics compliance, and financial stability.
- Items such as Board meeting minutes, pupil membership records, and reimbursement applications.
- Deposited state funds.

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

Findings and Observations

Observation

Criteria relevant to the observation:

Section 1303-A(c) provides:

All school entities shall develop a memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement which set 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. Law enforcement protocols shall be developed in cooperation with local law enforcement and the Pennsylvania State Police.

Additionally, the Basic Educational Circular issued by the Department of Education 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. (Emphasis added).

Memorandum of Understanding Not Updated Timely

Our audit of the Lackawanna Trail School District's records found that the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the District and local law enforcement agencies including, Pennsylvania State Police Wyoming Barracks, Dalton Police Department, Wyoming County Chief of Detectives and Wyoming County District Attorney's Office was last signed on August 9, 2007, and has not been updated since.

The failure to update MOUs with all local law enforcement agencies could result in a lack of cooperation, direction and guidance between District employees and law enforcement agencies if an incident occurs on school property, at any school sponsored activity, or 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.

The District attempted to obtain a current MOU during this audit, but was unable to do so. Wyoming County District Attorney's Office and Pennsylvania State Police sent written statements endorsing the current MOU, but the District was unable to complete an updated MOU with all required signatures.

The *Lackawanna Trail School District* should:

1. In consultation with the solicitor, continue to review, update and re-execute the current MOU between the District and the local law enforcement agencies.
2. Adopt a policy requiring the administration to review and re-execute the MOU every two years.

Management stated the following:

Lackawanna Trail's Memorandum of Understanding with the Wyoming County District Attorney's Office and local law enforcement has not been updated since 2007. We will formally update it in July of 2010 to correct this issue. In

Management Response

the meantime Wyoming County's newly elected District Attorney Jeffrey Mitchell indicated "the existing Memorandum of Understanding is acceptable and shall remain in effect." The Pennsylvania State Police, Troop P-Area II also sent a letter stating that the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding will remain standard operating procedure until the current participants can convene and renew the document.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the Lackawanna Trail School District for the school years 2005-06 and 2004-05 resulted in no findings or observations.

Distribution List

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

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

The Honorable Ronald J. Tomalis
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

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.

