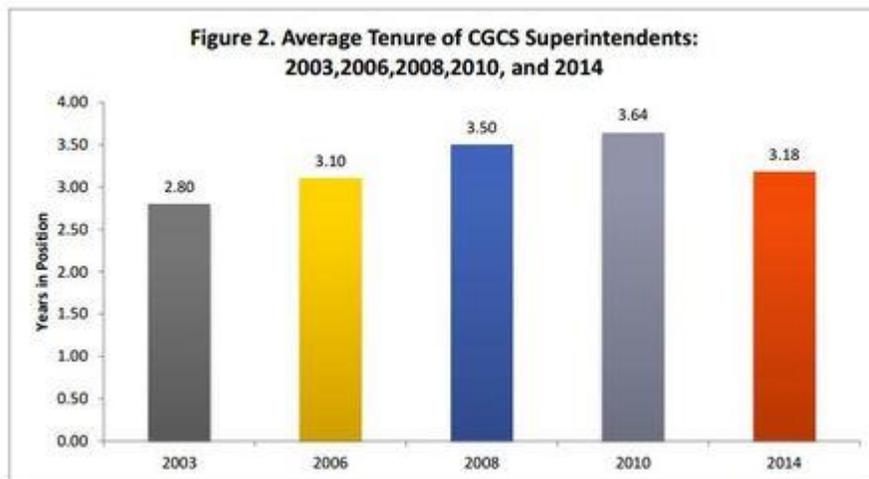


Average Urban School Superintendent Tenure Decreases, Survey Shows

By Madeline Will on November 6, 2014 3:03 PM

Urban school superintendents often leave the job after a few years—and the average time leaders spent in the post lost some ground this year, according to new survey results.

The average tenure of superintendents leading urban school districts across the country is now 3.2 years, a dip downward from what had been an uptick over several years, the [survey conducted by the Council of Great City Schools found](#). The council's survey—which represents the 2013-14 school year—included responses from 53 of its 66 members, which are among the largest school systems in the country.



Since 2003, average tenure for urban schools chiefs had grown from 2.8 years to 3.6 years in 2010.

The slight decrease was attributed to significant turnover in the 2013-14 school year.

"This continued churn makes it harder for urban school systems to maintain and accelerate the positive academic momentum that they have created over the last several years," said Michael Casserly, the council's executive director, in a statement.

And so far, it appears the churn in urban districts will continue for the current academic year. Last month, in one of the most notable examples, [John Deasy resigned](#) as superintendent from

Los Angeles Unified just shy of four years at the helm of the country's second-largest school system. His tenure was rife with controversy, including the district's botched rollout of a \$1.3 billion iPad program, but he also oversaw a rise in graduation rates, higher test scores, and improvements for English-language learners.

Other recent resignations in major districts include [Winston Brooks in Albuquerque](#) and Craig Witherspoon in Birmingham, Ala. And earlier this week, Heath Morrison, the superintendent in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district in North Carolina, abruptly resigned just two years after a national search brought him to the district from the Washoe County school system in Reno, Nev. The [Charlotte Observer has reported](#) that the district's general counsel wrote a report that outlined allegations that Morrison misled the school board about a building project and created a "culture of fear" among employees.

(Relatedly, my colleague Denisa Superville wrote about the toll the [high rate of principal turnovers](#) is putting on school districts.)

The council's report also includes the demographics of urban school superintendents. About 45 percent are white, 42 percent are black, and 9 percent are Hispanic. Men are much more likely to hold the top spot for urban schools—this year, 70 percent were men, compared to 28 percent of women.