



urban Indicator

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Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary *Seventh 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 business 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 collaborators, visionaries, good communicators, 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 seventh report on urban superintendents, presents the results of the 2010 survey.

CGCS represents the nation's largest urban school districts. Though there are approximately 17,000 school districts in the country, the Council's 65 districts serve approximately 7.2 million of America's 48.7 million K-12 students (14 percent), and approximately one-third of the nation's low-income students, students of color, and English language learners. With such a disproportionate number of low-income 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 2010 to determine the characteristics of big city school superintendents for the 2009-2010 school year. This report contains the results of that survey. Surveys were sent to superintendents and their secretaries using an online survey tool. The surveys were sent out beginning in May 2010 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 56 of the 65 CGCS member districts (86 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 responses, and is largely the same but not identical to the samples represented in past reports.

HIGHLIGHTS

Demographics¹

- As of 2010, approximately 47 percent of superintendents from CGCS member districts identified themselves as White, 41 percent as Black, and 11 percent as Hispanic. These percentages appear to be similar to those in 1999, when 42 percent of CGCS superintendents identified themselves as White, 43 percent as Black, and 15 percent as Hispanic. (Figure 1)
- As of 2010, approximately 74 percent of CGCS superintendents were men. Thirty-eight percent of CGCS superintendents were White males, 27 percent were Black males, and 9 percent were Hispanic males. (Figures 1 and 2)
- As of 2010, approximately 27 percent of CGCS superintendents were women. Fourteen percent of CGCS superintendents were Black females, 9 percent were White females, 2 percent were Hispanic females, and 2 percent were Asian females. (Figure 2)

Tenure

- The average tenure of current CGCS superintendents increased from 2.33 years in 1999 to 3.64 years in 2010.² This is a marked increase of 56 percent from 1999 when average tenure was at the lowest point ever recorded by CGCS. (Figure 3)
- Twenty-nine percent of CGCS superintendents in 2010 have been in office for five or more years, up from 12 percent in 1999. (Figure 4)
- Sixty-three percent of CGCS superintendents in 2010 have been in office between one and five years, up from 52 percent in 1999. (Figure 4)
- Nine percent of CGCS superintendents in 2010 have been in office for one year or less, down from 36 percent in 1999. (Figure 4)
- The average tenure of the immediate past CGCS superintendents was 5.1 years in 2010.

Previous Work Experience

- In 2010, most CGCS superintendents – 91 percent – worked in the K-12 education sector prior to their appointment as superintendent. (Figure 5)

Accountability

- Eighty-six percent of CGCS superintendents are accountable to their school boards. Five percent are accountable to both the school board and the mayor. Another four percent are accountable to the mayor only and five percent have other forms of accountability. (Figure 6)

Salaries

- Average CGCS superintendent salaries have increased from roughly \$154,000 in 1999 to approximately \$239,000 in 2010. Accounting for inflation (by reporting in 2010 dollars), average CGCS superintendent salaries have increased from \$201,000 in 1999 to \$239,000 in 2010. These changes reflect a real increase in earnings of 19 percent since 1999. (Figure 7)

¹ Calculations may not sum to 100 due to rounding

² Tenure is defined as the length of time the current superintendent has been in office as of July 1, 2010.

- Salaries in 2010 for CGCS superintendents ranged from \$157,000 to \$329,000. The majority (54 percent) of CGCS superintendents earned \$250,000 or more per year in 2010. The distribution of superintendent salaries since 1999³ is displayed in Figure 8.
- CGCS superintendent salaries appear to vary somewhat by tenure. In 2010, the average salary for a CGCS superintendent with five or more years experience was approximately \$245,000, the average salary for those with between one and five years experience was approximately \$241,000, and the average salary of those superintendents with one year or less experience was about \$207,000.⁴ (Figure 9)
- 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 was \$208,000. In a district with between 50,000 and 100,000 students the average salary was \$253,000. In a district with between 100,000 and 200,000 students the average salary is \$275,000. And in a district with 200,000 or more students the average salary was \$273,000. Figure 10 reports 2010 average CGCS superintendent salary by student enrollment.
- In 2010, average salaries of Black and White superintendents were similar,⁵ while the average salary for male superintendents was roughly \$10,000 more than the average salary of female superintendents. (Figure 11)
- According to the available data, the average CGCS superintendent salary in 2008 was comparable to that of their counterparts nationwide. The latest year for which comparable data are available is the 2008-2009 school year. In 2008-2009, the average salary across all district superintendents with 25,000 students or more was \$225,222 while the CGCS average was \$228,388 for that same year. (Figure 12)⁶

Benefits and Bonuses

- About 39% 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 2010 ranged from \$5,000 to \$65,000.
- Seventy-three percent of CGCS superintendents reported having access to a car or receiving a car allowance, 73 percent reported having an IRA/403b or other retirement account, and two percent reported received a housing allowance in 2010.
- The average benefits package for CGCS superintendents was valued at approximately \$141,000 in 2010.

³ Previous salaries (1999- 2008) in this Figure have not been adjusted for inflation.

⁴ Previous salaries (1999- 2008) in this Figure have not been adjusted for inflation.

⁵ Salary results for Hispanic superintendents are not reported due to the small sample size.

⁶ ERS, 2009.

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 1999. The largest increase is among White women, who went from zero percent of the CGCS superintendents in 1999 to 9 percent in 2010. However, there was a slight decrease in the percent of Hispanic and Black female superintendents.

According to the data, CGCS superintendents are staying in their districts for longer periods of time. The tenure of current CGCS superintendents has gradually increased over time, from a low of 2.3 years in 1999 to an average of 3.64 years in 2010. Moreover, the average tenure of the immediate past CGCS superintendents was 5.1 years in 2010.

Additionally, the average CGCS superintendent salary in 2008 was similar to that of their counterparts nationwide. In 2008-2009, the average salary across district superintendents with 25,000 students or more was \$225,222 while the CGCS average was \$228,388 for that same year.

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 magnitude of the job itself.

REFERENCES

Council of Great City Schools (2008). Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary. Urban Indicator. Winter 2008.

Council of Great City Schools (2003). Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary. Urban Indicator 7(1), 1-7.

Educational Research Service. (2009). Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2008-09. Arlington VA.

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity and Gender of CGCS Superintendents: 1999 and 2010

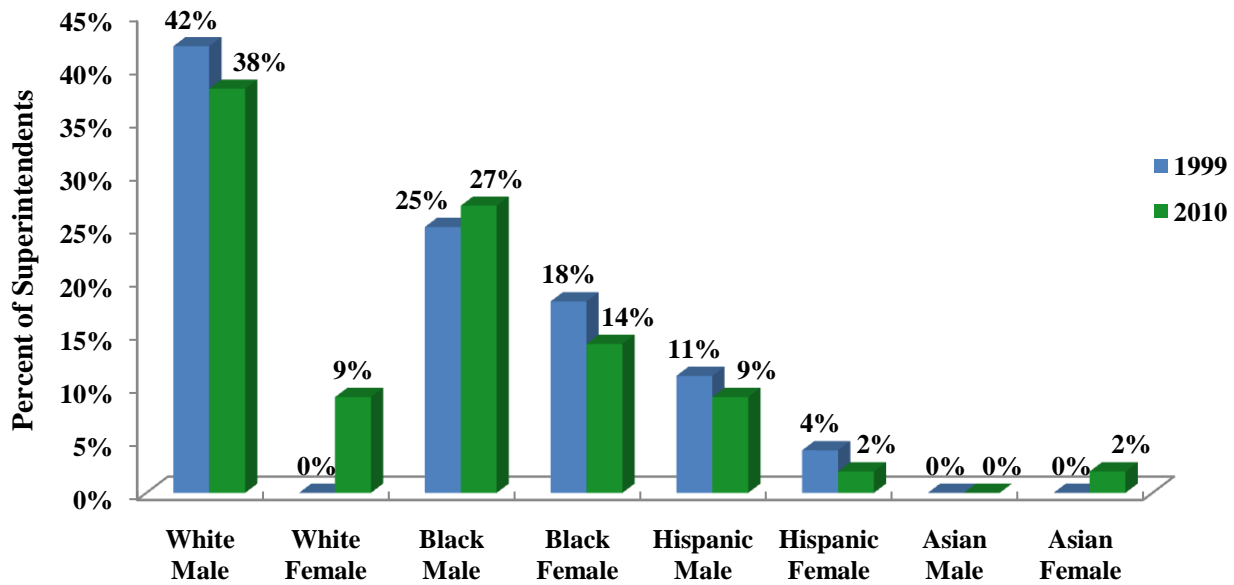
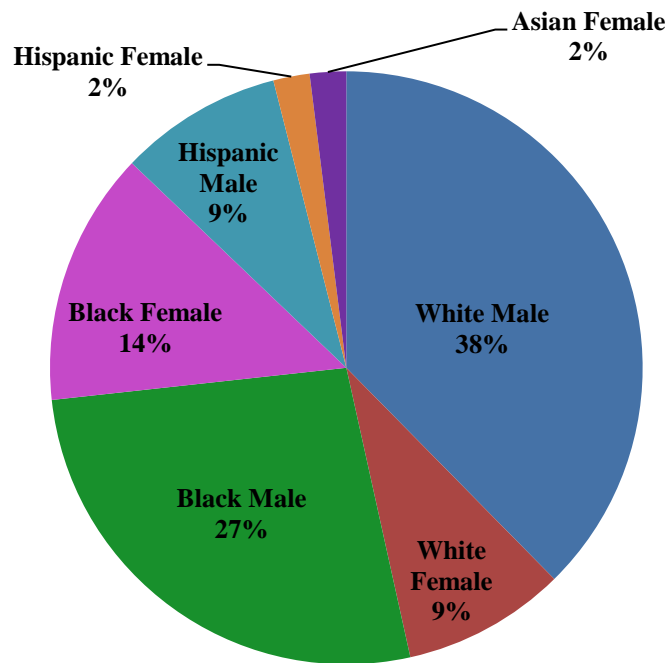
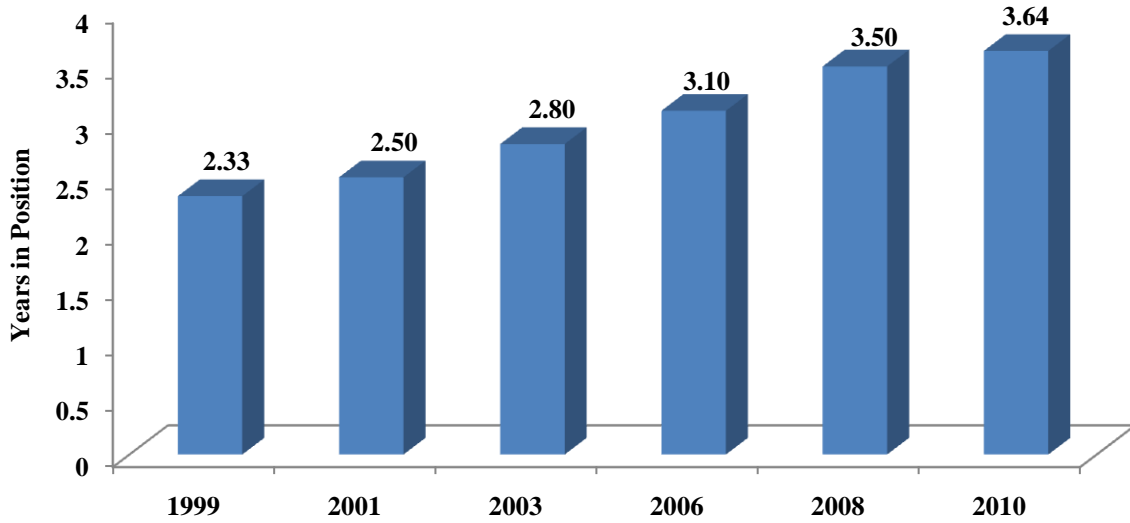


Figure 2. Race/Ethnicity and Gender of CGCS Superintendents in 2010*



*Calculations may not sum to 100 due to rounding

**Figure 3. Average Tenure of Current CGCS Superintendents:
1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010**



**Figure 4. Percent of Current CGCS Superintendents by Tenure:
1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010**

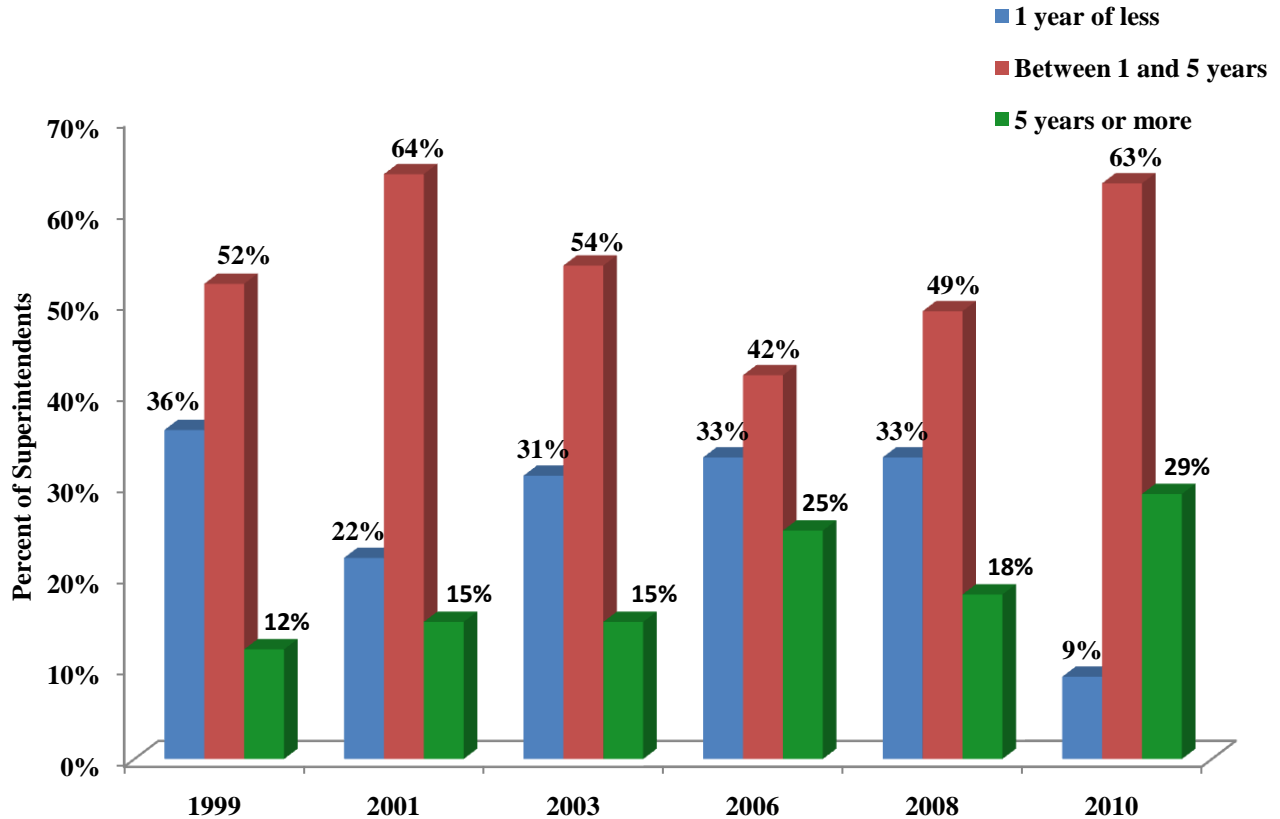


Figure 5. Prior Work Experience of CGCS Superintendents in 2010

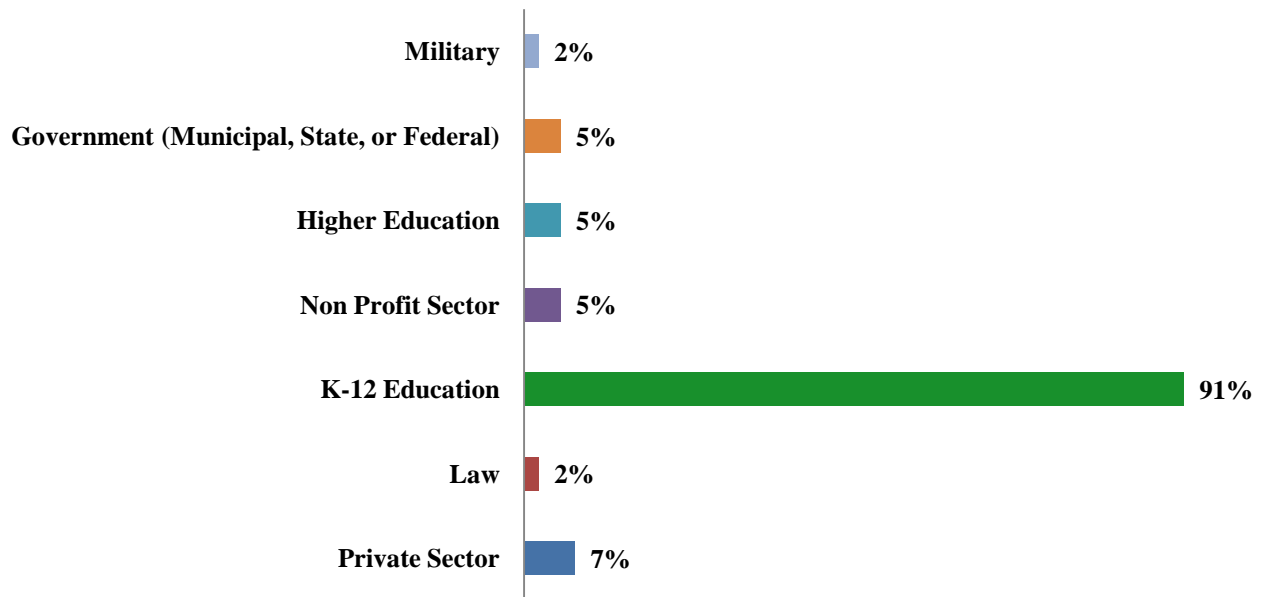
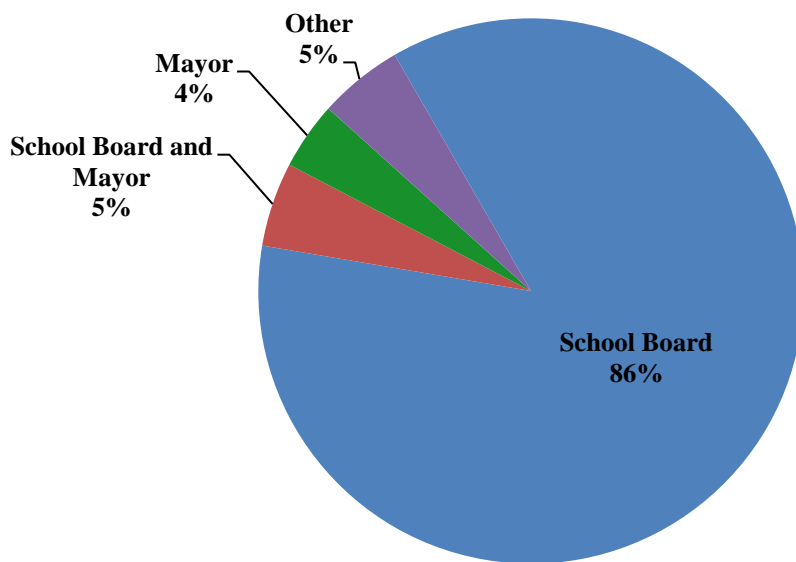
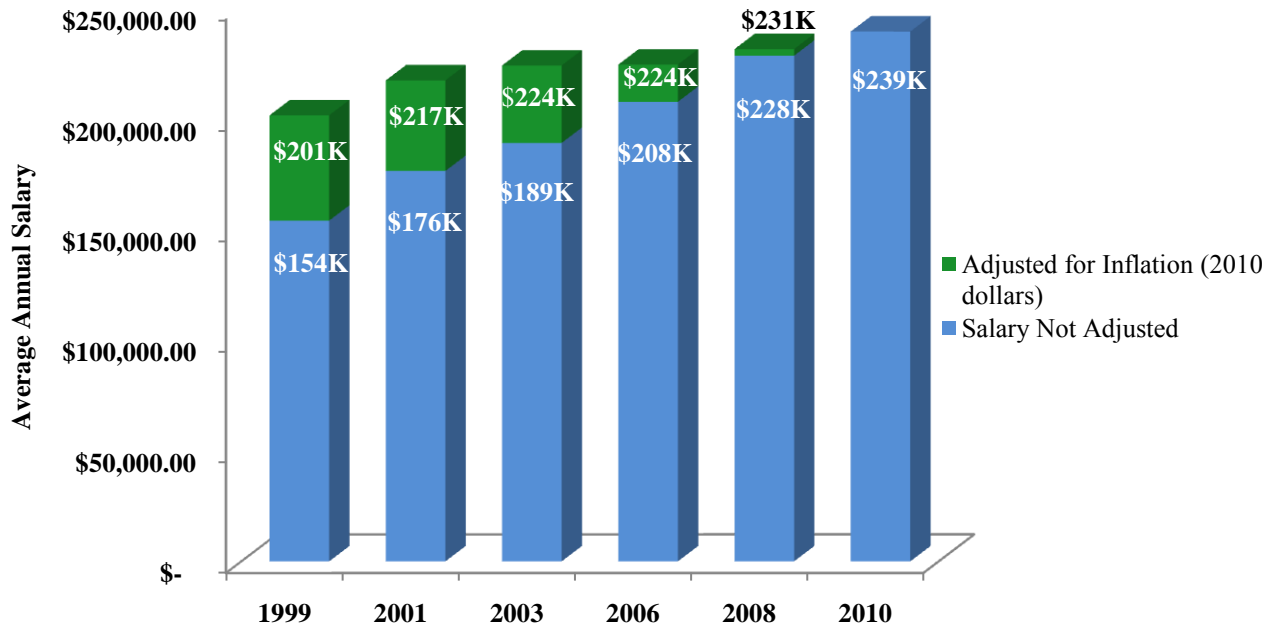


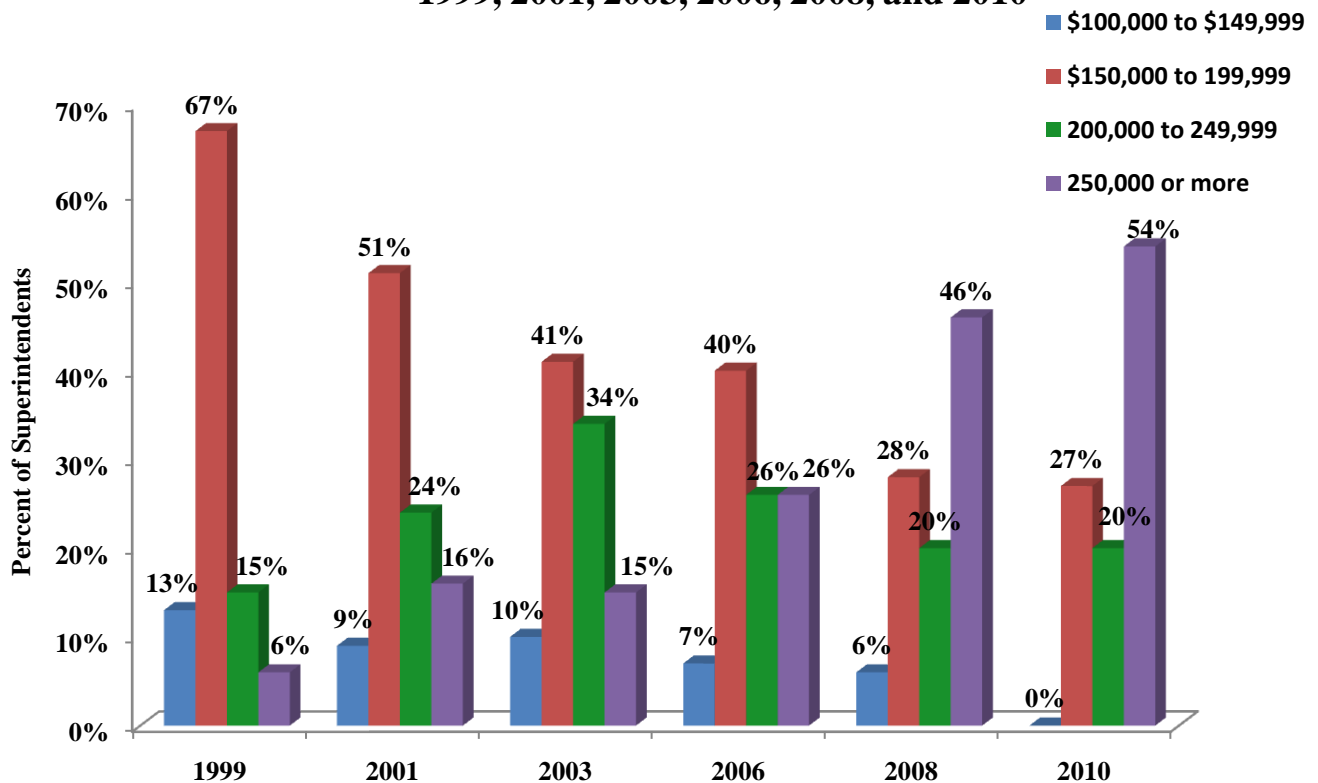
Figure 6: CGCS Superintendents Accountability Structure in 2010



**Figure 7. Average Annual Salary of CGCS Superintendents:
1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010**



**Figure 8. Percent of CGCS Superintendents by Salary Range:
1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010***



* These salaries are not adjusted for inflation

Figure 9. Average Annual Salary of CGCS Superintendents by Tenure: 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010

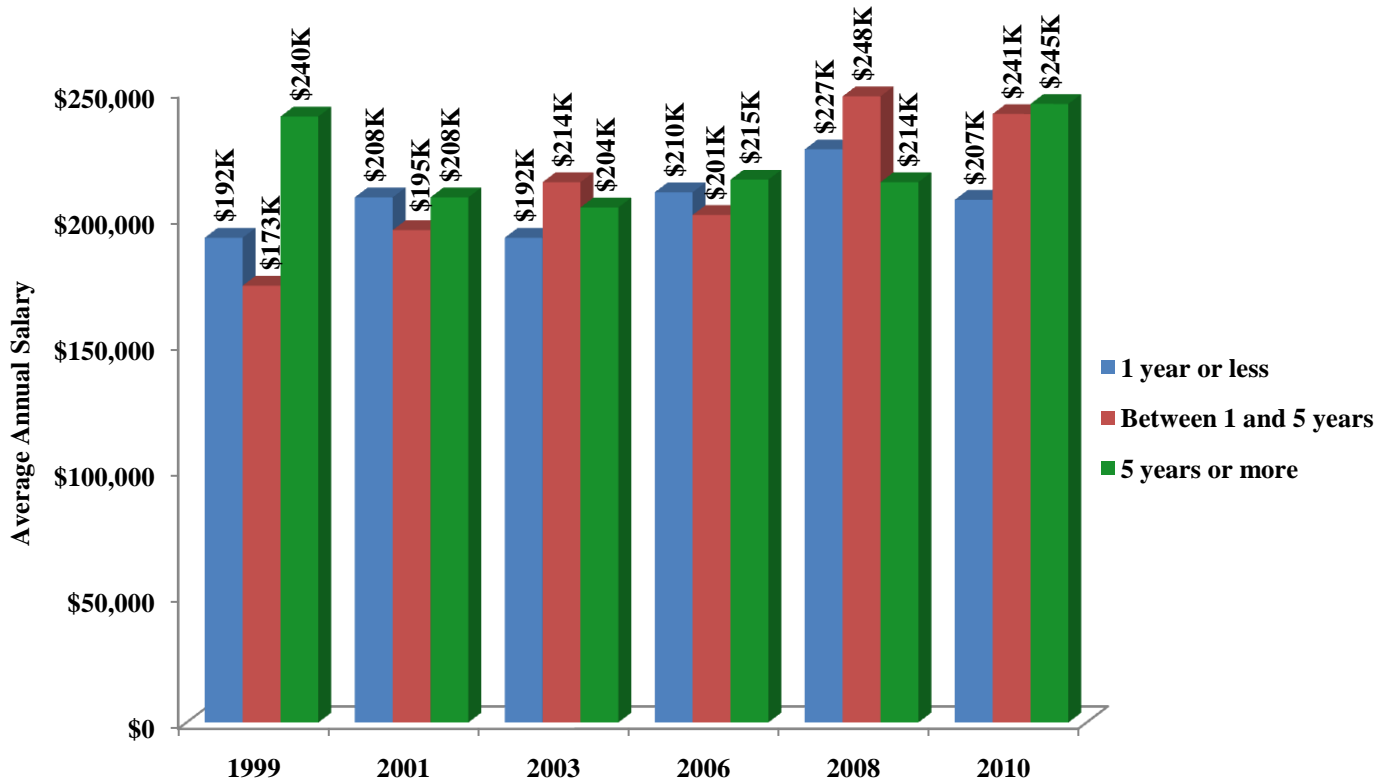


Figure 10. Average Annual Salary of CGCS Superintendents by School District Enrollment: 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010

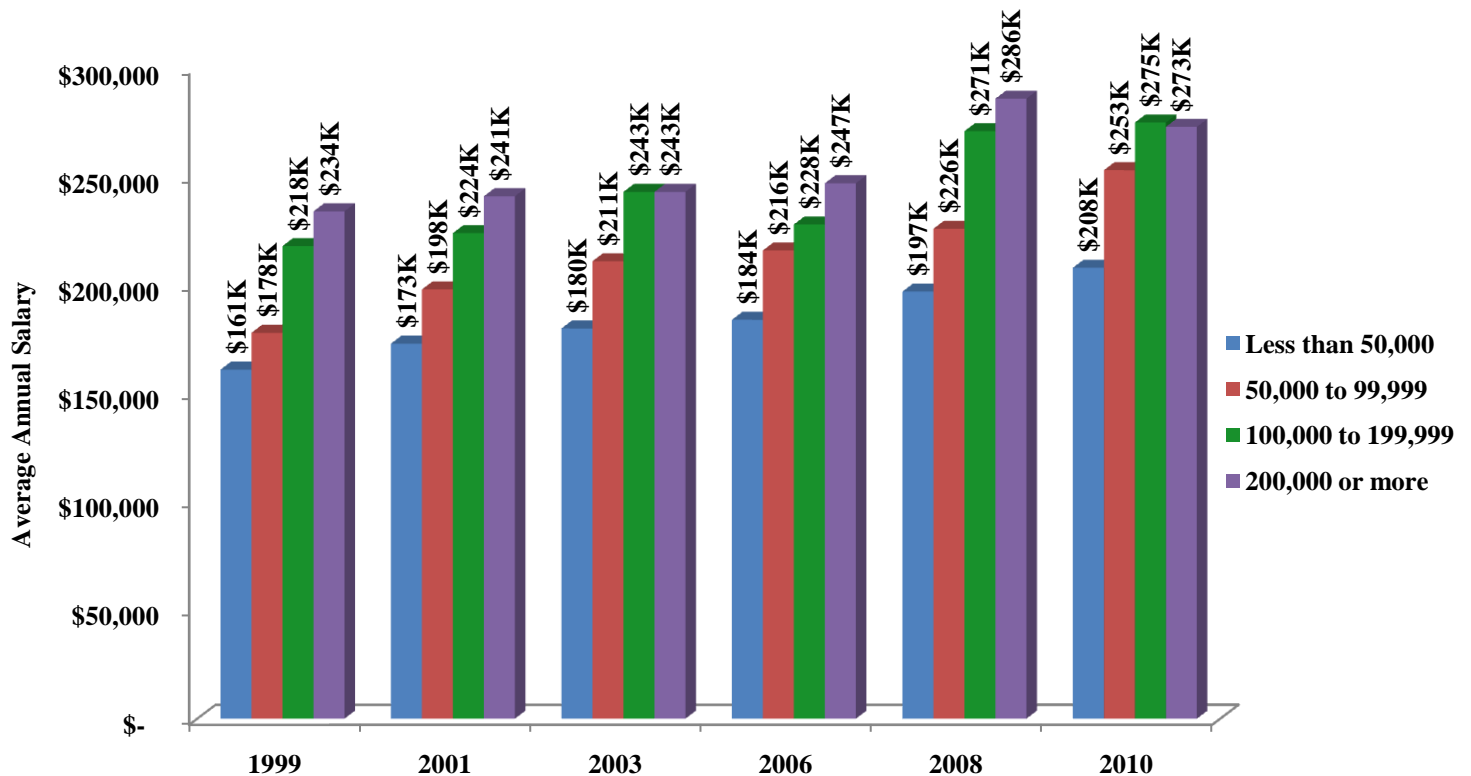
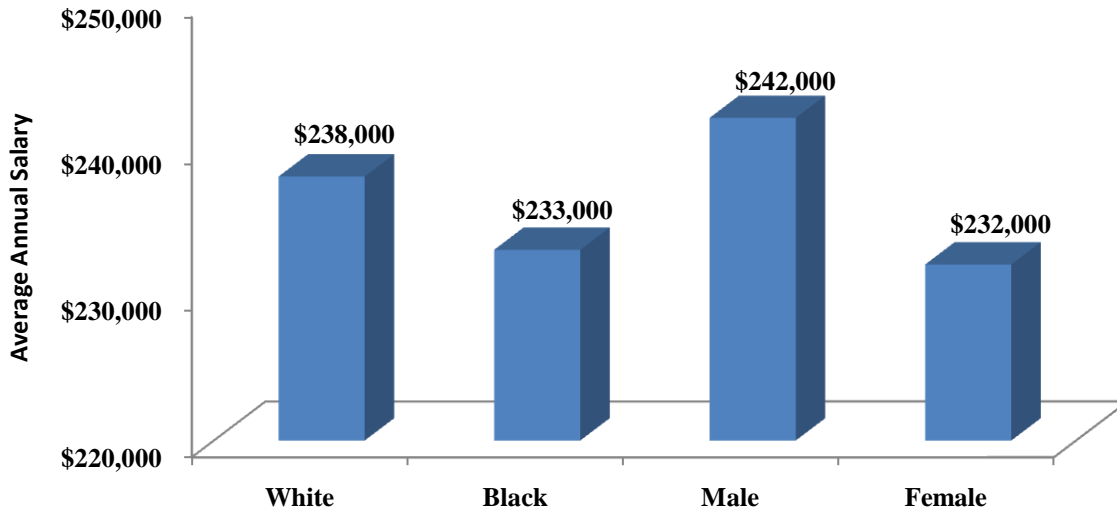
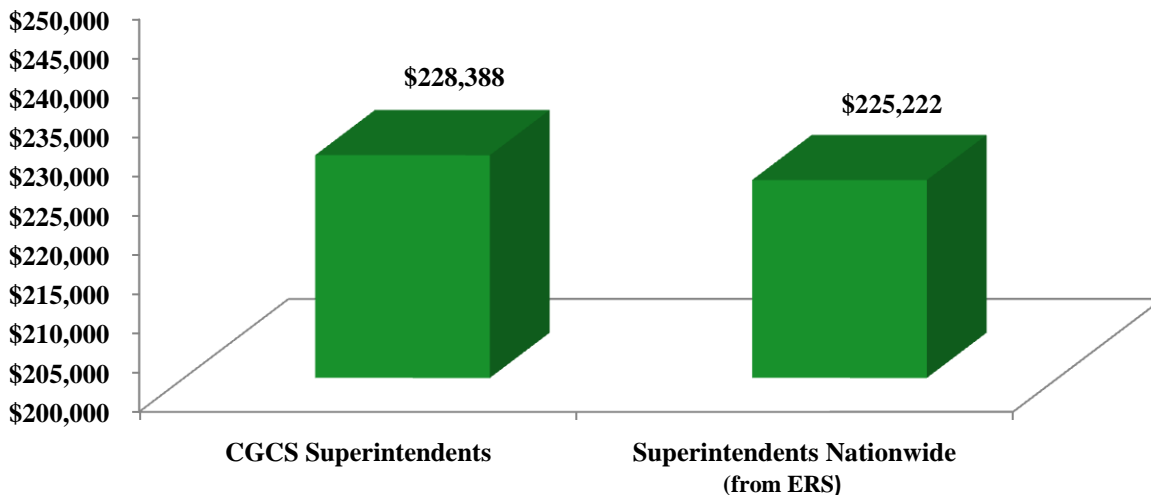


Figure 11. Average Annual Salary of CGCS Superintendents by Race/Ethnicity and Gender in 2010*



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

Figure 12. Average Annual Salary of CGCS Superintendents Compared with Superintendents in Districts Nationwide with 25,000 or More Students in 2008-09



Surveys were received from the following districts:

Albuquerque	Long Beach
Anchorage	Los Angeles
Atlanta	Louisville
Austin	Memphis
Baltimore	Miami-Dade
Birmingham	Milwaukee
Boston	Minneapolis
Broward County	Nashville
Buffalo	New York City
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	Newark
Cincinnati	Omaha
Clark County	Orlando
Cleveland	Palm Beach County
Columbus	Philadelphia
Dallas	Pittsburgh
Dayton	Portland
Denver	Providence
Duval County	Richmond
East Baton Rouge	Rochester
Forth Worth	Sacramento
Fresno	San Diego
Greensboro	San Francisco
Hillsborough County	Shreveport
Houston	St. Louis
Indianapolis	St. Paul
Jackson	Toledo
Kansas City	Washington, DC
Little Rock	Wichita

Albuquerque
 Anchorage
 Atlanta
 Austin
 Baltimore
 Birmingham
 Boston
 Broward County
 Buffalo
 Caddo Parish
 Charleston
 Charlotte-Mecklenburg
 Chicago
 Cincinnati
 Clark County
 Cleveland
 Columbus
 Dallas
 Dayton
 Denver
 Des Moines
 Detroit
 District of Columbia
 Duval County
 East Baton Rouge
 Fort Worth
 Fresno
 Guilford County
 Hillsborough County
 Houston
 Indianapolis
 Jackson
 Jefferson County
 Kansas City
 Little Rock
 Long Beach
 Los Angeles
 Memphis
 Miami-Dade County
 Milwaukee
 Minneapolis
 Metropolitan Nashville
 New Orleans
 New York City
 Newark
 Norfolk
 Oakland
 Oklahoma City
 Omaha
 Orange County
 Palm Beach County
 Philadelphia
 Pittsburgh
 Portland
 Providence
 Richmond
 Rochester
 Sacramento
 San Diego
 San Francisco
 Seattle
 St. Louis
 St. Paul
 Toledo
 Wichita



Council of the Great City Schools
 1301 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
 Suite 702
 Washington DC 20004
www.cgcs.org



The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 65 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.

INDICATOR STAFF

Michael Casserly
 Executive Director

Sharon Lewis
 Director of Research

Renata Uzzell
 Research Manager

Amanda Horwitz
 Research Manager

Candace Simon
 Research Manager