

Office of the Auditor General
Follow-Up Report on Prior Audit Recommendations

Office of Professional Preparation Services
Michigan Department of Education

October 2015

The auditor general shall conduct post audits of financial transactions and accounts of the state and of all branches, departments, offices, boards, commissions, agencies, authorities and institutions of the state established by this constitution or by law, and performance post audits thereof.

Article IV, Section 53 of the Michigan Constitution



Follow-Up Report

Office of Professional Preparation Services

Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

Report Number:
313-0140-10F

Released:
October 2015

We conducted this follow-up to determine whether MDE had taken appropriate corrective measures in response to the material condition noted in our March 2011 audit report.

| Prior Audit Information | Follow-Up Results | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| | Conclusion | Finding | Agency Preliminary Response |
| <p>Finding #1 - Material condition</p> <p>Monitoring needed to ensure that school districts provided teachers with the required amount of professional development.</p> <p>Validation of recorded professional development data in the Registry of Educational Personnel (REP) database needed.</p> <p>Agency partially disagreed.</p> | <p>Complied</p> <p>Not applicable</p> | <p>A new reportable condition exists.</p> <p>See <u>Finding #1</u>.</p> | <p>Agrees</p> |

We also observed that existing State statutes do not provide MDE with the authority to compel school districts to comply with teacher professional development requirements. MDE should consider seeking such legislation.

A copy of the full report can be
obtained by calling 517.334.8050
or by visiting our Web site at:
<http://audgen.michigan.gov>

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October 20, 2015

Mr. Brian J. Whiston
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Michigan Department of Education
John A. Hannah Building
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Mr. Whiston:

I am pleased to provide this follow-up report on the one material condition (Finding #1) and two corresponding recommendations reported in the performance audit of the Office of Professional Preparation Services (OPPS), Michigan Department of Education (MDE). That audit report was issued and distributed in March 2011. Additional copies are available on request or at <http://audgen.michigan.gov>.

Our follow-up disclosed that MDE complied with our first recommendation and our second recommendation is no longer applicable. Our follow-up also disclosed a new reportable condition related to the need for improvement in OPPS audit documentation (Finding #1). Therefore, we have issued a new recommendation.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us during our follow-up. If you have any questions, please call me or Laura J. Hirst, CPA, Deputy Auditor General.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Ringler". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Doug Ringler
Auditor General

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OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE OF FOLLOW-UP, AND AGENCY DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

This report contains the results of our follow-up of one material condition* (Finding #1) and two corresponding recommendations reported in our performance audit* of the Office of Professional Preparation Services (OPPS), Michigan Department of Education (MDE), issued in March 2011.

PURPOSE OF FOLLOW-UP

To determine whether MDE had taken appropriate corrective measures to address our corresponding recommendations.

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

OPPS is responsible for ensuring that teachers are qualified by:

- Implementing requirements for teacher initial preparation and certification.
- Certificate renewal based on appropriate professional development*.

This oversight helps to enhance instruction and achievement for all students. The State Budget Office's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) assists OPPS by providing school personnel data reported by school districts* to the Registry of Educational Personnel* (REP) database.

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS, AGENCY PLAN TO COMPLY, FOLLOW-UP CONCLUSION, NEW RECOMMENDATION, FOLLOW-UP AGENCY RESPONSE, AND OBSERVATION

FINDING #1

Audit Finding Classification: Material condition.

Summary of the March 2011 Finding:

OPPS should monitor school districts to ensure that school districts provide teachers with the required amount of professional development. In addition, OPPS should validate the professional development data recorded by school districts in the REP database. Without monitoring teacher development, OPPS cannot ensure that school districts are providing professional development designed to enable teachers to gain new skills and knowledge.

Recommendations Reported in March 2011:

We recommended that OPPS monitor school districts to ensure that school districts provide teachers with the required amount of professional development.

We also recommended that OPPS validate the professional development data recorded by school districts in the REP database.

AGENCY PLAN TO COMPLY*

Michigan Compiled Laws and administrative procedures required MDE to develop a plan to comply with the audit recommendations within 60 days after release of the March 2011 audit report.

MDE indicated on July 12, 2011 that OPPS was in the process of staffing a position to conduct random audits annually, beginning with the 2011 academic year, to validate the professional development data recorded by school districts in the REP database.

FOLLOW-UP CONCLUSION

OPPS conducted audits of school districts' professional development records.

- OPPS complied with the first recommendation.

OPPS implemented a process to audit school districts' professional development records to help ensure that the districts provided teachers with the required amount of professional development. OPPS performed audits of new teachers at 227 selected school districts for the 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 school years. In addition, OPPS

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

performed audits of experienced teachers at 125 selected school districts for the 2013-14 school year.

OPPS needs to improve its audit documentation.

We randomly selected and reviewed OPPS's documentation for 35 audits. For 12 (34.3%) of the 35, OPPS did not always demonstrate that it obtained sufficient documentation to verify that the school district had provided the required number of professional development hours for one or more teachers. Improving audit documentation could help OPPS ensure the effectiveness of the audits and support its conclusions.

- The second recommendation is no longer applicable.

At the time of our audit, OPPS indicated that it relied on the REP database information as an indicator of the amount of professional development provided by school districts. OPPS no longer uses REP for this purpose. Instead, OPPS relies on its audits of school districts' professional development records to ensure that school districts meet teacher professional development requirements. In addition, CEPI informed us that it does not utilize REP's professional development information for any federal or State compliance reports.

**NEW
RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that OPPS improve its audit documentation to consistently demonstrate its verification that audited school districts provided teachers with the required amount of professional development.

**FOLLOW-UP
AGENCY
RESPONSE**

MDE provided us with the following response:

MDE agrees and will continue to refine auditing procedures to ensure that adequate documentation is collected to verify that districts provide all required hours of professional learning to teachers.

OBSERVATION*

Existing State statutes do not provide MDE with the authority to compel school districts to comply with teacher professional development requirements when OPPS audits identify deficiencies in professional development provided to teachers. MDE should consider seeking such legislation.

Possible approaches could include allowing the districts a time frame to remediate any deficiencies related to documentation and/or unmet professional development requirements prior to imposition of penalties. Penalties for further noncompliance could result in withheld or delayed school aid payments.

* See glossary at end of report for definition.

FOLLOW-UP SCOPE AND PERIOD

FOLLOW-UP SCOPE

We interviewed OPPS personnel and reviewed their corrective action plan to determine the status of compliance with the recommendations related to the material condition. We assessed OPPS's efforts to monitor school districts to ensure that the districts provided teachers with the required amount of professional development in accordance with Public Act 451 of 1976, as amended. Our scope included a review of the methodology and supporting documentation for 35 audits OPPS conducted of school districts' professional development information.

PERIOD

Our follow-up was primarily performed during April through June 2015.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| agency plan to comply | The response required by Section 18.1462 of the <i>Michigan Compiled Laws</i> and the State of Michigan Financial Management Guide (Part VII, Chapter 4, Section 100). The audited agency is required to develop a plan to comply with Office of the Auditor General audit recommendations and submit the plan within 60 days after release of the audit report to the Office of Internal Audit Services, State Budget Office. Within 30 days of receipt, the Office of Internal Audit Services is required to review the plan and either accept the plan as final or contact the agency to take additional steps to finalize the plan. |
| CEPI | Center for Educational Performance and Information. |
| material condition | A matter that, in the auditor's judgment, is more severe than a reportable condition and could impair the ability of management to operate a program in an effective and efficient manner and/or could adversely affect the judgment of an interested person concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. |
| MDE | Michigan Department of Education. |
| observation | A commentary that highlights certain details or events that may be of interest to users of the report. An observation differs from an audit finding in that it may not include the attributes (condition, effect, criteria, cause, and recommendation) that are presented in an audit finding. |
| OPPS | Office of Professional Preparation Services. |
| performance audit | An audit that provides findings or conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence against criteria. Performance audits provide objective analysis to assist management and those charged with governance and oversight in using the information to improve program performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision making by parties with responsibility to oversee or initiate corrective action, and contribute to public accountability. |
| professional development | A comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' effectiveness in raising student achievement. This training should address the learning goals and objectives established by educators at the school and is routinely provided by the school district during the academic school year. |

Registry of Educational Personnel (REP)

A shared data collection tool that is used for recording information about teachers who are serving in Michigan's schools.

reportable condition

A matter that, in the auditor's judgment, is less severe than a material condition and falls within any of the following categories: an opportunity for improvement within the context of the audit objectives; a deficiency in internal control that is significant within the context of the audit objectives; all instances of fraud; illegal acts unless they are inconsequential within the context of the audit objectives; significant violations of provisions of contracts or grant agreements; and significant abuse that has occurred or is likely to have occurred.

school district

A local school district, intermediate school district, public school academy, urban high school academy, or strict discipline academy.

