



Council of the Great City Schools

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FOR RELEASE
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Urban School Superintendents Tenure Slips, Says New Report

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6 – Perhaps one of the toughest jobs in America, the urban school superintendent must unite parents, educators, school boards, as well as business and community leaders around a clear vision to effectively educate inner-city schoolchildren.

Although they run corporation-size operations that are in the business of providing instruction to a disproportionately large number of economically disadvantaged and minority students, today's urban school superintendents are staying in their posts longer than 10 years ago but somewhat shorter than 2010.

The average tenure of current superintendents leading the nation's largest urban public school districts gradually increased from 2.8 years in 2003 to 3.6 years in 2010, but dipped to 3.2 years in 2014, according to a new survey by the Council of the Great City Schools, [*Urban Indicator -- Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure and Salary.*](#)

"Urban school superintendents were leading their districts for longer periods of time, but significant turnover this year brought the average tenure down," stressed Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. "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."

Nonetheless, several big-city school superintendents have been at the helm for nearly or longer than 10 years, including Christopher Steinhauser of California's Long Beach Unified School District (12 years), MaryEllen Elia of Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa (nine years), Michael Hanson of California's Fresno Unified School District (9 years) and Carole Smith of Oregon's Portland Public Schools (seven years).

At the same time, urban school districts have lost a number of leaders this year, including superintendents in Albuquerque, Birmingham, Charlotte, and Los Angeles.

The new report is the Council's eighth survey in a series of *Urban Indicator* publications. Highlights of the 10-page report include the demographics of urban school superintendents, showing approximately 45 percent white, 42 percent black and 9 percent Hispanic, as well as 70 percent men and 28 percent women in 2014. Data are also given on previous work experience, accountability, salaries, benefits and bonuses.

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