



urban Indicator

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Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary Sixth Survey and Report

Urban school superintendents hold one of the most important and challenging jobs in America's education system. In this era of accountability and standards, superintendents are charged with making visible and rapid improvements in the academic achievement of the nation's most vulnerable children. They must break down barriers to reform and build capacity for quality teaching and learning in their schools. They must unite parents, educators, school boards, and community leaders behind a clear and coherent vision of instructional purpose. Amidst the highly politicized environments of big city school districts, superintendents must serve as mediators, statesmen, and agents of change.

Given this backdrop, the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) prepared this report to improve public understanding of employment patterns and demographic trends among the nation's urban superintendents. The organization has been surveying its member districts approximately every two years since 1997. This, the Council's sixth report on urban superintendents, presents the results of the Council's 2008 survey.

CGCS represents the nation's largest urban school districts. Though there are approximately 17,000 school districts in the country, the Council's 66 districts serve approximately 7.2 million of America's 48.7 million K-12 students (15 percent), and some 30 percent of the nation's low-income students, students of color, and English language learners. With such a disproportionate number of poor and minority students, urban school superintendents clearly face a greater set of challenges than their counterparts throughout the rest of the nation.

METHODOLOGY

The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its member districts in the spring and summer of 2008 to determine the characteristics of urban school superintendents in the United States. This report contains the results of that survey. Surveys were sent to board secretaries and superintendents using an online survey tool. The surveys were sent out beginning in May 2008 with reminders by email in June and July and by phone in August to ensure the highest response rate possible. Respondents were asked to provide information on the gender, race/ethnicity, salary, benefits, bonuses, and previous work experience of their district's superintendent.

Surveys were received from 53 of the 66 CGCS member districts (over 80% percent), and all responses were included in this analysis. All data presented in this publication are reported in summary form.

The data presented in this survey have a number of important limitations. No tests of statistical significance were conducted on changes over time, nor are standard errors of measurement included in this report. We relied solely on the information reported by the districts themselves. Furthermore, the survey sample consists only of districts that submitted surveys, and is largely the same but not identical to the samples represented in past reports.

HIGHLIGHTS

Demographics

- As of 2008, 48 percent of superintendents from CGCS member districts identified themselves as white, 42 percent as black, and 10 percent as Hispanic. These percentages appear to be somewhat different from those in 1997, when 37 percent of CGCS superintendents identified themselves as white, 47 percent as black, and 16 percent as Hispanic. (Figure 1)
- As of 2008, 66 percent of CGCS superintendents were men. Thirty-six percent of CGCS superintendents were white males, 22 percent were black males, and 8 percent were Hispanic males. (Figures 1 and 2)
- As of 2008, approximately 34 percent of CGCS superintendents were women. Twenty percent of CGCS superintendents were black females, 12 percent were white females, and 2 percent were Hispanic females. (Figure 2)

Tenure

- The average tenure of CGCS superintendents increased from 3.1 years in 2006 to 3.5 years in 2008.¹ (Figure 3) This is a marked increase from 1999 when average tenure was about 2.33 years—the lowest point recorded by CGCS.
- Eighteen percent of CGCS superintendents have been in office for five or more years, down from 25 percent in 2006. (Figure 4)
- Forty-nine percent of CGCS superintendents have been in office between one and five years, up from 42 percent in 2006. (Figure 4)
- Thirty-three percent of CGCS superintendents have been in office for one year or less, the same percent as in 2006. (Figure 4)

Previous Work Experience

- Most CGCS superintendents – 86 percent – worked in the K-12 education sector prior to their appointment as superintendent. (Figure 5)

¹ Tenure is defined as length of time the current superintendent has been in office as of June 1, 2008.

Salaries

- Average CGCS superintendent salaries have increased from roughly \$139,000 in 1997 to approximately \$228,000 in 2008. Accounting for inflation (by reporting in 2008 dollars), average CGCS superintendent salaries have increased from \$191,000 in 1997 to \$228,000 in 2008. These changes reflect a real increase in earnings of 19 percent since 1997, but less than one percent since 2006. (Figure 6)
- Figure 7 shows the distribution of superintendent salaries since 1997. 2008 salaries for CGCS superintendents ranged from \$120,000 to \$327,500. Six percent of CGCS superintendents made less than \$150,000 in 2008, while approximately 46 percent of CGCS superintendents made \$250,000 or more per year.
- CGCS superintendent salaries appear to vary somewhat by tenure, though the relationship is not linear. The average salary for a CGCS superintendent with five or more years experience is \$214,000, the average salary for those with between one and five years experience is \$248,000, and the average salary of those superintendents with one year or less experience is \$227,000. (Figure 8)
- Figure 10 reports average CGCS superintendent salary by student enrollment. Average CGCS superintendent salaries appear to vary substantially according to the size of the district. The average salary for a CGCS superintendent with fewer than 50,000 students is \$197,000. In a district with between 50,000 and 100,000 students the average salary is \$226,000. In a district with between 100,000 and 200,000 students the average salary is \$271,000. And in a district with 200,000 or more students the average salary is \$286,000.
- In 2008, average salaries of black and white superintendents are nearly identical,² while the average salary for male superintendents is roughly \$23,000 more than the average salary of female superintendents. (Figure 11) However, this figure is unadjusted for district size.
- According to the available data, the average CGCS superintendent salary is larger than that of their counterparts nationwide. The latest year for which comparable data exist is the 2005-2006 school year. In 2005-2006, the average salary across all district superintendents was \$116,244 while the CGCS average was \$207,547. (Figure 12)³

Benefits and Bonuses

- Only one third of responding superintendents reported receiving financial bonuses or pay-for-performance provisions. Where benefits were reported, the amount of the annual bonus or pay-for-performance provision in 2008 ranged from \$5,000 to \$75,000.
- Seventy-seven percent of CGCS superintendents reported having access to car or receiving a car allowance, 77 percent reported having an IRA/403b or other retirement account, and two percent reported received a housing allowance in 2008.
- The average benefits package for CGCS superintendents was valued at approximately \$58,000 in 2008.

² Salary results for Hispanic superintendents are not reported due to the small sample size.

³ Education Week, 2006

DISCUSSION

Several patterns, trends, and relationships relating to employment and demographics have emerged through the course of this analysis.

On some dimensions, the demographics of urban superintendents have become more diverse over time. Currently, more women are superintendents in CGCS member districts than was the case in 1997. The largest increase is among white women, who went from zero percent of the CGCS superintendents in 1997 to 12 percent in 2008. However, there was a decrease in the percent of Hispanic female superintendents.

While the percent of white male superintendents has remained relatively stable, black males and Hispanic males make up less of the total number of superintendents than they did in 1997.

According to the data, CGCS superintendents are staying in their districts for longer periods of time. The tenure of CGCS superintendents has gradually increased over time, from a low of 2.3 years in 1999 to an average of 3.5 years in 2008.

Overall, salaries have also been steadily rising since 1997, when the vast majority of superintendents earned less than \$200,000. In 2008, 66 percent of superintendents earned more than \$200,000, and 46 percent earned more than \$250,000.

While superintendent salary does not appear to have a simple linear relationship with tenure, there does appear to be a relationship between superintendent salary and district enrollment. In short, superintendents in larger districts tend to earn more money, suggesting that the financial compensation for big-city superintendents varies according to the level of responsibility and magnitude of the job itself.

REFERENCES

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Snipes, J., Horwitz, A., Soga, K., & Casserly, M. (2008). *Beating the odds: An analysis of student performance and achievement gaps on state assessments (Results from the 2006-2007 school year)*. Washington, DC: The Council of the Great City Schools.

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity and Gender of CGCS Superintendents: 1997 and 2008

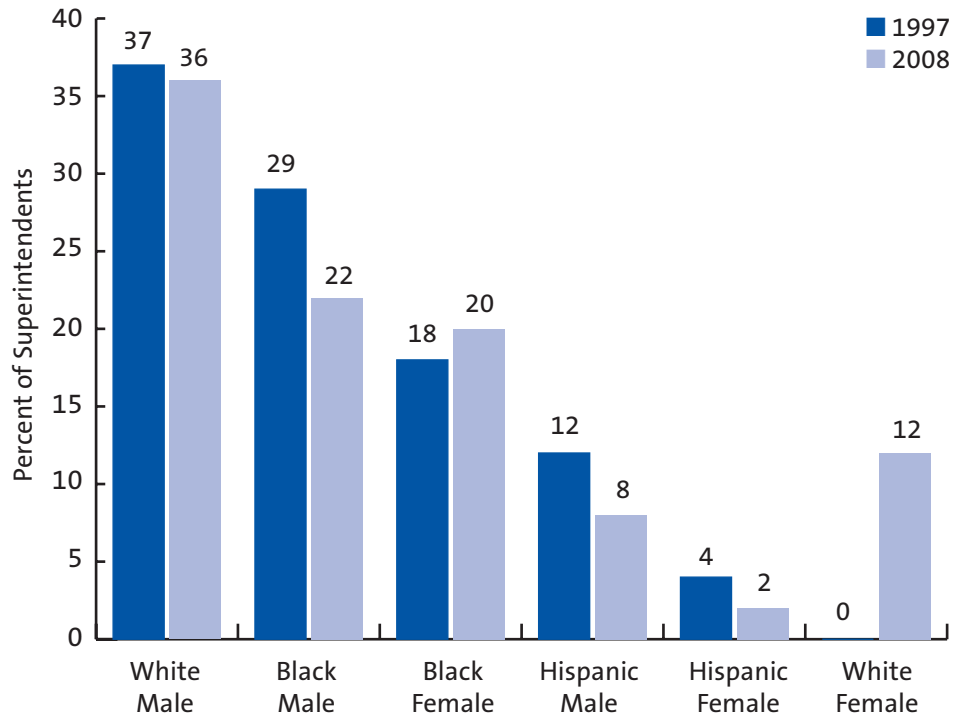
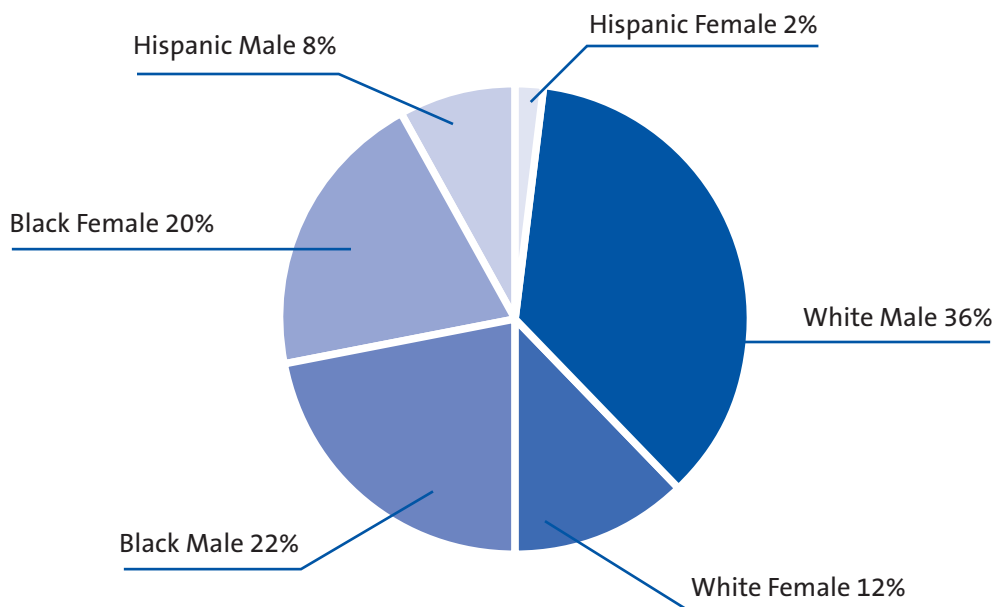
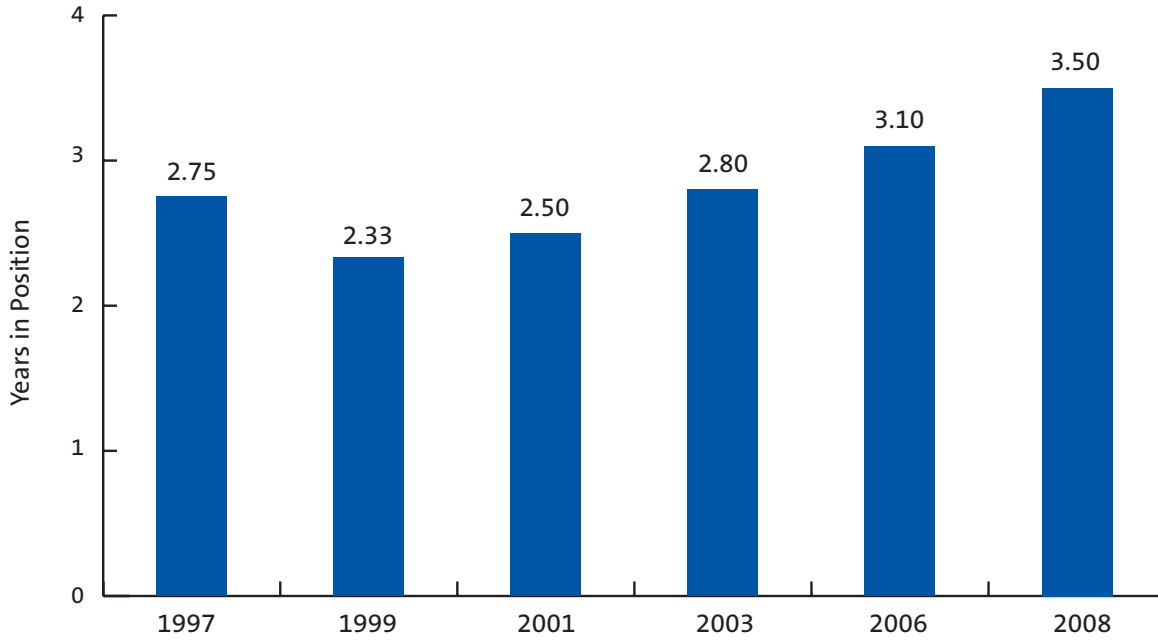


Figure 2. Race/Ethnicity and Gender of CGCS Superintendents in 2008



**Figure 3. Average Tenure of CGCS Superintendents:
1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2008**



**Figure 4. Percent of CGCS Superintendents by Tenure:
1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2008**

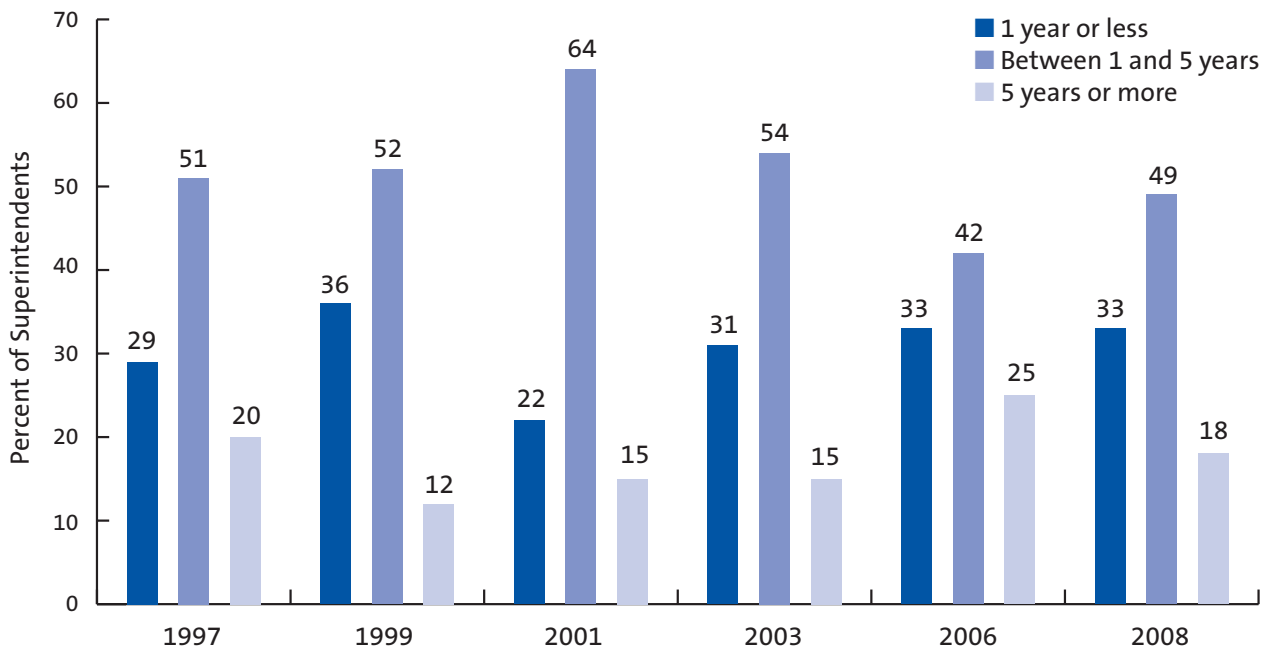


Figure 5. Prior Work Experience of CGCS Superintendents

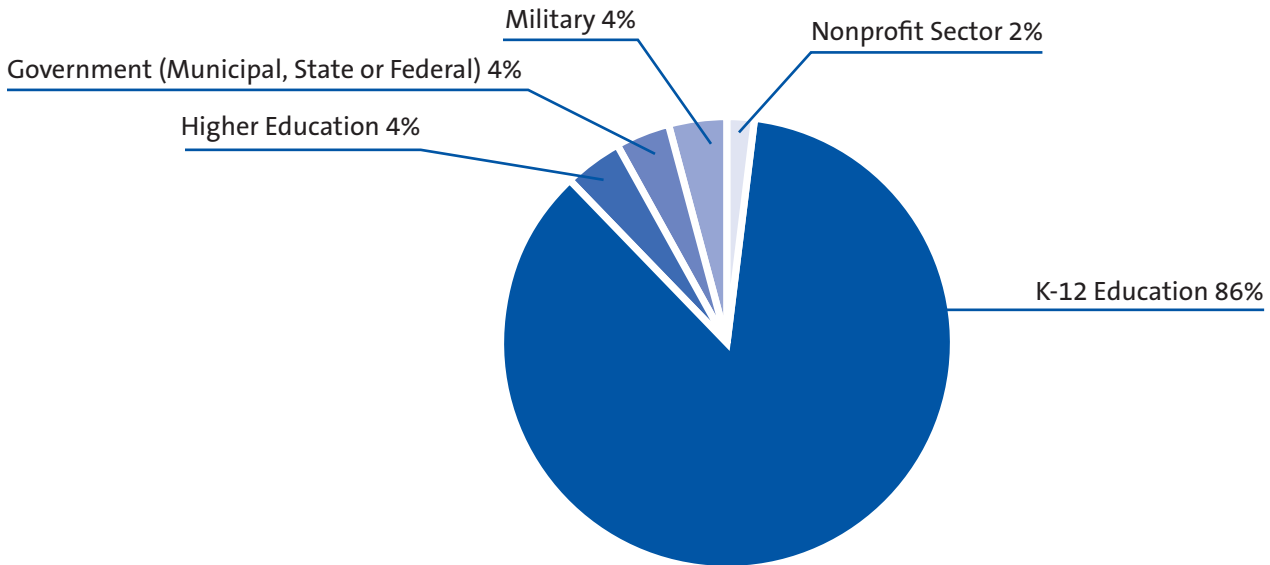


Figure 6. Average Annual CGCS Superintendent Salary: 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2008

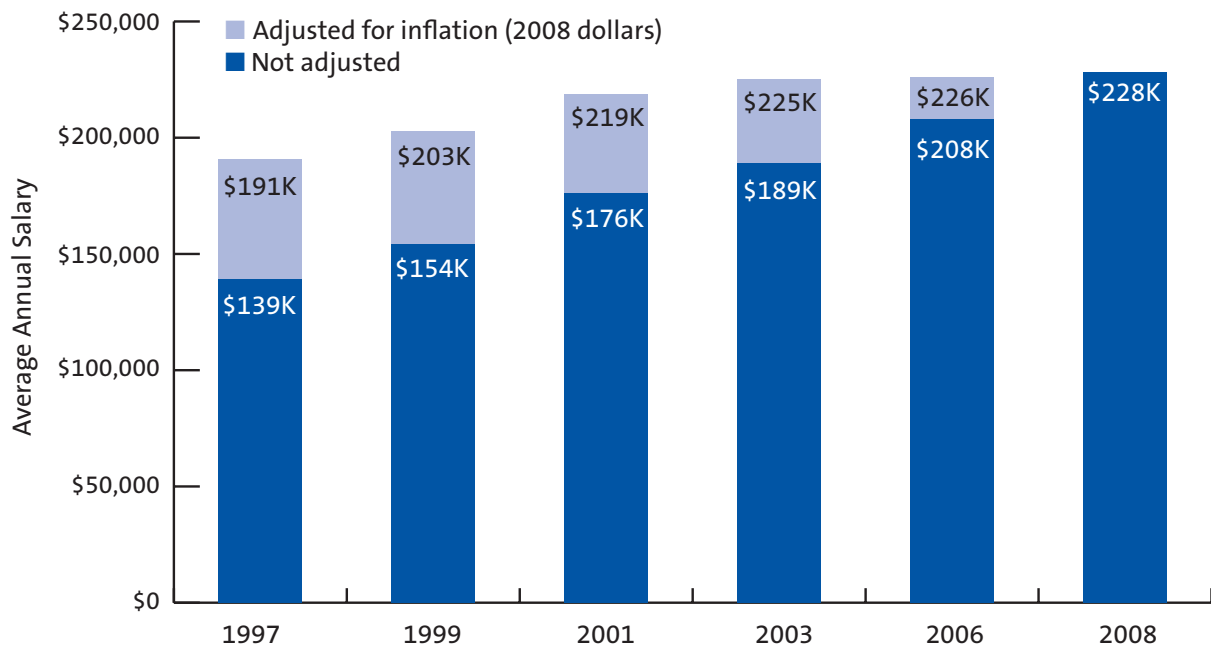


Figure 7. Percent of CGCS Superintendents by Salary Range: 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2008

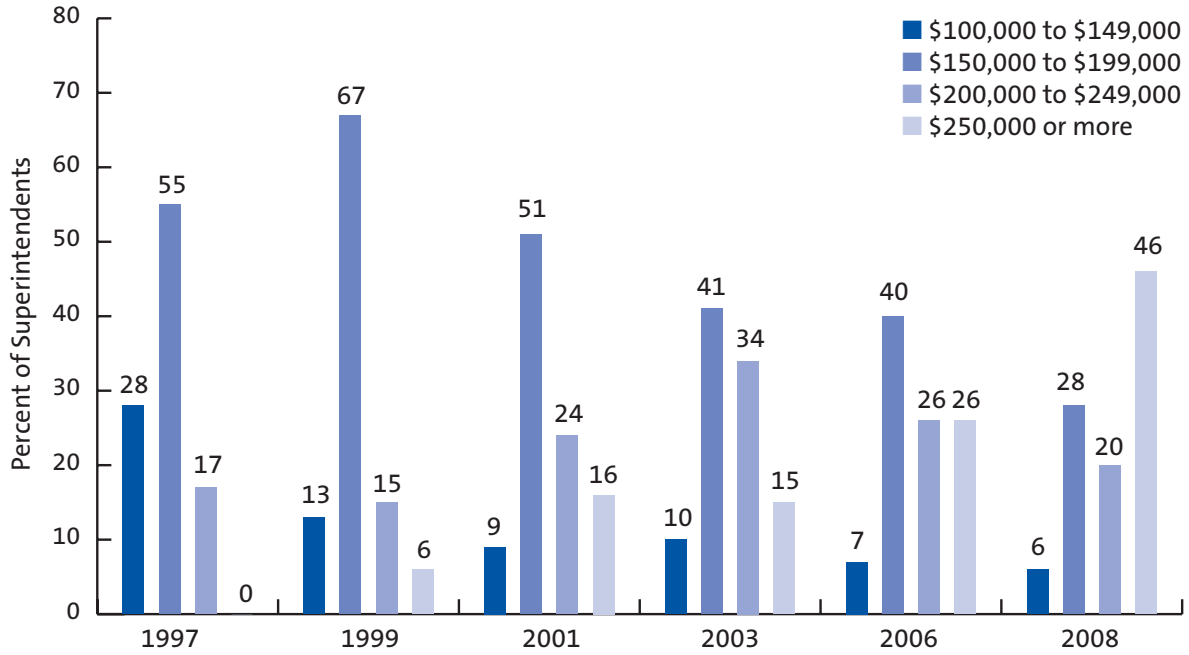


Figure 8. Average Annual CGCS Superintendent Salary by Tenure in 2008

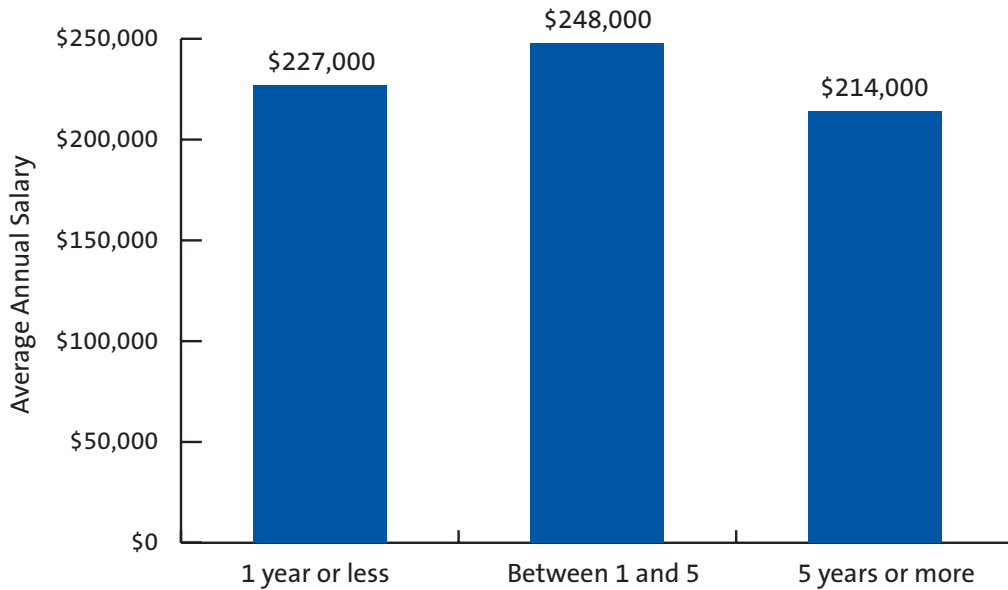


Figure 9. Average Annual CGCS Superintendent Salary by Tenure: 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2008

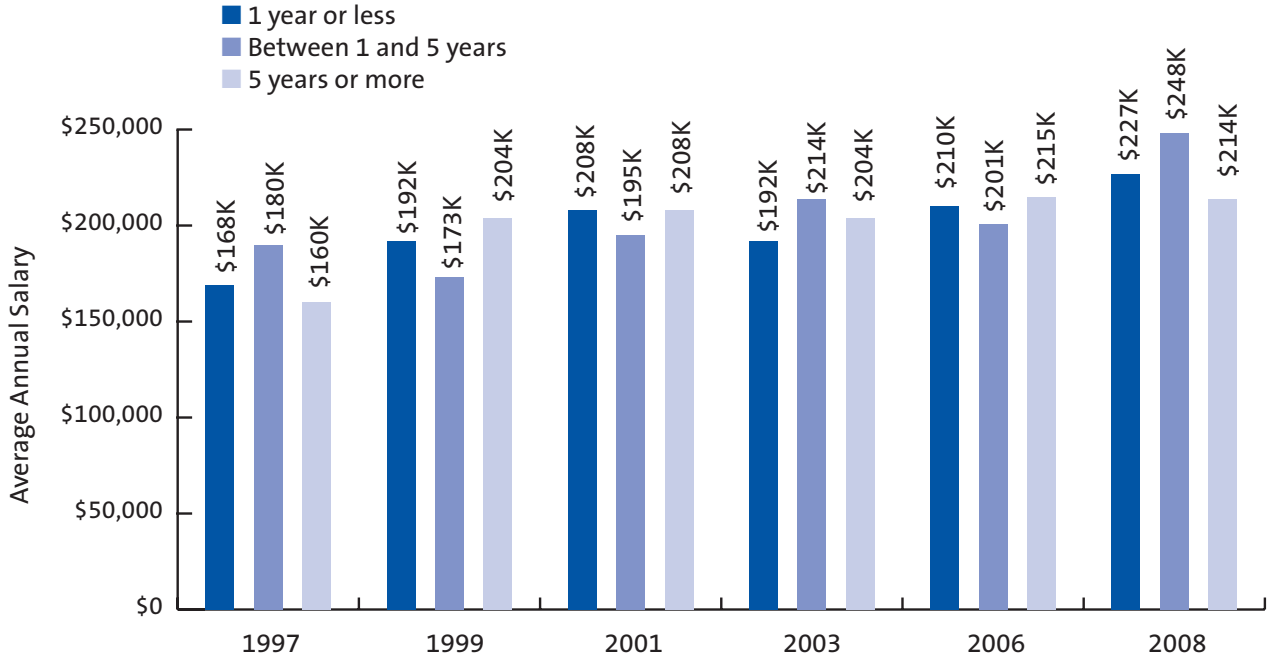


Figure 10. Average Annual CGCS Superintendent Salary by School District Enrollment: 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2008

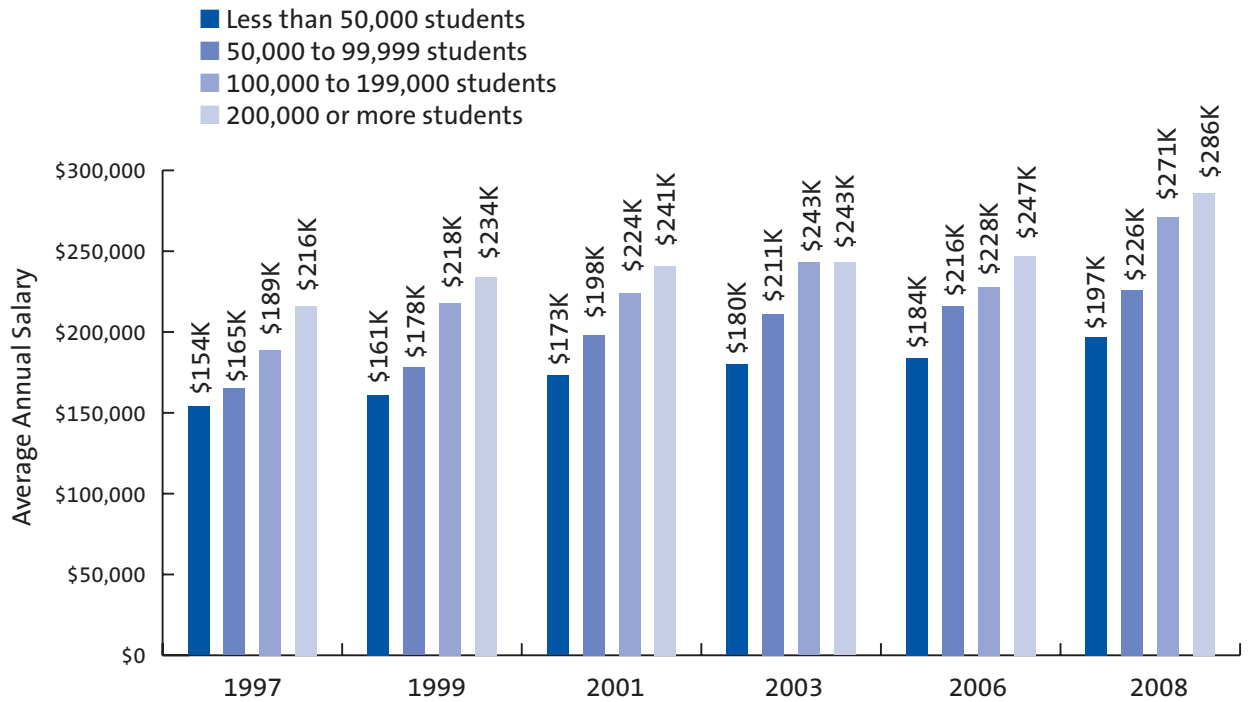
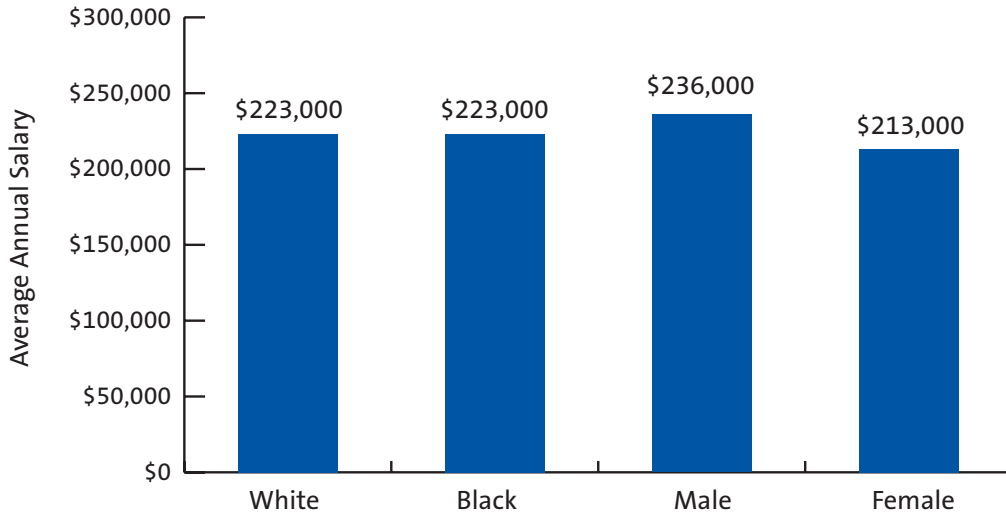


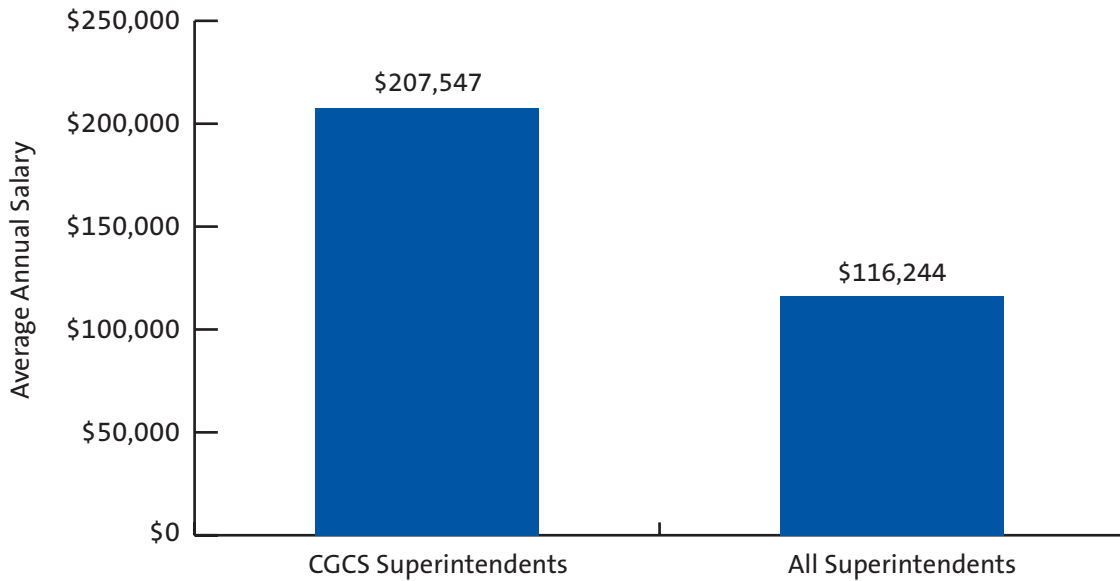
Figure 11. Average Annual CGCS Superintendent Salary by Race/Ethnicity and Gender in 2008*



*Salary results for Hispanic superintendent are not reported due to the small sample size.

Figure 12. Average CGCS Superintendent Salary in 2006 and Average Salary for Superintendents Nationwide* in 2005-06

*From Education Week, 2006



Surveys were received from the following districts:

Albuquerque	Milwaukee
Anchorage	Minneapolis
Atlanta	New Orleans
Austin	Newark
Baltimore	Norfolk
Boston	Oakland
Broward County	Oklahoma City
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	Omaha
Chicago	Orlando
Christina (DE)	Palm Beach County
Cincinnati	Philadelphia
Clark County	Pittsburgh
Columbus	Portland
Dallas	Providence
Denver	Richmond
Detroit	Rochester
East Baton Rouge	Sacramento
Fresno	Salt Lake City
Houston	San Diego
Indianapolis	San Francisco
Jackson	Seattle
Jacksonville	Shreveport
Kansas City	St. Louis
Long Beach	St. Paul
Los Angeles	Tampa
Louisville	Toledo
Miami-Dade County	

Albuquerque
 Anchorage
 Atlanta
 Austin
 Baltimore City
 Birmingham
 Boston
 Broward County
 Buffalo
 Charleston
 Charlotte
 Chicago
 Christina
 Cincinnati
 Clark County
 Cleveland
 Columbus
 Dallas
 Dayton
 Denver
 Des Moines
 Detroit
 East Baton Rouge
 Fort Worth
 Fresno
 Greensboro
 Houston
 Indianapolis
 Jackson
 Jacksonville
 Kansas City
 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
 Palm Beach
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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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