

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District has provided all information requested to the Auditor General. This information can be found at the following link:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8ns017e5tkulxje/AAA6UjnCzy6DMe-ndi_es4-a?dl=0

Over the past few years, the Wilkes-Barre Area School District has taken numerous steps to keep the district from falling into a financial distress designation. During the 2015-2016 school year, the Wilkes-Barre Area School District contacted PDE for financial assistance. In response, PDE provided the district with assistance through the PFM group. In March of 2016, the PFM group presented their analysis to the Board and the community. Their report indicated that if draconian measures were not taken, the District would be facing a \$36 million dollar deficit in the 2018-2019 school year. Furthermore, if no actions were taken the District would be facing a \$70 million dollar deficit in the 2020-2021 school year. The following actions were taken to avoid financial distress:

- The Wilkes-Barre Area Board approved the action plan “Pathway to the Future”;
- Furloughed 37 teachers;
- Furloughed 24 support staff;
- Eliminated an additional 12 teaching positions;
- Eliminated all (8) Dean of Students positions;
- Curtailed the following programs:
 - Elementary & Junior High Art
 - K-12 Library
 - Industrial Arts
 - Family and Consumer Science

Furthermore, the district has also consolidated the following positions:

- Assistant Superintendent;
- Director of Transportation;
- Director of Pupil Personnel;
- Director of Secondary Curriculum;
- Director of Elementary Curriculum;
- Director of Data and Cyber Services;
- Building Technology Coaches;
- Departmental Coordinators;
- Instructional Support Teachers;
- After Hours Security;
- Custodial/Secretary positions.

It should be noted that since the district implemented the “Pathway to the Future”, what would have been a projected \$36 million dollar deficit is currently an approximate \$5 million dollar fund balance. Additionally, the district’s credit outlook, as established by Moody’s and S&P Global, has gone from negative to stable.

The District has been able to accomplish these results despite the fact that, according to the Basic Education Formula (BEF), the Wilkes-Barre Area School District is approximately \$33 million dollars underfunded annually.

We have requested a face-to-face meeting with the Auditor General and his staff to answer any and all questions he may have. The District appreciates the Auditor General's concern for our financial well-being and would also welcome any assistance he can provide to facilitate fair funding for our District and taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian J. Costello
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