

OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE  
KEITH FABER



Bethel-Tate  
Local School District

# Performance Audit

October 2025



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**To the Bethel-Tate Local School District Community:**

The Auditor of State's Office recently completed a performance audit for the Bethel-Tate Local School District (the District). The District was selected for a performance audit based on its projected financial condition. This review was conducted by the Ohio Performance Team and provides an independent assessment of operations within select functional areas. The performance audit has been provided at no cost to the District through state funds set aside to provide analyses for districts that meet certain criteria, including conditions that would lead to fiscal distress.

This performance audit report contains recommendations, supported by detailed analyses, to enhance the District's overall economy, efficiency, and/or effectiveness. This report has been provided to the District and its contents have been discussed with the appropriate elected officials and District management. The District has been encouraged to use the recommendations contained in the report to perform its own assessment of operations and develop alternative management strategies independent of the performance audit report.

It is my hope that the District will use the results of the performance audit as a resource for improving operational efficiency as well as service delivery effectiveness. The analyses contained within are intended to provide management with information, and in some cases, a range of options to consider while making decisions about their operations.

This performance audit report can be accessed online through the Auditor of State's website at <http://www.ohioauditor.gov> and choosing the "Search" option. Additional resources related to performance audits are also available on the Ohio Auditor of State's website.

Sincerely,

KEITH FABER  
Ohio Auditor of State

Tiffany L. Ridenbaugh, CPA, CFE, CGFM  
Chief Deputy Auditor

October 21, 2025

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# Introduction

The public expects and deserves government entities to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. School officials have a responsibility to maximize program outcomes and success while minimizing costs. Transparent management of taxpayer dollars promotes a good relationship with the constituents served by a school district. School districts in Ohio are required to submit budget forecasts to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) annually in the fall, with updates to the forecast submitted in the spring.<sup>1</sup> These documents provide three years of historical financial data, as well as the projected revenues and expenses for a five-year period.<sup>2</sup>

The Ohio Auditor of State's Office Ohio Performance Team (OPT) routinely reviews the submitted forecasts in order to identify districts which may benefit from a performance audit. These audits are designed to assist school districts that are struggling financially. We use data-driven analyses to produce and support recommendations that identify opportunities for improved operations, effectiveness, increased transparency, and reductions in cost. While we have the authority to initiate a performance audit for school districts facing financial distress, any school district can request, and benefit from, an audit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>ORC § 5705.391 and OAC 3301-92-04.

<sup>2</sup> House Bill 96 of the 136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (the biennial budget bill) contained changes to the school forecast which included shortening the length of the forecast period and altering the submission dates. These changes went into effect in FY 2026.

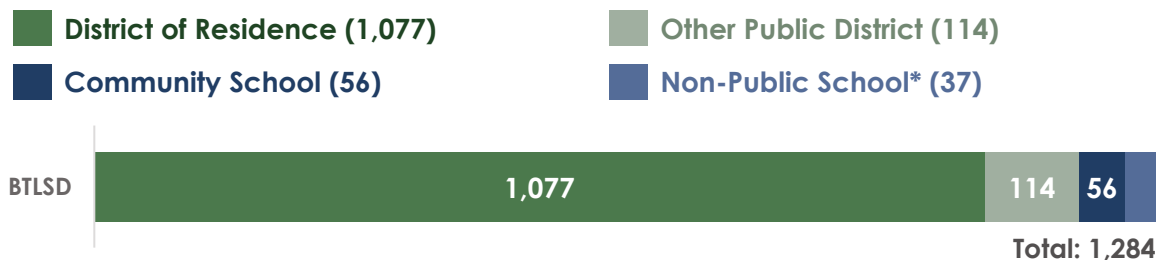
<sup>3</sup>Performance audits are conducted using Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards guidelines, see [Appendix A](#) for more details.

# Bethel-Tate Local School District

Bethel-Tate Local School District (BTLSD or the District) is located in Clermont County and, as of fiscal year (FY) 2024, had 1,317 students enrolled including students residing in the District and those who attend through open enrollment options. The District spans approximately 48 square miles and has a median income of \$58,067. Of the total enrolled students, approximately 19 percent were students with disabilities.

Students and their families have choices regarding where to attend school. Because of this, not all resident students attend the district where they live. Based on available data from ODEW, which tracks state funding on a per-student basis, the visual below shows where students living in BTLSD are attending schools. It should be noted that this visual does not include students who choose to attend private schools and do not receive state assistance or students who are home schooled. Additionally, the number of students attending BTLSD represented in this chart does not include students attending via open enrollment options and is not reflective of the total enrollment.

## Place of Enrollment, Students Living in BTLSD, FY 2024



Source: ODEW School Report Card

\*Includes, if applicable, students participating in the EdChoice or EdChoice Expansion Scholarship Programs, the Cleveland Scholarship Program, the Ohio Autism Scholarship Program, or the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program.

Note: This data is compiled by ODEW from a variety of sources and represents a snapshot of a single day in the school year. Due to this, enrollment figures will likely not match other official numbers reported by ODEW.

As seen in the visual above, approximately 16.1 percent of students residing in BTLSD have chosen to attend community schools, nonpublic schools, or another public district that accepts students through open enrollment. During FY 2024, BTLSD educated 156 students who open enrolled into the District.

## Audit Methodology

Our audit focuses on identifying opportunities where expenditures may be reduced as the District administration can make decisions in these areas. The information, which was presented to District officials, is based on a combination of peer district comparisons, industry standards, and statewide requirements. During the audit, we relied primarily on FY 2024 data to complete our

analyses, which was the most recent year of available data at the time. When applicable, we supplemented our analyses with current data supplied by the District.

Two groups of peer districts were identified for the purpose of this audit. The first peer group, primary peers, are districts located throughout Ohio and are chosen based on having similar or better academic performance and similar demographic makeup while maintaining relatively lower spending per pupil. Primary peer districts are used for financial comparisons and analyses regarding operations such as staffing levels. The second, local peers, is comprised of districts in the surrounding area and is used for labor market comparisons, such as salary schedules. See [Appendix A](#) for a list of all districts used in our peer comparisons.

## Financial Condition

In November 2024, the District released its required annual five-year forecast that showed negative year-end fund balances in the forecast period beginning in FY 2026. A summary of this forecast is in the table below. As seen in this table, the District has negative results of operations in each of the five years of the forecast period. This deficit spending is possible in the short-term because of the existing positive fund balance. However, based on projected deficit spending, the District projected a negative ending cash balance beginning in FY 2026, which was projected to grow to approximately \$9.0 million by FY 2029, the last year of the forecast. Due to the declining fiscal condition of the District, and in consultation with ODEW, we chose to conduct a performance audit.

### Financial Condition Overview (November 2024 Forecast)

	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Total Revenue	\$17,830,188	\$18,021,583	\$17,590,409	\$17,177,836	\$17,114,074
Total Expenditures	\$19,828,792	\$19,683,236	\$20,363,034	\$21,325,143	\$22,041,111
<b>Results of Operations</b>	<b>(\$1,998,604)</b>	<b>(\$1,661,653)</b>	<b>(\$2,772,625)</b>	<b>(\$4,147,307)</b>	<b>(\$4,927,037)</b>
Beginning Cash Balance	\$2,758,036	\$759,432	(\$902,221)	(\$3,674,845)	(\$7,822,152)
<b>Ending Cash Balance</b>	<b>\$759,432</b>	<b>(\$902,221)</b>	<b>(\$3,674,845)</b>	<b>(\$7,822,152)</b>	<b>(\$12,749,189)</b>
Encumbrances	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Cumulative Balance of Replacement/Renewal Levies	\$0	\$0	\$750,000	\$2,250,000	\$3,750,000
Cumulative Balance of New Levies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$659,432</b>	<b>(\$1,002,221)</b>	<b>(\$3,024,845)</b>	<b>(\$5,672,152)</b>	<b>(\$9,099,189)</b>

Source: ODEW

After the submission of the District's November 2024 forecast, ODEW identified BTLSD as being in a state of fiscal pre-caution and required the District to submit a written financial recovery plan to address the negative ending fund balance present in four years of the forecast. The recovery plan, which was approved by the Board in February 2025, included revenue

enhancements, such as implementing all-day tuition-based preschool, and expenditure reductions, such as staffing reductions and transportation changes.

In May 2025, the District released its semi-annual forecast, which projected negative year-end fund balances beginning in FY 2028, the fourth year of the forecast. This deficit is projected to grow to more than \$3 million by the end of the forecast period in FY 2029 and includes negative results of operations throughout the forecast period, but represents an overall improved financial condition from November 2024.

### Financial Condition Overview (May 2025 Forecast)

	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Total Revenue	\$18,195,102	\$17,931,058	\$17,097,285	\$16,272,928	\$16,143,250
Total Expenditures	\$19,170,214	\$18,145,014	\$18,730,773	\$19,321,481	\$19,909,178
<b>Results of Operations</b>	<b>(\$975,112)</b>	<b>(\$213,956)</b>	<b>(\$1,633,488)</b>	<b>(\$3,048,553)</b>	<b>(\$3,765,928)</b>
Beginning Cash Balance	\$2,758,033	\$1,782,921	\$1,568,964	(\$64,523)	(\$3,113,076)
<b>Ending Cash Balance</b>	<b>\$1,782,921</b>	<b>\$1,568,964</b>	<b>(\$64,523)</b>	<b>(\$3,113,076)</b>	<b>(\$6,879,004)</b>
Encumbrances	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Cumulative Balance of Replacement/Renewal Levies	\$0	\$0	\$750,000	\$2,250,000	\$3,750,000
Cumulative Balance of New Levies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$1,682,921</b>	<b>\$1,468,964</b>	<b>\$585,477</b>	<b>(\$963,076)</b>	<b>(\$3,229,004)</b>

Source: ODEW

The District's improved financial condition in the May 2025 forecast is due to the measures taken as part of the recovery plan, such as a staffing reduction of approximately 23 positions. These staffing reductions were via reductions-in-force and attrition. As a result, the May forecast projected \$800,000 less in Personal Services than the November forecast for FY 2025. The District also projected revenue from renewing their current emergency levy beginning in FY 2027 and continuing through the forecast period.

# School Funding

Historically, school funding in Ohio has been a partnership between the state and local districts. Local districts can raise funds through property and income taxes, and the state provides funding primarily through a foundation formula, which is intended to ensure a basic level of education funding for all students. Districts may also receive some funding from other sources, such as federal grants. In FY 2025, of the approximately \$28.5 billion in reported revenue for public education in Ohio, nearly 83 percent, or \$23.8 billion, came from state and local sources.

## State Funding

On July 1, 2025, House Bill 96 of the 136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (the biennial budget bill) was signed by the Governor. This bill included changes to the state foundation funding formula, which was enacted in 2021,<sup>4</sup> and is commonly referred to as the Fair School Funding Plan. The formula changes were phased-in at 83.33 percent in FY 2026 and 100 percent in FY 2027.<sup>5</sup> During the phase-in period, the amount of state funding received in any given year may have been less than what would have been received if the formula were fully funded. A new biennial budget will determine state funding for FY 2028 and FY 2029.

## Local Funding

Local revenue can be raised through a combination of property and income taxes. While property taxes are assessed on both residential and business properties within a district, income tax is assessed only on residents.<sup>6</sup> Approximately one-third of Ohio school districts currently have an income tax.

## Property Tax

Property taxes levied in Ohio are subject to restrictions in the Ohio Constitution<sup>7</sup> and the Ohio Revised Code (ORC).<sup>8</sup> These restrictions limit the amount of tax that can be levied without voter approval to 10 mills<sup>9</sup> or 1 percent of property value. While the Constitutional limitation is based on fair market value, the ORC sets a more restrictive limit based on taxable value, which is defined as 35 percent of fair market value. These taxes are distributed between the various taxing districts that operate where a property is located.

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<sup>4</sup> ODEW transitioned to the new funding model in January of 2022.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=21197&format=pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See <https://tax.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/tax/individual/school-district-income-tax>

<sup>7</sup> Ohio Const. Art. XII, Section 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ohio Rev. Code § 5705.02.

<sup>9</sup> A mill is defined as one-tenth of one percent or \$1 for every \$1,000 of taxable value.

The 10 mills allowed by the Constitution are typically referred to as inside, or un-voted mills. On average, school districts have approximately 4.7 inside mills, and the remainder of property tax revenue would come from voted, or outside millage.

School districts can obtain additional property tax revenue through voter approved bonds and levies. These taxes can have a variety of purposes that are defined in the authorizing language which are generally divided into three broad categories: general operations, permanent improvement, and construction.

Levies may be defined as either a fixed-rate or a fixed-sum. A fixed-rate levy identifies the number of mills that will be assessed in order to raise revenues. If new construction occurs within the district, the rate will apply, and the district would realize additional revenues. Current expense levies, used for general operations, and permanent improvement levies are typically fixed-rate. A fixed-sum levy identifies an amount that will be generated from the levy. While there may be an estimated millage rate, the actual rate will vary based on assessed property values. If new construction occurs within the district, there would be no new revenues for a fixed-sum levy. Emergency levies<sup>10</sup> for general operations, and bond levies for the financing of new buildings, are typically fixed-sum levies.

Ohio has historically had laws which limit the impact rising property values can have on property taxes. The most recent version of these limitations was enacted in 1976 and requires that the amount collected on fixed-rate millage is frozen at the dollar value collected in its first year.<sup>11</sup> In subsequent years, with exceptions such as new construction, a district would not receive additional revenue from a levy as property values increased.<sup>12</sup> Instead, the outside mills are subject to reduction factors<sup>13</sup> which lower the effective millage rate in order to maintain the preceding year's level of revenue from the same properties.<sup>14</sup>

However, under state law, in order to receive state foundation funding, a district must collect a minimum of 20 mills in property taxes for general purposes, or current expenses.<sup>15</sup> In order to prevent a district from failing to meet this minimum threshold, reduction factors stop being applied once a district reaches an effective rate of 20-mills, colloquially known as the 20-mill floor. Practically speaking, this means that if a district's effective tax rate is reduced to 20 mills for current expenses, the amount of revenue generated from levies will increase with property

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<sup>10</sup> Authorized by ORC §5705.194.

<sup>11</sup> Am.Sub.H.B. No. 920, 136 Ohio Laws, Part II, 3182, 3194.

<sup>12</sup> If property value decreased due to reappraisal, it is possible that a district would receive less revenue than originally intended.

<sup>13</sup> ORC § 319.301.

<sup>14</sup> We are providing this information for historical purposes only. The law which regulates collection of on outside millage has been amended since enacted in 1976. The District should consult with the most current version of the law for a clear understanding of how this process works today.

<sup>15</sup> The term 'current expense' refers to revenue generated from levies that are not restricted in their use. It does not include bonds or levies that generate revenues for restricted funds, such as Permanent Improvement levies.

values unless a new operating levy is approved by voters. It is important to note not all levies count toward the 20-mill floor.

Ultimately, the mixture of property taxes approved by voters can have a wide-ranging impact on both the revenues collected by a district and the amount of tax that individual property owners are required to pay on an annual basis.

## *Income Tax*

A school district income tax is an alternative method of raising local revenue. Like property taxes, an income tax must be approved by voters and may be for either general use or specific purposes, such as bond repayment. Once approved, a tax becomes effective on January 1st of the following year. Unlike municipal income taxes which are generally levied on wages earned in the municipality by both residents and nonresidents, school district income taxes are levied on wages earned by residents of the district, regardless of where the resident may work. Businesses operating within the school district are not required to pay the income tax.

A school board, when determining that an income tax is necessary for additional revenue, must submit a resolution to the Ohio Tax Commissioner identifying the amount of revenue to be raised and the tax base to be used for calculations. A school district income tax can be assessed on either a traditional tax base or an earned income tax base. The traditional tax base uses the same income base as Ohio's income tax and the earned income tax base is only earned income from an employer or self-employment. Under the earned income tax base, income such as capital gains or pension payments is not taxable, though this type of income may be taxed under the traditional tax base. Once this information is received, the Tax Commissioner identifies the income tax rate and equivalent property tax millage for the district.

The Ohio Department of Taxation collects income tax through employer withholding, individual quarterly estimated payments, and annual returns. Employers are required to withhold the tax and submit payments to the state under the same rules and guidelines as are currently used for state income taxes. Districts receive quarterly payments from the Department of Taxation and each payment is for the amount collected during the prior quarter. A district receives the total amount of revenue collected less a 1.5 percent fee retained by the state for administration purposes. The amount of revenue collected via income tax each year will vary based on the earnings of the district's residents.

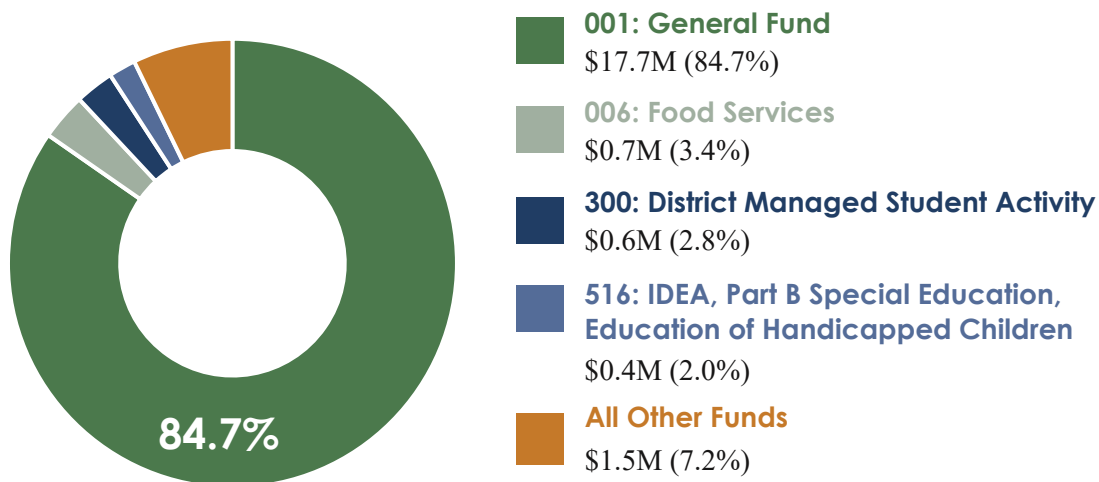
While BTLSD does not have an income tax, one of the primary peer districts does collect revenue from an income tax.

## BTLSD Revenues

A school district budget is comprised of revenues and expenditures. Revenues are primarily received from local, state, and federal funding sources, and can be placed into general or specific use funds. In FY 2024, BTLSD had approximately \$20.9 million in total revenue as seen in the following chart. While the majority of this revenue, or 84.7 percent, was General Fund revenue, the District also received revenue that was associated with a special revenue fund for its Food Service program totaling 3.4 percent of all revenue.

### FY 2024 Total Revenue All Funds

Total: \$20.9M



Source: BTLSD

Note: The District has 23 total funds, 19 of which recorded revenue in FY 2024. All other funds are comprised of a variety of sources including IDEA funding, Title I, and Extracurricular Activities.

Note: Due to rounding, revenue categories may not sum up to the total listed.

Note: Excludes advances-In

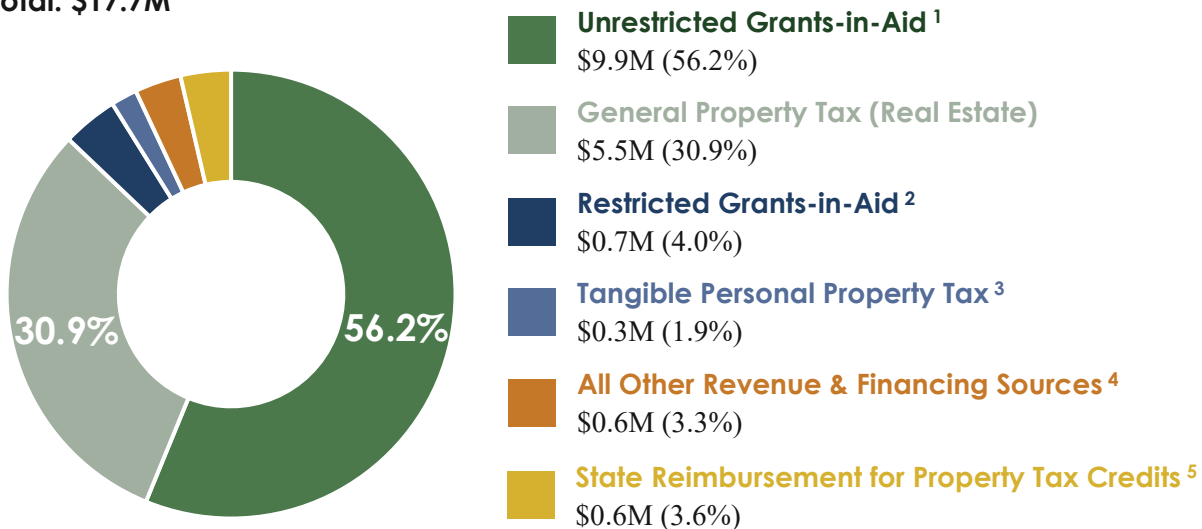
As noted above, the majority of the District's revenue is directed to the General Fund, which is used for general operations. In FY 2024, the District's total General Fund revenue was approximately \$17.7 million.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This total excludes advances to the General Fund. For purposes of comparison, we excluded advances to the General Fund for both BTLSD and the peer groups throughout the Revenues section.



## FY 2024 General Fund Revenue Composition

Total: \$17.7M



Source: ODEW

Note: Due to rounding, revenue categories may not sum up to the total listed.

Note: Excludes Advances-In

1: Unrestricted grants-in-aid is comprised primarily of state foundation funding.

2: Restricted grants-in-aid includes revenues received as grants from the state which must be used for a categorical or specific purpose.

3: Tangible Personal Property Tax includes revenues related to public utility personal property (telephone, electric, and gas) tax paid by public utilities.

4: All Other Operating Revenue & Financing Sources includes tuition, fees, earnings on investments, rentals, donations, operating transfers, and all other financing sources.

5: State Reimbursement for Property Tax Credits consists of reimbursements from the state for local taxpayer credits or reductions.

Within the District's General Fund, as seen in the chart above, the primary sources of revenue are unrestricted grants-in-aid, general property tax, and other revenue. Other revenue sources include food service, Title I, and IDEA funding. The remaining revenue is comprised of a variety of sources.

## Revenue per Pupil

Revenue per pupil, broken down by type of funding, is another way to compare funding sources between Ohio school districts. Because our audit focuses on the projected deficit in the five-year forecast, we reviewed only the forecasted fund revenues for this purpose.<sup>17</sup> In FY 2024, the District received approximately \$13,320 per pupil, with 35.7 percent, or approximately \$4,760,

<sup>17</sup> Forecasted funds include the District's General Fund and funds derived from emergency levies.

coming from local taxes.<sup>18</sup> In FY 2024, the primary peer average was \$12,256 in revenue per pupil, with 44.2 percent, or approximately \$5,396, coming from local taxes. While the District's total revenue was higher than the primary peer average, its local revenue was lower than the primary peer average in FY 2024.

## Millage

In 2024, BTLSD collected revenues on 25.54 mills of property tax for residential properties.<sup>19</sup> This included 3.70 inside mills and 16.30 outside mills for current expenses. The District's current expense millage rate is at the 20-mill floor and therefore not subject to reduction factors. In addition to the 20 mills collected for current expenses, the District collects additional property tax revenue that does not count toward the 20-mill floor. In 2024, this additional millage totaled 5.54 emergency and substitute mills.

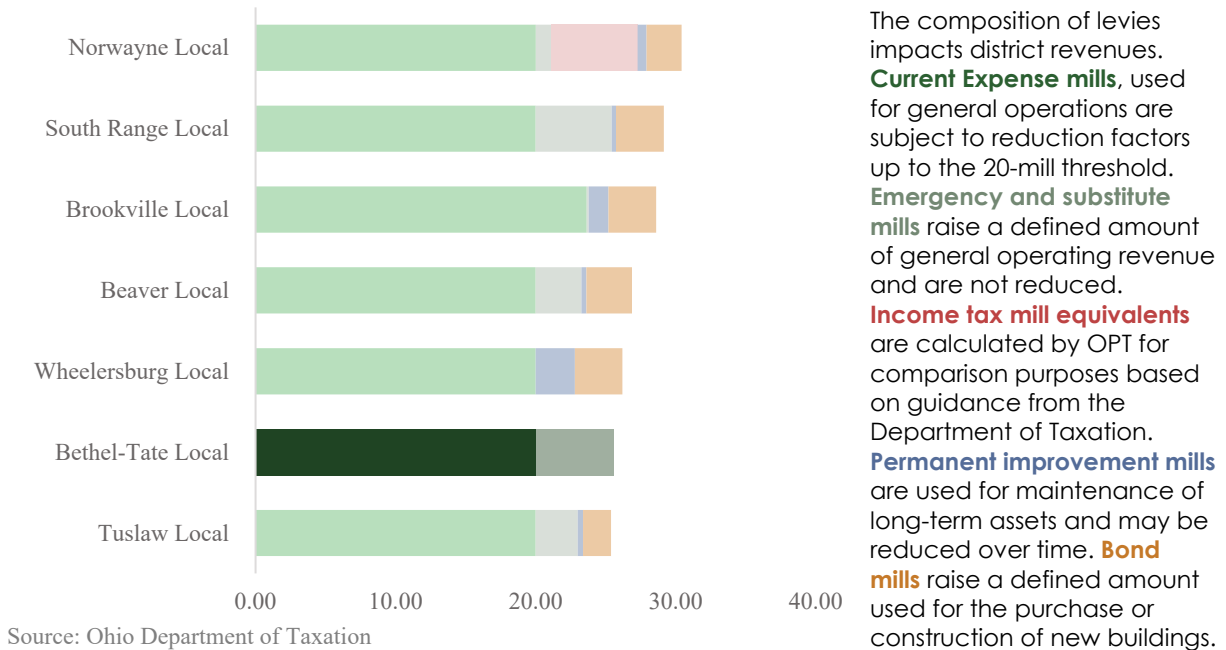
Since the total millage rate can be rolled back as a result of reduction factors, we compared the total effective millage for BTLSD to that of its primary peers. This comparison is found in the chart below. The green portion of the bar represents the current expense millage rate, where all but one of the peers are also at the 20-mill floor. The grey portion represents emergency and substitute revenue which is not subject to reduction factors. The blue represents permanent improvement funds, and the orange represents bond funding. While BTLSD does not have a school district income tax, one peer does have revenue from income tax. For comparison purposes, OPT calculated an estimated millage for the revenue generated from income taxes based on guidance from the Department of Taxation, which is represented by the pink portion of the bars in the chart below.

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<sup>18</sup> The Cupp Report, issued by ODEW, provides information on all revenues received by a district. Because of this, the percentage of revenues from local revenues in the Cupp report may vary from the amount in our report due to the inclusion of additional revenues.

<sup>19</sup> Residential and agricultural property is considered Class 1 real estate. Commercial Property is considered Class 2 real estate and subject to a different set of reduction factors. The effective millage rate for Class 2 property in 2024 was 26.64.

## 2024 Millage and Millage Equivalents | Primary Peers



The composition of levies impacts district revenues. Current expense mills, used for general operations are subject to reduction factors up to the 20-mill threshold. Emergency and substitute mills raise a defined amount of general operating revenue and cannot be reduced. Income tax mill equivalents are calculated by OPT based on guidance provided by the Department of Taxation for comparison purposes. Permanent improvement mills are used for maintenance of long-term assets and may be subject to reduction factors. Bond mills raise a defined amount used for the purchase or construction of new buildings. It is important to understand that *revenue* generated from bond and emergency levies remains the same regardless of changes to property values as they are voted as fixed-sum levies. The *revenue* generated from current expense millage and permanent improvement millage also stays the same until the 20-mill floor is hit for current expense taxes. At that point, a district at the floor would see additional revenues from increases in value to existing properties. This means that BTLSD and its peers at the 20-mill floor will see additional revenue if property values increase.

## Property Valuation

Millage is one component of how districts generate revenue. The millage is assessed on property value, so the total revenue collected from property levies is a combination of millage and total valuation. A district with high property value may see more total revenue from fewer mills than a district with low property values. BTLSD's millage rate is among the lowest compared to the primary peers. In addition, the District has a low property valuation compared to its peers. BTLSD's total property valuation in Tax Year 2023 was approximately \$272 million compared

to the primary peer average of approximately \$325 million. In Tax Year 2023, one mill of property tax generated approximately \$205 in revenue per pupil, which is slightly below the primary peer average of \$218 per pupil. The combination of lower valuation and lower total millage means that the District would generate less revenue than the primary peers.

The property tax revenues for the District's General Fund are generated from several levies. The following table shows the levies currently in effect for the District and includes the Gross Tax Rate, or the amount that was voted on, and the Effective Tax Rate, or the amount that is assessed on properties. In the table, the first current expense levy is identified as starting in 1976. It should be noted that in 1976, changes were made to the ORC that impacted the collection of property taxes. The levy identified in 1976 may include any levies that predate that year which remain in effect.

### Current Levies Collected by BTLSD, FY 2024

Levy Year	Levy Name	Gross Tax Rate	Class I Effective Tax Rate
	GENERAL FUND (Inside Mills)	3.70	3.70
1976	CURRENT EXPENSE	21.30	11.59
1977	CURRENT EXPENSE	3.00	1.63
1989	CURRENT EXPENSE	5.30	3.07
2016	EMERGENCY (\$1,100,000)	4.04	4.04
2021	EMERGENCY (\$410,000)	1.50	1.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>38.84</b>	<b>25.54</b>

Source: Ohio Department of Taxation

Note: The emergency levy passed in 2016 was renewed with an increase in 2021, as reported by the Department of Taxation.

Although the District passed an emergency levy in 2016 and renewed and increased the levy in 2021, as seen in the table, the most recent levy for current operating expenses was passed by voters in 1989, or more than 30 years ago. The difference between the Gross Tax Rate and the Effective Tax Rate illustrates the impact that reduction factors have on collection rates. The 3.70 mills that are identified as General Fund millage are considered inside mills and are unvoted by the taxpayers. These mills are not subject to reduction factors. As property values have risen, the District has seen revenue growth due to property reappraisals and reevaluations since it is at the 20-mill floor for current expenses.

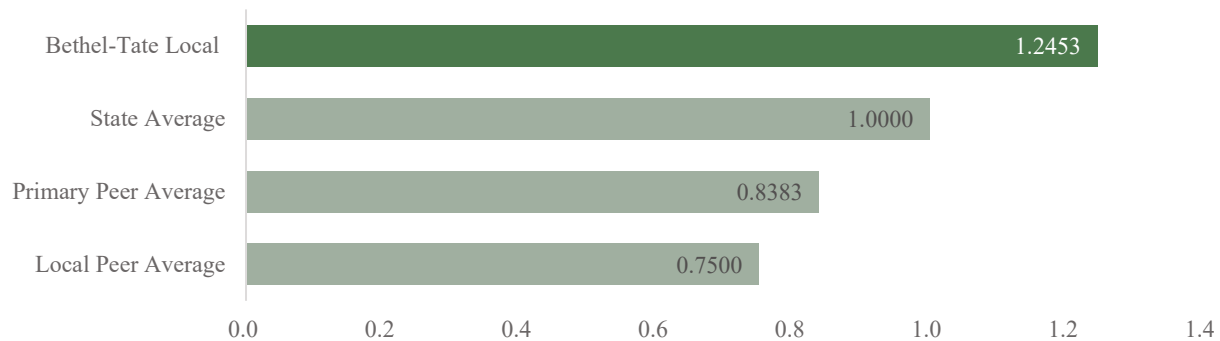
### Local Tax Effort

ODEW uses the Local Tax Effort Index as a measure of taxpayer support for the district in which they reside. This index, one of a number of possible measures for evaluating local effort, was initially developed by the Division of Tax Analysis within the Ohio Department of Taxation and is calculated in the context of the residents' abilities to pay by determining the relative position of each school district in the state in terms of the portion of residents' income devoted to supporting public education. This index uses median income data and provides context to better

understand a community's tax burden, not only compared to other districts, but also as a function of the residents' ability to pay.

On this sliding scale, a value of 1.0 indicates the state average, a baseline against which all districts in the state are weighed. If a district has a local tax effort below 1.0, residents provide a smaller portion of their available income to public education whereas a value above 1.0 indicates the community pays a larger portion of their available income to public education compared to the state average. The index is updated annually by ODEW as part of its District Profile Reports, also known as the Cupp Report, to reflect changes in local conditions from year to year.

### FY 2024 Local Tax Effort Comparison



Source: ODEW

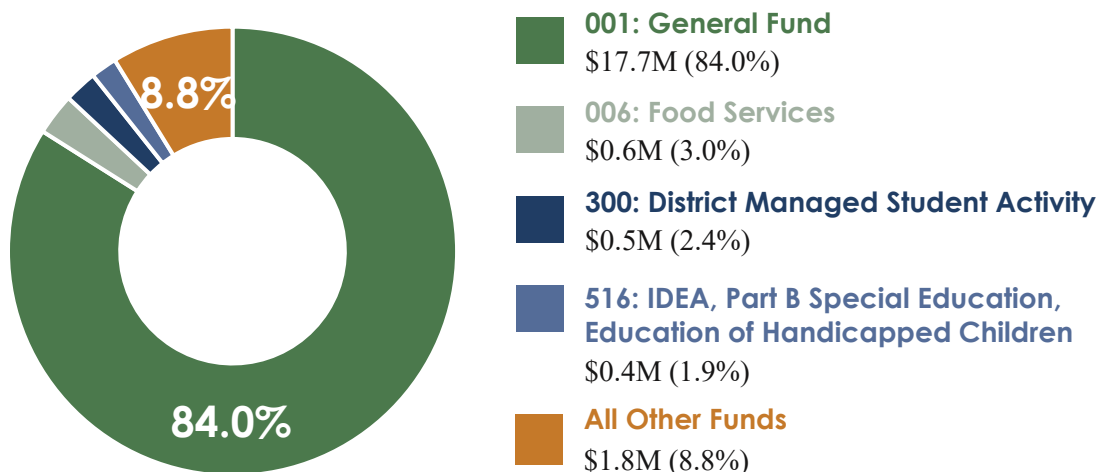
The District's local tax effort was compared to the local peers, primary peers, and the state average. Districts are ranked from 1 to 606, with 1 being the highest level of effort, or the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile and 606 being the lowest level of effort, or 1<sup>st</sup> percentile. The District has a local tax effort of 1.2453. This ranks 168 out of 606 districts in the state, which is approximately the 72<sup>nd</sup> percentile of all districts. By comparison, the local peer average of 0.7500 would rank approximately 484<sup>th</sup> out of all 606 districts, or the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile.

## BTLSD Expenditures

Similar to revenue allocation, expenditures are paid from specific funds. For example, most salaries and wages are typically paid from the General Fund. The chart below shows the District's total expenditures by fund type. In FY 2024, the total revenue was slightly lower than total expenditures.

### FY 2024 Total Expenditure Distribution by Fund

Total: \$21.0M



Source: BTLSD

Note: The District has 23 total funds, 22 of which recorded expenditures in FY 2024. All other funds are comprised of a variety of sources including Food Service, IDEA, and Extracurricular Activities.

Note: Due to rounding, expenditure categories may not sum up to the total listed.

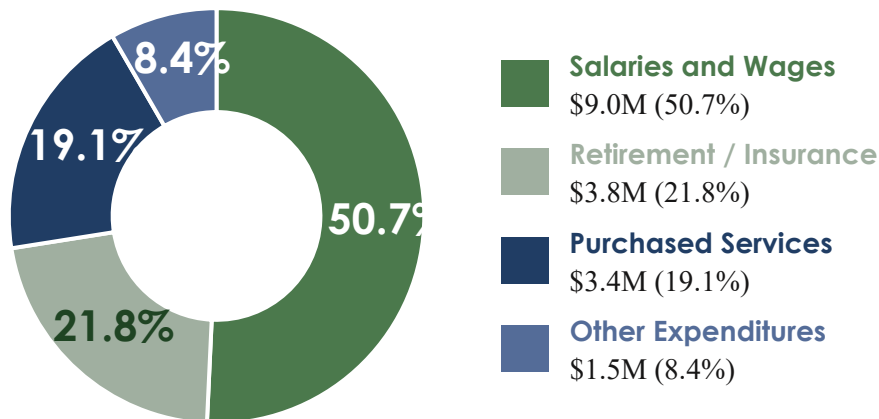
Note: Excludes Advances-Out

As seen in the visual above, the District's total General Fund expenditures were approximately \$17.7 million in FY 2024.<sup>20</sup> The largest source of expenditures was human resources which includes salaries, wages, and benefits, followed by purchased services. The chart that follows provides additional detail regarding District expenditures.

<sup>20</sup> This total excludes advances from the General Fund. For purposes of comparison, we excluded advances from the General Fund for both BTLSD and the peer groups throughout the Expenditures section.

## FY 2024 General Fund Expenditure Composition

**Total: \$17.7M**



Source: ODEW

Note: Other Expenditures may include Supplies and Materials, Capital Outlay, Principal on Loans, Interest & Fiscal Charges, Other Objects, Operating Transfers-Out, and All Other Financing Uses.

Note: Excludes Advances-Out

As demonstrated in the visual above, purchased services expenditures were approximately \$3.4 million in FY 2024, making up 19.1 percent of the General Fund expenses. Of that total, approximately 52 percent of the expenditures were attributed to special education, approximately 13 percent were attributed to Professional and Technical Services, and approximately 9 percent were attributed to Utilities.

## Expenditures per Pupil

Several of our comparisons are made on a per-pupil basis. This is done to normalize the variation in size between peer districts. The table below shows the District's spending on a per-pupil basis in several key areas. It also shows the differences between the types of funds from which expenditures are made. For example, the majority of salaries and wages are paid from the General Fund, whereas the majority of capital outlay expense are paid from non-General Fund dollars.

## FY 2024 Expenditure per Pupil by Object Code

<b>Object</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Other Funds</b>	<b>All Funds</b>
100: Salaries & Wages	\$6,744	\$910	\$7,654
200: Retirement & Insurance Benefits	\$2,894	\$174	\$3,068
400: Purchased Services	\$2,543	\$239	\$2,782
500: Supplies & Materials	\$263	\$403	\$666
600: Capital Outlay	\$230	\$567	\$797
800: Other Objects	\$364	\$8	\$372
900: Other Uses of Funds	\$254	\$237	\$491
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,292</b>	<b>\$2,5398</b>	<b>\$15,830</b>

Source: BTLSD & ODEW

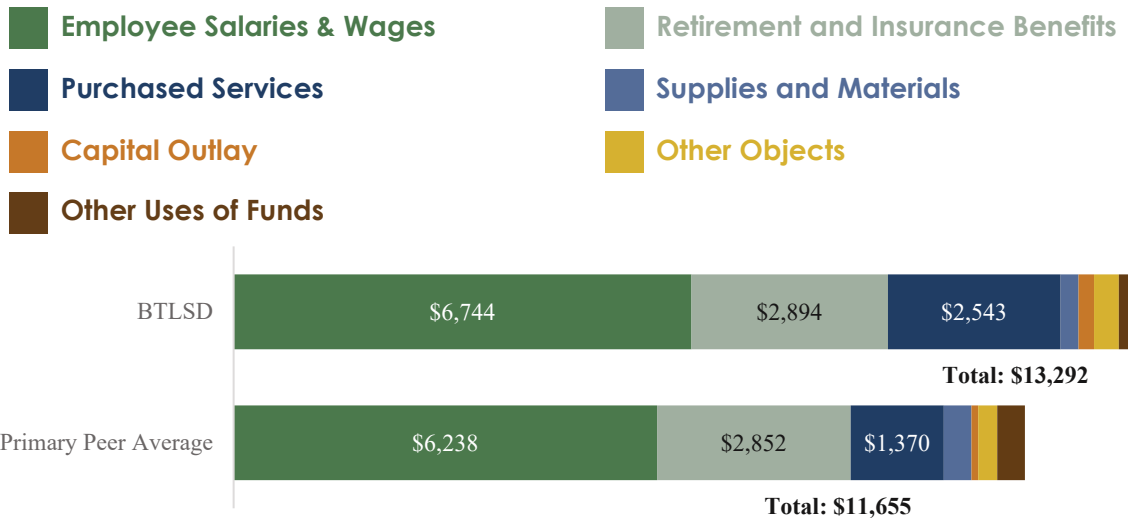
In FY 2024, BTLSD spent approximately \$13,292, which is 14.0 percent higher when compared to the primary peer average of \$11,655 per pupil. The District spent more than the primary peer average on employee salaries and wages, employee benefits, purchased services, capital outlay, and other objects. The District spent less than the primary peer average on supplies and materials and other uses of funds.<sup>21</sup> The chart that follows provides a comparison of expenditures per pupil for BTLSD and the primary peer average.

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<sup>21</sup> The category of “Other Objects” includes things such as interest on loans, memberships in professional organizations, County Board of Education contributions, and various types of non-healthcare insurance. “Other Uses of Funds” mainly consists of transfers, and contingencies within the various accounting dimensions.



## FY 2024 General Fund Expenditures Per Pupil



Source: BTLSD, Peers, and ODEW

Note: Excludes Advances

The District's higher employer salaries and wages are driven, in part, by employing more staff than the primary peers in select position categories (see [Recommendation 4](#) and [Recommendation 5](#)). The District's higher purchased services expenditures are impacted by the District's special education population, with approximately 52 percent of purchased services expenditures being allocated to special education purposes. In addition, Professional and Technical Services, and Utilities each comprised another share of purchased services expenditures at approximately 13 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

## Results of the Audit

Based on an initial analysis of the District's data as compared to its peer groups, the following scope areas were included for detailed review and further analyses: Financial Management, Human Resources, Facilities, and Transportation (see **Appendix A**). We identified eight recommendations within these scope areas which would result in reduced expenses or improve the District's operational management based on industry standards and peer averages.

Standard Recommendations		Savings
<b>R.1</b>	<b>Improve the Development of the Five-Year Forecast and Utilize this Planning Tool for Operational Decision Making</b>	N/A
<b>R.2</b>	<b>Develop and Enhance Formal Plans</b>	N/A
<b>R.3</b>	<b>Align the General Fund Subsidy for Extracurricular Activities with the Local Peer Level</b>	\$11,000
<b>R.4</b>	<b>Eliminate Administrative and Administrative Support Positions above the Peer Average</b>	\$234,000
	Eliminate 2.0 FTE Building Administrator Staff	\$149,000
	Eliminate 2.0 FTE Building Office Support Staff	\$85,000
<b>R.5</b>	<b>Eliminate Direct Student Support Positions above the Peer Average</b>	\$22,000
<b>R.6</b>	<b>Improve Building Utilization</b>	\$182,000
<b>R.7</b>	<b>Develop Formal Internal Policies and Procedures for T-Reporting</b>	N/A
<b>R.8</b>	<b>Monitor Transportation Operations</b>	N/A
<b>Total Cost Savings from Performance Audit Recommendations (General Fund)</b>		<b>\$449,000</b>

Note: These numbers reflect the average annual savings of each recommendation over the forecast period. Some recommendations may not be implemented in all years of the period and have lower average annual savings compared to what is presented in the recommendation itself. Where appropriate, the timing of implementation is discussed in the recommendation language in the report.

Our recommendations that are based on industry standards and peer comparisons are projected to save the District an average of approximately \$449,000 annually, if fully implemented. The financial impact of these recommendations on the May 2025 five-year forecast is shown in the table on the following page. This table reflects the actual annual financial impact along with the cumulative financial impact of the implementation of these recommendations on the five-year forecast and the associated reduction in the projected deficit. It should be noted that some of these recommendations may require contract negotiations and savings may not be realized immediately.

## Results of the Audit Recommendations (May 2025 Forecast)

	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Original Results of Operations	(\$213,957)	(\$1,633,487)	(\$3,048,553)	(\$3,765,928)
<b>In Year Recommendation Savings</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$599,990</b>	<b>\$603,328</b>	<b>\$606,795</b>
<b>Revised Results of Operations</b>	<b>(\$213,957)</b>	<b>(\$1,033,497)</b>	<b>(\$2,445,226)</b>	<b>(\$3,159,133)</b>
Revised Starting Cash Balance	\$1,782,921	\$1,568,964	\$535,467	(\$1,909,759)
<b>Revised Ending Cash Balance</b>	<b>\$1,568,964</b>	<b>\$535,467</b>	<b>(\$1,909,759)</b>	<b>(\$5,068,892)</b>
Estimated Encumbrances June 30	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Cumulative Balance of Replacement/ Renewal Levies	\$0	\$750,000	\$2,250,000	\$3,750,000
<b>Revised Ending Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$1,468,964</b>	<b>\$1,185,467</b>	<b>\$240,241</b>	<b>(\$1,418,892)</b>

Source: BTLSD & ODEW

The financial savings from the standard recommendations would reduce the projected fund balance deficit from approximately negative \$3.2 million to negative \$1.4 million in FY 2029. However, the District's current financial condition is such that implementation of the recommendations identified using industry standards and peer comparisons would not fully address the projected deficit. Because of this, BTLSD officials will need to consider additional cost savings measures or revenue enhancements.

Our audit identified areas where the District could further reduce expenditures by going beyond alignment with peer averages and industry standards. In some cases, these cost saving measures may include reducing services to state minimum levels. The additional cost saving measures are identified in the table below. The implementation of these measures could change the type or level of services offered by the District. It is important for BTLSD officials to carefully consider the needs of the students and families served by the District when implementing any of these additional cost saving measures. The potential cost savings associated with the additional recommendations are seen in the table below. These estimated savings reflect the average annual savings that could be achieved in FY 2027 through the remainder of the forecast period.

Additional Recommendations		Savings
<b>R.9</b>	<b>Eliminate the General Fund Subsidy for Extracurricular Activities</b>	<b>\$228,000</b>
<b>R.10</b>	<b>Implement a Base and Step Salary Freeze</b>	<b>\$656,000</b>
<b>R.11</b>	<b>Eliminate up to 23.0 Classroom Teacher Staff</b>	<b>\$1,446,000</b>

The amount of savings realized from staffing reductions identified in [Recommendation 11](#) would be dependent on a variety of factors including the number of positions that are eliminated along with the impact of the implementation of other cost saving measures identified in this report or by the District itself. Similarly, the cost savings achieved from any type of salary freeze would be impacted by staffing reductions made by the District. Our estimated savings of approximately \$1.4 million identified for this recommendation are based on reductions to state minimum teaching levels and represent the maximum savings possible. The District could identify a smaller amount of cost savings through strategic staffing reductions if necessary.

When considering implementation of recommendations that may take services below industry standards the District must consider the impact on overall operations. District officials may wish to consider implementing any of these additional recommendations, or some combination of them, based on the current financial condition of the District.

# Standard Recommendations

## Financial Management

Any organization needs to consider both short-term needs and long-term goals when developing policies and procedures related to financial management. This requires strategic planning in order to identify the best use of available resources. School districts, in particular, must have sound planning processes in place so that they can effectively and transparently provide services to their residents. When developing annual budgets and making spending decisions, the District's administration should consider the information presented in the five-year forecast. Additionally, large purchases and other expenditures should be planned for through long-term strategic planning that is also tied to the forecast and annual budget. These practices, when properly adhered to, can help a district avoid financial distress.

We reviewed BTLSD's financial management policies in order to determine if there were areas for improved management.

### Recommendation 1: Improve the Development of the Forecast and Utilize this Planning Tool for Operational Decision Making

Districts are required to submit five-year forecasts to ODEW twice annually, and these documents should provide a consistent overview of a district's financial health.<sup>22</sup> The forecast can be used as a tool, along with other fiscal monitoring practices, to ensure district officials proactively manage finances to avoid a state of fiscal distress.

A review of BTLSD's recent five-year forecasts showed significant variance from forecast to forecast, particularly in the projected annual results of operations. While some variance may be attributable to unforeseen events, the District's November 2024 forecast did not have robust assumptions or explanations to indicate why expected revenues or expenditures changed drastically over a six-month period. The District's May 2025 forecast included assumptions that were generally well-supported with the exception of line 3.030 (Purchased Services) and line 8.010 (Estimated Encumbrances June 30). The Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO), ODEW, and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) each provide guidance regarding forecasting and fiscal management. Key components in these guidelines include:

<sup>22</sup> House Bill 96 of the 136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (the biennial budget bill) contained changes to the school forecast, including shifting to a four-year forecast period from a five-year period.

- Maintain formal, written guidance on how to prepare the forecast;
- Include appropriate information regarding assumptions and provide detailed explanations regarding variances from forecast to forecast;
- Take corrective action to avoid spending down cash balances when deficit spending is projected in a forecast;
- Compare actual revenues and expenditures to forecasted amounts throughout the school year and adjust operations as needed; and,
- Create a written cash balance policy to avoid negative fund balances.

Implementing these best practices can help BTLSD address its current financial state in a transparent manner.

## Impact

By implementing forecasting best practices, the District will be better positioned to effectively, transparently, and proactively manage and sufficiently explain its revenues and expenditures. Such management of financials would assist the District in avoiding deficit spending and consequential negative ending fund balances, resulting in an improved financial condition.

## Background

School districts in Ohio are required to submit a five-year forecast to ODEW twice annually. These forecasts include three years of historic financial data along with five years of projections. In addition, the forecasts include notes to explain any significant changes or assumptions used to develop the reported projections. Due to the nature of projecting financial information, it is likely that actual results will deviate from the forecast in later years. However, the forecast is a management tool that districts can use to identify future financial challenges and proactively manage operations to address those issues.

The five-year forecast is meant to be a tool that assists with long range planning and to facilitate discussions between the administration, the local board of education, and the community regarding the fiscal health of a district and financial issues that it may be facing. In addition, the forecast identifies a district's ability to maintain personnel and programs. It is also used by ODEW and the Auditor of State to identify districts that may face financial distress. The District uses Golden Gate software to develop their forecasts.

Due to the District's decline in financial condition, we reviewed historical forecasts to identify if there were earlier indications of financial difficulty. In addition, the historical forecasts allowed us to understand what information had been presented and if BTLSD officials were making informed management decisions.

Indicators of financial difficulty would include projected deficit spending, where annual expenditures exceed annual revenues. Many school districts have a cash balance in the General Fund, which can allow a district to manage unforeseen expenditures in a given year. However, if

deficit spending is projected in a forecast, it could be an indicator of a structural imbalance in the district's operations that necessitates immediate corrective action by the Board of Education.

## Methodology

We interviewed District officials to understand their forecasting process. We also obtained and reviewed the District's November 2024 and May 2025 five-year forecasts and assumptions. We specifically analyzed lines of the forecast that projected significant increases or decreases and then compared those lines to the corresponding assumptions to assess whether these changes were thoroughly documented. We developed a historical review of the District's forecast trends to determine how prior years' projections may have impacted their current financial condition.

Once we gained an understanding of BTLSD's forecasting process, we compared the District's process to best practices from OASBO, ODEW, and the GFOA to identify opportunities for improved transparency and effectiveness of future forecasts.

## Analysis

According to *Five-Year Forecast – Guidance and Best Practices* (OASBO, 2025), the five-year forecast is arguably the most critical financial document at a school district, as it outlines the financial state of the District and helps guide the decision-making process. As a critical financial document and management tool, it is important that a district have formal, written policies in place that clearly outline roles, responsibilities, and expectations. While the Treasurer is responsible for the creation of the five-year forecast, the Board of Education has ultimate governing authority of the financial processes, with their roles and contributions consisting of the following: approve the forecast (ensure alignment with District's financial state), represent community promoting transparency, and guide financial decisions (use forecast to make informed decisions). As such, it is important for both parties to be actively involved in the creation and monitoring of the five-year forecast. In addition, OASBO indicates the Superintendent, District administrators, the community and other external partners should be involved in the forecasting process. All the stakeholders identified by OASBO have unique expertise and perspectives that can be applied to the forecasting process.

BTLSD does not have formal written policies for developing financial forecasts. However, the District reviews individual lines of the forecast on a monthly basis. As the District creates its forecasting policies, it should incorporate best practices from OASBO, ODEW, and the GFOA.

## Forecasting Assumptions

One important accompanying document to the forecast is the forecast assumptions. OASBO says that the forecast, without any accompanying documentation, only tells part of the story and is merely a "piece of the puzzle". For a forecast to be comprehensively and effectively understood, forecast assumptions are needed to provide context and support. Not only are the assumptions recommended, but they are required by OAC 3301-92-04. Using forecast assumptions, OASBO

recommends that Districts sufficiently explain significant variations in revenues and expenditures. Explaining significant fluctuations in revenues and expenditures helps to enhance transparency and helps readers understand the “why” behind the projected financials in the forecasts.

We noted significant changes from forecast to forecast regarding the same fiscal year’s results of operations. For example, the Spring 2023 forecast projected a \$2.5 million deficit in FY 2027, but the following Fall 2023 forecast projected a deficit of only \$0.9 million for the same year. These changes did not have corresponding assumptions that would reasonably explain the variance. While the District failed to provide robust assumptions regarding overall operations for the November 2024 forecast, the assumptions for the following forecast in May 2025 were more robust. However, although the overall assumptions were improved, the District could have taken steps to provide more robust details related to specific lines of expenditures. Examples of forecast lines in which fluctuations may be explained include the following:

- Property Tax Revenue (Line 1.010): This could increase due to reappraisal within the county or expected new developments within the district;
- Personal Services (Line 3.010): This could increase or decrease due to staffing changes or negotiated salary changes;
- Employee Retirement/Insurance Benefits (Line 3.020): This could change due to changes in insurance costs or staffing levels; and,
- Purchased Services (Line 3.030): This could change due to changes in operations, increased utility rates, or changes to contracts.

At BTLSD, line 3.030 (Purchased Services) shows significant variance in projected expenditures between forecasts. From May 2024 to November 2024, there was a 27 percent increase in projected purchased services expenditures. Purchased services may include, but are not limited to, legal and consulting fees, maintenance agreements, utilities, out of district tuition costs, and service contracts. At the District, expenditures related to special education fall under purchased services. OASBO identifies specific items needed to calculate this line. These include utility agreements, transportation/custodial service agreements, enrollment and tuition levels for students placed outside of the district, and special services for special education students. Further, OASBO states, “It is important for every treasurer to be in frequent contact and communication with special services, as some of these agreements can be extremely costly.” The assumptions for line 3.030 (Purchased Services) do not adequately explain the drastic increase. Key administrators indicated they were uncertain as to the reason for the projected increased in special education purchase services, and it was unclear how much it was discussed.

The District also submitted inadequate assumptions for line 8.010 (Estimated Encumbrances June 30). The Treasurer described the forecasting process for encumbrances as using actual values for the year, however, the forecast includes a fixed amount of \$100,000 annually.

For a forecast to be meaningful, it must be accompanied by robust and detailed assumptions. These assumptions are what tell the story, or explain, the reason behind significant increases or



decreases identified in a forecast. In addition to assumptions that effect the overall forecast, the District should include underlying details and assumptions related to specific expenditure lines in the assumption document to ensure transparency to the public.

### *Projected Deficit Spending*

According to OASBO, the forecast assumptions should also explain Line 6.010 (Excess of Revenues and Other Financing Sources Over (Under) Expenditures and Other Financing Uses), most notably if there is deficit spending. Deficit spending may be sustained for short periods due to a district's cash balance however, districts should not do so precipitously, or below an established threshold, without taking action. As OASBO notes, if deficit spending is significant in the current fiscal year or first few years of the forecast period, it may indicate that a district is operating outside of its means. In any scenario, OASBO indicates that a financial plan is likely necessary to reverse deficit spending and avoid drawing down the cash balance. Further, OASBO notes that early interventions are key to avoiding more disruptive actions in the future.

Beginning in the November 2021 forecast, the District projected deficit spending in all years of the forecast period, with this trend continuing for nearly all forecasts analyzed below. From the November 2022 forecast to the May 2023 forecast, the projected deficit for FY 2027 increased significantly before dropping again in the November 2023 forecast. By the May 2024 forecast, the District projected deficit spending of \$5.14 million in FY 2028, which was reduced by approximately \$1 million in each subsequent forecast. The table below shows the forecasted annual results of operations for each forecast beginning in May 2021.

### Historical Projected Results of Operations (Forecast Line 6.010)<sup>23</sup>

Forecast	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29
May '21	(\$0.35M)	\$0.39M	(\$0.10M)	(\$0.64M)	(\$1.22M)				
Nov '21		(\$0.04M)	(\$0.30M)	(\$0.76M)	(\$1.12M)	(\$1.17M)			
May '22		(\$0.19M)	(\$0.47M)	(\$0.79M)	(\$1.08M)	(\$1.31M)			
Nov '22			(\$0.44M)	(\$0.92M)	(\$1.21M)	(\$1.58M)	(\$1.96M)		
May '23			(\$0.26M)	(\$0.51M)	(\$0.93M)	(\$1.36M)	(\$2.56M)		
Nov '23				(\$0.20M)	(\$0.20M)	(\$0.56M)	(\$0.96M)	(\$1.36M)	
May '24				\$0.12M	(\$0.27M)	(\$0.80M)	(\$2.96M)	(\$5.14M)	
Nov '24					(\$2.00M)	(\$1.66M)	(\$2.77M)	(\$4.15M)	(\$4.93M)
May '25					(\$0.98M)	(\$0.21M)	(\$1.63M)	(\$3.05M)	(\$3.77M)

Source: ODEW

<sup>23</sup> The table only contains forecasted five-year results of operations and excludes actuals.

According to OASBO, if a forecast is demonstrating deficit spending, then corrective action should be explained in the assumptions. As noted, BTLSD does not fully explain significant increases or decrease in expenditures and revenues, and the forecasts do not address the projected deficits in Line 6.010 (Excess of Revenues and Other Financing Sources Over (Under) Expenditures and Other Financing Uses) and plans for solvency. During this time period, the District had the opportunity to take action and adjust expenditure patterns to avoid spending down the cash balance. However, despite the projected deficit spending in the majority of the forecasts presented over the past five fiscal years, the Board did not curtail spending, which contributed to the current financial state. The GFOA states that forecasting should play a key role in budgeting and financial decisions. Based on available information, it appears the District did not consider the projected deficits when making these types of financial decisions.

Looking at the table, the projected deficits from May 2021 continue to grow, both in frequency and severity until the May 2023 forecast, at which point final year projections significantly worsened and continued to do so through May 2025.

### *Forecast Monitoring*

OASBO also calls for districts to proactively manage revenues and expenditures to avoid deficit spending and ultimately, negative ending fund balances. The optimal method for proactive management is comparing monthly and year-to-date actuals to budgeted appropriations and the forecast. Regular comparison can reveal significant deviations and, if so, allows districts time to engage in corrective action. If there is a significant variance, districts should do the following:

- Identify the cause;
- Evaluate the impact;
- Adjust appropriations if necessary;
- Adjust estimated revenues if necessary;
- Communicate with stakeholders; and,
- Adopt a revised forecast.

Similarly, ODEW recommends that districts report and discuss expenditures compared to revenues on a monthly basis. District administrators shared that they conduct monthly reviews on forecasted funds versus actuals.

### *Cash Balance Policy*

Maintaining a minimum cash balance helps a district to avoid financial difficulties that may arise from unforeseen expenses or reduced revenues. The District does not have a cash balance policy in place, which helped to contribute to the current financial condition. Both OASBO and ODEW recommend minimum cash balances. OASBO recommends that a district maintain a cash balance equivalent to 90 days or 25 percent of operating expenditures while ODEW recommends a district maintain a balance of 30 to 60 days of operating expenditures. Although the OASBO and ODEW recommended cash balance amount differs, both ultimately recommend there be a

policy outlining the District's requirement to maintain a strategic cash balance. As the District continues to develop financial plans, it should create a formal, written cash balance policy to help prevent future continued fiscal distress and emergency.

## Conclusion

The District does not comply with all best practices related to forecasting as identified by OASBO, ODEW, or the GFOA. Further, the District has not effectively and proactively managed its finances to avoid deficit spending and negative ending fund balances in its forecasts. By implementing forecasting best practices outlined by OASBO, ODEW, and the GFOA, the District will have the ability to create forecasts that are reliable and provide an accurate representation of the District's true financial state, which is essential information for the governing body to have in order to make sound financial decisions regarding the operations of the District. In addition, the District's forecasting assumptions will be reasonably supported, which will add to the accuracy of the forecast.

## Recommendation 2: Develop and Enhance Formal Plans

BTLSD should develop formal written capital improvement, facilities preventative maintenance, fleet preventative maintenance, and bus replacement plans, while refining its existing strategic plan, in order to meet financial, programmatic, and operational needs.

### Impact

School districts should have multiple formal plans that identify future needs and guide each operational area of the district. It is important that the district has a long-term strategic plan tied to a formal budget and capital plan, as well as a facilities preventative maintenance plan, fleet preventative maintenance plan, and bus replacement plan. This allows the district to ensure the needs of all operational areas can be met in an efficient and effective manner.

### Methodology

We interviewed District officials and confirmed that the District has a strategic, but does not have formal capital improvement, facilities preventative maintenance, fleet preventative maintenance, and bus replacement plans. We then compared the District's current planning practices to industry standards and best practices to identify opportunities for improvement.

### Analysis

A formal strategic plan provides a framework for decision-making as BTLSD officials work to achieve long-term goals. However, without also having a comprehensive capital plan that identifies needs over a multi-year period, the decisions made related to the strategic plan may be inefficient or ineffective. Further, the District does not have formal plans for facilities preventative maintenance, fleet preventative maintenance, or bus replacement. The lack of a bus replacement plan, for example, could result in financial difficulty in the future if the District is forced to make a large purchase that is unplanned.

Each operational area within the District has specific planning needs which should be considered and included in planning documents. Specific criteria related to each type of plan is addressed below.

### *Strategic Plan*

The GFOA provides guidance to governmental entities in the development and maintenance of effective long-term planning. *Strategic Planning* (GFOA, 2023) defines strategic planning as the “act of articulating where or what an organization wants to be in the future and includes the design of a vision and identification of goals and objectives. It relates to long-term financial planning, developing financial policies, capital improvement planning, and budgeting, but it is inherently different. Each process fulfills a different combination of planning purposes.”

Key steps in the strategic planning process include:

- Initiating the strategic planning process;
- Preparing a mission statement;
- Assessing and identifying environmental factors and critical issues;
- Agreeing upon and developing strategies for a small number of broad goals;
- Creating an action plan, including measurable objectives and performance measures;
- Obtaining approval of the plan; and,
- Implementing, monitoring, and reassessing the plan.

BTLSD has a strategic plan that outlines the mission, vision, beliefs, and core values of the District. The plan has three goal areas that were informed by discussions with key stakeholders. However, the plan does not meet all of the strategic planning best practices established by the GFOA. Areas where the District does not meet the criteria include analyze internal and external environments; identify the most critical problems facing the organization; develop tactics to implement strategies; execute and monitor tactics and strategies; and continually evaluate and reassess the vision and strategies. Since the District meets all other sub-steps of the criteria and has an existing formal strategic plan, the District should work to refine its existing plan and account for the unmet sub-steps.

## Capital Plan

According to *Multi-Year Capital Planning* (GFOA, 2022), public entities should “prepare and adopt comprehensive, fiscally sustainable, and multi-year capital plans to ensure effective management of capital assets.” The GFOA further states that “a prudent multi-year capital plan identifies and prioritizes expected needs based on a strategic plan, established project scope and cost, details estimated amounts of funding from various sources, and projects future operating and maintenance costs.”

## Facilities Preventative Maintenance Plan

According to the *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003), “a comprehensive facility maintenance program is a school district’s foremost tool for protecting its investment in school facilities and is the cornerstone of any effective maintenance initiative.” A good maintenance program is built on a foundation of preventative maintenance. An effective maintenance program begins with an audit of buildings, grounds, and equipment.

After facilities data has been assembled, structural items and pieces of equipment can be selected for preventative maintenance. Once the items that should receive preventative maintenance are identified, planners must decide on the frequency and type of inspections. Manufacturers’ manuals are a good place to start when developing this schedule; they usually provide guidelines about the frequency of preventative service, as well as a complete list of items that must be maintained. Finally, this information must be formatted so that preventative maintenance tasks

can be scheduled easily. Ideally, scheduling should be handled by a computerized maintenance management program; however, tasks can be efficiently managed using a manual system as well.

### *Fleet Preventative Maintenance Plan*

According to the *Public Works Management Practices Manual* (American Public Works Association, 2014), a preventative maintenance program should be developed for all equipment and includes preventative maintenance, recording performance, and monitoring the preventative maintenance program. A fleet preventative maintenance program should call for the scheduled maintenance and the program should be evaluated to ensure its efficacy.

### *Bus Replacement Plan*

In *School Bus Replacement Considerations* (NASDPTS, 2002), the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation recommends that the timely replacement of school buses should be a planned process. While available funding is a key consideration for the replacement of school buses, there are two other major factors which should be considered:

- First, the need to keep up with federal standards for the safety, fuel efficiency, or exhaust emissions requirements; and,
- Second, the operating and maintenance expenses on a school bus, or group of school buses.

While the rule of thumb for bus replacement is between 12 and 15 years of age, reviewing maintenance costs for each bus may identify buses that should be replaced sooner or kept in service longer. With accurate and thorough records on the operating and maintenance costs of all school buses in a fleet, a District will have the data necessary to understand when to make replacement decisions. The District currently has 10 assigned buses and 7 spare buses, which were all purchased between 2006 and 2024.

## **Conclusion**

Formal plans help an organization address financial, programmatic, and operational needs. By developing these plans and tying a formal capital plan to the overall strategic plan, the District will be able to efficiently and effectively allocate its limited resources. In particular, by understanding and mapping out both routine expenditures and large purchases, the District will improve its ability to avoid unexpected or unnecessary expenses.

## Recommendation 3: Reduce the General Fund Subsidy Percent of Total Expenditures for Extracurricular Activities to the Local Peer Level

### Impact

Reducing expenditures and increasing revenue to bring the General Fund subsidy percent of total expenditures for extracurricular activities in line with the local peer average would save BTLSD an average of approximately \$11,000 in each year of implementation.

### Background

Extracurricular activities represent student activities falling outside the scope of a typical school curriculum. These activities occur under the guidance or supervision of qualified adults and are designed to provide opportunities for pupils to participate in such experiences on an individual basis, in small groups, or in large groups – at school events, public events, or a combination of these, for purposes of motivation, enjoyment, and skill improvement. In practice, participation usually is not required, and credit usually is not given. When participation is required, or credit given, the activity is generally considered to be a curricular course.

Extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to, academic-oriented activities (drama, marching band), sport-oriented activities (individual and team sports), and co-curricular activities (student government, yearbook).

### Methodology

The District's FY 2024 General Fund subsidy as a percent of total extracurricular activities expenditures was compared to the local peer average.

### Analysis

In FY 2024, the District spent approximately \$526,000 on student extracurricular activities, which included the salaries and benefits of directors, coaches, and advisors; supplies and materials; transportation services; awards and prizes; and other miscellaneous expenditures. The District transferred \$304,000 from the General Fund to subsidize these activities. Additionally, approximately \$302,000 in revenue was generated through ticket sales for admissions and other sources. The District does charge pay-to-participate fees for extracurricular activities, as do all of the local peer districts. The amount of funding used to subsidize extracurricular activities has increased by approximately 57.6 percent since FY 2022.

The District's General Fund subsidy as a percent of extracurricular expenditures is 52.7 percent compared to the local peer average of 48.8 percent. Aligning the District's General Fund subsidy as a percent of extracurricular expenditures with the local peer average would save

approximately \$11,000 annually. While it is common for Ohio school districts to subsidize extracurricular activities from the General Fund, doing so at a rate that exceeds the local peer average may represent an undue burden on the District's General Fund.

The District could consider the following steps to reduce expenditures or raise additional revenue to extracurricular activities:

- Increase pay-to-participate fees;
- Increase admissions and sales;
- Increase booster club funding;
- Reduce the supplemental salary schedules, and/or,
- Eliminate programs.

## **Conclusion**

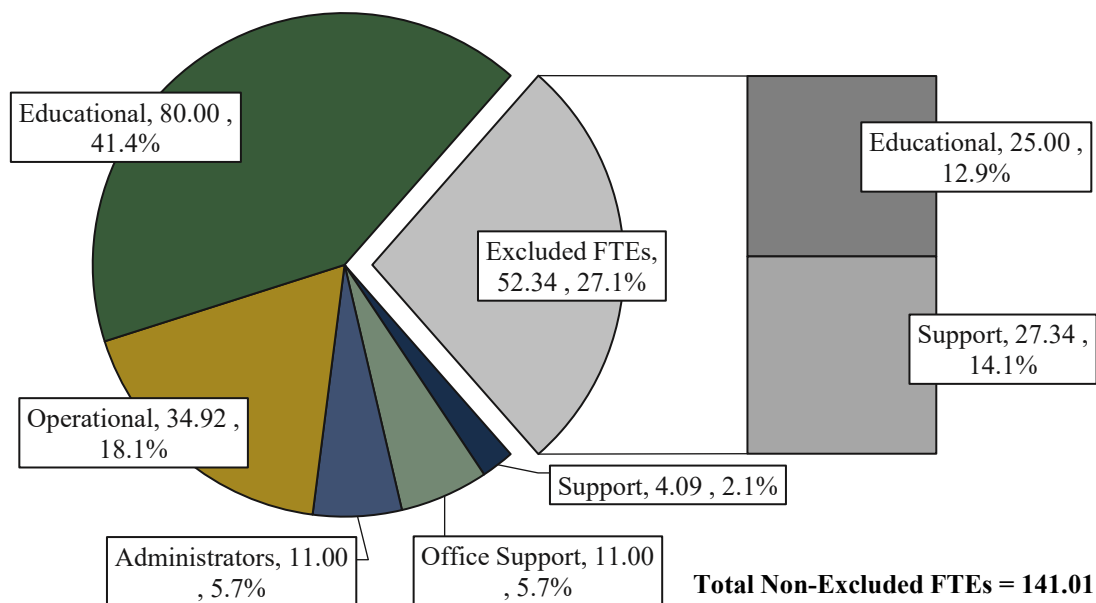
The District's General Fund subsidy of extracurricular activities as a percent of total expenditures is above the local peer average. To close the gap between revenue and expenditures, and in turn alleviate the amount of General Fund support needed, the District should reduce the General Fund subsidy as a percent of total expenditures for extracurricular activities to the local peer average. Doing so would save the District approximately \$11,000 in each year of implementation.



# Human Resources

Human Resources (HR) expenditures are significant to both the operational and financial conditions within school districts. OPT reviewed BTLSD's staffing levels and compared them to peer districts.

Personnel costs represent over 72.5 percent of the District's spending. Due to this, we conduct several analyses relating to the expense associated with maintaining the existing staffing levels. Certain staff were excluded from our analyses due to various legal and contractual requirements that would make reductions difficult. In the chart below there are approximately 52.34 excluded staff FTEs, which includes individuals associated with Special Education, Title I, and preschool programming.



Source: BTLSD

## Recommendation 4: Eliminate Administrative and Administrative Support Positions above the Peer Average

BTLSD should consider eliminating administrative and administrative support positions above the primary peer average.

### Impact

By reducing administrative and administrative support positions to be in line with the primary peer average, the District could save an average of approximately \$234,000 annually beginning in FY 2027.<sup>24</sup>

### Background

The District employs individuals in administrative and administrative support positions who are responsible for activities related to the daily operations of the District. While these positions provide support to students and educators at BTLSD, the District may be able to reduce some positions based on peer comparisons.

### Methodology/Analysis

Staffing levels for the District were identified and compared to the primary peer averages on a per-1,000 student basis and a per-building basis.<sup>25</sup> Areas where BTLSD could reduce administrative and administrative support positions include:

- 2.0 FTE Building Administrators; and,
- 2.0 FTE Building Office Support Staff.

#### *Building Administrators*

BTLSD employs 6.0 FTE building administrators, including 4.0 FTE principals and 2.0 FTE assistant principals. This is 2.02 FTEs above the primary peer average on a per-1,000 student basis and 0.44 FTEs above the primary peer average on a per-building basis. Eliminating 2.0 FTE building administrator positions could save an average of approximately \$149,000 annually.

#### *Building Office Support Staff*

BTLSD employs 7.0 FTE building office support staff, which is 1.92 FTEs above the peer average on a per-1,000 student basis and 0.15 FTEs below the peer average on a per-building

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<sup>24</sup> Calculated savings are based on the salary and benefits of the lowest paid administrators and lowest tenured building office support staff.

<sup>25</sup> A Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) was used to identify staffing levels, based on ODEW reporting guidelines.

basis. Eliminating 2.0 FTE building office support staff positions could save an average of approximately \$85,000 annually.

## **Conclusion**

The District should consider eliminating 4.0 FTE administrative and administrative support positions. Eliminating these positions could save an average of approximately \$234,000 annually beginning in FY 2027 and bring staffing to a level consistent with the primary peer average.

## Recommendation 5: Eliminate Direct Student Support Positions above the Peer Average

BTLSD should consider eliminating support positions above the primary peer average.

### Impact

By reducing support positions to be in line with the primary peer average, the District could save an average of approximately \$22,000 annually.<sup>26</sup>

### Background

Support positions perform functions that assist students in an educational setting directly in some manner. Based on peer comparisons, BTLSD could eliminate staffing positions in one category.

### Methodology/Analysis

Staffing levels for the District were identified and compared to primary peer averages on a per-1,000 student basis.

#### *Nursing Staff*

BTLSD employs 2.0 FTE nursing staff, which is 1.44 FTEs above the primary peer average. Eliminating 1.0 FTE nursing staff position could save an average of approximately \$22,000 annually.

### Conclusion

The District should consider eliminating 1.0 FTE from its support positions. Eliminating this position could save an average of approximately \$22,000 annually beginning in FY 2027 and bring staffing to a level consistent with the primary peer average.

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<sup>26</sup> Calculated savings are based on the salary and benefits of the lowest tenured employee in each category.

# Facilities

The changing landscape of education requires periodic reviews of facilities operations to ensure that a district is using limited resources wisely. We reviewed BTLSD's building utilization in comparison to best practices and industry standards to determine if there were any areas for improvement.

## Recommendation 6: Improve Building Utilization

BTLSD has experienced declining enrollment in recent years and is not projecting enrollment to increase. The District should take this opportunity to consolidate buildings and improve overall building utilization. Based on our analysis, BTLSD could close one academic building.

### Impact

Improving building utilization through the consolidation of academic buildings would result in average annual savings of approximately \$182,000. Included in these savings are reductions to administrative and administrative support staff of 2.0 FTEs which coincides with one less building to maintain.

### Background

BTLSD has four academic buildings: Bethel-Tate High School (grades 9-12) built in 2002, Bethel-Tate Middle School (grades 6-8) built in 1966, Hill Intermediate School (grades 3-5) built in 2001, and Bick Primary School (grades Pre-K-2) built in 1966.

### Methodology

We interviewed District officials to obtain an understanding of facility-related projects, such as building renovations, and how each building is used, such as grade levels, headcounts, and floor plans. We also toured each academic building to understand how each room is used. We then calculated the functional and maximum capacity of each building and compared the District's building utilization to best practices and industry benchmarks, while considering enrollment trends and projections.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Spaces within each building dedicated to special education were excluded from our analysis.

## Analysis

Benchmark criteria from DeJong & Associates (*Defining Capacity*, 1999) was used to calculate the functional and maximum capacity of each of the District's four academic buildings.<sup>28</sup> The functional capacity is based on how the District is using each building and classroom during FY 2025 whereas the maximum capacity is based on all classrooms being used for instruction instead of other uses. In both scenarios, after calculating the total capacity for each building, based on the number of classrooms and a varying number of students per class based on grade level, we determined the utilization rate for FY 2025 by dividing the headcount per building by capacity.

Using this information, we compared the District's current building configuration and utilization to both the functional and maximum capacity on a building by building basis. School districts should not plan for 100 percent utilization within academic buildings. *Defining Capacity* notes when utilization exceeds 90 percent, it becomes increasingly difficult to schedule students and spaces. As seen in the table below, the District's overall utilization rate using functional capacity is 63.8 percent.

### Building Capacity & Utilization – FY 2025

Building	Grades	Head Count	FUNCTIONAL			MAXIMUM		
			Class-Rooms	Capacity	Util. Percent	Class-Rooms	Capacity	Util. Percent
Bethel-Tate High	9-12	374	24	510	73.3%	27	574	65.2%
Bethel-Tate Middle	6-8	296	28	595	49.7%	28	595	49.7%
Hill Intermediate Elementary	3-5	305	21	475	64.2%	24	600	50.8%
Bick Primary Elementary	PreK-2	337	19	477	70.6%	25	577	58.4%
<b>Districtwide</b>		<b>1,312</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>2,057</b>	<b>63.8%</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>2,346</b>	<b>55.8%</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

Using functional capacity, we analyzed various reconfiguration scenarios but were unable to identify an option that would allow the District to consolidate its buildings while maintaining traditional grade bands and remaining within 90 percent utilization for each building. For example, in one scenario Bethel-Tate Middle School would house grades 4 through 8, which is a nonstandard grouping of students. As a result, we used maximum capacity to determine an option for reconfiguration. As seen in the table above, the District's overall utilization rate using maximum capacity is 55.8 percent.

Maximum capacity allows a district to utilize every space in a building that is suitable for general education. In addition to shifting grades between buildings, this approach would likely result in some teachers needing to move from room to room rather than having a dedicated space, such as

<sup>28</sup> The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Child Care Manual was used to calculate capacity for the District's preschool classrooms.

elementary art and music teachers. The table below shows the impact of shifting all students from Bick Primary School to Hill Intermediate School, while also reconfiguring Bethel-Tate Middle School to account for the addition of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to that space.

### Maximum Capacity Building Configuration Scenario

Building	Grades	Head Count	Capacity	Util. Percent
Bethel-Tate High	9-12	372	574	64.8%
Bethel-Tate Middle	5-8	401	595	67.4%
Hill Intermediate Elementary	PreK-4	537	600	89.5%
Bick Primary Elementary	CLOSED	0	0	-
<b>Districtwide</b>		1,312	1,769	74.1%

Source: BTLSD and ODE

BTLSD projects enrollment to decline by an additional 10.3 percent by FY 2030, after already decreasing by 18 percent since FY 2018. The District is maintaining academic facilities in excess of what is needed for the current and projected student population. In doing so, the District is incurring additional facilities costs to continue operating the underutilized space.

With the closure of the primary school, the District's overall utilization would improve from 55.8 percent to 74.1 percent. Shifting to a building plan that utilizes maximum capacity may change District operations, and BTLSD officials should consider the implications of this shift prior to making a final decision.

At a minimum, our analysis determined that it is possible for BTLSD to close one building and remain below the benchmark utilization standard for building capacity. Closing one building would result in average annual savings of approximately \$182,000.<sup>29</sup> The cost savings would include a staffing reduction of 2.0 FTEs along with reduced utilities expenditures and supplies and materials.

## Conclusion

BTLSD is operating with excess building capacity and its enrollment, which has declined in recent years, is projected to continue to decline. The District should consider consolidating its four academic buildings through the closure of one primary school, thus relocating students to the intermediate school, reconfiguring the middle school, and increasing overall utilization across the District.

<sup>29</sup> There may potentially be one-time costs associated with the building closures such as moving furniture, packing and unpacking, etc.

# Transportation

Transportation of students is a critical function for school districts. Ensuring that busing services are provided in a safe and efficient manner is important for both the well-being of students and the fiscal health of the school district. We examined BTLSD's T-1<sup>30</sup> reporting policies and procedures in comparison to ODEW guidance to determine whether there were any areas for improvement.

## Recommendation 7: Develop Formal Internal Policies and Procedures for T-Reporting

To ensure proper funding, as well as compliance with ORC, OAC, and ODEW guidelines, BTLSD should develop formal internal policies and procedures for T-Reporting.

### Impact

Accurate reporting on school district transportation is not only required but is necessary to ensure proper funding. Providing correct ridership and mileage on the T-1 Report allows for an accurate calculation of state pupil transportation payments and funding.

### Background

In accordance with ORC § 3317.0212 and OAC § 3301-83-01, school districts in Ohio are required to submit annual T-Reports to ODEW. Districts are required to complete the T-1 Report by recording the average number of pupils transported to school as well as the average daily miles traveled for pupil transportation, excluding non-routine and extracurricular miles, during the first full week of October.

According to ODEW, "Students shall only be counted once for AM or PM ridership per day regardless of how many vehicles they ride. You will complete a morning count and an afternoon count and use the greater of the average transported. Students who are not present on the bus may not be included in the counts."

### Methodology

We obtained and reviewed the District's October 2024 count sheets and compared them to the T-1 Report. We met with BTLSD officials to discuss the District's transportation practices for conducting count week and reporting the results on the T-1 Report.

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<sup>30</sup> T-1 reports are submitted annually to certify to ODEW the actual number of students transported, and the total daily miles traveled. The data is used for calculations of the pupil transportation payment pursuant to ORC § 3317.0212.



## Analysis

During the October 2024 count week, the District's bus drivers completed count sheets. The Operations Director then compiled the results and verified the accuracy of the data. Once the information was approved by the District's administration, it was submitted to ODEW.

Our review and comparison of the October count sheets, and the T-1 Report, submitted by the District, found that the District made several errors. The District underreported riders by 3 riders, or 0.5 percent less, and underreported miles by 54 miles, or 10.1 percent less. The District also did not conduct count week when school was in session all five days. According to ODEW, if a district is in session for less than five days during count week, then a different week should be selected.

In addition, the District did not record all AM and PM riders and miles for all buses on the count sheets. Further, while the District noted that their T-1 Reporting methodology included reporting the maximum ridership and mileage, the maximum ridership and mileage were not always the data found on the T-1 Report. Lastly, the District inaccurately reported special education riders as regular riders.

Since BTLSD did not correctly conduct count week and did not accurately record ridership and mileage for all buses, the District is at risk of not fully complying with ODEW guidance and ORC and OAC statutes. Further, inaccurate reporting increases the possibility of receiving an inaccurate amount of state transportation funding. In FY 2025, BTLSD was funded on a per-rider basis.

## Conclusion

BTLSD has reported inaccurate data on the October 2024 T-1 Report. Through proper adherence to ODEW guidance, training, and utilization of resources, these errors can be mitigated. To ensure that the District is receiving accurate state pupil transportation payments, as well as remaining in compliance with ORC, OAC, and ODEW guidelines, BTLSD should develop formal policies and procedures for T-1 Reporting.

## Recommendation 8: Monitor Transportation Operations

Districts are required to provide busing to students in kindergarten through eighth grade that live more than two miles from their school of attendance. In addition, districts may choose to provide busing to students in high school and those students living closer to the school building. Prior to FY 2026, BTLSD provided busing to all students in the District. However, during the course of the audit the Board approved changes to reduce transportation service levels. It is unclear how the District considered the impact these changes would have on its operations, revenues, or expenditures. BTLSD should monitor the impact of these changes as they are implemented in FY 2026 and evaluate the full financial impact of any future changes to transportation service delivery.

### Impact

Districts receive funding from ODEW for transportation services. This funding is based on either a per-rider or per-mile basis and could vary from year to year. When making major changes to transportation, a district may see reductions in expenditures due to the elimination of bus routes. However, the district could also see reductions in revenues from ODEW due to reductions in total mileage or ridership associated with those same route eliminations.

### Background

Due to financial difficulties, BTLSD decided to significantly reduce transportation for FY 2026. As part of the Board approved recovery plan, BTLSD eliminated busing for high school students and students in third through eighth grade living within two miles of their school. Transportation for the primary school remains unchanged. This decision was made with minimal to no financial analysis. While the district forecasted cost savings associated with transportation changes generally, figures presented to the board were not specifically for routing changes nor did it include any impacts to transportation funding.

### Methodology

We interviewed BTLSD officials regarding transportation operations and assessed the impact of the District's route reductions on future funding. To determine state and local historical transportation funding and to forecast future funding, we analyzed School Foundation Payment Report (SFPR) and USAS data.

### Analysis

According to the GFOA (*Measuring the Full Cost of Government Service, 2021*), governments should calculate the full cost of its various internal services for managerial reporting purposes. This includes distinguishing avoidable costs from unavoidable costs, taking into account the cost of transition in service, flexibility of the agreement, offsetting revenues, communicating to

stakeholders, and monitoring expense and performance. According to the Operations Director, BTLSD did not consider and did not know how to calculate impacts to revenue when deciding to reduce transportation services. Further, the financial recovery plan submitted to ODEW in which the decision to reduce transportation services was approved did not include detailed accounting of cost of savings specifically associated with the reduction, as many of the transportation-related actions in the plan were grouped together for the District's forecasted savings.

It is unclear to what extent the change in transportation services was communicated to the Board and how much opportunity the public was given to speak on the issue. The agenda for the Board meeting in which the decision was approved (February 18, 2025) has no mention of transportation. Instead, it was included as, "B. Approve Ohio Department of Education & Workforce Written Plan." Additionally, the meeting minutes for that meeting have no mention of transportation. The public was informed of the transportation changes after they were approved in the plan. Making the decision to cut transportation services and informing the public after it was approved is not communicating with stakeholders early and does not allow for their interests to be communicated nor recognized.

Transportation funding in Ohio is based on a series of factors. Districts receive funding on a per-mile or per-rider basis, whichever is higher. Because of this, it is important for districts to consider the impact a reduction in service levels may have on ridership and funding. In FY 2025, BTLSD was funded on a per-rider basis, meaning it received a certain amount of funding for each student it transported. By moving to state minimum transportation practices for the intermediate, middle, and high schools, the District lowered its ridership and would see reductions in funding from the state.<sup>31</sup>

Based on our calculations, if BTLSD had operated at the reduced service levels in FY 2025, the lower ridership would have resulted in a loss of approximately \$226,000 from the state based on per-rider funding. However, because the District would receive guaranteed funding, the actual reduction in revenue would be approximately \$51,000. While the District's plan to reduce transportation services may have resulted in cost savings, these savings are dependent on guaranteed funding from the state. If the transportation guarantee is removed or changed, the District ultimately may realize reductions in revenue that are greater than the reductions in expenditures from the elimination of bus routes.

## Conclusion

BTLSD did not consider the full financial impact of eliminating busing for high school students, as well as middle school and intermediates school students living within two miles of their school. Since the District did not evaluate this service delivery, a decision was made that would

<sup>31</sup> Due to the Temporary Transitional Aid Guarantee, districts are guaranteed to receive, at minimum, the equivalent of FY 2021 funding levels. However, this guarantee may be removed by the General Assembly at any time.

negatively impact its students and reduce future transportation revenues. BTLSD should monitor the impact of transportation changes on its revenues and expenditures and make operational adjustments if appropriate. Additionally, when making future decisions regarding service delivery, the District should evaluate the full financial impact before implementing changes.

## Additional Recommendations

As discussed in detail throughout the preceding sections of this report, BTLSD could gain efficiencies by aligning its operations with the peer averages and industry standards and implementing the previously identified baseline recommendations. However, the recommendations identified previously in this report, even if fully implemented, would not resolve the projected deficit in the most recent five-year forecast.

The following recommendations are additional actions that District leadership may need to consider when addressing the current fiscal situation. Implementing the following additional actions could have a significant impact on the District's operations and instructional activities. However, without additional revenue, the District will likely need to consider the implementation of at least one of, or a combination of, the following recommendations in order to remain fiscally solvent.

### Eliminate the General Fund Subsidy for Extracurricular Activities

In order to reduce expenditures, the District could reduce the General Fund subsidy of extracurricular activities (see [Recommendation 3](#)). To achieve additional savings, the District could consider fully eliminating the subsidy, which would save an additional \$228,000 per year, based on the FY 2024 subsidy level.

While supporting extracurricular activities with the General Fund is a common practice in Ohio, it is not required by law. To fund extracurricular activities without a General Fund subsidy, the District may consider the following options:

- Increase pay-to-participate fees;
- Increase admissions and sales;
- Increase booster club funding;
- Reduce the supplemental salary schedule; and/or,
- Eliminate programs.

### Implement a Base and Salary Step Freeze

We compared the District's certificated and classified salaries to the local peer averages. The results of this analysis indicated that the District is generally below or in line with the local peer salaries for all positions analyzed. In order to achieve additional savings, the District could consider implementing a base and step salary freeze, which would result in significant annual savings.

The District's May 2025 five-year forecast assumes a 2 percent base increase for teaching staff in FY 2025 and a 2 percent base increase for classified staff in FY 2026. Step increases are projected beyond FY 2026. Due to the expiration of the District's CBAs, the earliest a salary freeze could be implemented is FY 2027. If the District froze salaries at the FY 2026 forecast levels for FY 2027 through FY 2029, it could realize average annual savings of approximately \$656,000. These estimated savings reflect the average annual savings that can be achieved beginning in FY 2027 through the remainder of the forecast period.<sup>32</sup>

## Eliminate Teacher Positions

If the District successfully implements all of the standard recommendations along with a combination of the previously identified additional recommendations, it can resolve the projected deficit. Some of the previously identified recommendations are subject to negotiations and may be difficult for the District to achieve. If the financial condition of the District does not improve, it may need to consider eliminating teaching positions.

State law requires that for every 25 students, districts employ at least one classroom teacher, for a student-to-teacher ratio of 25 to 1. In FY 2025, the District had a student-to-teacher ratio of 14.48 to 1.<sup>33</sup> While the District exceeds the primary peer average for classroom teachers by 5.10 FTEs, they have planned reductions in force of 8.0 FTEs. To further reduce expenditures, the District could eliminate up to 23.0 FTE additional teaching positions and remain within state minimum standards. This level of reduction would result in approximately \$1.4 million in average annual savings but would result in an approximately 42 percent reduction in teaching staff and substantively impact District operations.

While a reduction to state minimum standards is likely not necessary to address the projected deficit, BTLSD should choose to strategically implement teacher reductions to maximize savings while minimizing the impact on District operations. Ultimately, the total cost savings realized from teacher reductions would be dependent on a variety of factors including the number of positions eliminated, the tenure of the individuals, and the impact of other potential cost savings measures.

If the District decides to pursue state minimum teacher reductions, it should work with ODEW to ensure compliance with the state minimum requirement in OAC 3301-35-05 before reducing classroom teaching levels.

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<sup>32</sup> The savings identified in this recommendation do not take into account recommended staffing reductions. If the District were to reduce staffing, actual savings would be reduced.

<sup>33</sup> The student number used in this ratio represents a regular student population – a formula driven number that reflects students enrolled and educated within the District, excluding categories two through six of special education students. Classroom teachers include K-12 general education teachers as well as art, music, physical education, English language instructional program, and gifted and talented teachers. Preschool teachers, special education teachers, and career-technical teachers are excluded from the ratio (*Source, ODEW*).

## Client Response Letter

Audit standards and AOS policy allow clients to provide a written response to an audit. The letter on the following page is the District's official statement in regards to this performance audit. Throughout the audit process, staff met with District officials to ensure substantial agreement on the factual information presented in the report. When the District disagreed with information contained in the report, and provided supporting documentation, revisions were made to the audit report.



# Bethel-Tate Local School District

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**Melissa Kircher**  
Superintendent

**Karen R Royer**  
Treasurer/CFO

October 13, 2025

Mr. Keith Faber  
Auditor of State  
65 E State St.  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Auditor Faber,

On behalf of the Bethel-Tate Local School District Board of Education and Administration, we would like to thank you and the Performance Audit Team for the time and effort in preparing the audit report for our district.

As a result of the audit, the administration team will continue to monitor the information and recommendations as we prepare for the upcoming forecast.

The Board of Education will be discussing levy strategies in the upcoming months to be prepared as our current Emergency Levy will expire in Fiscal Year 2027.

To clarify the district administration team meets regularly, typically once per month to go over and speak regarding each department. The Special Ed Director goes over all areas of Special Education including but not limited to enrollment and transportation for special needs students as well as the anticipated cost of students. To further clarify the budgeting process, each Principal has a dollar amount that they can spend, those funds are divided up as to what the Principal needs are for that particular building. The same process goes for the Director of Operations, Food Service, Superintendent and Treasurer. Once the budget is in from each Administrator those are compared to the forecast. Both areas are compared multiple times per year.

The district in December of 2024 began working with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce to reduce our expenditures. During this process the district began aligning their staffing and services to state minimums full recognizing that some departments would have a greater value than others but nevertheless all departments were reduced for the 2025-2026 school year.

We have already started implementing many of the recommendations prior to the audit, staffing reductions through attrition, reduction in force, transportation services and increasing our pay to play amount. We have also been working on more robust assumptions to our forecast and will communicate with our community and we will post those on our webpage. We do speak to our deficit spending and show a monthly report at each board meeting on where the district stands on general fund revenue and expense to our board and community.

Respectfully,

Melissa Kircher, Superintendent  
Karen R. Royer, Treasurer





# Appendix A: Purpose, Methodology, Scope, and Objectives of the Audit

## Performance Audit Purpose and Overview

Performance audits provide objective analysis to assist management and those charged with governance and oversight 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.

Generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS) require that a performance audit be planned and performed so as to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for findings and conclusions based on audit objectives. Objectives are what the audit is intended to accomplish and can be thought of as questions about the program that the auditors seek to answer based on evidence obtained and assessed against criteria.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with GAGAS. 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.

## Audit Scope and Objectives

In order to provide the District with appropriate, data driven, recommendations, the following questions were assessed within each of the agreed upon scope areas:

### Summary of Objectives and Conclusions

Objective	Recommendation
<b>Financial Management</b>	
Are the District's forecasting practices consistent with leading practices and is the five-year forecast reasonable and supported?	<b>R.1</b>
Are the District's planning practices consistent with leading practices?	<b>R.2</b>
Is the District's General Fund subsidy of extracurricular activities appropriate in comparison to local peers and the District's financial condition?	<b>R.3, Additional Recommendation</b>
<b>Human Resources</b>	

Efficient • Effective • Transparent

Are the District's staffing levels appropriate in comparison to primary peers, state minimum standards, demand for services, and the District's financial condition?	<b>R.4, R.5, Additional Recommendation</b>
Are the District's salaries and wages appropriate in comparison to local peers and the District's financial condition?	<b>Additional Recommendation</b>
Are the District's insurance costs appropriate in comparison to other governmental entities within the local market and the District's financial condition?	<b>No Recommendation:</b> The District's insurance costs are appropriate in comparison to other school districts in the local market.
<b>Facilities</b>	
Are the District's facilities staffing levels appropriate in comparison to leading practices, industry standards, and the District's financial condition?	<b>No Recommendation:</b> The District's facilities staffing levels are appropriate in comparison to leading practices and industry standards.
Is the District's building utilization appropriate in comparison to leading practices, industry standards, and the District's financial condition?	<b>R.6</b>
<b>Transportation</b>	
Is the District's T-1 Report accurate, and did it result in the appropriate level of State transportation funding?	<b>R.7, R.8</b>

Although assessment of internal controls was not specifically an objective of this performance audit, internal controls were considered and evaluated when applicable to scope areas and objectives. The following internal control components and underlying principles were relevant to our audit objectives:<sup>34</sup>

- Control environment
  - We considered the District's control of its EMIS and payroll systems.
- Risk Assessment
  - We considered the District's activities to assess fraud risks.
- Information and Communication
  - We considered the District's use of quality information in relation to transportation data.
- Control Activities
  - We considered the District's compliance with applicable laws and contracts.

Internal control deficiencies were not identified during the course of this audit.

<sup>34</sup> We relied upon standards for internal controls obtained from *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (2014), the U.S. Government Accountability Office, report GAO-14-704G.

## Audit Methodology

To complete this performance audit, auditors gathered data, conducted interviews with numerous individuals associated with the areas of District’s operations included in the audit scope, and reviewed and assessed available information. Assessments were performed using criteria from a number of sources, including:

- Peer Districts;
- Industry Standards;
- Leading Practices;
- Statutes; and
- Policies and Procedures.

In consultation with the District, two sets of peer groups were selected for comparisons contained in this report. A “Primary Peers” set was selected for general, District-wide comparisons. This peer set was selected from a pool of demographically similar districts with relatively lower per-pupil spending and similar academic performance. A “Local Peers” set was selected for a comparison of the general fund subsidy of extracurricular activities, compensation, benefits, and collective bargaining agreements, where applicable. This peer set was selected specifically to provide context for local labor market conditions. The table below shows the Ohio school districts included in these peer groups.

### Peer Group Districts

#### Primary Peers

- Wheelersburg Local School District (Scioto County)
- Beaver Local School District (Columbiana County)
- Tuslaw Local School District (Stark County)
- Norwayne Local School District (Wayne County)
- South Range Local School District (Mahoning County)
- Brookville Local School District (Montgomery County)

#### Local Peers

- Batavia Local School District (Clermont County)
- Williamsburg Local School District (Clermont County)
- New Richmond Exempted Village School District (Clermont County)
- West Clermont Local School District (Clermont County)
- Western Brown Local School District (Brown County)
- Felicity-Franklin Local School District (Clermont County)

Where reasonable and appropriate, peer districts were used for comparison. However, industry standards or leading practices were used in some operational areas for primary comparison. District policies and procedures as well as pertinent laws and regulations contained in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) and the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) were also assessed. Each recommendation in this report describes the specific methodology and criteria used to reach our conclusions.

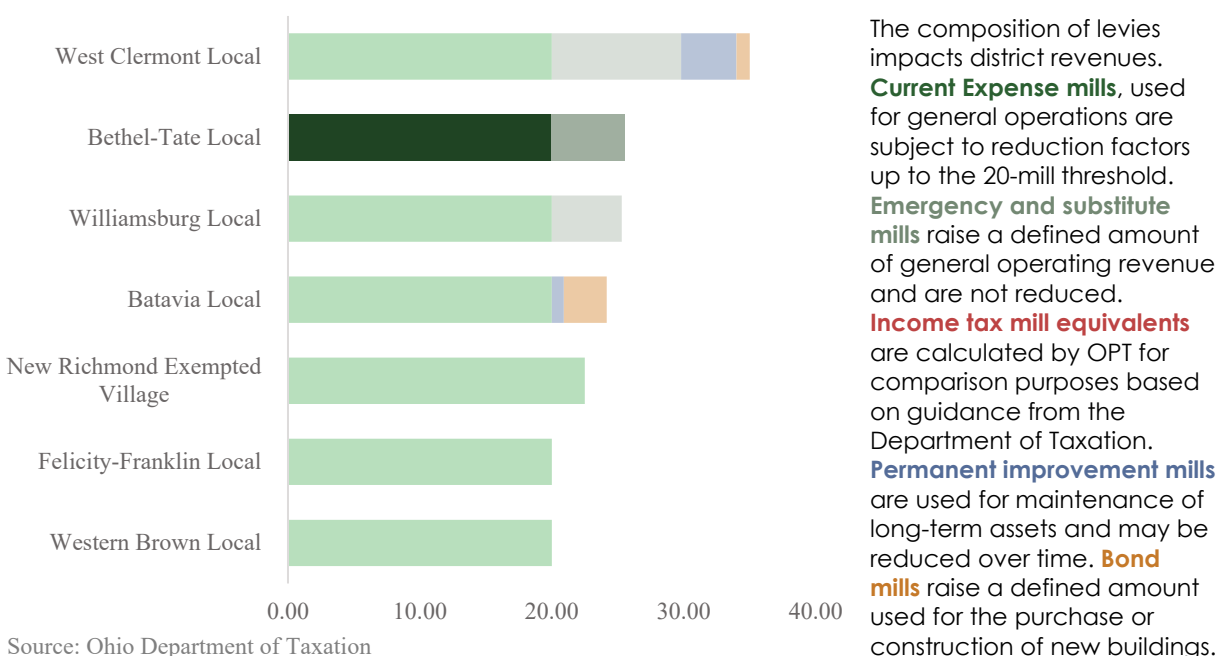
## Appendix B: Financial Systems

In addition to the financial analyses previously presented throughout the report, we conducted an additional review of the District's finances compared to peers. This information is provided to give a deeper understanding of the current financial condition of the District.

### Local Revenue Comparisons

Since the total millage rate can be rolled back as a result of reduction factors, we compared the total effective millage for BTLSD to that of its local peers. This comparison is found in the chart below. The green portion of the bar represents the current expense millage rate, where five of the local peers are at the 20-mill floor. Because the District is at the 20-mill floor, it will see continued growth from current expense mills as property value increases.

#### 2024 Millage and Millage Equivalents | Local Peers



The District's effective tax rate of 25.54 mills is the second highest in comparison to the local peer districts. In Tax Year 2023, one mill of property tax generated approximately \$205 in revenue per pupil, falling below the local peer average by approximately \$2, or 1.1 percent.

The following tables show the income tax revenue for primary peer districts and local peer districts. Only one primary peer and none of the local peers collect revenue from an income tax.

## 2024 Income Tax Revenue and Millage Equivalents | Primary Peers

District	Tax Rate	Income Tax Revenue	Estimated Millage Equivalents
Norwayne Local	0.75%	\$1,707,202.38	6.17
Beaver Local	0.00%	-	0.00
Bethel-Tate Local	0.00%	-	0.00
Brookville Local	0.00%	-	0.00
South Range Local	0.00%	-	0.00
Tuslaw Local	0.00%	-	0.00
Wheelersburg Local	0.00%	-	0.00

Source: Ohio Department of Taxation

The following tables show the local tax effort (LTE) comparison between BTLSD and the primary peer districts and the local peer districts. The District's LTE is above the statewide average and is among the highest of the primary and local peer groups. A higher LTE results in a lower rank and a higher percentile. For example, a district with a rank of 1 would have the highest LTE and highest percentile in the State.

## 2024 Local Tax Effort Comparison | Primary Peers

District	LTE	Rank	Percentile
Norwayne Local	1.2584	161	73.4%
Bethel-Tate Local	1.2453	168	72.3%
South Range Local	0.8992	359	40.8%
Beaver Local	0.8727	378	37.6%
Brookville Local	0.8037	437	27.9%
Tuslaw Local	0.7045	512	15.5%
Wheelersburg Local	0.4913	589	2.8%
<b>Primary Peer Average</b>	<b>0.8383</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>32.7%</b>

Source: ODEW

## 2024 Local Tax Effort Comparison | Local Peers

District	LTE	Rank	Percentile
Bethel-Tate Local	1.2453	168	72.3%
Williamsburg Local	0.9559	320	47.2%
West Clermont Local	0.9209	347	42.7%
New Richmond Exempted Village	0.7545	478	21.1%
Felicity-Franklin Local	0.7255	497	18.0%
Western Brown Local	0.6546	540	10.9%
Batavia Local	0.4886	590	2.6%
<b>Local Peer Average</b>	<b>0.7500</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>20.1%</b>

Source: ODEW

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The following tables show the comparison of the District's forecasting practices to industry standards and best practices. The District's forecasting processes do not meet all components recommended by the GFOA and ODEW.

### ODEW Best Practices

Doesn't Meet	Proactive management of revenues/expenditures
Doesn't Meet	Board policy to achieve and maintain 60 days of expenditures in cash balance
Meets	Report and discuss expenditures vs revenues monthly
Doesn't Meet	Participate in a program that promotes best budgeting practices for school districts

## GFOA Forecasting Best Practices

☒ Meets
 ☐ Partially Meets
 ☐ Does Not Meet

Define Assumptions	Gather Information	Preliminary/ Exploratory Analysis	Select Methods	Implement Methods	Use Forecast
Forecast has a timeline	District uses statistical data in forecasting	Understands how revenues/ expenditures vary with economic activity	Determine the quantitative and/or qualitative forecasting methods that will be used	Put into practice described forecasting methods	Forecaster has credibility
District is transparent as to whether the forecast is conservative in estimating revenues/ expenditures	Uses accumulated judgment and expertise of individuals inside and perhaps also outside the organization	Understands effects of demographic trends			Forecast is presented with a clear message
District is aware of political/legal issues that could affect forecast	Become familiar with other longer-term planning efforts of the organization that impact financial decisions and the fiscal environment.	Outliers are identified and explained			Forecast plays a key role in budgeting and financial decisions
District knows major revenue/expense categories		Relationships between different variables are identified and explained			

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# Appendix C: Human Resources

## Staffing Comparison Tables

The following tables illustrate the District’s employee FTEs compared to calculated benchmark FTEs.

The enrollment benchmark FTEs represents the FTEs the District would need to align with the *primary peer average FTEs per-1,000 student ratio*. Normalizing data on a per-1,000 student basis, as seen in the calculation below, allows for a more precise comparison between districts when student counts differ. This primary comparison is shown in each of the following staffing comparison tables.

$$\text{Enrollment Benchmark FTEs} = \text{Peer Avg. FTE per 1,000 Students} * \left( \frac{\text{Client Enrollment}}{1,000} \right)$$

The building benchmark FTEs represents the FTEs the District would need to align with the *primary peer average FTEs per building ratio*. Normalizing data on a per-building basis, as seen in the calculation below, allows for a more precise comparison between districts when building counts differ. This secondary comparison is shown in select staffing comparison tables.

$$\text{Building Benchmark FTEs} = \text{Peer Avg. FTE per Building} * \text{District Building Count}$$

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark by 0.45 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District did not make any Central Office Administrator staffing reductions and we did not have a recommendation for this position due to the District operating efficiently compared to the benchmark.

### Central Office Administrator Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Enrollment Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Supervisor/Manager	0.00	0.92	(0.92)
Coordinator	0.00	0.59	(0.59)
Director	1.00	0.49	0.51
Other Official/Administrative	2.00	0.55	1.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>0.45</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark on a per-1,000 student basis by 2.02 FTEs and above the peer benchmark on a per-building basis by 0.44 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District did not make any Building Administrator staffing reductions. Due to the District exceeding the benchmark on a per-1,000 student basis we recommended a staffing reduction of 2.0 FTEs (see **Recommendation 4**).

### Building Administrator Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Enrollment Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Assistant Principal	2.00	0.76	1.24
Principal	4.00	3.04	0.96
Dean of Students	0.00	0.18	(0.18)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>2.02</b>

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Building Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Assistant Principal	2.00	1.11	0.89
Principal	4.00	4.22	(0.22)
Dean of Students	0.00	0.22	(0.22)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>5.56</b>	<b>0.44</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark by 8.10 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District reduced 8.0 FTEs which brings them in line with the peer benchmark.

### Teaching Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
General Education	66.00	59.32	6.68
Gifted and Talented	2.00	0.18	1.82
Career-Technical Programs	0.00	0.39	(0.39)
<b>Total</b>	<b>68.00</b>	<b>59.90</b>	<b>8.10</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark for K-8 art education teaching staff by 0.71 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District reduced 1.0 FTE K-8 art teaching staff and 0.5 FTE K-8 music teaching staff which brings them in line with the peer benchmark.

### K-8 Teaching Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Art Education K-8	2.00	1.29	0.71
Music Education K-8	2.00	1.96	0.04
Physical Education K-8	2.00	1.97	0.03

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

### Non-Teaching Educational Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Curriculum Specialist	0.00	0.33	(0.33)
Counseling	3.00	2.88	0.12
Remedial Specialist	1.00	2.22	(1.22)
Tutor/Small Group Instructor	0.00	2.63	(2.63)
Full-time Substitute Teacher	0.00	0.05	(0.05)
Teacher Mentor/Evaluator	0.00	0.13	(0.13)

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

## Professional Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Psychologist	0.00	0.53	(0.53)
Other Professional	0.00	0.18	(0.18)

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

## Technical Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Computer Programming	0.00	0.42	(0.42)
Other Technical	0.00	0.24	(0.24)
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>(0.66)</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark by 0.41 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District reduced 0.58 FTEs which brings them below the peer benchmark.

## Central Office Support Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Administrative Assistant	0.00	0.14	(0.14)
Accounting	2.00	0.00	2.00
Bookkeeping	0.00	1.29	(1.29)
Clerical	1.00	1.72	(0.72)
Records Managing	1.00	0.18	0.82
Other Office/Clerical	0.00	0.26	(0.26)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>0.41</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark on a per-1,000 student basis by 1.92 FTEs and below the peer benchmark on a per-building basis by 0.15 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District did not make any Building Office Support Staff reductions. Due to the District exceeding the benchmark on a per-1,000 student basis we recommended a staffing reduction of 2.0 FTEs (see **Recommendation 4**).

### Building Office Support Staff Comparison

Position	BTLSD FTEs	Enrollment Benchmark FTEs	FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark
Clerical	5.00	4.61	0.39
Records Managing	2.00	0.00	2.00
Other Office/Clerical	0.00	0.47	(0.47)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>5.08</b>	<b>1.92</b>

Position	BTLSD FTEs	Building Benchmark FTEs	FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark
Clerical	5.00	6.57	(1.57)
Records Managing	2.00	0.00	2.00
Other Office/Clerical	0.00	0.58	(0.58)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>7.15</b>	<b>(0.15)</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

### Library Staff Comparison

Position	BTLSD FTEs	Benchmark FTEs	FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark
Librarian/Media	0.00	0.29	(0.29)
Library Aide	2.00	3.18	(1.18)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>(1.47)</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark by 1.44 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District did not make any Nursing Staff reductions. Due to the District exceeding the benchmark, we recommended a staffing reduction of 1.0 FTE (see **Recommendation 5**).

### Nursing Staff Comparison

Position	BTLSD FTEs	Benchmark FTEs	FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark
Registered Nursing	1.00	0.56	0.44
Practical Nursing	1.00	0.00	1.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>1.44</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

## Classroom Support Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Instructional Paraprofessional	1.09	2.08	(0.99)
Teaching Aide	0.00	6.17	(6.17)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.09</b>	<b>8.26</b>	<b>(7.17)</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

As seen in the following table, BTLSD is above the peer benchmark by 0.41 FTEs. During the course of the audit, the District reduced 2.0 FTEs which brings them below the peer benchmark.

## Extra-Curricular/Intra-Curricular Staff Comparison

<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Advisor	1.00	0.46	0.54
Other Extra/Intra-Curricular Activities	0.00	0.13	(0.13)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.41</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

## Other Support Staff Comparison

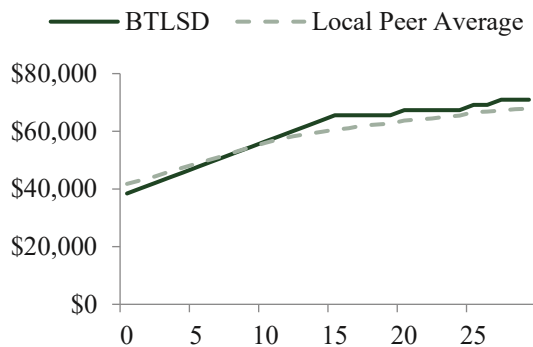
<b>Position</b>	<b>BTLSD FTEs</b>	<b>Benchmark FTEs</b>	<b>FTEs Above/(Below) Benchmark</b>
Monitoring	0.00	0.36	(0.36)
Other Service Worker/Laborer	0.00	0.36	(0.36)
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>(0.72)</b>

Source: BTLSD and ODEW

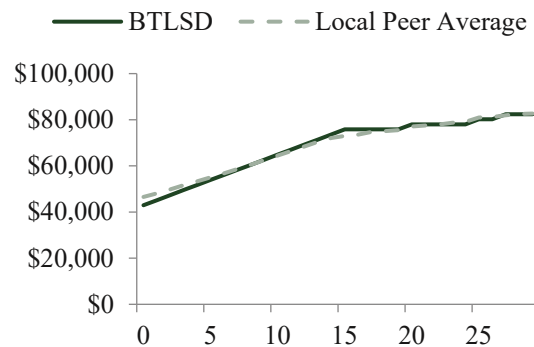
We also looked at annual salaries for all certificated employees and the hourly wage rates for various classified employee positions over the course of a 30-year career, as seen in the following charts.

## Certificated Career Compensation

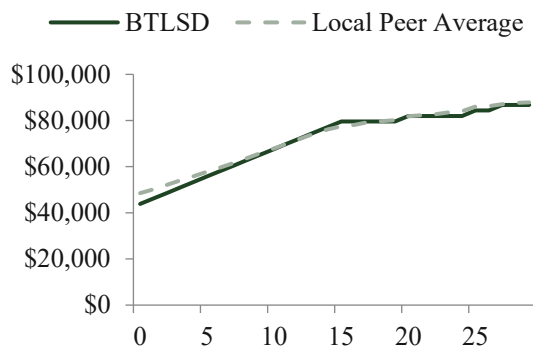
### Bachelors



### Master's



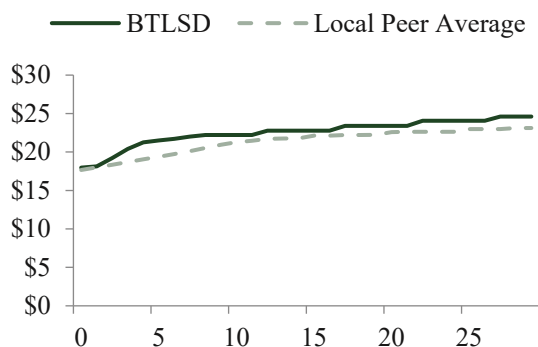
### MA+15



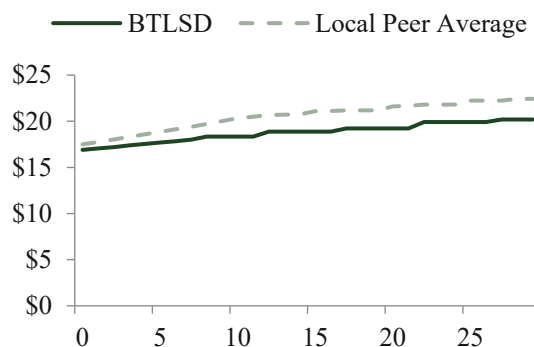
Source: BTLSD, Local Peers, and SERB

## Classified Career Compensation

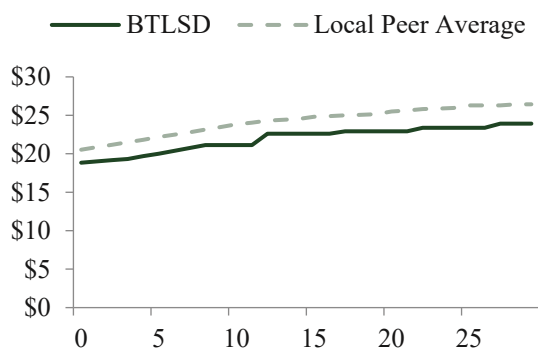
### Secretary



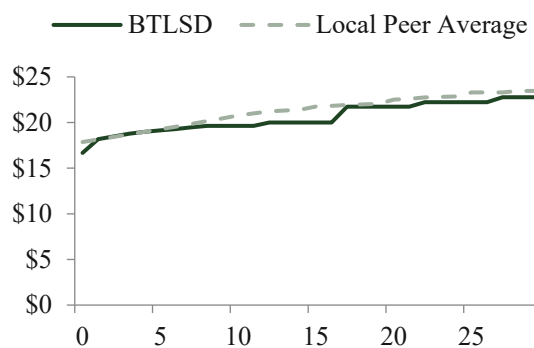
### Head Cook



### Bus Driver



### Custodian



Source: BTLSD, Local Peers, and SERB



# OHIO AUDITOR OF STATE KEITH FABER



**BETHEL-TATE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**CLERMONT COUNTY**

## **AUDITOR OF STATE OF OHIO CERTIFICATION**

This is a true and correct copy of the report, which is required to be filed pursuant to Section 117.26, Revised Code, and which is filed in the Office of the Ohio Auditor of State in Columbus, Ohio.



**Certified for Release 11/6/2025**

65 East State Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Phone: 614-466-4514 or 800-282-0370

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