



urban Indicator

Fall 2009

Urban School Board Survey: Characteristics, Structure, and Benefits Second Survey and Report

The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its member districts in the fall of 2008 to determine the characteristics of school boards and school board members in the nation's major urban school districts. This is the second such survey that the organization has conducted in the last several years. The first was in 2005.

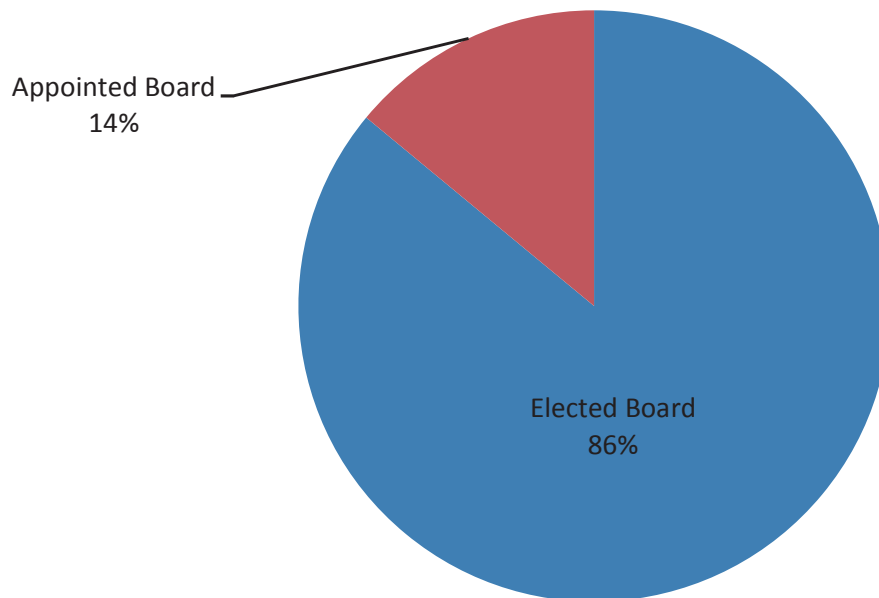
Survey forms were prepared via the web survey tool, *Zoomerang*, and a link to the survey was emailed in the fall of 2008 to school board representatives in each member district. To increase response rates, the survey link was emailed again in January 2009. Respondents were asked to provide information on a range of topics, including board governance; board structure and organization; and the demographics of school board members. The survey also included questions about board member compensation, benefits, elections, and activities.

Surveys were received from 42 of the 67 member districts, for a response rate of 64 percent. All data presented in this report are in summary form, and all responses are based on an "n" of 42 unless otherwise noted.

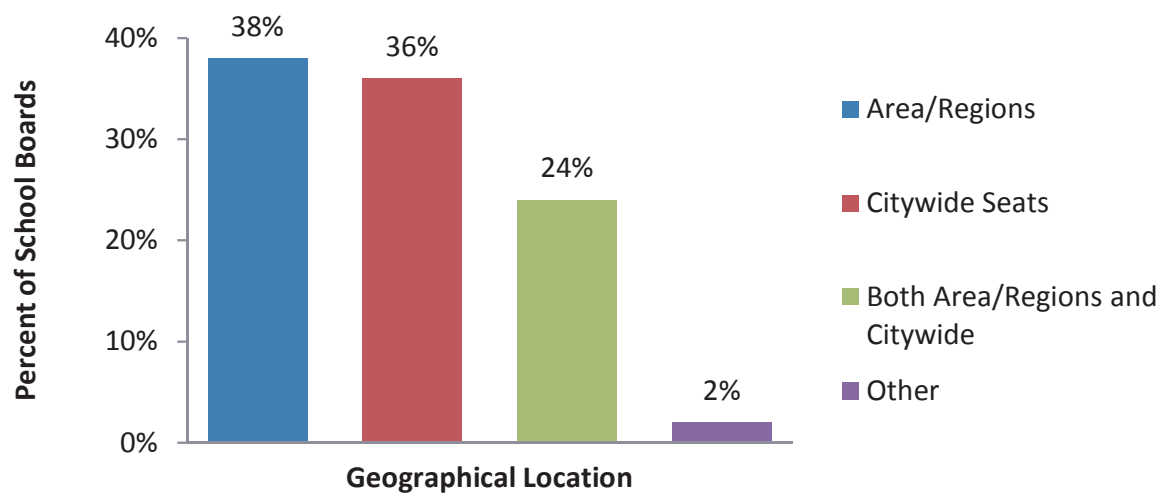
SCHOOL BOARD STRUCTURE

- Some 86 percent of the school boards in the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) are elected, 14 percent are appointed (Figure 1).
- The six appointed CGCS school boards include two boards appointed by the mayor, one by the city council, two by both the mayor and governor, and one board appointed by a combination of the mayor, city council and the governor.
- About 38 percent of CGCS school boards have seats elected/appointed by geographic regions, 36 percent are comprised of citywide seats, 24 percent are made up of both geographical regions and citywide seats, and 2 percent hold other types of seats (Figure 2).
- The average number of school board members on a CGCS board is 8. Approximately 81 percent of CGCS boards have four year terms, 10 percent have three year terms, 5 percent have five year terms, 2 percent have two year terms, and another 2 percent have no set term limit due to their type of appointment.

**Figure 1. CGCS School Board Structure
2008**



**Figure 2. CGCS School Board Members by Geographical Location
2008**



DEMOGRAPHICS

- The demographic composition of the CGCS school boards shifted slightly between 2005 and 2008. The percentage of white board members dropped from 57 percent in 2005 to 52 percent in 2008. The percentage of African Americans increased from 30 to 33 percent. The percentage of Latinos remained constant at about 9; while Asians increased from 3 to 4 percent of CGCS school board members (Figure 3).
- A majority of CGCS school board members are women, increasing from 52 to 55 percent between 2005 and 2008. The percentage of White females decreased from 31 to 28 percent, while African American females increased from 15 to 18 percent. Latino females remained constant at about 4 percent and Asian females increased from 1 to 2 percent (Figure 3).
- The percentage of CGCS male school board members decreased slightly from approximately 48 to 46 percent. The percentage of White male school board members decreased in 2008 from 26 to 24 percent. The percentage of African American males remained constant at 15 percent. Both Latino males and Asian males remained constant at 5 and 2 percent, respectively of CGCS school board members (Figure 3).
- The average age of the CGCS school boards members shifted slightly between 2005 and 2008. The school board members between the ages of 50 and 59 decreased from 34 to 33 percent; the percent of board members between the ages of 40 and 49 decreased from 34 to 30 percent. The percentage of board members age 60 and older increased from 21 to 25 percent; and the percent between the ages of 30 and 39 increased from 7 to 11 percent. Members between the ages of 20 and 29 decreased from 2 to 1 percent.
- The percentage of CGCS school board members holding a Bachelor's degree decreased from 44 to 37 percent from 2005 to 2008; however the percentage holding a Master's degree increased from 28 to 31 percent, while 9 percent had a Ph.D. or Ed.D in 2008 in contrast with 10 percent in 2005. The percentage of CGCS board members holding an Associate's degree or completing two years of college increased from 4 to 5 percent, and the percent that hold other degrees increased from 8 to 11 percent.
- Approximately 22 percent of CGCS school board members work in private industry, 18 percent are retired, 14 percent are educators, 14 percent work in the nonprofit sector, 7 percent are attorneys, 10 percent are government employees, 1 percent are physicians, and 8 percent are in other professions (Figure 4).

Figure 3. CGCS School Board Members by Race/Ethnicity and Gender
n=318

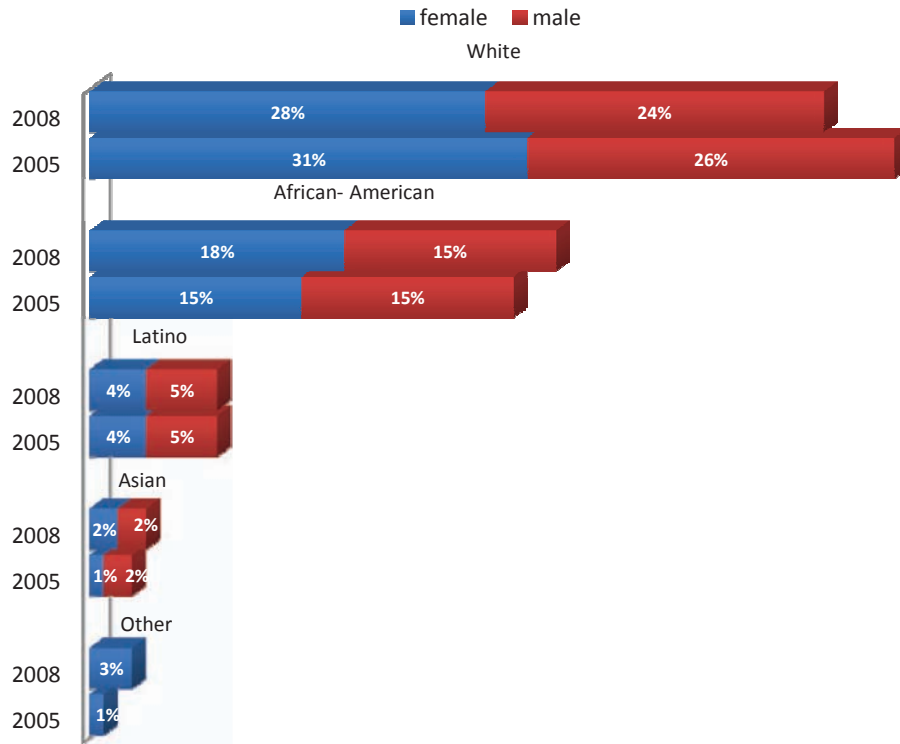
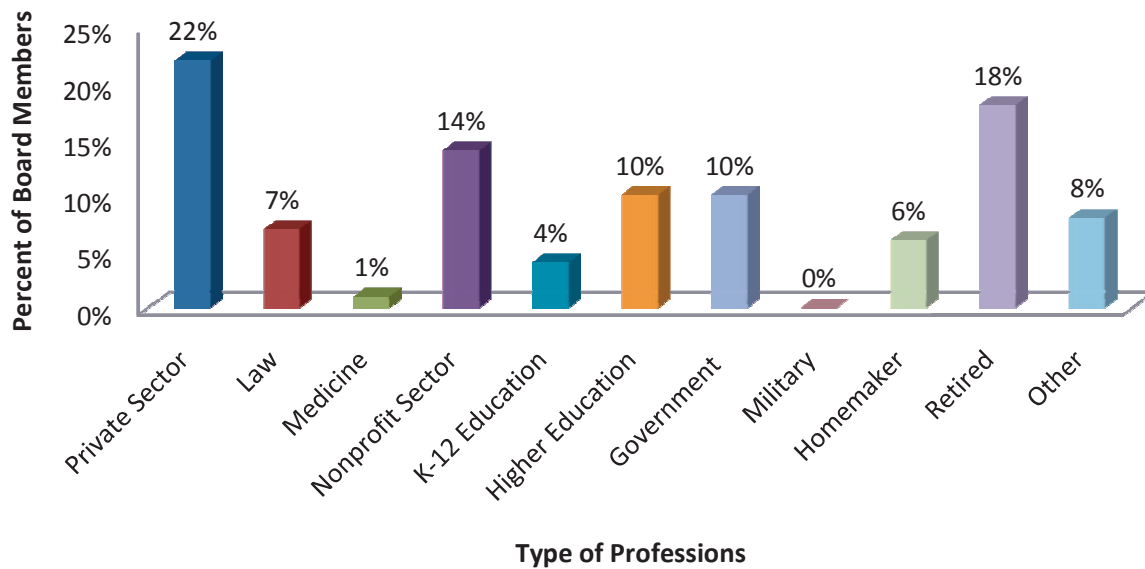


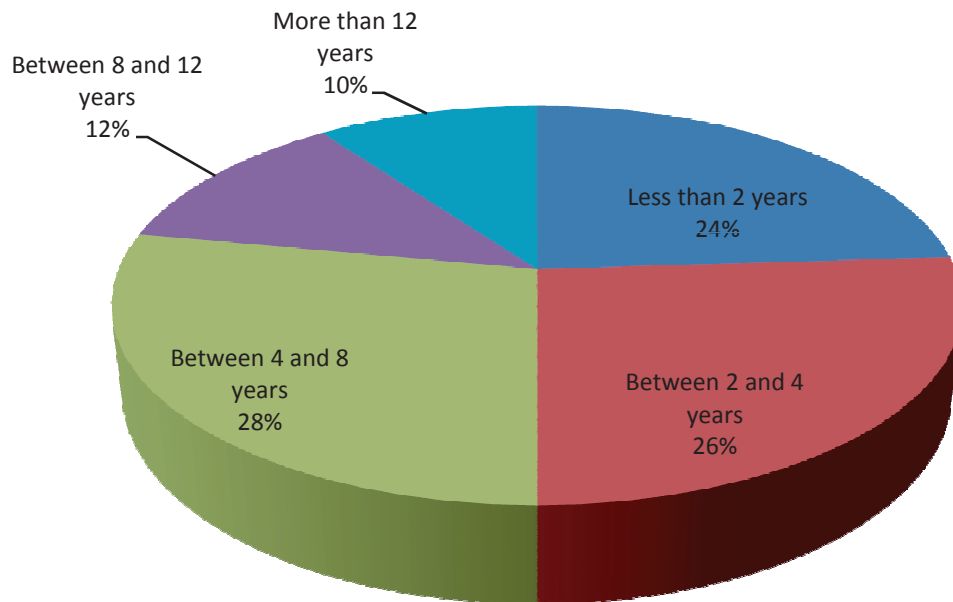
Figure 4. CGCS School Board Members by Profession
2008
n=312



TENURE¹

- Approximately 28 percent of CGCS school board members have an average tenure between 4 and 8 years. About 26 percent have an average tenure between 2 and 4 years. A slightly smaller percentage of board members, 24 percent, have an average tenure of less than 2 years (Figure 5).
- A much smaller proportion of CGCS board members, 12 percent, have an average tenure of between 8 and 12 years, while 10 percent have an average tenure of more than 12 years (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. CGCS School Board Members Average Length of Service
2008
n=321**



¹ Average tenure is defined here as the average length of service of all the board members.

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING CHARACTERISTICS

- About 38 percent of CGCS school boards meet on a biweekly basis. About 14 percent meet monthly, 17 percent meet bimonthly, 17 percent meet weekly, and 14 percent meet on another schedule (Figure 6).
- A majority of CGCS school board meetings, 55 percent, last between two and four hours on average. Approximately 31 percent last between four and six hours, 12 percent of CGCS school board meetings last on average between one and two hours, and 2 percent last less than 1 hour (Figure 7).
- About 57 percent of CGCS school boards spend an average of over six hours per week on board business. Some 21 percent of CGCS school boards spend an average of between four and six hours per week on board business, 14 percent spend between two and four hours, and 7 percent spend between one and two hours (Figure 8).
- About 97 percent of CGCS school board reported they were either significantly or moderately involved in budgeting/funding issues. Approximately 96 percent were heavily involved in student achievement, 85 percent in parental outreach, 83 percent in closing achievement gaps, and 78 percent in school safety.

**Figure 6. CGCS School Board Meeting Schedules
2008**

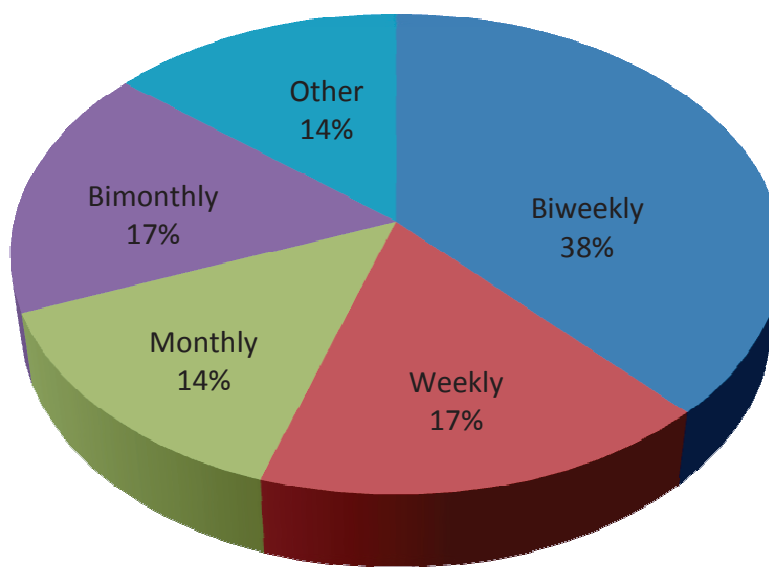


Figure 7. Average Length of CGCS School Board Meetings

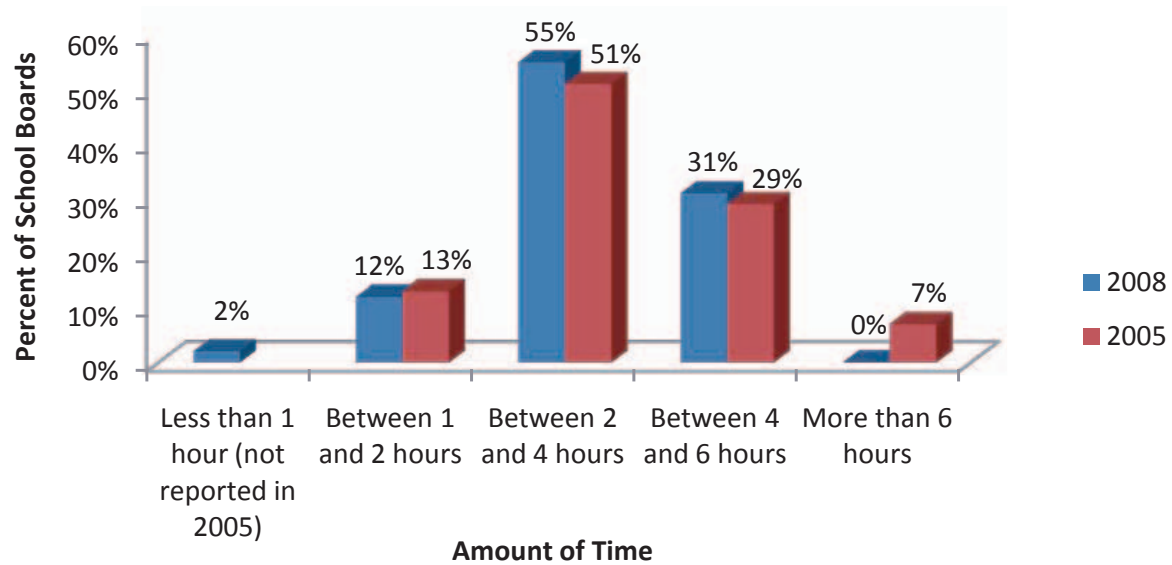
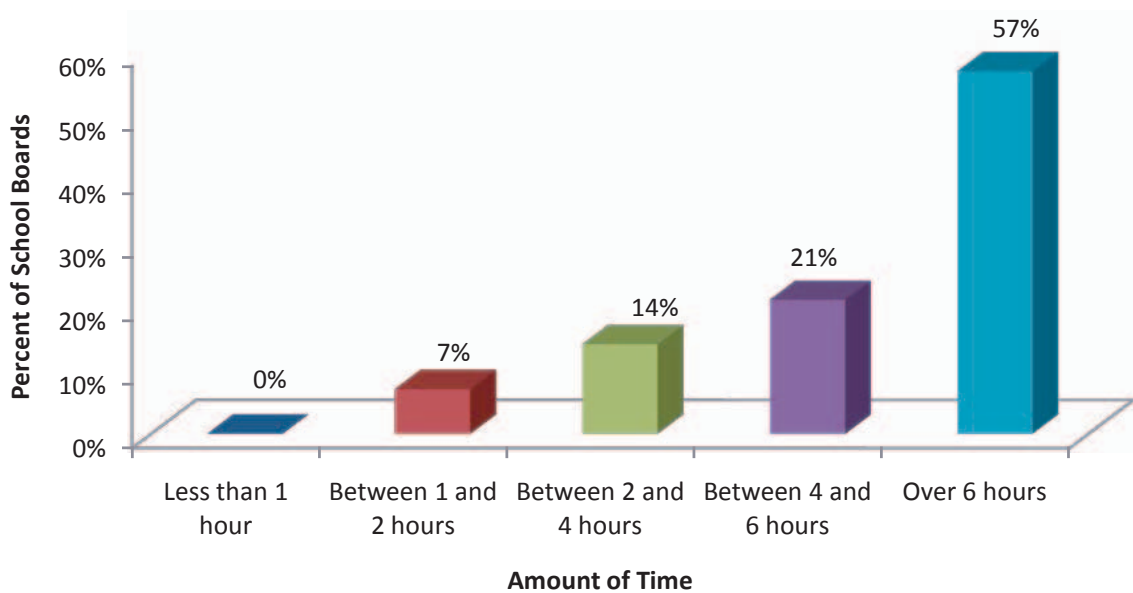


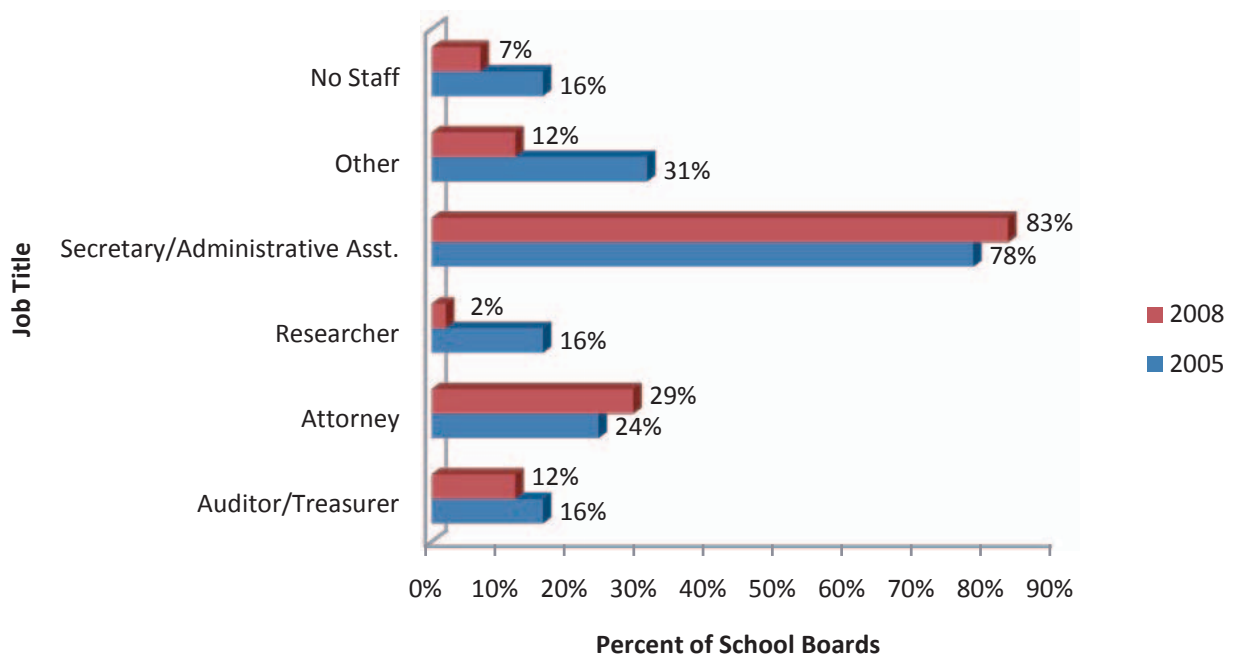
Figure 8. Average Time Spent on CGCS School Board Business Each Week 2008



RESOURCES

- Approximately 83 percent of CGCS school boards have secretaries who work under their direction, 29 percent have attorneys, 12 percent have auditors/treasurers, and 2 percent have researchers. About 12 percent of CGCS boards have staff serving other functions, most commonly administrative (Figure 9).
- Some 7 percent of CGCS school boards do not have staff at all (Figure 9).
- About 38 percent of CGCS school boards have offices for each board member at the district's headquarters.

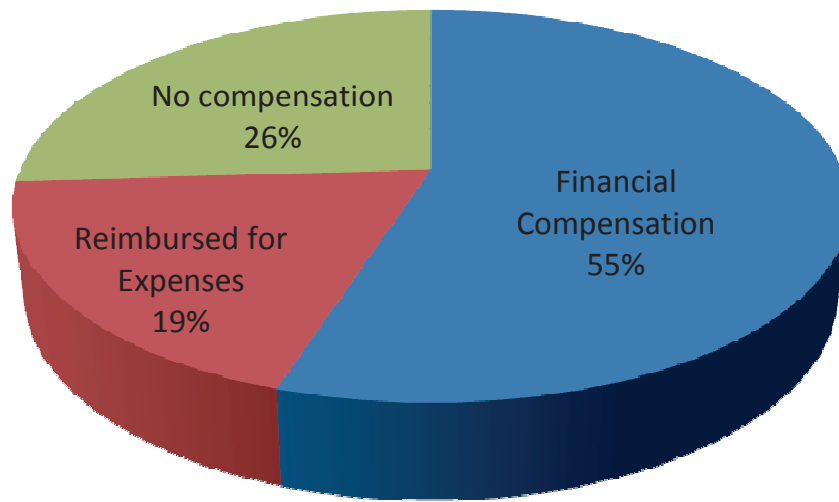
Figure 9. CGCS School Board Staffing



BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION

- Approximately 55 percent of CGCS school board members receive some type of financial compensation for their time. About 19 percent are reimbursed for expenses only and 26 percent do not receive financial compensation for their time (Figure 10).
- Some 55 percent receive a meeting allowance as a benefit, 19 percent have access to a credit card, and 17 percent have either access to a car or receive car mileage reimbursement.

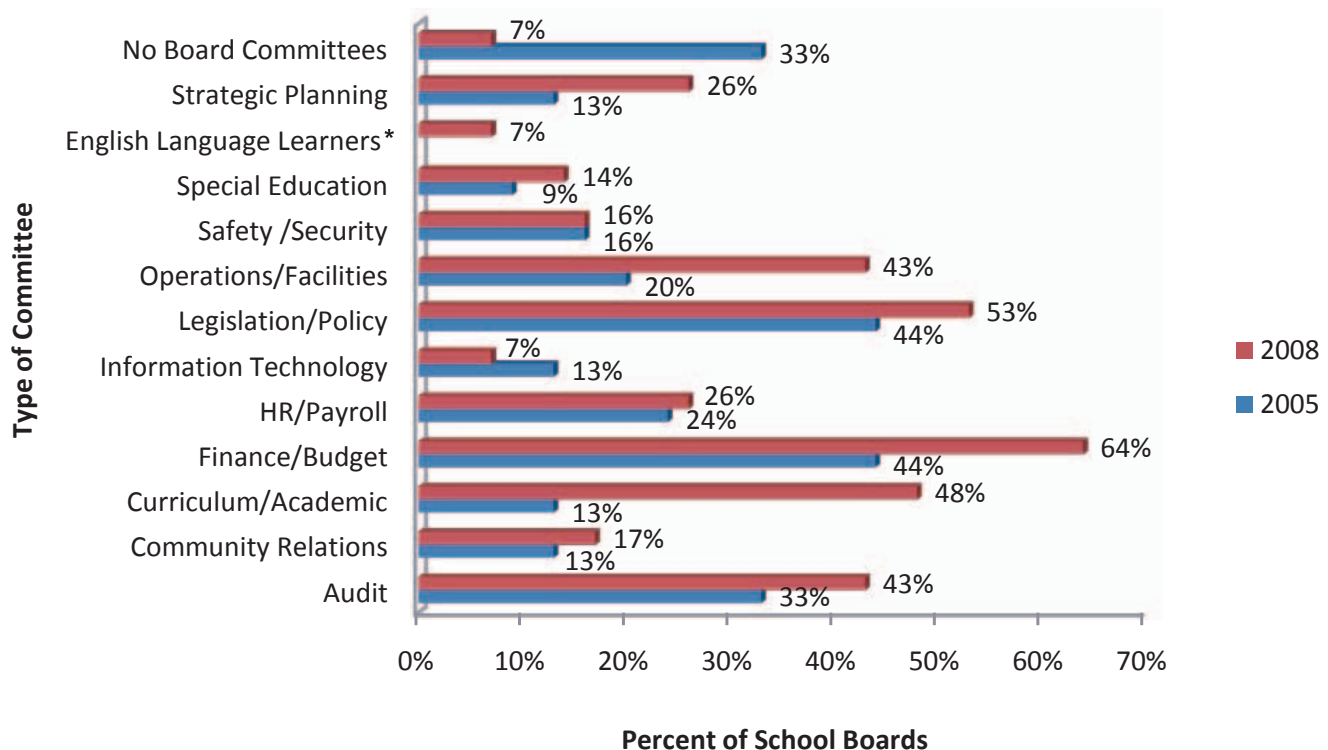
**Figure 10. CGCS School Board Members' Benefits and Compensation
2008**



SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEES

- Approximately 93 percent of CGCS school boards have standing committees in some functional area, while 7 percent have no board committees (Figure 11).
- About 64 percent have Finance/Budget committees, and another 53 percent have Legislation/Policy committees. Also, 43 percent have an Audit committee and another 48 percent have a Curriculum/Academic committee. Another 43 percent have Operations/Facilities committees (Figure 11).

Figure 11. CGCS School Board Committees

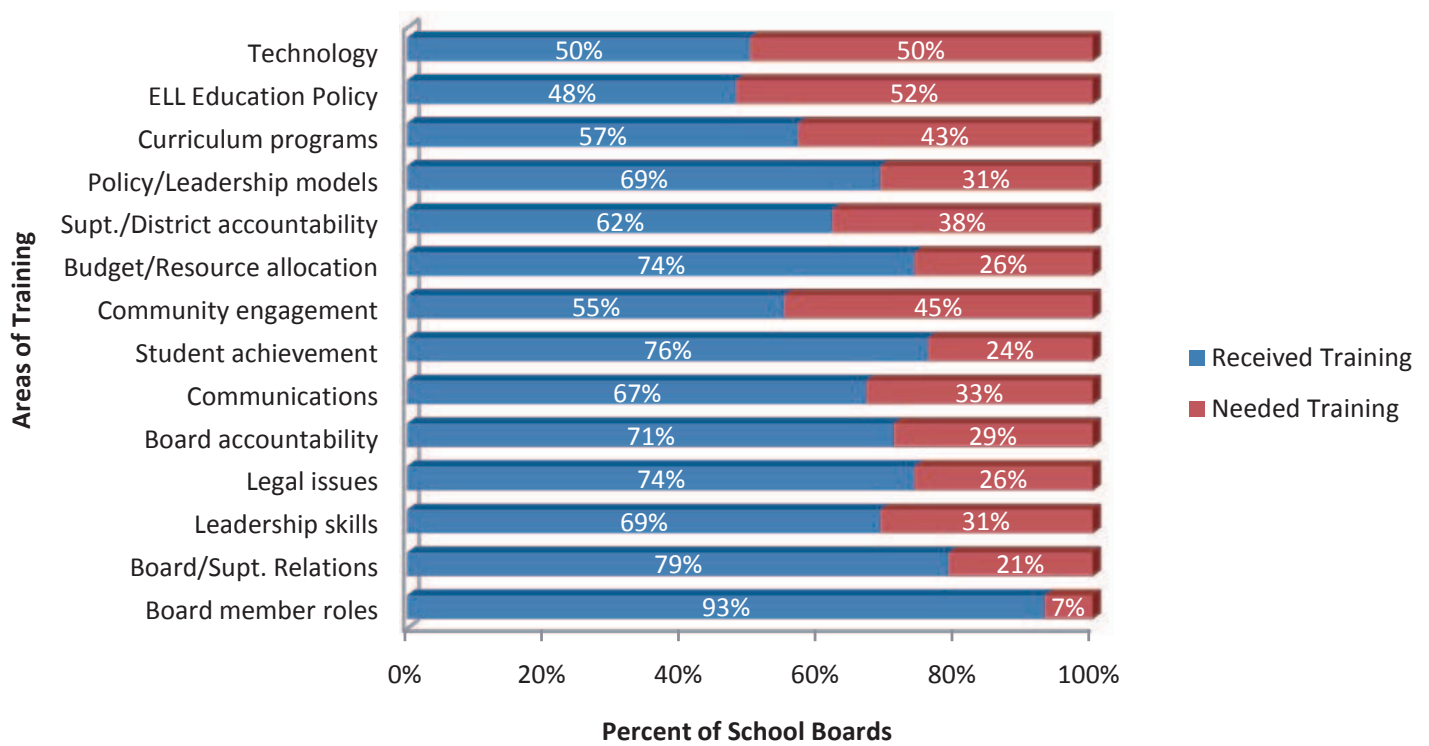


* This information was not reported in 2005

TRAINING

- The amount of training for board members has increased between 2005 and 2008. The percentage of CGCS school boards that received training in the area of board member roles and responsibilities increased from 80 to 93 percent. Seventy-nine percent of CGCS boards received training in superintendent and board relations in 2008, compared with 71 percent in 2005. The percentage of board members trained in the area of policy governance increased from 64 to 69 percent (Figure 12).
- Some 74 percent of CGCS school boards are now trained in budgeting and finance, and in legal issues (Figure 12).
- Despite additional training being reported in some areas, CGCS school board members reported the need for additional training. Some 50 percent of CGCS boards surveyed indicated a need for additional training in the area of technology. Another 45 percent reported needing training in the areas of community engagement and partnerships, 43 percent in curriculum and educational programs, 33 percent in communications, 31 percent needed training in communications and educational programs, 33 percent needed training in communications (Figure 12).

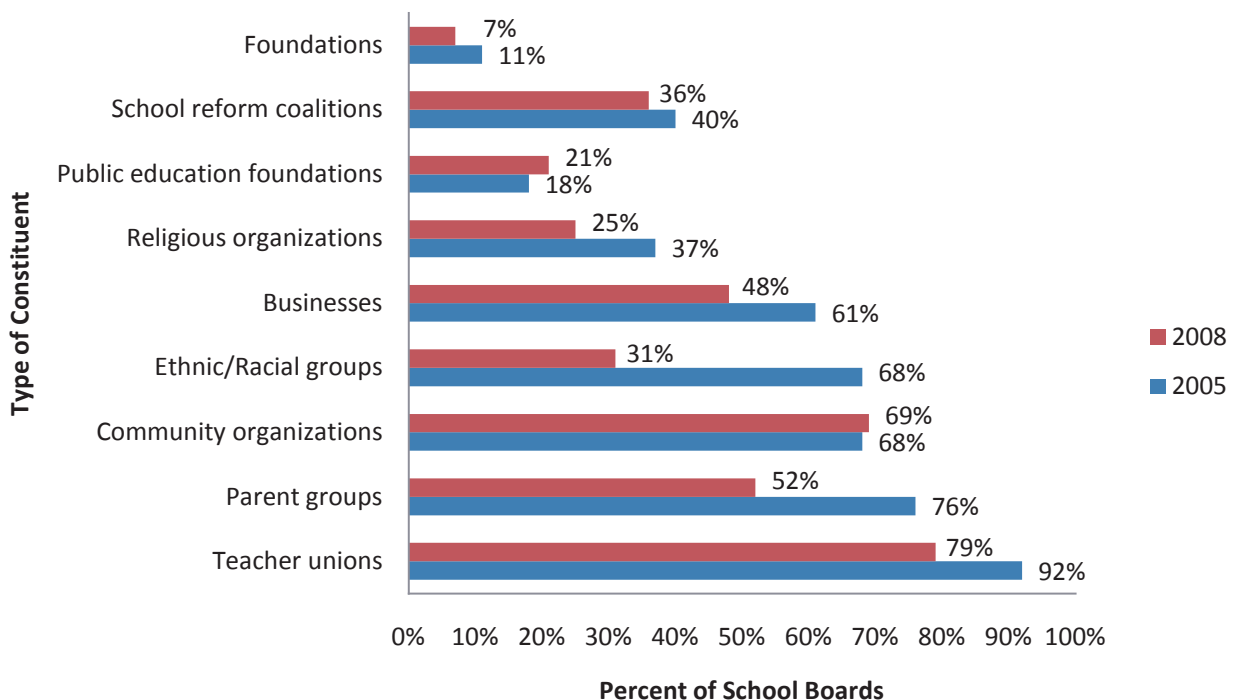
Figure 12. CGCS School Board Training



SCHOOL BOARD CAMPAIGNS

- Approximately 17 percent of CGCS school board members spend on average between \$10,000 and \$24,999 on their campaigns. About 19 percent spend \$25,000 or more; 12 percent spent between \$5,000 and \$9,999; 24 percent spend between \$1,000 and \$4,999; and another 7 percent spend less than \$1,000. Another 14 percent of board members were appointed and campaign spending was not applicable.
- Some 10 percent of CGCS boards considered school board elections to be extremely competitive in their districts, 29 percent very competitive, and 29 percent somewhat competitive. Some 21 percent reported competitiveness varied greatly year by year, didn't know, or reported no electoral competition due to appointments.
- About 79 percent of CGCS school boards report that teachers unions are active in school board elections. Approximately 69 percent report that community organizations are active in elections; 52 percent of boards report that parent groups are active; 36 percent of boards report that school reform coalitions are active, and 31 percent of boards report that ethnic/racial groups are active in elections (Figure 13).

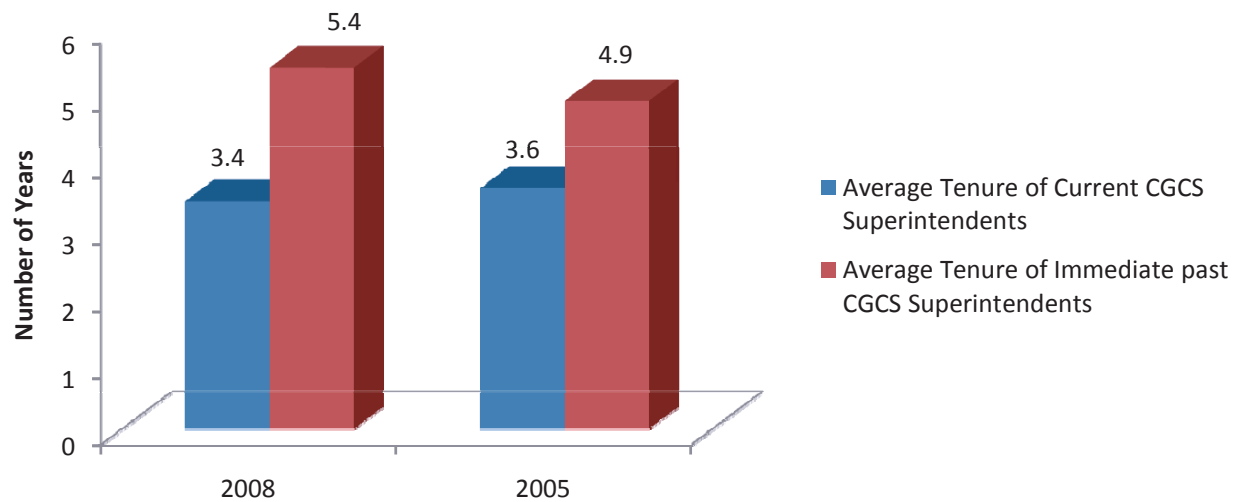
Figure 13. Constituents Active in CGCS School Board Elections



DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

- The average tenure of the current CGCS superintendent decreased slightly between 2005 and 2008 from 3.6 to 3.4 years, and the average tenure of the immediate past superintendent increased from 4.9 in 2005 to 5.4 years in 2008 (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Average Tenure of Superintendents



Notes

[illegible]

Surveys were received from the following districts:

Anchorage	Louisville
Atlanta	Memphis
Austin	Milwaukee
Baltimore	Minneapolis
Broward County	New Orleans
Buffalo	Norfolk
Cincinnati	Oakland
Clark County	Omaha
Dallas	Orlando
Dayton	Palm Beach County
Denver	Philadelphia
East Baton Rouge	Portland
Fresno	Providence
Greensboro	Richmond
Hillsborough County	Sacramento
Houston	San Francisco
Indianapolis	Seattle
Jackson	St. Louis
Kansas City	St. Paul
Long Beach	Toledo
Los Angeles	Wichita

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 Broward County
 Buffalo
 Charleston
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 Chicago
 Christina
 Cincinnati
 Clark County
 Cleveland
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 Dallas
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 Denver
 Des Moines
 Detroit
 East Baton Rouge
 Fort Worth
 Fresno
 Greensboro
 Houston
 Indianapolis
 Jackson
 Jacksonville
 Kansas City
 Little Rock
 Long Beach
 Los Angeles
 Louisville
 Memphis
 Miami-Dade County
 Milwaukee
 Minneapolis
 Nashville
 Newark
 New Orleans
 New York City
 Norfolk
 Oakland
 Oklahoma City
 Omaha
 Orange County
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 Seattle
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 Wichita



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The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 66 of the nation's largest urban school systems. The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public schools and to assist them in their improvement. To meet that mission, the Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management.

The Research Department of the Council of the Great City Schools publishes *Urban Indicator*, which explores timely and pertinent issues facing urban education.

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