



Legislative Post Audit Performance Audit Report Highlights

K-12 Education: Efficiency Audit of the Auburn-Washburn School District

Report Highlights

July 2015 • R-15-010

Summary of Legislator Concerns

K.S.A. 46-1133 requires the Legislative Division of Post Audit to conduct a series of efficiency audits of Kansas school districts from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2017. The audits are to include one small, one medium, and one large school district.

Auburn-Washburn school district was selected for an audit in September 2013 in the large-sized school district category.

Background Information

The Auburn-Washburn school district is located in Northeast Kansas, in Shawnee County.

The district served about 5,750 FTE students and had 848 FTE employees in the 2013-14 school year.

In the 2013-14 school year, the district's expenditures were a little more than \$64 million.

Five-year trend data show the district's student enrollment has increased while staffing has declined. However, expenditures per FTE students have remained constant.

QUESTION 1: *Could the Auburn Washburn school district achieve significant cost savings by improving resource management, and what effect would those actions have?*

Savings Options That Would Have Little to No Impact on Students or the Community and Should be Implemented

- The district could save between \$165,000 and \$280,000 by eliminating 5.0 to 8.5 FTE custodial positions.
 - Auburn-Washburn's custodial staffing levels are high compared to peer districts and national benchmarks.
 - District officials were concerned that eliminating custodial positions would make buildings less clean and pose a health risk to students.
 - Based on our tours of schools in districts that meet the national custodial benchmarks and information from the Centers for Disease Control, we think the peer and national benchmarks are reasonable standards for Auburn-Washburn.
 - Eliminating custodial positions would save the state between \$18,000 and \$30,000 in Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERS) funding.
- The district could save between \$34,000 and \$77,000 annually by aligning supplemental pay with what similar districts pay.
 - In the 2014-15 school year, Auburn-Washburn paid 189 staff a total of \$525,000 in supplemental pay for a variety of extracurricular activities.
 - Auburn-Washburn's supplemental pay is often more than what similar districts pay because it is based on a percentage of individual staff pay rather than a flat rate.
 - Reducing supplemental pay would also save the state between \$4,500 and \$10,200 annually in KPERS funding.
- The district could use its procurement cards for more of its supply and service expenditures, which could generate up to \$34,000 in revenue annually.
 - District officials told us it was possible to expand their use of procurement cards but expressed some concerns.

Savings Options That Could Have a **Moderate Impact** on Students or the Community, and Should be Considered

- The district could save \$68,000 annually by replacing four nurses with health aides.
 - Auburn-Washburn had similar total health services staffing levels as four peer districts.
 - However, two of the four peer districts we evaluated used health aides rather than nurses to deliver basic health services to students.
 - If Auburn-Washburn used health aides in a similar way, it could replace four nurses with four health aides and save \$68,000.
 - District officials were concerned that replacing nurses with health aides would pose a safety risk to students.
 - The state would also save about \$9,000 in KPERS funding if the district replaced four nurses with health aides.

Savings Options That Could Have a **Significant Impact** on Students or the Community, and Should be Considered

- The district could reduce or offset about \$215,000 to \$335,000 in annual transportation costs by changing its policies on busing students who live less than 2.5 miles from school.
 - The district offers transportation services to all students who live in the district, regardless of how far away they live from school.
 - The district could save between \$232,000 and \$335,000 annually by no longer busing students who live less than 2.5 miles from their school.
 - Alternatively, the district could achieve up to \$250,000 in savings and increased revenue by requiring parents to pay for bus services for students who live less than 2.5 miles from their school.
 - District officials raised several concerns about altering their transportation services including safety issues and community resistance.
 - The state could save up to \$18,000 in KPERS funding if the district changed its transportation policy.

Auburn-Washburn has higher property values and lower free-lunch counts than the state average.

92% of the district staff that responded to our survey reported that the district operated efficiently or very efficiently.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- We made several recommendations to the Auburn-Washburn school district to either implement or consider implementing the cost savings options we identified.

AGENCY RESPONSE

- District officials generally concurred with the report's findings, conclusions, and recommendations except that officials raised concerns with some recommendations.

HOW DO I REQUEST AN AUDIT?

By law, individual legislators, legislative committees, or the Governor may request an audit, but any audit work conducted by the division must be directed by the Legislative Post Audit Committee. Any legislator who would like to request an audit should contact the division directly at (785) 296-3792.

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