



GUIDING PRINCIPALS:

AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL
LEADERS IN GREATER MILWAUKEE



THE SECOND REPORT IN THE METRO MILWAUKEE EDUCATOR SERIES

PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

ABOUT THE PUBLIC POLICY FORUM

The Milwaukee-based Public Policy Forum, established in 1913 as a local government watchdog, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of government and the development of Southeastern Wisconsin through objective research of regional public policy issues.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is intended to provide citizens and policymakers with useful statistical information regarding the district administrators, principals, and other school leaders in the four-county Metro Milwaukee region. We hope this report's findings will be used to inform education discussions and policy debates at the local and state levels. This report is the second in the *Metro Milwaukee Educator* series of reports that will explore the characteristics of teachers and school leaders in our metro region.

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GUIDING PRINCIPALS: *An Analysis of Public School Leaders in Greater Milwaukee*

The second report in the Metro Milwaukee Educator series

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INTRODUCTION

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” – John F. Kennedy

Leadership is much celebrated in our culture. From the battlefield to the boardroom, from the playing field to politics, we exalt those with the ingenuity and skill to motivate others and achieve success.

That is also the case with regard to education. Research supports the link between quality school leaders – superintendents, principals, and assistant principals – and high student achievement. A longitudinal study of principal effectiveness in Texas found that “highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount.”¹ Moreover, the effect of high-quality school leaders is more pronounced at underperforming schools.²

We celebrate effective leaders in other facets of life, and research points to the importance of effective leaders in education. And yet, what do we know about the characteristics of school leaders in our own metro area?

In this report, we address this question with a comprehensive look at public school leaders in Greater Milwaukee. Our analysis covers the four-county Milwaukee metropolitan area and uses the most up-to-date data available to answer a number of questions, including:

- How many school leaders are there in Greater Milwaukee and how does that number compare among school districts?
- What are the ages and demographics of school leaders across the region?
- What qualifications and levels of experience do school leaders possess?
- What are the advancement options for school leaders and is there mobility across districts?

The education profession in Wisconsin has been the subject of much discussion and debate in recent years, particularly during consideration and implementation of Wisconsin Act 10. Consequently, our analysis includes data over multiple years to capture changes in school leader characteristics that have occurred since the 2009-10 school year.

This report is the second in a series on the educator workforce in the Milwaukee area. The first report, *Taking Attendance: An Analysis of Greater Milwaukee’s Teacher Workforce*, found that the number of teachers in the region has decreased nearly 5% since 2009-10. In response to retirements and vacancies, districts have hired teachers who are less experienced, but not necessarily younger. The teaching workforce is 89% white, despite the fact that 46% of Metro Milwaukee's K-12 students are students of color.

The final report will examine the teaching profession pipeline. Anecdotal information suggests that fewer people are entering the profession and that the region may face a shortage of teachers in coming years. Our upcoming research will quantify the number of teachers near retirement age, as well as the number of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs throughout the state. The analysis will help to answer whether we have enough people entering the profession to replace those nearing retirement.

¹ Branch, G.F., Hanushek, E.A., and Rivkin, S.G. (2013). *School Leaders Matter: Measuring the impact of effective principals*. EducationNext, Vol. 13, No. 1.

² Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., and Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *Review of research: How leadership influences student learning*. The Wallace Foundation.



The importance of teachers in educating students has been well documented. But while teachers are responsible for the students in their classrooms, school leaders define and prod organizational success for entire schools and districts. By examining the characteristics of principals, superintendents, and other school leaders in Metro Milwaukee and trends in their age, education levels, and mobility, we hope to provide insight for policymakers and the public that will further efforts to ensure that there is a pipeline of strong leaders to promote educational excellence in our region.



DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data used in this report primarily come from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The 'All Staff' files compiled by DPI include a variety of metrics for each public school employee, including name, gender, age, demographics, highest degree earned, and years of experience. The files also describe the position and role of each staff member as well as the district and school in which they are employed. Using these 'All Staff' data files as a starting point, we conducted analyses to explore the school leader workforce at public schools in the region.

The sample for analysis includes staff members who are classified as District Administrator, Assistant District Administrator, Principal, and Assistant Principal. We acknowledge there are many other administrators at the district and school levels who positively affect the educational environment for students. However, the goal of this report is to look at the personnel most responsible for managing and operating schools and districts.

This report focuses on individuals, rather than Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. The sample includes any school leader who had at least one contract day in the 2009-10 and/or 2013-14 academic years, whether or not their primary position was as a district administrator, principal, or assistant principal. Unfortunately, the 2013-2014 school year represents the latest year for which a complete data set is available. We had hoped the DPI data set for the recently completed 2014-15 year would be available over the summer, but we recently learned that would not be the case.

For each metric in our analysis, we first discuss all school leaders in the metro region and then provide figures broken out by position for district officials, principals, and assistant principals. We do this because some metrics, such as age and experience level, can vary by position. Moreover, some individuals were coded in the data as holding multiple leadership roles. For this analysis, someone listed as both superintendent and principal is considered to be a superintendent. Similarly, someone listed as both principal and assistant principal is considered to be a principal.

We chose not to include information on salaries as part of this report. The DPI dataset includes every role for an employee, though only one amount for salary and benefits. A staff member who is an assistant principal, an English teacher, and an athletic coach appears in the data set three times, but his or her salary is the same for all three positions. Because we cannot isolate the amount of compensation resulting from school leadership activities, we chose to omit salaries.

The geographic focus of our analysis is the four-county Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes the public school districts in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties. We also added the Racine Unified School District at the bottom of **Table 1** to provide perspective on another large urban district that has some similarity to Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). We do not include Racine figures in the aggregate Metro Milwaukee numbers, however.

Several districts in the four-county region are in fact singular elementary and middle schools that feed into one of three union high schools: Arrowhead Union in Waukesha County, Hartford Union in Washington County, and Nicolet Union in Milwaukee County. To help distinguish these singular schools in the analyses, district-level tables provide the grade levels served by the districts that contribute to the union high schools.

It is important to note how charter schools are counted. Schools that are chartered by MPS are counted in the aggregate figures for Metro Milwaukee and are included in the district figures for MPS. Schools that are chartered by the Milwaukee Common Council and the University of Wisconsin-



Milwaukee are included in the aggregate figures for Metro Milwaukee, but are not included in the district breakdowns.

Private schools are not included in any of our analyses, as data regarding the school leader workforce in those schools are not collected by DPI and are not publicly available. Additionally, 21 MPS charter schools were omitted from the analysis due to a lack of data for the 2013-14 school year. As a result, the report cites the number of MPS schools with data as 144, while there were actually 165 total MPS schools in that year. Consequently, because of the unavailability of these data, the analysis provided here reflects a large, but still incomplete view of the regional school leader workforce.

Wisconsin Act 10, adopted in 2011, included a series of fiscal “tools” intended to help schools balance their budgets in the face of increasing health care and retiree legacy costs, major reductions in state aid adopted as part of the 2011-13 biennial state budget, and lower school district property tax levy caps. The bill aimed to achieve cost reductions in three main ways: by severely restricting the topics subject to collective bargaining by public employees; by requiring public employees to contribute 5.8% of their salary toward their pensions; and by requiring public employees in state-sponsored health care plans to pay 12.6% of their health insurance premiums.

From the perspective of local school districts, perhaps the most significant provision of Act 10 was its elimination from the collective bargaining process of all topics other than wage increases, which the law limits to the rate of inflation. Topics that were traditionally subject to labor negotiations, such as tenure, seniority, fringe benefits, and retirement age, may now be established at the discretion of local school boards. Wage increases negotiated beyond the rate of inflation must be approved by a referendum, and unions and employers are no longer allowed to bargain over supplementary pay above base wages.



NUMBER OF SCHOOL LEADERS

Public school districts across Metro Milwaukee employed 709 school leaders in the 2013-14 school year. This figure includes 60 district administrators, four assistant district administrators, 401 principals, and 244 assistant principals. These school leaders are found in urban, suburban, and rural districts throughout the region, as shown in **Table 1** on the following page.

Each district has an administrator, or superintendent, while only a handful have an assistant district administrator. The real variation among school districts is in the number of principals and assistant principals. The number of principals and assistant principals employed by a district is largely proportional to the number of schools in the district. To provide context, **Table 1** also includes a count of the number of schools in each district.

MPS employs nearly a third of all school leaders in the region, which makes sense given the district has exactly a third of the region's public schools. MPS employs 121 principals and 105 assistant principals, which represents 30.2% of all principals and 43.0% of all assistant principals in the region.

In nine small districts – including Herman, Lake Country, and Neosho – one individual serves as both district superintendent and school principal. Most districts have one principal for each school and less than one assistant principal per school. Though MPS has the highest number of principals, it has fewer principals than schools. The district had 144 schools in 2013-14 and just 121 principals. Similarly, West Bend had three fewer principals than schools in the district. Many small districts have individuals serving in the same role across multiple schools. For example, Hartland-Lakeside has three principals who each lead two schools.

The number of school leaders in the region declined by 32 (4.3%) between the 2009-10 and 2013-14 school years, as shown in **Table 2**. Over this period, 10 of the 53 districts in the analysis have fewer school leaders, 17 districts added personnel, and the remaining 26 districts had no change.

Table 2 digs beneath the aggregate data to see how individual positions have changed in recent years. Superintendents and assistant district administrators are combined as 'District Officials.' Over time, the number of district officials increased by 3, with the growth coming from non-MPS charter schools in Milwaukee. The number of principals in the region grew by 5. At the district level, Kettle Moraine and Waukesha each added 3, while non-MPS charter schools added 7. Conversely, a number of districts have fewer principals, including MPS (-5), West Allis (-4), and West Bend (-2).

Assistant principals accounted for the majority of the change in school leaders over the past five years. There are 40 fewer assistant principals today as compared to 2009-10, a 14.1% reduction. MPS has 44 fewer assistant principals, more than the decline for the region as a whole. Other districts with fewer assistant principals include Hartford UHS (-3) and Kettle Moraine (-2). A number of districts added assistant principals over the time period. Brown Deer, Elmbrook and Pewaukee each added two assistant principals, while non-MPS charter schools added three.



Table 1: Number of School Leaders in Metropolitan Milwaukee Public School Districts, 2013-14

District	Total Number of School Leaders	District Administrator	Assistant District Administrator	Principal	Assistant Principal	Number of Schools in District
Arrowhead UHS (9-12)	5	2	0	1	2	1
Brown Deer	7	1	0	2	4	2
Cedarburg	9	1	0	5	3	5
Cudahy	10	1	0	7	2	7
Elmbrook	19	1	0	10	8	10
Erin (K-8)	2	1	0	1	0	1
Fox Point (K-8)	3	1	0	2	0	2
Franklin	11	1	0	7	3	7
Friess Lake (K-8)	1	1	0	0	0	1
Germantown	10	1	0	6	3	6
Glendale-River Hills (K-8)	3	1	0	2	0	2
Grafton	8	1	0	6	1	5
Greendale	9	1	0	5	3	5
Greenfield	13	1	0	6	6	6
Hamilton	12	1	0	7	4	7
Hartford J1 (K-8)	5	1	0	3	1	3
Hartford UHS (9-12)	3	1	0	1	0	1
Hartland-Lakeside (K-8)	4	1	0	3	0	6
Herman (K-8)	1	1	0	0	0	1
Kettle Moraine	13	1	0	9	3	9
Kewaskum	7	1	0	5	1	5
Lake Country (K-8)	1	1	0	0	0	1
Maple Dale - Indian Hills (K-8)	2	1	0	1	0	2
Menomonee Falls	11	1	0	6	4	6
Mequon-Thiensville	10	1	1	6	2	6
Merton (K-8)	3	1	0	2	0	2
Milwaukee	227	1	0	121	105	144*
Mukwonago	14	1	0	8	5	8
Muskego-Norway	15	1	1	8	5	8
Neosho (K-8)	1	1	0	0	0	1
New Berlin	14	1	0	6	7	6
Nicolet UHS (9-12)	4	1	0	1	2	1
North Lake (K-8)	6	1	0	3	2	4
Northern Ozaukee	2	1	0	1	0	1
Oak Creek-Franklin	18	1	1	9	7	9
Oconomowoc	14	1	0	8	5	8
Pewaukee	9	1	0	4	4	4
Port Washington-Saukville	8	1	0	5	2	5
Richfield (K-8)	2	1	0	1	0	2
Richmond (K-8)	2	1	0	1	0	1
Rubicon (K-8)	2	1	0	1	0	1
Saint Francis	5	1	0	3	1	3
Shorewood	5	1	0	4	0	5
Slinger	10	2	0	5	3	5
South Milwaukee	10	1	0	6	3	6
Stone Bank (K-8)	2	1	0	0	1	1
Swallow (K-8)	2	1	0	1	0	1
Waukesha	39	1	1	26	11	25
Wauwatosa	23	1	0	16	6	17
West Allis	23	1	0	17	5	17
West Bend	17	1	0	9	7	12
Whitefish Bay	8	1	0	4	3	4
Whitnall	6	1	0	4	1	4
Metro Milwaukee	709	60	4	401	244	433
<i>Racine</i>	62	1	2	33	26	32

* MPS had a total of 165 schools in 2013-14 (including charters), though 21 were omitted from analysis due to lack of data



Table 2: Number of School Leaders Over Time by Position

Position	2009-10	2013-14	Change Over Time
District Officials	61	64	3
Principals	396	401	5
Assistant Principals	284	244	-40
Total School Leaders	741	709	-32

There are two considerations worth noting with regard to this five-year comparison. First, we should consider the change in school leaders in the context of changes in student enrollment, since this influences the number of schools in the region. Overall, the four-county metro area enrolled 236,205 public school students in 2013-14, which represents a 0.4% decline from the 2009-10 enrollment level of 237,127 students. The 4.3% decline in school leaders outpaced the decrease in student enrollment.

Second, we should consider the change in the number of schools in Metro Milwaukee, since this influences the number of school leaders. Over the time period, the number of schools in the region fell from 483 to 433, a decline of 10.4%. The reduction of 50 schools is disproportional to the much smaller proportional decreases in school leaders and student enrollment.

The metro-wide figures mask the very real influence of MPS. If we separate the region into MPS and non-MPS, a number of interesting patterns emerge. Over time, MPS saw a decrease of 3,580 students, representing a 4.4% decrease in its student population. Meanwhile, non-MPS districts saw enrollments increase by 1.7%, or 2,658 students. If we look at schools, we see MPS had 198 schools in 2009-10 and 165 schools in 2013-14, a 16.7% reduction.³ Meanwhile, non-MPS districts added two schools, growing from 286 to 289 schools in the last five years.

The decrease in students and schools within MPS contributed to a decline in school leaders. MPS had 276 school leaders in 2009-10. By 2013-14, that number had fallen to 227, a 17.8% reduction in school leaders. Over this same period, the number of school leaders in non-MPS districts increased from 465 in 2009-10 to 482 in 2013-14, a 3.7% increase.

The decrease in MPS school leaders is greater than the decrease in student enrollment, but less than the decline in schools. Some of this decline is the result of a district initiative to move towards combined K-8 schools rather than separate elementary and middle schools. Prior research by the Public Policy Forum has noted a decrease in MPS enrollment coinciding with rising enrollments in charter schools and private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.⁴ The combination of district policies and shifting enrollments likely contributed to fewer schools and fewer school leaders in MPS over time.

³ In the 2013-14 school year, 21 MPS charter schools were omitted from analysis due to lack of data, which gives the 144 schools figure shown in Table 1.

⁴ Day, D., Yeado, J., and Schmidt, J. (2014). *The K-12 School System in Milwaukee: How has it changed and how does it measure up to peers?* The Public Policy Forum.



DEMOGRAPHICS OF SCHOOL LEADERS

With an understanding of the number of school leaders in Greater Milwaukee, we can explore their demographics. On the whole, school leaders in the region are fairly evenly divided by gender, with 47.7% of leaders being female and 52.3% being male, as shown in **Table 3**. This contrasts greatly with the teacher workforce in the area, which is 74.8% female and 25.2% male. Over time, the gender balance for school leaders has skewed slightly more towards males, with their representation increasing 0.5 percentage points in the last five years.

Table 3: Gender of School Leaders Over Time by Position

Position	2009-10		2013-14	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
District Officials	73.8%	26.2%	65.6%	34.4%
Principals	49.0%	51.0%	49.1%	50.9%
Assistant Principals	51.1%	48.9%	54.3%	45.7%
Total School Leaders	51.8%	48.2%	52.3%	47.7%

Looking at specific leadership positions, we see that the widest gender disparity involves district officials. In 2013-14, men comprised 65.6% of district officials, compared to just 34.4% women. Though men are twice as likely to be district officials as women, the ratio is actually more balanced than previously. In the 2009-10 school year, men made up 73.8% of district officials, while women accounted for 26.2%.

School principals are almost evenly split, with 50.9% being female and 49.1% male. It is interesting to note that the gender balance for principals is largely unchanged over the last five years. Men are slightly more represented among assistant principals (54.3%) than women (45.7%). This gender gap for assistant principals has widened over time.

School leaders in the area are not especially diverse. As shown in **Table 4**, white school leaders comprise 72.2% of the workforce in Metro Milwaukee, while minority school leaders account for 27.8% of the workforce. African Americans make up the largest minority group with 21% of all school leaders. Despite the racial imbalance, school leaders are more diverse than teachers in the region, as teachers of color account for only 10.9% of the workforce. Both groups of educators, however, lack the diversity of enrollments, where 45.7% are students of color. Moreover, the diversity of school leaders declined in recent years. Non-white leaders comprised 29.4% of school leaders in 2009-10, but fell 1.6 percentage points in the ensuing five years.

Table 4: Race/Ethnicity of Metro Milwaukee School Leaders and Teachers, 2013-14

Race/Ethnicity	All School Leaders	Teachers	Students
African American	21.0%	6.1%	23.9%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%
Asian	0.6%	1.0%	4.6%
Hispanic	5.4%	3.2%	14.5%
Two or More Races	0.6%	0.2%	1.9%
White	72.2%	89.1%	54.3%
Total Non-White	27.8%	10.9%	45.7%



While school leaders are a more racially diverse group than teachers, the diversity is not spread throughout the region. Milwaukee Public Schools employs 157 of the 197 leaders of color in the metro area, just shy of 80%. Of the 53 districts in the analysis, 37 do not employ any school leaders of color. Several of these districts are small with only a handful of schools and principals. Others, however, are larger and serve significant numbers of students of color. For example, Cudahy employs 10 school leaders, all of whom are white, despite a student population that is 31.1% minority. Similarly, all of the 19 school leaders in Elmbrook are white while the enrollment is 24.3% students of color.

One contributing factor to the low number of leaders of color may be the low number of teachers of color in the region. Across Metro Milwaukee, there were 1,566 teachers of color in 2013-14 out of a total of 14,411 teachers (10.9%). Because school leaders are most frequently promoted from the ranks of teachers, a small pool of teachers of color likely results in a small number of leaders of color. Districts should continue taking steps to increase retention of all teachers, but especially teachers of color. This can be a challenging process, but it may help bring greater racial balance to school leadership.

District officials are the least racially diverse group of school leaders, as shown in **Table 5**. In 2013-14, 90.6% of district officials were white, while just 9.4% were minority. This equates to six leaders of color among the 64 district officials employed in the region. There has been some recent improvement in this area, however, as the number of non-white district officials has doubled from three in 2009-10.

Table 5: Race/Ethnicity of Metro Milwaukee School Leaders Over Time

Position	2009-10	2013-14	Change Over Time
District Officials: Percent non-white	4.9%	9.4%	+/- 4.5 pts
District Officials: Percent white	95.1%	90.6%	
Principals: Percent non-white	25.8%	27.7%	+/- 1.9 pts
Principals: Percent white	74.2%	72.3%	
Assistant Principals: Percent non-white	39.8%	32.8%	+/- 7.0 pts
Assistant Principals: Percent white	60.2%	67.2%	
Total School Leaders: Percent non-white	29.4%	27.8%	+/- 1.6 pts
Total School Leaders: Percent white	70.6%	72.2%	

Principals in the region are 27.7% non-white and 72.3% white, largely reflecting the pattern among all school leaders. MPS employs 87 principals of color, which represents 78.4% of all minority principals in Greater Milwaukee. This group has grown more diverse over time, with principals of color increasing 1.9 percentage points from 25.8% in 2009-10.

Assistant principals represent the most racially diverse group of school leaders, as leaders of color comprise 32.8% of assistant principals in the region. Once again, the diversity is centered in MPS, which employs 86.3% of all assistant principals of color. Since 2009-10, the number of assistant principals in the region declined by 40, and the decrease was disproportionately attributed to a reduction in non-whites, who accounted for 33 of the total. This resulted in the percentage of minority assistant principals declining from 39.8% in 2009-10 to 32.8% in 2013-14.



AGE OF SCHOOL LEADERS

Looking beyond demographics, we see that the average age of a public school leader in Greater Milwaukee is 45.9 years, as shown in **Table 6**. The typical school leader is younger today, with the average age falling from 47.1 years in 2009-10. For comparison, the average age of a public school teacher is 43 years old and is unchanged over the same time period.

Table 6: Average Age of School Leaders Over Time

Position	2009-10	2013-14	Change Over Time
District Officials	53.4	50.6	-2.8
Principals	47.9	46.4	-1.5
Assistant Principals	44.7	43.8	-0.9
Total School Leaders	47.1	45.9	-1.2

District officials have the highest average age at 50.6 years, which is logical given the years of necessary experience inherent to the position. Over the past five years, however, the average age of district officials has declined by nearly three years. The average age for a principal in the region is 46.4 years and this too has declined, falling from 47.9 years in 2009-10. Assistant principals tend to be the youngest school leaders, with an average age of 43.8. The average age of assistant principals decreased by nearly a year during the period examined.

This information yields a number of interesting implications. First, the average age for each position decreased over time. This indicates that as older school leaders retire or leave the district, they are being replaced by younger leaders across each position. Second, the average number of years between positions is shrinking. In 2009-10, there was a gap of 5.5 years between the average age of district officials and principals, and 3.2 years between principals and assistant principals. By 2013-14, the margin had narrowed to 4.2 years between district officials and principals, and 2.6 years between principals and assistant principals. This suggests individuals are assuming these leadership positions at younger ages than in the past.

Table 7 takes a closer look at the distribution of ages across school leaders and reveals certain patterns. School leaders in their 40s comprise nearly 45% of the workforce in the region. Leaders in their 30s and 50s each account for about a quarter of the workforce, while only a small number (5.6%) are in their 60s. Very young and very old school leaders make up a negligible part of the workforce.

Table 7: School Leaders by Age Group Over Time

Age Range	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
20-29	0.1%	0.7%	0.6 pts
30-39	25.0%	22.7%	- 2.3 pts
40-49	33.2%	44.9%	11.6 pts
50-59	31.7%	25.7%	- 6.0 pts
60-69	9.7%	5.6%	- 4.1 pts
70+	0.3%	0.4%	0.1 pt



Looking at the age groups over time, we see that the percentage of school leaders in their 50s and 60s has declined. This trend was also present for teachers, whose exit from the profession may have been prompted by changes to benefits associated with Act 10. However, salary and benefits for administrators are not collectively bargained as they are for teachers, suggesting that Act 10 may not have been a contributing factor in school leaders leaving the profession.

One possible explanation may be that educators typically have an earlier retirement age (55) than many other professions. The U.S. Census Bureau defines Baby Boomers as being born between 1946 and 1964, meaning that educators in this generation would be eligible for retirement starting in 2001 and extending through 2019. The five-year period in our analysis coincides with the middle of the Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement age. To replace these leaders, it is logical to expect districts to hire younger employees, which helps explain the large increase in the number of leaders in their 40s.

What is curious is the decline in school leaders in their 30s. To maintain a steady supply of leaders, one might expect districts to hire more principals in their 40s and more assistant principals in their 30s. We address this question by examining age ranges for the various school leader categories.

Table 8 provides the age distribution for district officials. As we have noted, district officials have the highest average age among school leaders, and the table shows an equal percentage in their 40s and 50s. Officials in their 30s and 60s comprise 10.8% and 12.5% of the total, respectively, and there is one official aged 70 or above. Over time, the number of district officials in their 50s and 60s declined and the number in their 40s increased, as would be expected. What is more surprising is the growth among district officials in their 30s.

Table 8: District Officials by Age Group Over Time

Age Range	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
30-39	4.9%	10.8%	5.9 pts
40-49	24.6%	37.5%	12.9 pts
50-59	45.9%	37.5%	- 8.4 pts
60-69	24.6%	12.5%	- 12.1 pts
70+	0.0%	1.6%	1.6 pts

Looking at principals in **Table 9**, we see the same patterns on display. Nearly half of the principals in Metro Milwaukee are in their 40s, with their percentage of the workforce increasing 12 percentage points since 2009-10. Meanwhile, the number principals in their 50s and 60s fell as expected. It is interesting to note that while principals in their 30s account for about 19% of the workforce, their ranks grew very slowly – just half a percentage point – over the last five years.

Table 9: Principals by Age Group Over Time

Age Range	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
20-29	0%	0.2%	0.2 pts
30-39	18.7%	18.7%	No change
40-49	36.9%	48.9%	12.0 pts
50-59	34.3%	26.2%	- 8.1 pts
60-69	9.8%	5.5%	- 4.3 pts
70+	0.3%	0.5%	0.2 pts



As shown in **Table 10**, assistant principals in their 40s represent the largest age group and have increased over the time period studied, though to a lesser extent than district officials and principals. As we have seen with other positions, the decrease among those in their 50s and 60s exists for assistant principals, as well. Somewhat surprising is that the percentage of assistant principals in their 30s fell from 38% in 2009-10 to 32.4% in 2013-14. This suggests that districts in the region are not expanding the ranks of younger assistant principals, which may present challenges in creating an effective leadership pipeline to prepare future principals and district officials.

Table 10: Assistant Principals by Age Group Over Time

Age Range	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
20-29	0.4%	1.6%	1.2 pts
30-39	38.0%	32.4%	- 5.6 pts
40-49	29.9%	40.2%	10.7 pts
50-59	25.0%	21.7%	- 3.3 pts
60-69	6.3%	4.1%	- 2.2 pts
70+	0.4%	0.0%	- 0.4 pts

There are two additional findings regarding age that are worth noting. First, for nearly all leadership positions, men are younger than women, as shown in **Table 11**. Across all school leaders, the average age for women is 46.3 years old, while men are nearly a full year younger at 45.5 years. District officials are relatively equal in terms of age across gender. However, women principals and assistant principals are consistently older than their male counterparts. The gender age gap for male principals has actually narrowed over time from -3.2 years in 2009-10, while the gap for assistant principals nearly doubled from -0.4 years to -0.7 years in the past five years.

Table 11: Average Age of Metro Milwaukee School Leaders by Gender, 2013-14

Position	Women	Men	Difference for Men
District Officials	50.4	50.8	0.4
Principals	47.0	45.8	-1.2
Assistant Principals	44.1	43.4	-0.7
Total School Leaders	46.3	45.5	-0.8

The second finding is in regard to the percentage of school leaders who are age 55 and over and who would be anticipated to retire in the near future. **Table 12** shows that 16.6% of school leaders in the metro area are 55 and older. District officials have the highest concentration of leaders 55 and over, representing 37.5% of the workforce, while assistant principals have the fewest with 11.9% of the workforce. Each position saw a decrease in the percentage of leaders 55 and over since 2009-10, which aligns with the wave of Baby Boomer reaching retirement age as described above.

Table 12: Percentage of School Leaders Aged 55 and Over

Position	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
District Officials	50.8%	37.5%	- 13.3 pts
Principals	27.5%	17.0%	- 10.5 pts
Assistant Principals	18.3%	11.9%	- 6.4 pts
Total School Leaders	25.9%	16.6%	- 9.3 pts



EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL LEADERS

In 2013-14, the average school leader in Greater Milwaukee had 17.1 years of total educational experience, as shown in **Table 13**. District officials have an average of 23.1 years of total experience, while principals have 17.5 years, and assistant principals have 14.8 years. For comparison, the average teacher in Metro Milwaukee has 12.7 years of total teaching experience.

Table 13: Average Years of Total Experience of School Leaders Over Time

Position	2009-10	2013-14	Change Over Time
District Officials	25.2	23.1	-2.1
Principals	19.5	17.5	-2
Assistant Principals	15.5	14.8	-0.7
Total School Leaders	18.4	17.1	-1.3

Across each leadership position, the average experience level has decreased from 2009-10. District officials and principals saw a decline of about two years of experience, while assistant principals exhibited a decrease of nearly one year. These declines indicate that, on average, the school leader workforce in the region is less experienced today than it was five years ago. This finding aligns with the data showing sharp decreases in the number of leaders age 50 and over. The departure of these older school leaders, presumably with many years of experience, would lower the average experience level for the leader workforce as a whole.

Looking at the distribution of total experience across the workforce in **Table 14** again yields interesting results. Nearly 47% of school leaders have between 10 and 20 years of total experience. About 20% of the workforce has less than 10 years of experience, while a third of school leaders have been in the profession for 20 years or more. Over time, the number of leaders with 15-20 years of experience has grown, while those with more than 25 years have decreased. Interestingly, the number of leaders with between 5-15 years of experience also has declined. This decrease in younger school leaders again raises concerns about a stable pipeline to prepare future leaders.

Table 14: Percent of School Leaders by Total Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
0-4.9	7.2%	7.8%	0.6 pts
5-9.9	12.7%	12.1%	- 0.6 pts
10-14.9	20.9%	19.3%	- 1.6 pts
15-19.9	18.1%	27.5%	9.4 pts
20-24.9	14.6%	15.0%	0.4 pts
25-29.9	10.7%	9.6%	- 1.1 pts
30+	16.0%	8.7%	- 7.3 pts



Looking at the distribution of experience across all school leaders in the area masks some important trends. **Table 15** shows the experience distribution for district officials. Among these leaders, the largest group – 26.4% of the workforce – has more than 30 years of experience, as befitting the nature of the job. However, this group has declined nearly 18 percentage points – a 40% reduction – since 2009-10. Meanwhile, district officials within nearly all other experience segments increased over time. These patterns suggests that, in the last five years, older and more experienced district officials retired or left the profession and were replaced with younger, less experienced officials.

Table 15: Percent of District Officials by Total Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
0-4.9	9.8%	4.7%	- 5.2 pts
5-9.9	0.0%	4.7%	4.6 pts
10-14.9	8.2%	10.9%	2.6 pts
15-19.9	9.8%	14.1%	4.0 pts
20-24.9	14.8%	23.4%	8.3 pts
25-29.9	13.1%	15.6%	3.8 pts
30+	44.3%	26.4%	- 17.9 pts

As shown in **Table 16**, in 2009-10, principals were fairly evenly distributed between levels of experience, with about 39% having 10-20 years. By 2013-14, that group expanded to encompass 49.4% of the workforce. The percentage of principals with more than 25 years of experience has decreased sharply over time.

Table 16: Percent of Principals by Total Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
0-4.9	5.3%	5.0%	- 0.3pts
5-9.9	10.4%	11.5%	1.1 pts
10-14.9	19.4%	19.2%	- 0.2 pts
15-19.9	19.7%	30.2%	10.5 pts
20-24.9	15.4%	16.5%	1.1 pts
25-29.9	11.6%	9.2%	- 2.4 pts
30+	18.2%	8.4%	- 9.8 pts

Assistant principals, shown in **Table 17**, display a unique pattern. Much like the other positions, the largest group of assistant principals – 26.6% of the workforce – has between 15-20 years of total experience. This group has grown over time, as have assistant principals with less than five years of experience. But assistant principals at every other experience level declined over time, including those with 5-15 years of experience. It is this group that can form the core of school leaders to be groomed over time to become principals and district leaders. The decreased representation of this group among assistant principals further underscores challenges to developing future school leaders.



Table 17: Percent of Assistant Principals by Total Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Percent of Workforce 2009-10	Percent of Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
0-4.9	9.2%	13.1%	3.9 pts
5-9.9	18.7%	15.2%	- 3.5 pts
10-14.9	25.7%	21.7%	- 4.0 pts
15-19.9	17.6%	26.6%	9.0 pts
20-24.9	13.4%	10.2%	- 3.2 pts
25-29.9	8.8%	8.6%	- 0.2 pts
30+	6.7%	4.5%	- 2.2 pts

There are two additional findings regarding experience levels that are worth noting. First, for every school leadership position, men have less experience than women, as shown in **Table 18**. Across all school leaders, women have an average of 17.8 years of total experience, compared to 16.5 years for their male counterparts. The largest disparity is seen among school principals, where men have nearly two fewer years of experience. Taken together with the earlier findings on age, we see that male school leaders tend to be younger and less experienced than their female colleagues.

Table 18: Average Years of Experience of Metro Milwaukee School Leaders by Gender, 2013-14

Position	Women	Men	Difference for Men
District Officials	23.9	22.6	-1.3
Principals	18.5	16.6	-1.9
Assistant Principals	15.4	14.4	-1.0
Total School Leaders	17.8	16.5	-1.3

Finally, there is a difference between the total number of years a leader has worked and the number of years the leader has worked in the current district. **Table 19** illustrates that while the average school leader has 17.1 years of total experience, the average leader has been working in the current district for 11.7 years. The difference is most stark for district officials, who have an average of 23.1 years of total experience and 10.3 years of local experience. Since districts only have one superintendent, it is logical that district officials would need to change school districts in order to advance their careers.

Table 19: Difference Between Total and Local Years of Experience Among School Leaders

Position	Total Experience	Local Experience	Difference
District Officials	23.1	10.3	-12.8
Principals	17.5	11.7	-5.8
Assistant Principals	14.8	12.0	-2.8
Total School Leaders	17.1	11.7	-5.4

The difference is smaller for principals (5.8 years) and assistant principals (2.8 years). Interestingly, assistant principals have more local experience than the average for all school leaders. The data suggest that assistant principals tend to spend their entire tenure in the same district unless and until, presumably, they are promoted to become a principal or district leader.



QUALIFICATIONS OF SCHOOL LEADERS

Among school leaders in Metro Milwaukee, the highest degree earned is typically a Master's degree. As shown in **Table 20**, 82.2% of school leaders hold a Master's degree. Additionally, 6.6% obtained a Doctorate, 8.9% hold a Bachelor's degree, and 2.2% of the workforce has a 6-Year Specialist or Other credential. Since 2009-10, the number of school leaders with Master's and Doctorate degrees has declined, while the number with a Bachelor's as their highest degree has increased.

Table 20: Metro Milwaukee School Leaders by Highest Degree Earned

Degree	Percent of the Workforce 2009-10	Percent of the Workforce 2013-14	Change Over Time
6-Year Specialist	2.4%	1.1%	- 1.3 pts
Bachelor	5.1%	8.9%	3.8 pts
Masters	83.9%	82.2%	- 1.7 pts
Doctorate	8.0%	6.6%	- 1.4 pts
Other	0.5%	1.1%	0.6 pts

Table 21 provides a look at education attainment levels for the different leadership positions. A Doctorate degree is the most common credential for district officials (48.4%) followed closely by a Master's degree (45.3%). Eighty-nine percent of principals have a Master's as their highest degree, with a small number of Bachelor's degree holders (6.0%) and a handful of Ph.Ds. (3.5%). Among assistant principals, a Master's degree also was the most common (80.7%), but a Bachelor's degree (15.6%) was much more common than for the other positions.

Table 21: Highest Degree Earned of School Leaders by Position

Degree	District Official	Principal	Assistant Principal
6-Year Specialist	4.7%	0.5%	1.2%
Bachelor	1.6%	6.0%	15.6%
Masters	45.3%	89.0%	80.7%
Doctorate	48.4%	3.5%	0.8%
Other	0.0%	1.0%	1.6%

It is not unusual that so many school leaders have advanced degrees. To be a principal or assistant principal in Wisconsin requires a master's degree in administration or equivalent area, a valid teaching license or the ability to obtain one, and at least three years of successful teaching or student services experience.⁵ Superintendents require an additional specialist degree. The fact that there are school leaders with Bachelor's degrees likely is attributed to a provision in State statutes that allows school boards to request a one-year administrator license provided that the person is admitted to an approved preparation program and will complete the program within two years. This conditional license can be renewed once. It is not clear how many school leaders are currently working via a conditional license, though this would explain the number of Bachelor's degree holders currently serving as school leaders.

⁵ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2015). *Chapter PI 34: Teacher Education Program Approval and Licenses*. http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/pi/34.pdf



SCHOOL LEADER MOBILITY AND ADVANCEMENT

As part of our analysis, we sought to understand the career path of school leaders in the region. We wanted to know if school leaders frequently changed districts, what the advancement options are for school leaders, and whether it was necessary to move to a new district to gain a promotion. In the DPI data set, each employee is given a unique identifying number, which allowed us to follow a leader over the course of his or her career.

Table 22 begins our examination with a look at teacher mobility. Of the 741 school leaders in the four-country metro's public schools in 2009-10, 411 were still working in the 2013-14 school year. Of that amount, 375 were still employed in the same district, while 36 were working in a different district – a mobility rate of 8.8%. Teachers, by comparison, had a mobility rate of 6.8% over the same time period. Mobility does not appear to be a widespread issue for school leaders or teachers.

Table 22: School Leader Mobility Over Time

	Number	Percent
Leaders Employed in Both 2009-10 and 2013-14	411	-
Leaders Employed in the Same District	375	91.2%
Leaders Employed in a Different District	36	8.8%

Table 23 shows advancement patterns for school leaders over time. Of the 411 leaders still working in 2013-14, 26% were in a different position. Of the 107 leaders working in a different position, 93% had received a promotion. There were eight leaders who transitioned to lower positions, typically moving from a principal to an assistant principal. Among the school leaders in new roles, 90 stayed in the same district, while 17 (15.9%) took a new position in a different district. There is some evidence to suggest leaders move up by moving out, but it does not appear to be a widespread practice.

Table 23: School Leader Advancement Over Time

	Number	Percent
Leaders Employed in the Same Position	304	74.0%
Leaders Employed in a Different Position	107	26.0%
Leaders Who Received a Promotion	99	92.5%
Leaders Who Moved to a Lower Position	8	7.5%

Finally, we were curious about the advancement patterns of assistant principals. In **Table 24**, we see that of the 174 assistant principals working in both 2009-10 and 2013-14, 87 remained as assistant principals, 86 became principals, and one became a superintendent. Thirteen assistant principals changed districts to become a principal, further showing some evidence of moving up by moving out. These advancement patterns suggests that assistant principals are a talent pool from which to draw principals, though with the reduction in assistant principals over time, it remains unclear how well the pool is stocked for the future.

Table 24: Outcomes for Assistant Principals Over Time

Outcome	Number	Percent
Remained Assistant Principal	87	50.0%
Promoted to Principal	86	49.4%
Became Superintendent	1	0.6%



CONCLUSION

This report set out to quantify the number of public school leaders in the Greater Milwaukee area and to provide insight on their characteristics. Using data collected by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, we were able to identify a number of trends and patterns in the school leader workforce over a period of time that included the adoption of Act 10. The findings include the following:

- The number of school leaders in the metro area has declined by 32 (4.3%) since 2009-10. MPS lost 49 leaders, which means that other districts in the region collectively saw an increase of 17 school leaders.
- School leaders are predominately white, with leaders of color comprising 27.8% of the workforce despite students of color making up 45.7% of enrollments.
- The average age and average years of experience have fallen over time, indicating a younger, less experienced group of school leaders.
- The number of school leaders age 55 and over is down 38.5% in recent years.
- Mobility among school leaders exists, but with only 8.8% of leaders moving over the recent five-year period examined, mobility is not a widespread issue.
- There are advancement pathways for school leaders, but with a reduction in assistant principals over time, the talent pool of future leaders is smaller than in the past.

These findings provide much insight about school leaders in our region, but they omit an important group. Private schools in the metro area do not submit the same data and are not included in this report. Without the ability to include leaders from private schools, this analysis does not encompass the entire educational landscape of Greater Milwaukee.

As with many research projects, this report raises more questions than it provides answers. Some questions for future research include:

- Many smaller districts have leaders filling multiple roles. Do these districts have the resources they need to adequately staff their schools?
- How will a shift towards younger, less experienced school leaders affect student achievement?
- How do districts sustain and develop a pool of school leaders for future positions?

We aim to address these and other questions in future research. The final report in the *Metro Milwaukee Educator* series will quantify the teacher workforce pipeline to understand if current and projected staffing levels align with the number of teachers who may retire in the near future. We will also explore retention and professional development policies with an aim to understand how teachers are prepared to become future school leaders.

Leadership is not the presence of a single attribute; rather, it is the collection of many characteristics that, when combined, motivate and inspire others towards a common goal. In a region facing numerous education challenges, strong and effective education leaders are badly needed. We hope the research findings presented here shed light on school leaders and initiate enhanced planning by policymakers and civic leaders to ensure that Greater Milwaukee has a high-quality workforce of education leaders.

