

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Grove City Area School District Mercer County, Pennsylvania

June 2017



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Jeffrey A. Finch, Superintendent
Grove City Area School District
511 Highland Avenue
Grove City, Pennsylvania 16127

Mrs. Roberta Hensel, Board President
Grove City Area School District
511 Highland Avenue
Grove City, Pennsylvania 16127

Dear Mr. Finch and Mrs. Hensel:

We have conducted a performance audit of the Grove City Area School District (District) for the period July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2015, 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 the appendix of this report:

- Budgeting Transfers
- Contracting
- Hiring Practices
- Sunshine Act
- Bus Driver Requirements
- School Safety

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 found that the District performed adequately in the areas listed above.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eugene A. DePasquale".

Eugene A. DePasquale
Auditor General

June 13, 2017

cc: **GROVE CITY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT** Board of School Directors

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Background Information

School Characteristics 2015-16 School Year ^A	
County	Mercer
Total Square Miles	86.8
Resident Population ^B	17,522
Number of School Buildings	5
Total Teachers	205
Total Full or Part-Time Support Staff	82
Total Administrators	15
Total Enrollment for Most Recent School Year	2,507
Intermediate Unit Number	4
District Vo-Tech School	Mercer County Career Center

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

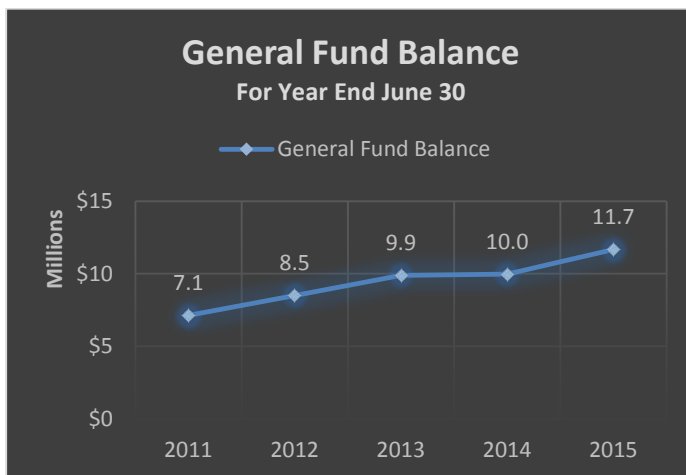
B - Source: United States Census
<http://www.census.gov/2010census>.

Mission Statement^A

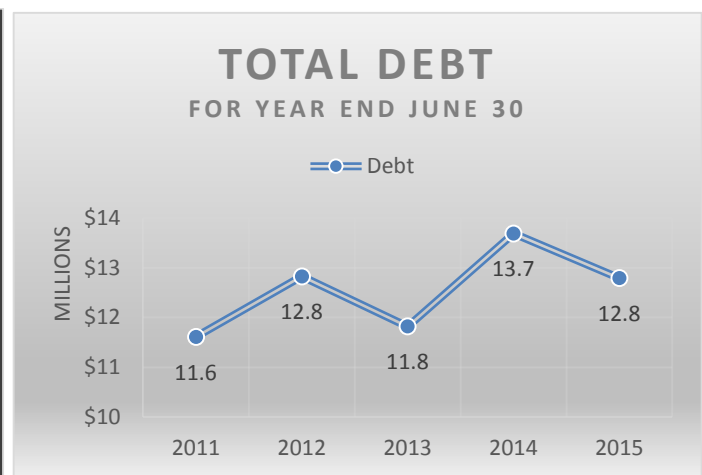
“Our mission is to equip all our students for their successful future. We’ve designed our programs so that students can demonstrate that they are perceptive thinkers, collaborative contributors, involved citizens, innovative producers, self-directed learners, academic achievers and problem solvers. Before they graduate out students will produce products, portfolios, and performances which show that they not only have knowledge but can use that knowledge to solve problems in the real world. Our goal is to give our students the tools to find solutions to problems they will face in a dynamic future.”

Financial Information

The following pages contain financial information about the 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**.

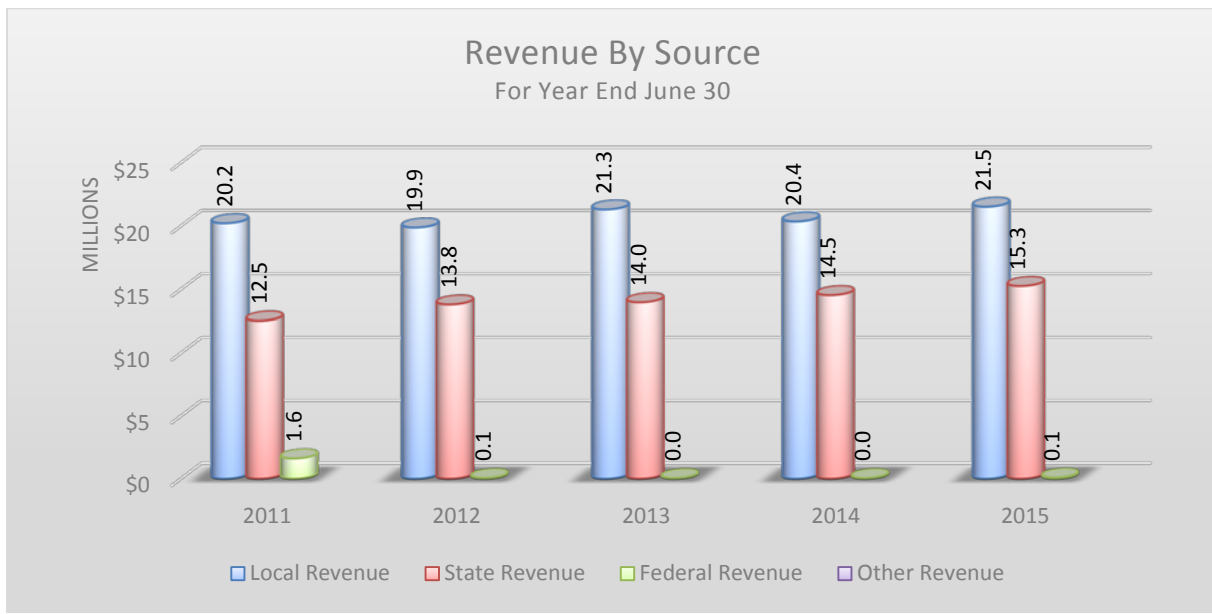
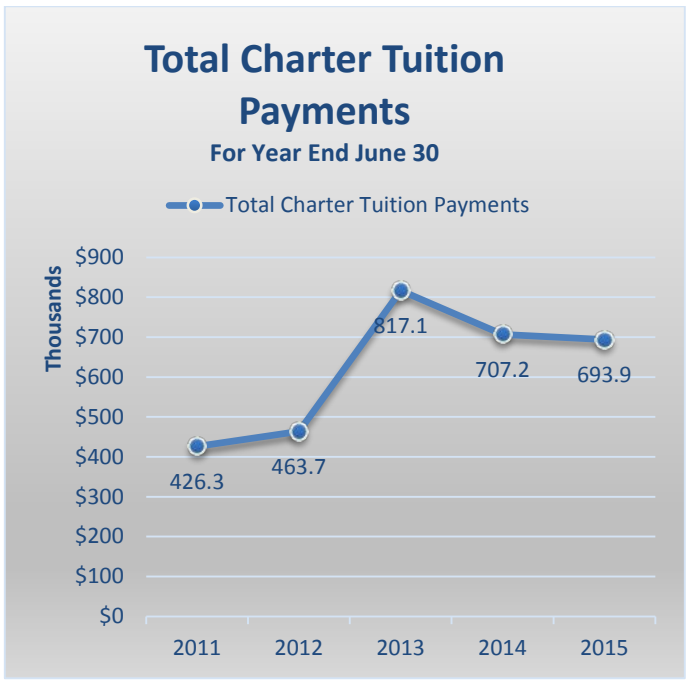
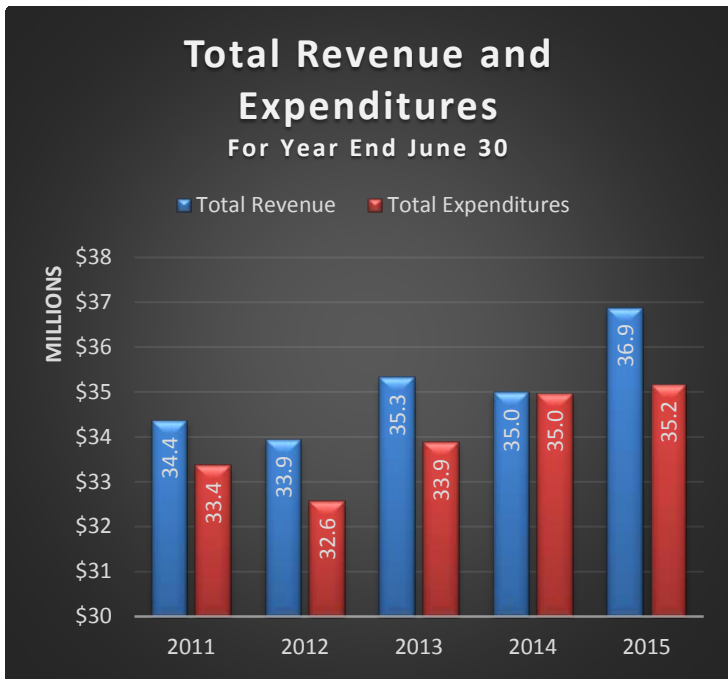


Note: General Fund Balance is comprised of the District’s Committed, Assigned and Unassigned Fund Balances.



Note: Total Debt is comprised of Short-Term Borrowing, General Obligation Bonds, Authority Building Obligations, Other Long-Term Debt, Other Post-Employment Benefits and Compensated Absences.

Financial Information Continued



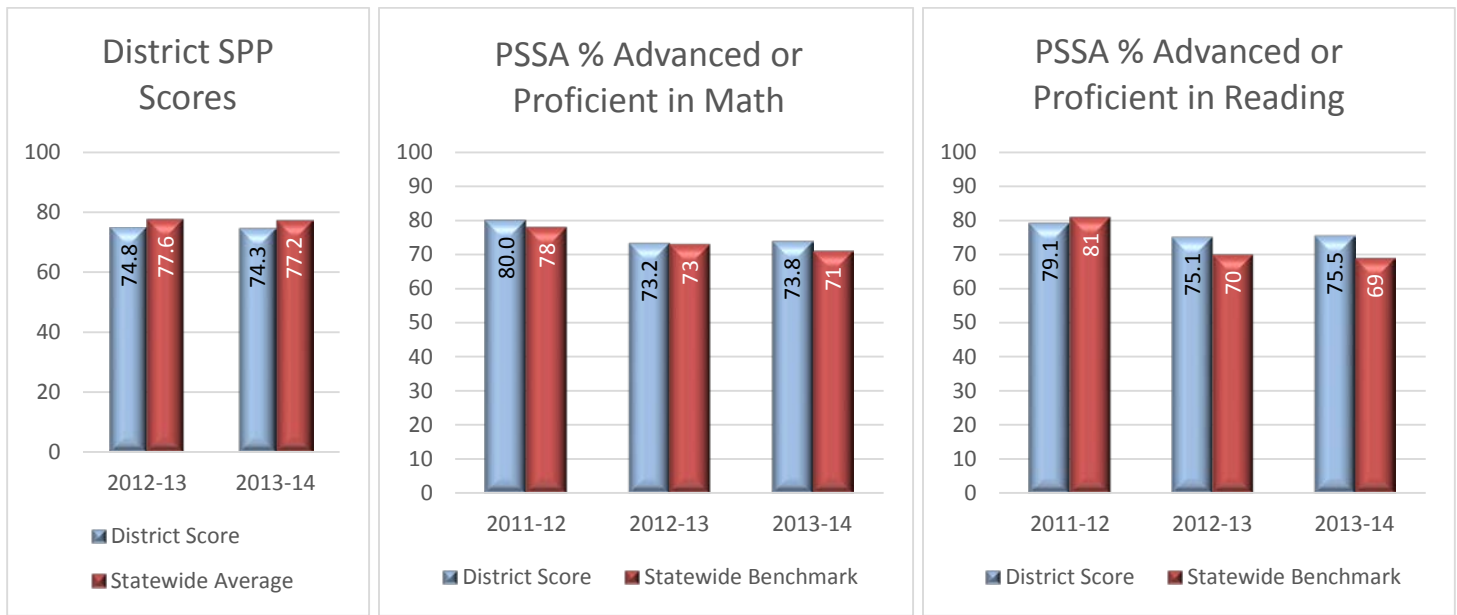
Academic Information

The following table and charts consist of School Performance Profile (SPP) scores and Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) results for the entire District obtained from PDE's data files.¹ These scores are presented in the District's audit report for **informational purposes only**, and they were not audited by our Department.

SPP benchmarks represent the statewide average of all district school buildings in the Commonwealth.² PSSA benchmarks and goals are determined by PDE each school year and apply to all public school entities.³ District SPP and PSSA scores were calculated using an average of all of the individual school buildings within the District. Scores below SPP statewide averages and PSSA benchmarks/goals are presented in red.

Districtwide SPP and PSSA Scores

District	SPP Scores		PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Math			PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Reading		
	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<i>Statewide Benchmark</i>	77.6	77.2	78	73	71	81	70	69
<i>Grove City Area SD</i>	74.8	74.3	80.0	73.2	73.8	79.1	75.1	75.5
<i>SPP Grade⁴</i>	C	C						



¹ PDE is the sole source of academic data presented in this report. All academic data was obtained from PDE's publically available website.

² Statewide averages for SPP scores were calculated based on all district school buildings throughout the Commonwealth, excluding charter and cyber charter schools.

³ PSSA benchmarks apply to all district school buildings, charters, and cyber charters. In the 2011-12 school year, the state benchmarks reflect the Adequate Yearly Progress targets established under No Child Left Behind. In the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years, the state benchmarks reflect the statewide goals based on annual measurable objectives established by PDE.

⁴ The following letter grades are based on a 0-100 point system: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (59 or below).

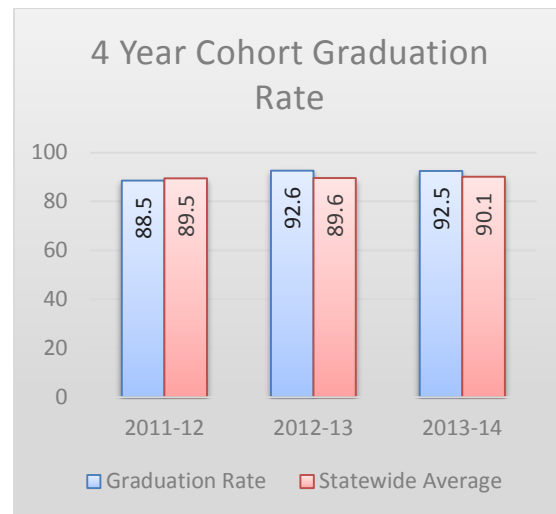
Individual School Building SPP and PSSA Scores

The following table consists of SPP scores and PSSA results for each of the District's school buildings. Any blanks in PSSA data means that PDE did not publish a score for that school for that particular year.⁵

School Name	SPP Scores		PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Math			PSSA % Advanced or Proficient in Reading		
	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<i>Statewide Benchmark</i>	77.6	77.2	78	73	71	81	70	69
<i>George Jr Republic High School</i>	55.7	55.3						
<i>Grove City Area High School</i>	70.5	65.5	73.6	64.0	60.5	75.1	73.3	66.9
<i>Grove City Area Middle School</i>	77.6	81.2	82.1	71.7	69.3	78.2	71.7	74.0
<i>Highland Elementary School</i>	86.9	89.1			84.3			83.6
<i>Hillview Elementary School</i>	83.4	80.3	84.4	83.9	81.2	83.9	80.1	77.7

4 Year Cohort Graduation Rates

The 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.⁶



⁵ PDE's data does not provide any further information regarding the reason a score was not published.

⁶ <http://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Cohort-Graduation-Rate-.aspx>.

Finding(s)

For the audited period, our audit of the District resulted in no findings.

Status of Prior Audit Findings and Observations

Our prior audit of the District resulted in no findings or observations.

Appendix: 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, PDE, and other concerned entities.

Our audit, conducted under authority of Sections 402 and 403 of The Fiscal Code,⁷ 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.

Scope

Overall, our audit covered the period July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2015. In addition, the scope of each individual audit objective is detailed on the next pages.

The District's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls⁸ to provide reasonable assurance that the District is in compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, and administrative procedures (relevant requirements). In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the District's internal controls, including any information technology controls, which we consider to be significant within the context of our audit objectives. We assessed whether those controls were properly designed and implemented. Any deficiencies in internal controls that were identified during the conduct of our audit and determined to be significant within the context of our audit objectives are included in this report.

⁷ 72 P.S. §§ 402 and 403.

⁸ 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; and compliance with certain relevant state laws, regulations, contracts, and administrative procedures.

Objectives/Methodology

In order to properly plan our audit and to guide us in selecting objectives, we reviewed pertinent laws and regulations, board meeting minutes, academic performance data, annual financial reports, annual budgets, new or amended policies and procedures, and the independent audit report of the District's basic financial statements for the fiscal years July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2015. 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 efficiency and effectiveness in the following areas:

- Budgeting Transfers
- Contracting
- Hiring Practices
- Sunshine Act
- Bus Driver Requirements
- School Safety

As we conducted our audit procedures, we sought to determine answers to the following questions, which served as our audit objectives:

- ✓ We sought to determine whether or not the District was conducting budget transfers according to the Public School Code (PSC)⁹ and District policy.
 - To address this objective, we reviewed the 2014-15 Independent Auditor's report to identify the budgetary transfers that occurred in that year. We then interviewed District administrators to understand the District's process related to budget transfers. Finally, we reviewed the board meeting minutes for the 2014-15 school year to determine if all the District's budget transfers were made in accordance with the PSC and District policy. Our review of this objective did not disclose any reportable issues.
- ✓ Did the District ensure that specific contracts were current, properly obtained, approved, executed, and monitored?
 - To address this objective, we reviewed the District's procurement and contract monitoring policies and procedures. Three contracts were selected for testing based on indicators of high risk of noncompliance with the PSC and/or board policies. Testing included a review of the procurement documents to determine if the contract was procured in accordance with the PSC and District policies. We also reviewed documents and interviewed District personnel to determine if the District monitored the selected contracts. Finally, we reviewed board meeting

⁹ 24 P.S. § 6-687.

minutes to determine proper approvals. Our review of this area did not disclose any reportable issues.

- ✓ Did the District follow the PSC¹⁰ and the District's policy and procedures when hiring new staff?
 - To address this objective, we obtained and reviewed the District's hiring policies and procedures. We selected the three most recent employees hired as of November 15, 2016, and reviewed documentation to determine if the District complied with the PSC and the District's policy and procedures in hiring these three new employees. Our review of this objective did not disclose any reportable issues.

- ✓ Did the District comply with the relevant requirements in the Sunshine Act¹¹ regarding open meetings, executive sessions, and public participation? In addition, did the District have policies and procedures governing the relevant requirements of the Sunshine Act that would, when followed, provide reasonable assurance of compliance?
 - To address this objective, we reviewed the District's board meeting minutes for the period July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2015, to determine compliance with relevant requirements of the Sunshine Act. We also reviewed the December 5, 2016 board meeting due to the high risk factors we identified. We also reviewed the District policy and procedures related to the Sunshine Act and determined that, when followed, these policies and procedures ensured compliance. Our review of this objective disclosed no reportable issues.

- ✓ Did the District ensure that bus drivers transporting District students had the required driver's license, physical exam, training, background checks, and clearances as outlined in applicable laws?¹² Also, did the District have written policies and procedures governing the hiring of new bus drivers that would, when followed, provide reasonable assurance of compliance with applicable laws?
 - To address this objective, we randomly selected 5 of the 51 bus drivers approved by the District on August 8, 2016, and reviewed documentation to ensure the District complied with the requirements for bus drivers. We also determined if the District had written policies and procedures governing the hiring of bus drivers and if those procedures, when followed, ensure compliance with bus driver hiring requirements. Our review of this objective disclosed no reportable issues.

¹⁰ 24 P.S. § 5-508, 24 P.S. § 11-1106, and 24 P.S. § 11-1111.

¹¹ 65 Pa.C.S. § 704, 65 Pa.C.S. § 708, and 65 Pa.C.S. § 710.1.

¹² 24 P.S. § 1-111, 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344(a.1), 24 P.S. § 2070.1a *et seq.*, 75 Pa.C.S. §§ 1508.1 and 1509, and 22 Pa. Code Chapter 8.

- ✓ Did the District take actions to ensure it provided a safe school environment?¹³
 - To address this objective, we reviewed a variety of documentation including safety plans and anti-bullying policies. Due to the sensitive nature of school safety, the results of our review of this objective area are not described in our audit report. The results of our review of school safety are shared with District officials and, if deemed necessary, PDE.

¹³ 24 P.S. § 13-1301-A *et seq.*

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 Pedro A. Rivera

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

The Honorable Joe Torsella

State Treasurer
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Harrisburg, PA 17120

Mrs. Danielle Mariano

Director
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Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dr. David Wazeter

Research Manager
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Harrisburg, PA 17105

Mr. Nathan Mains

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Pennsylvania School Boards Association
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Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at 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.