



# urban Indicator

A Research Publication

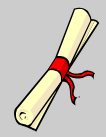
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*Council of the Great City Schools*

## **Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary**

**Fourth Biennial Survey**



## Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure and Salary

### Introduction & Survey Methodology

The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its member cities in the summer of 2003 to determine the characteristics of superintendents in America's urban schools. This, the Council's fourth biennial report on urban superintendents, contains the results of that survey. Results from the 1997, 1999, and 2001 surveys are also provided as comparisons.

Survey forms were mailed and faxed to the secretary of the board of education and the communication/public relations manager in each of the member districts in July and again in September of 2003 to insure the highest response rate possible. Re-

spondents were asked to provide information on the gender, race/ethnicity, salary, benefits, and bonuses for their districts' superintendent as of July 1, 2003. Surveys were received from 59 out of the 61 member districts, for a response rate of 96.7 percent.

Council staff determined the race/ethnicity and gender of superintendents in the non-responding districts and estimated salaries on the basis of previous information. These estimates are included in this report. All data presented in this publication are reported in summary form. Salaries for 1997, 1999, and 2001 have been adjusted for inflation and are presented in constant 2003 dollars.

### Highlights

#### Demographics

(As of July 1, 2003)

- ◆ Some 56 percent of Great City School (GCS) superintendents were White, 33 percent were Black, and 10 percent were Hispanic in 2003. By contrast, 37 percent of GCS superintendents were White, 47 percent were Black and 16 percent were Hispanic in 1997.
- ◆ About 77 percent of GCS superintendents were men in 2003. Some 46 percent of all superintendents were White males; 20 percent were Black males, 10 percent were Hispanic males, and less than 2 percent were Asian males.
- ◆ Approximately 23 percent of GCS superintendents were women in 2003. Some 13 percent of all superintendents were Black females; 10 percent were White females; and there were no Hispanic or Asian female superintendents.
- ◆ About 15 percent of GCS superintendents come from non-traditional backgrounds.



#### Tenure

- ◆ The average tenure of the current Great City Schools (GCS) superintendent increased from 2 ½ years in 2001 to 2 ¾ years in 2003.<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ The average tenure of the immediate past Great City Schools (GCS) superintendent was 4 3/5 years in 2003.<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ The majority (54%) of GCS superintendents have been in office between one and five years. This is down from (64%) 2001.

<sup>1</sup> Tenure was defined as length of time current superintendent has been in office as of July 1, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> 2003 was the first year the tenure of the immediate past superintendent was calculated.



- ◆ Approximately 31 percent of GCS superintendents have been in office for one year or less. This is an increase from 22 percent in 2001.
- ◆ Only 15 percent of GCS superintendents had 5 or more years in their current positions in 2003. This is a decrease from 20 percent in 1997.

### Salaries

- ◆ The average salary for GCS superintendents increased from \$183,208 (in constant 2003 dollars)<sup>3</sup> in 2001 to \$188,988 in 2003, a real increase of 3.2 percent.
- ◆ The salary range for GCS superintendents was \$120,000 to \$325,500 in 2003. The salary range was \$113,000 to \$298,000 in 2001.
- ◆ The average salary for a GCS superintendent with 5 or more years experience was \$187,245 in 2003; and the average salary for a GCS superintendent with between 1 and 5 years was \$196,781; and the average salary for a GCS superintendent with 1 year or less was \$176,277.
- ◆ The average salary for a GCS superintendent in a district with less than 50,00 students was \$164,681 in 2003; in a district with between 50,000 and 100,000 students was \$193,728; in a district with between 100,000 and 200,000 students was \$222,527; and in a district with more than 200,000 students was \$223,094.
- ◆ The average salary for superintendents of school districts with 25,000 or more students in 2003 nationally is estimated at \$170,024, compared with an average of \$126,268 for districts of all sizes.<sup>4</sup>

### Benefits & Bonuses

- ◆ The range of annual bonuses or pay-for-performance provisions in 2003 ranged from \$4,050 to \$100,000.
- ◆ Superintendent pay-for-performance bonuses in 2003 ranged from 3 to 40 percent of their base salary.
- ◆ Some 81.4 percent of GCS superintendents had benefits that included a car or mileage allowance; 30.5 percent had financial bonuses; 37.3 percent had such other benefits as travel allowances, membership dues, moving expenses, and communication allowances; and 5.1 percent had a house or apartment allowance in 2003.
- ◆ The average benefit package for GCS superintendents was valued at \$39,648 in 2003.



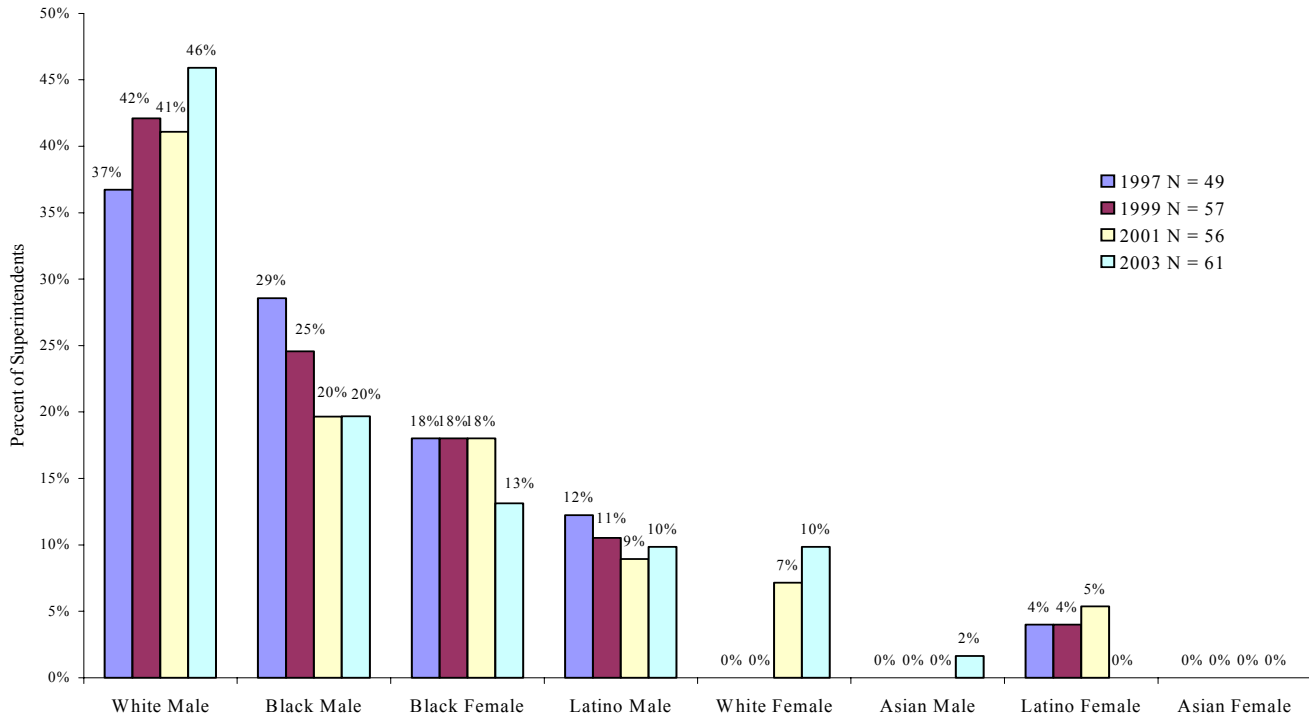
<sup>3</sup> Dollars were converted to 2003 constant dollars using the Consumer Price Indices provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Educational Research Service: *Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2002-2003*.

## Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure and Salary

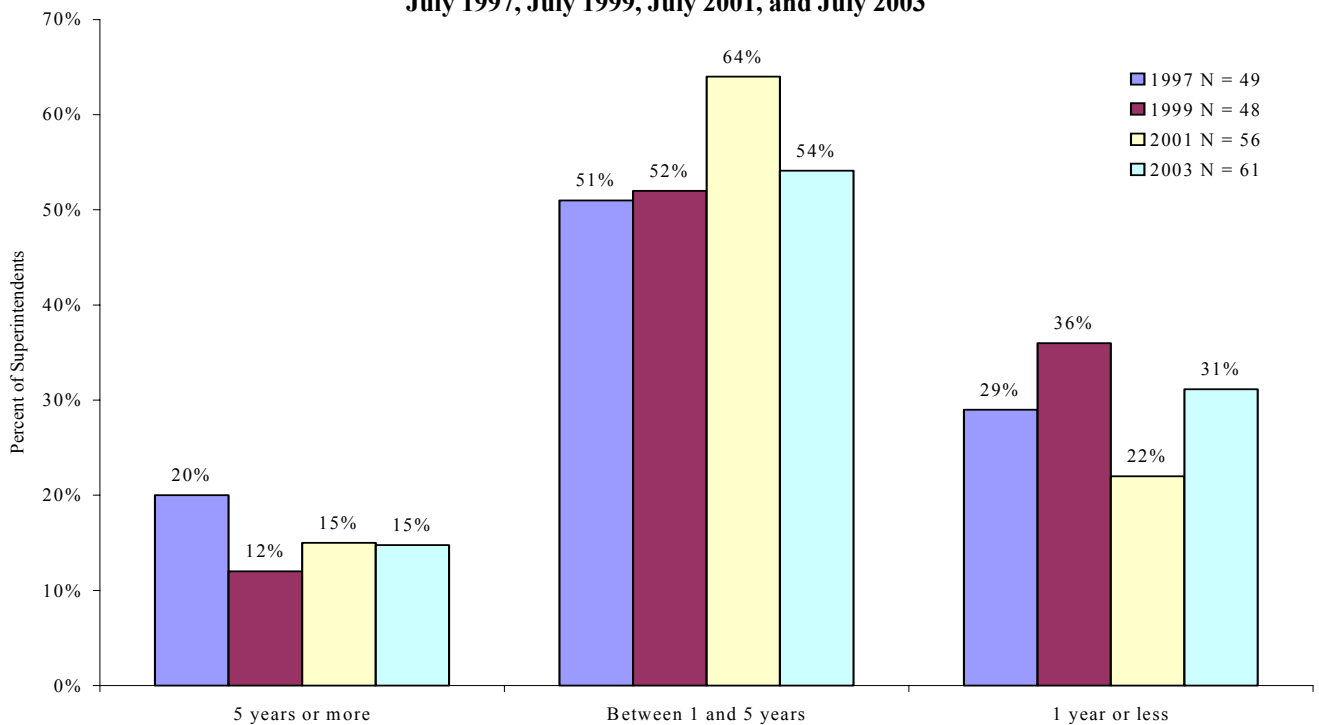
**Figure 1**

**GCS Superintendents by Race/Ethnicity and Gender:  
July 1997, July 1999, July 2001, and July 2003**

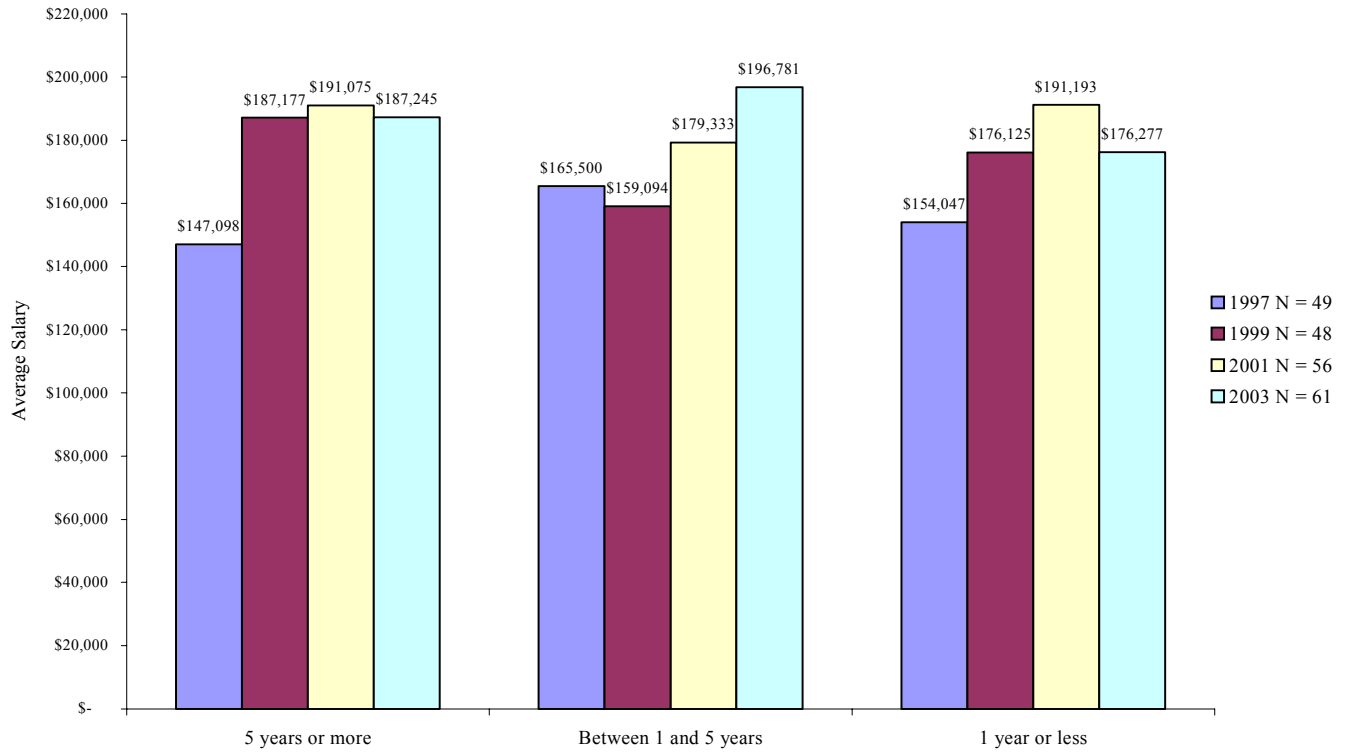


**Figure 2**

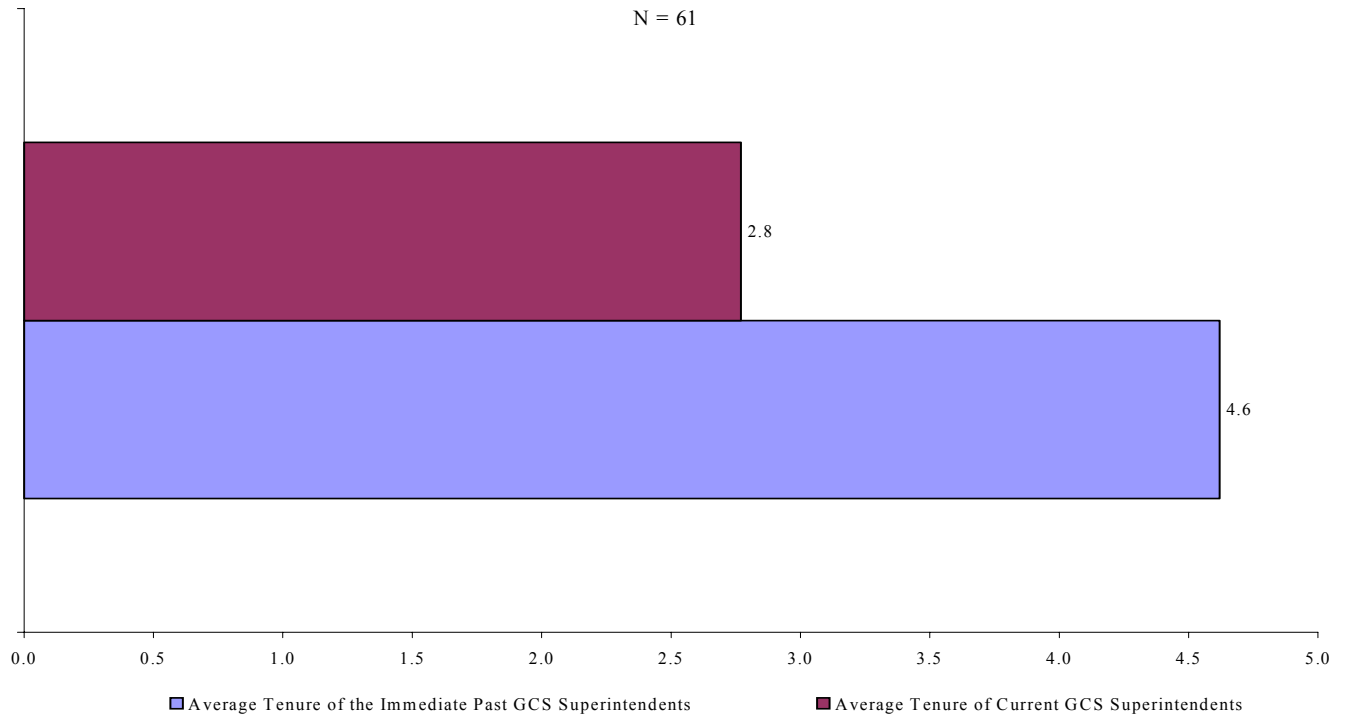
**GCS Superintendents by Tenure:  
July 1997, July 1999, July 2001, and July 2003**



**Figure 3**  
**GCS Superintendents Salaries by Tenure:**  
**July 1997, July 1999, July 2001, and July 2003**

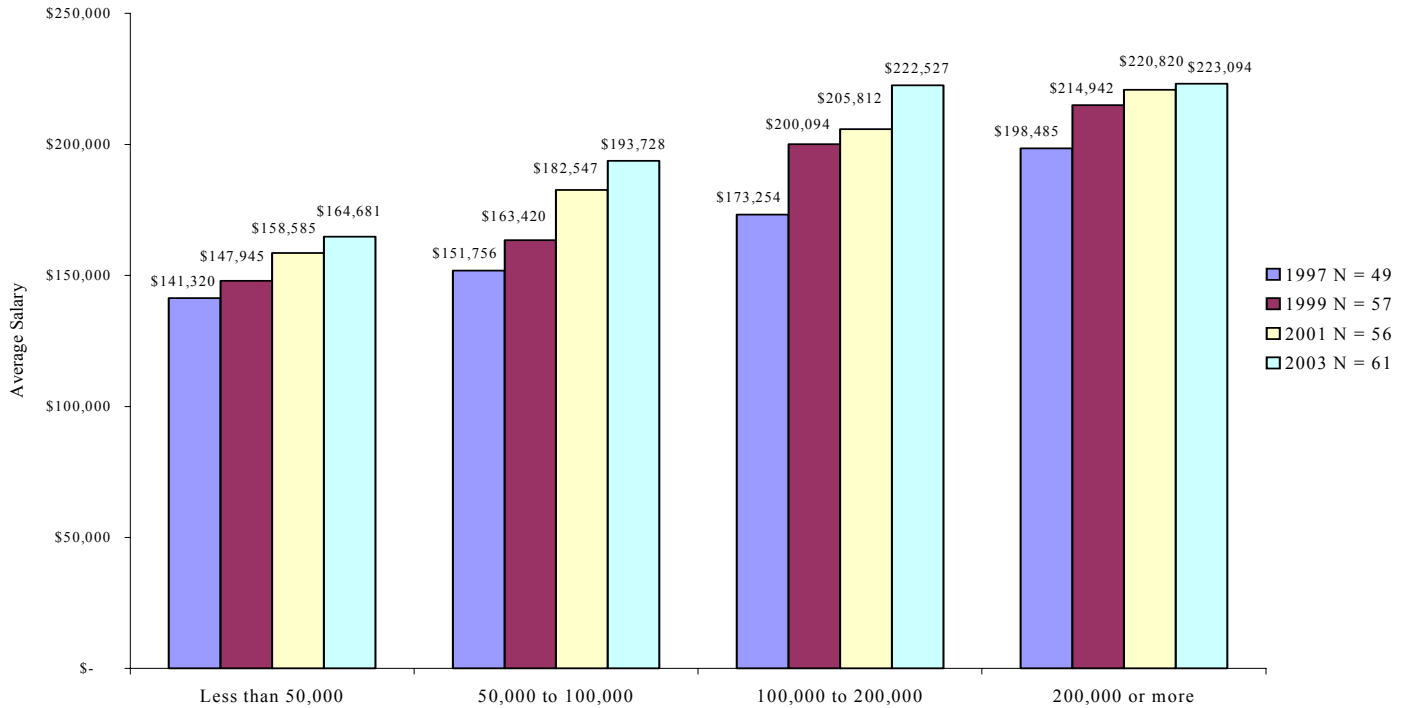


**Figure 4**  
**Average Tenure of the Immediate Past and Current GCS Superintendents**

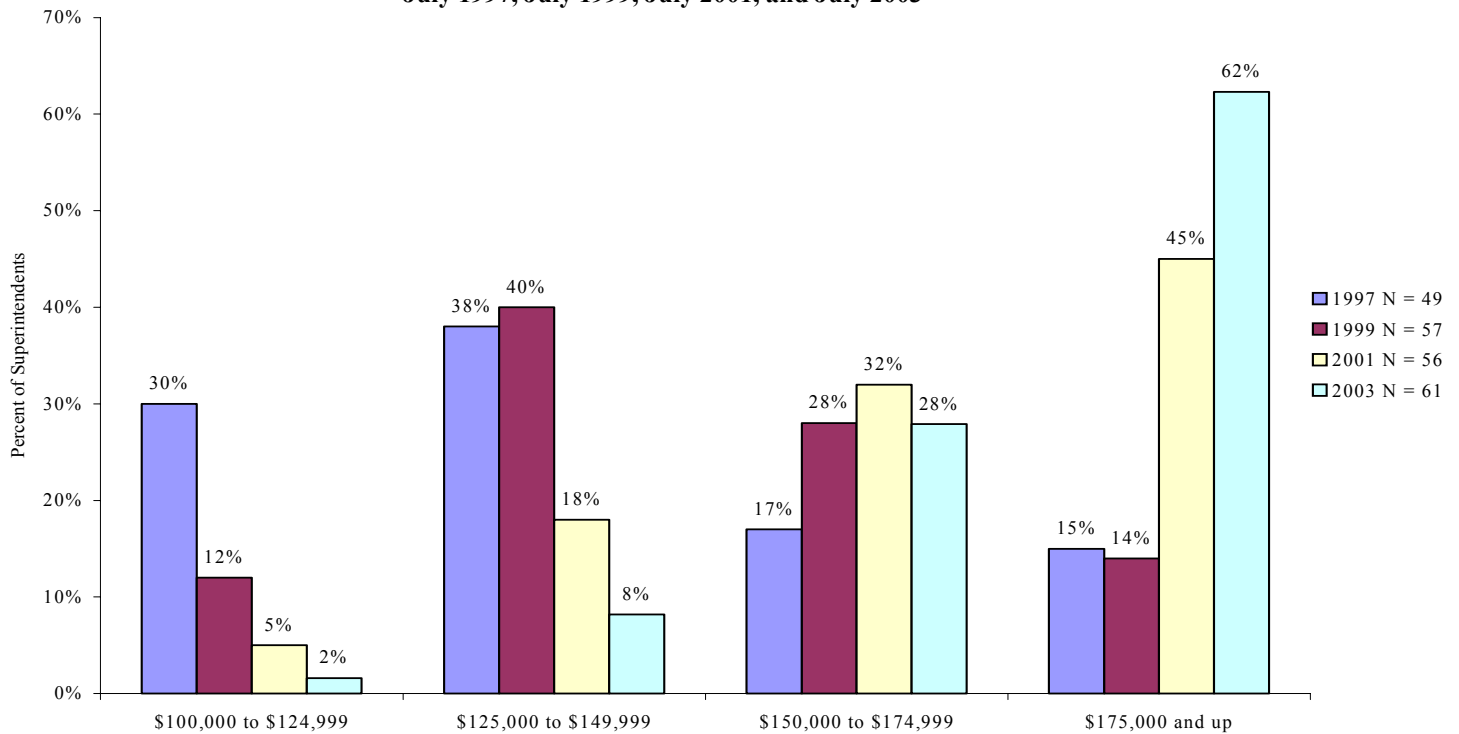


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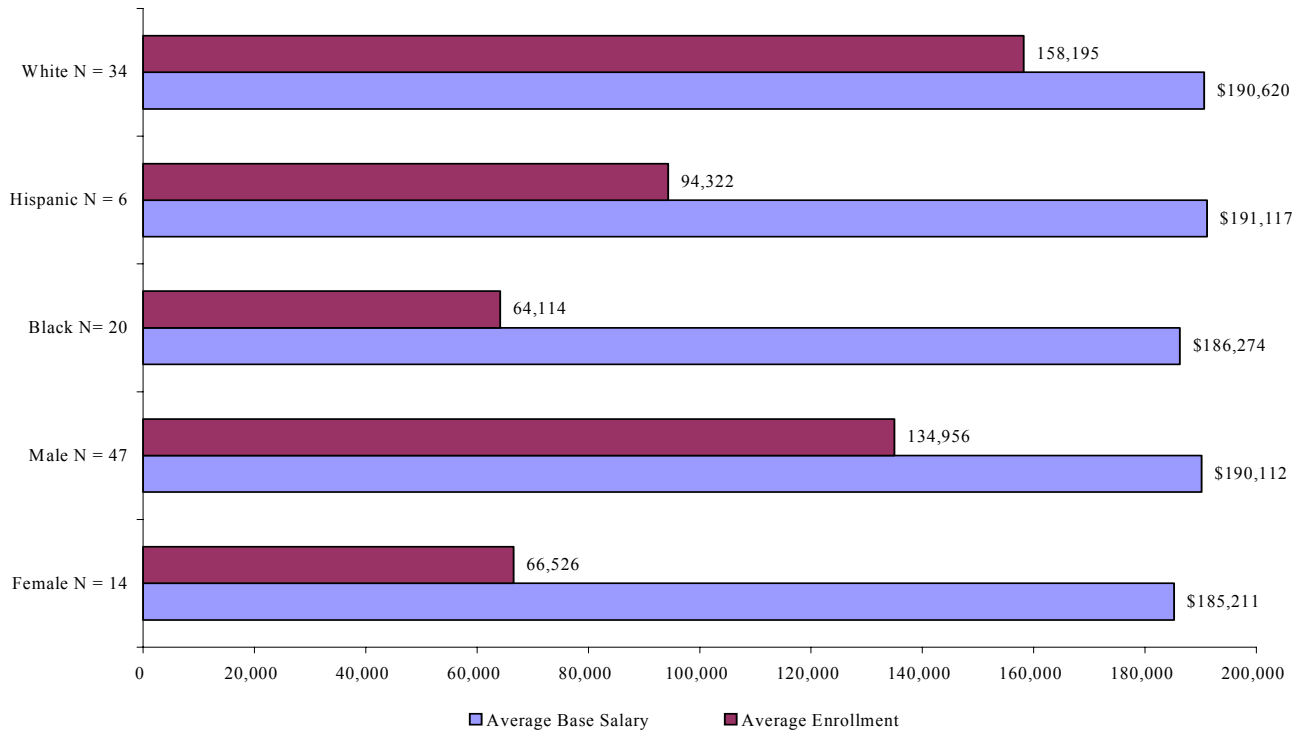
**Figure 5**  
**GCS Superintendents Salaries by Enrollment:**  
 July 1997, July 1999, July 2001, and July 2003



**Figure 6**  
**GCS Superintendents by Salary Range:**  
 July 1997, July 1999, July 2001, and July 2003



**Figure 7**  
**Ethnicity and Gender of GCS Superintendents by Salary and Enrollment: July 2003**



## Discussion

Being the superintendent of a major urban public school system is one of the toughest jobs in America. It requires a unique blend of leadership, management, instructional, political, and operational skills needed in few other jobs. It is also a job that turns over far too frequently, given the need in urban education to create more stability and momentum for reform.

The data from this report indicate that the average tenure of the current major city school district superintendent is about 2 ¾ years, up from 2 ½

years in 2001. For the first time this survey calculated the tenure of the immediate past GCS superintendent, which was 4 3/5 years. About 15 percent of the superintendents moreover, were from non-traditional backgrounds. Finally, the results indicated that female and Black superintendents lead somewhat smaller districts, on average, than their counterparts.

This report also shows that salaries for urban superintendents have increased over the last several years as demand has risen.

## References

- Council of the Great City Schools (1997) *Urban School Superintendents: Tenure and Salaries*. Washington, D.C.
- Council of the Great City Schools (1999) *Urban School Superintendents: Tenure and Salaries*. Washington, D.C.
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- Educational Research Service (2003). *Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2002-2003*, Arlington, VA.

**Member Districts 2003-2004**

<p>Albuquerque Anchorage Atlanta Austin Baltimore Birmingham Boston Broward County Buffalo Charlotte-Mecklenberg Chicago Clark County Cleveland Columbus Dallas Dayton Denver Des Moines Detroit Duval County</p>	<p>Fort Worth Fresno Guilford County Greenville Hillsborough Houston Indianapolis Jackson Jefferson County Long Beach Los Angeles Memphis Miami-Dade County Milwaukee Minneapolis Nashville Newark New Orleans New York City Norfolk Oakland</p>	<p>Oklahoma City Omaha Orange County Palm Beach County Philadelphia Pittsburgh Portland Providence Richmond Rochester Sacramento Salt Lake City San Diego San Francisco Seattle St. Louis St. Paul Toledo Tucson Washington, D.C.</p>
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The Research Department of the Council of the Great City Schools publishes the *Urban Indicator*, which explores timely and pertinent issues facing urban education.

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