



**New Jersey State Legislature
Office of Legislative Services
Office of the State Auditor**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
RENAISSANCE SCHOOLS
July 1, 2015 to October 2, 2018**

We determined the department complied with applicable provisions of the Urban Hope Act; however, department oversight was inadequate to identify noncompliance by renaissance schools with statutory and regulatory requirements. We found noncompliance with laws and regulations by the renaissance schools with regard to criminal history background checks, employee certifications, student enrollment, and website posting of board meeting information.

AUDIT HIGHLIGHTS

The department's current oversight process provides limited assurances that renaissance school projects are meeting their goals and are complying with state laws and regulations. The department currently relies on self-reported, unverified information in the renaissance school projects' annual reports to guide its periodic review and has not conducted site visits since 2016.

We reviewed renaissance school projects for compliance with selected statutory and regulatory requirements and identified noncompliance in the following areas.

- The department did not ensure renaissance schools complied with statutory requirements for criminal history background checks. We found that the renaissance schools failed to ensure the proper background check process was completed for 244 of 798 individuals prior to employment. Of these, 5 were disqualified and should not have been employed, and 29 did not complete the process.
- We reviewed Department of Labor and Workforce Development wage information, Department of Education records, and renaissance school staff rosters from the 2017-18 school year to determine if employees held the appropriate New Jersey certification for their job title. We identified 342 employees in positions requiring certification and found 89 did not hold the appropriate New Jersey certificate for their position.
- Effective January 2018, the administrative code requires the board of trustees of a renaissance school project to post a copy of all meeting notices and meeting minutes on the renaissance school project's website. In July 2018, we reviewed the renaissance school projects' websites for this information and found that two of three did not post their upcoming meetings, and two of three did not post copies of meeting minutes.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

Although the department respectfully disagrees with our recommendation regarding periodic review, it concurs with our other findings and recommendations.

For the complete audit report or to print this Executive Summary, click [here](#).