



urban Indicator

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Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary *Eighth 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 since 1997. This, the Council’s eighth report on urban superintendents, presents the results of the 2014 survey.

CGCS represents the nation’s largest urban school districts. Though there are approximately 17,000 school districts in the country, the Council’s 66 districts serve approximately 6.9 million of America’s 49.2 million K-12 students (14%), and twenty to forty percent of the nation’s low-income students (20%), students of color (25%), and English language learners (40%).

METHODOLOGY

The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its member districts in the winter of 2014 to determine the characteristics of big city school superintendents for the 2013-2014 school year. This report presents the results of that survey. Surveys were sent to superintendents and their assistants using an online survey tool. The surveys were sent out in January 2014 with reminders by email and phone in February, March and April. 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 **53 of the 66 CGCS member districts (80 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 samples in past reports.

HIGHLIGHTS

Demographics¹

- As of 2014, approximately 45 percent of superintendents from CGCS member districts identified themselves as White, 42 percent as Black, and 9 percent as Hispanic. These results represent slightly more diversity compared to 2003, when 56 percent of CGCS superintendents identified themselves as White, 33 percent as Black, and 10 percent as Hispanic. (Figure 1)
- As of 2014, approximately 70 percent of CGCS superintendents were men. Thirty-two percent of CGCS superintendents were White males, 28 percent were Black males, 8 percent were Hispanic males, and 2 percent were Asian males. (Figures 1)
- As of 2014, approximately 28 percent of CGCS superintendents were women. Thirteen percent of CGCS superintendents were Black females, 13 percent were White females, and 2 percent were Hispanic females. (Figure 1)

Tenure

- The average tenure of current CGCS superintendents increased from 2.8 years in 2003 to 3.18 years in 2014.² (Figure 2)
- Twenty-one percent of CGCS superintendents in 2014 have been in office for five or more years, up from 15 percent in 2003. (Figure 3)
- Fifty-seven percent of CGCS superintendents in 2014 have been in office between one and five years, up from 54 percent in 2003. (Figure 3)
- Twenty-three percent of CGCS superintendents in 2014 have been in office for less than a year, down from 31 percent in 2003. (Figure 3)
- The average tenure of the immediate past CGCS superintendents was 4.5 years in 2014.

Previous Work Experience

- In 2014, most CGCS superintendents – 92 percent – worked in the K-12 education sector prior to their appointment as superintendent. (Figure 4)

Accountability

- Ninety-two percent of CGCS superintendents are accountable to their school boards. Four percent are accountable to the mayor and another four percent have other forms of accountability. (Figure 5)

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 May 1, 2014.

Salaries

- Average CGCS superintendent salaries have increased from roughly \$189,000 in 2003 to approximately \$242,000 in 2014. Accounting for twenty-seven percent inflation since 2003 (\$189,000 in 2014 dollars), average CGCS superintendent salaries have increased by less than one percent from \$240,000 in 2003 to \$242,000 in 2014. (Figure 6)
- Salaries in 2014 for CGCS superintendents ranged from \$99,000 to \$339,000. The majority (54 percent) of CGCS superintendents earned \$250,000 or more per year in 2014. The distribution of superintendent salaries since 2003³ is displayed in Figure 7.
- CGCS superintendent salaries appear to vary somewhat by tenure. In 2014, the average salary for a CGCS superintendent with five or more years experience was approximately \$255,000, the average salary for those with between one and five years of experience was approximately \$246,000, and the average salary of those superintendents with one year or less experience was about \$223,000.⁴ (Figure 8)
- Average CGCS superintendent salaries also appear to vary according to the size of the district. The average salary for a CGCS superintendent with fewer than 50,000 students was \$211,000. In a district with between 50,000 and 100,000 students, the average salary was \$260,000. In a district with between 100,000 and 200,000 students the average salary is \$276,000. And in a district with 200,000 or more students the average salary was \$281,000. Figure 9 reports 2014 average CGCS superintendent salary by student enrollment.
- In 2014, female superintendents in large districts (100,000 or more students) had an average tenure of 3.5 years and an average salary of approximately \$265,000 while their male counterparts in large districts had an average tenure of 2.47 years and salary of \$284,000. In smaller districts (less than 100,000), female superintendents had an average tenure of 3.8 years and salary of approximately \$203,000 while male superintendents in smaller districts had an average tenure of 3.1 and a salary of approximately \$241,000. (Table 1)
- Average tenure for Black superintendents in large districts was 1.08 years with an average salary of \$275,000 in 2014. White superintendents in large districts had an average tenure of 3.01 years with an average salary of \$271,000. In the smaller districts, Black superintendents had an average tenure of 2.85 years and an average salary of \$231,000 while White superintendents in smaller districts had an average tenure of 4.16 years with an average salary of \$228,000. (Table 1)
- According to the data available, the average CGCS superintendent salary in 2014 was slightly higher than that of their counterparts nationwide. In 2013-2014, the average salary across all district superintendents with 25,000 students or more was approximately \$202,000 while the CGCS average was approximately \$242,000. (Figure 10)⁵

Benefits and Bonuses

- About twenty-six percent 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 approximately \$2,000 to \$200,000.
- Forty-five percent of CGCS superintendents reported having access to a car or receiving a car allowance, 86 percent reported having an IRA/403b or other retirement account, and four percent reported receiving a housing allowance in 2014.

³ Previous salaries (2003- 2010) in this Figure have not been adjusted for inflation.

⁴ Previous salaries (2003- 2010) in this Figure have not been adjusted for inflation.

⁵ AASA, 2014.

- The average benefits package for CGCS superintendents was valued at approximately \$153,223 in 2014.

DISCUSSION

Several patterns, trends and relationships relating to employment and demographics have emerged through the course of this analysis.

The demographics of urban superintendents have become more diverse over time. Currently, Black and Hispanic superintendents represent a little over half of the CGCS superintendents where they were only 43 percent of the superintendent demographic in 2003. Also in 2003, there were no Hispanic women superintendents, currently they account for two percent of the CGCS 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 2.8 years in 2003 to an average of 3.18 years in 2014, although there was a dip compared to 2010. Moreover, the average tenure of the immediate past CGCS superintendents was 4.5 years in 2014.

Additionally, the average CGCS superintendent salary in 2013-2014 was similar to that of their counterparts nationwide. In 2013-2014, the average salary across district superintendents with 25,000 students or more was \$201,573 while the CGCS average was approximately \$242,000 for that same year. CGCS superintendents tend to serve in districts with considerably more students.

While superintendent salary does not have a simple 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 (2010). Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary. Urban Indicator. Fall 2010.

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

The School Superintendents Association, AASA (2014). 2013 Superintendents Salary and Benefits Study.

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity and Gender of CGCS Superintendents: 2003 and 2014

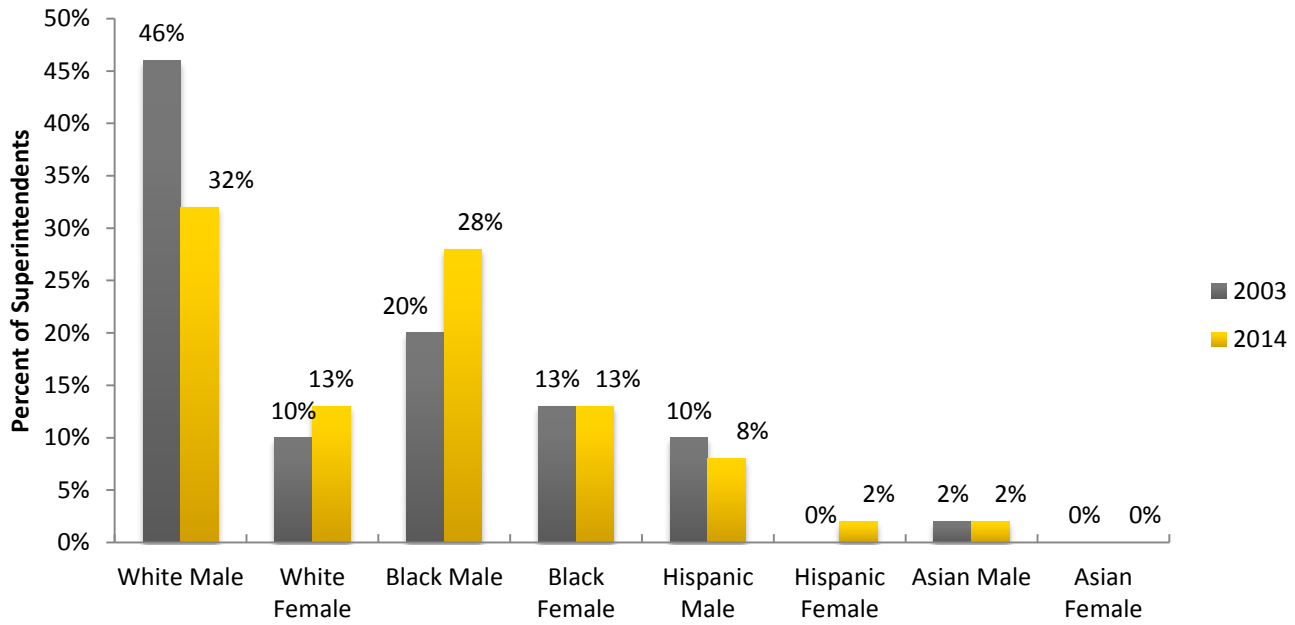


Figure 2. Average Tenure of CGCS Superintendents: 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2014

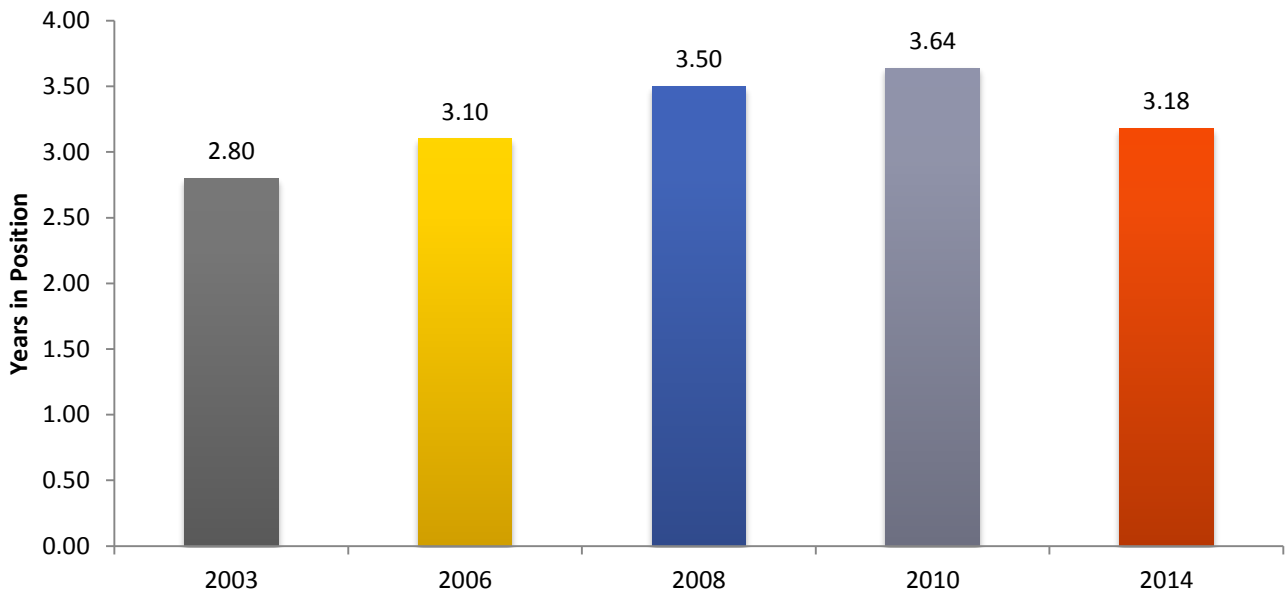


Figure 3. Percent of CGCS Superintendents by Tenure: 2003,2006,2008,2010, and 2014

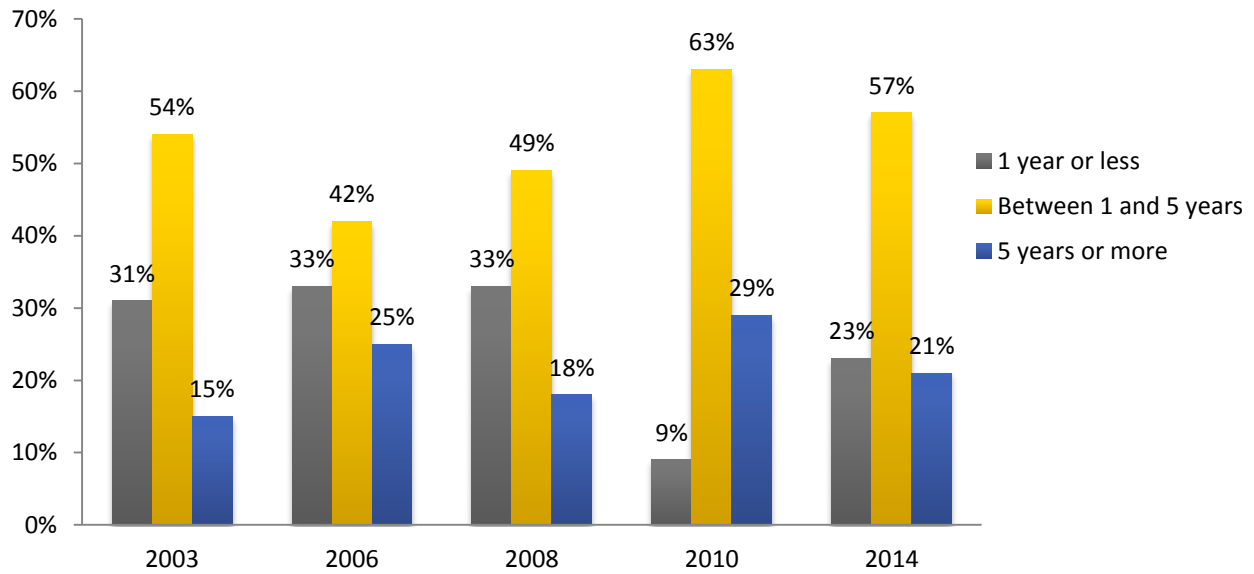


Figure 4. Prior Work Experience of CGCS Superintendents: 2014

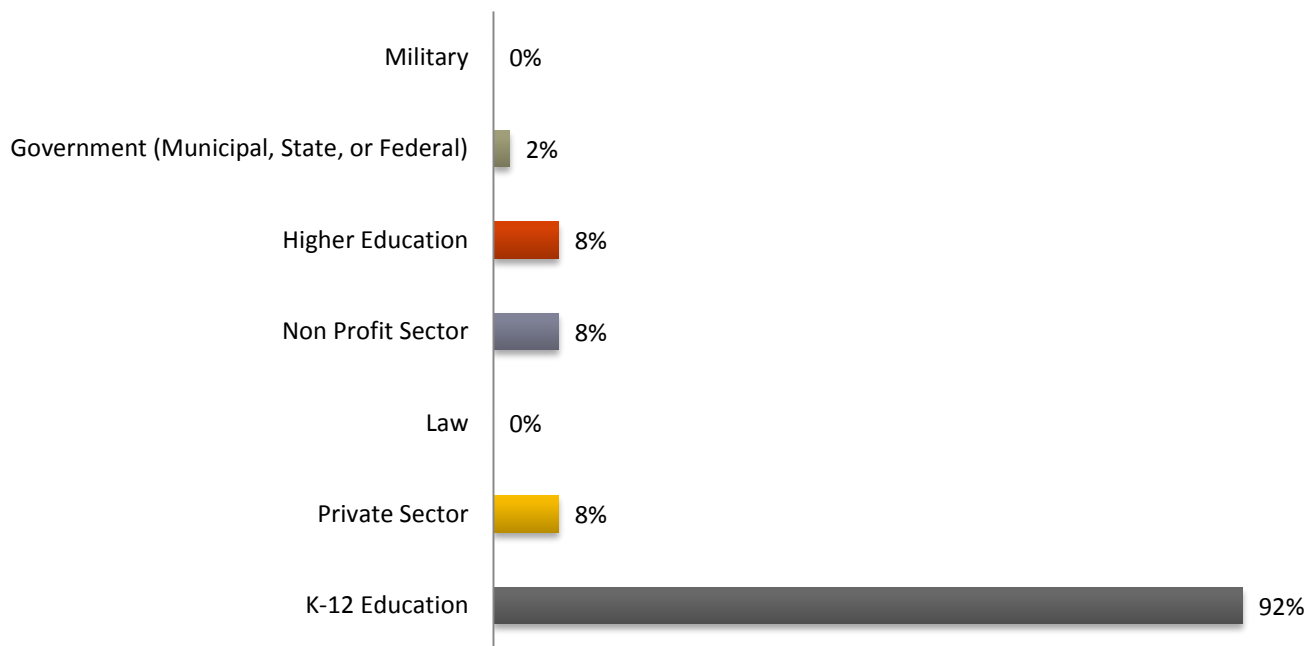


Figure 5: CGCS Superintendents Accountability Structure: 2014

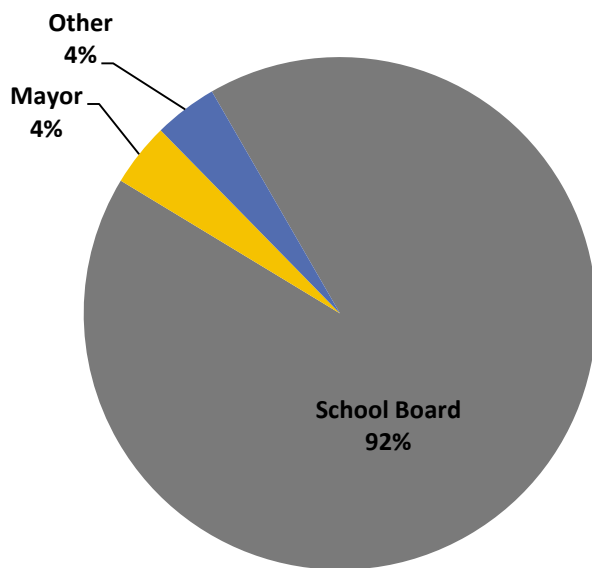


Figure 6. Average Annual CGCS Superintendent Salary: 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2014

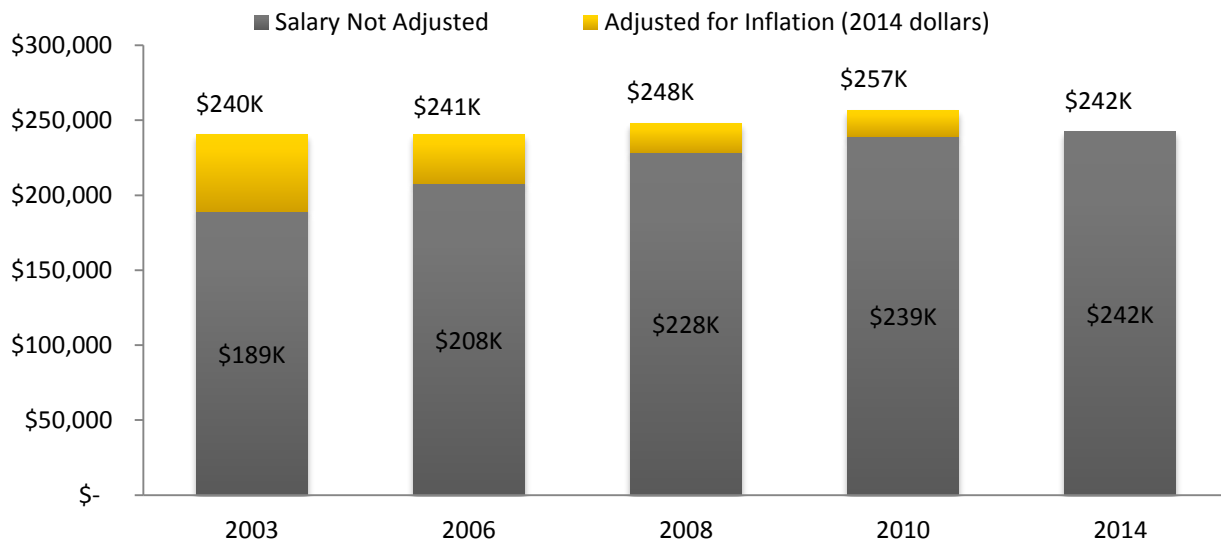


Figure 7. Percent of CGCS Superintendents by Salary Range: 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2014

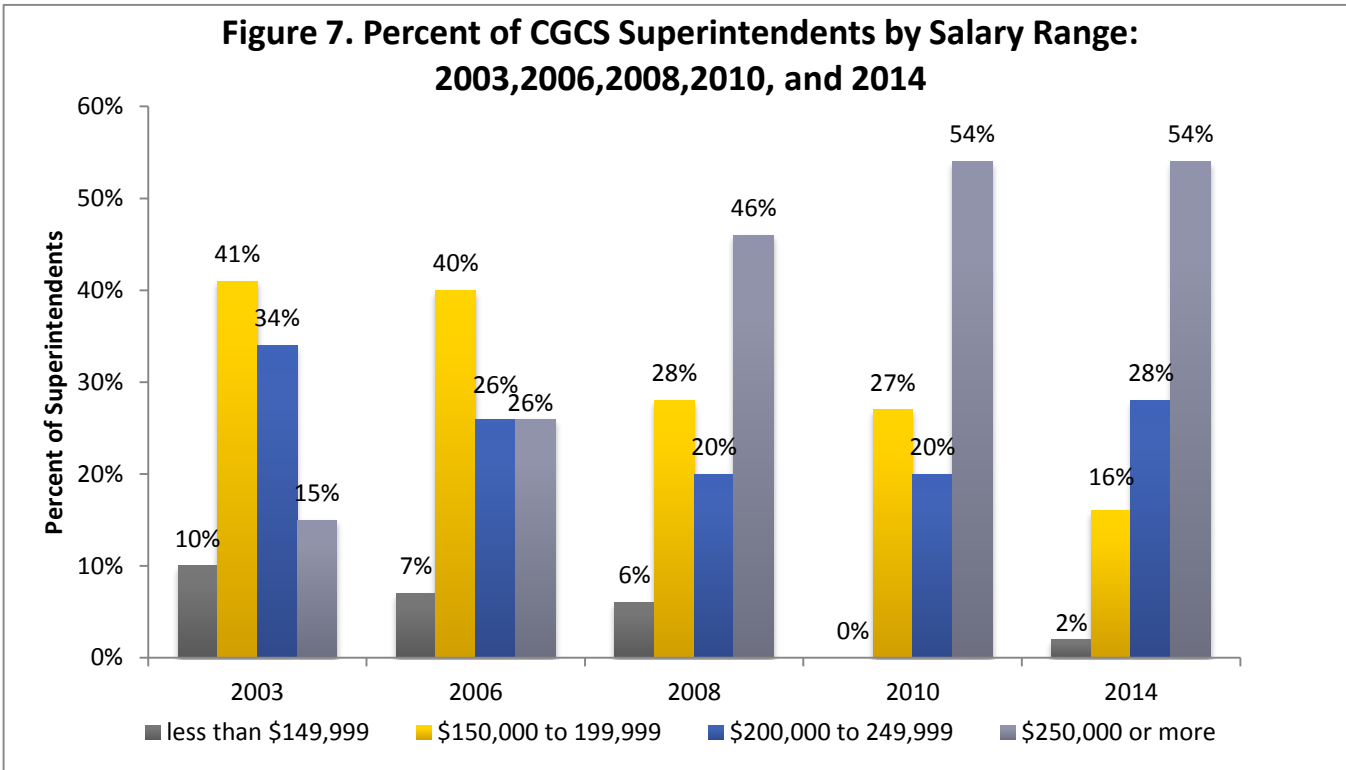


Figure 8. Average Salary of CGCS Superintendents by Tenure: 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2014

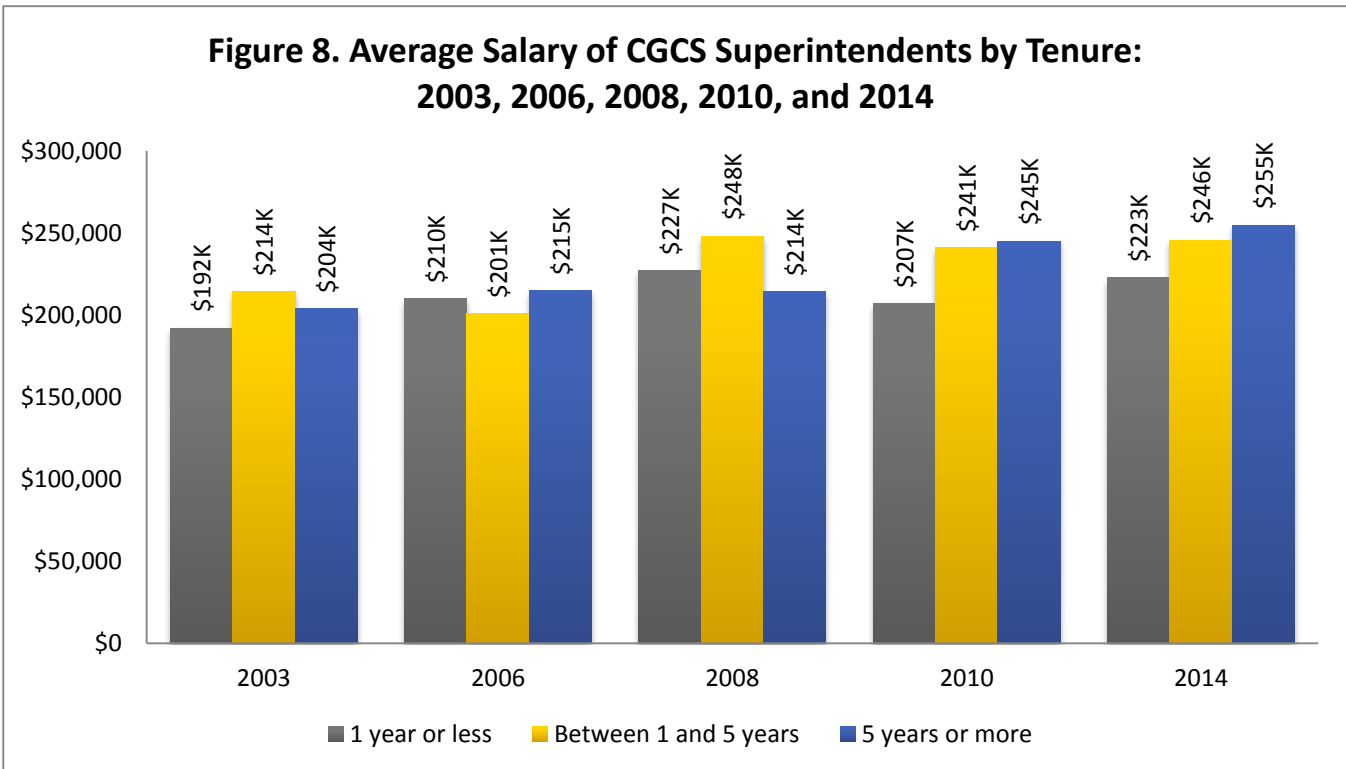


Figure 9. Average Annual CGCS Superintendents Salary by School District Enrollment: 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2014

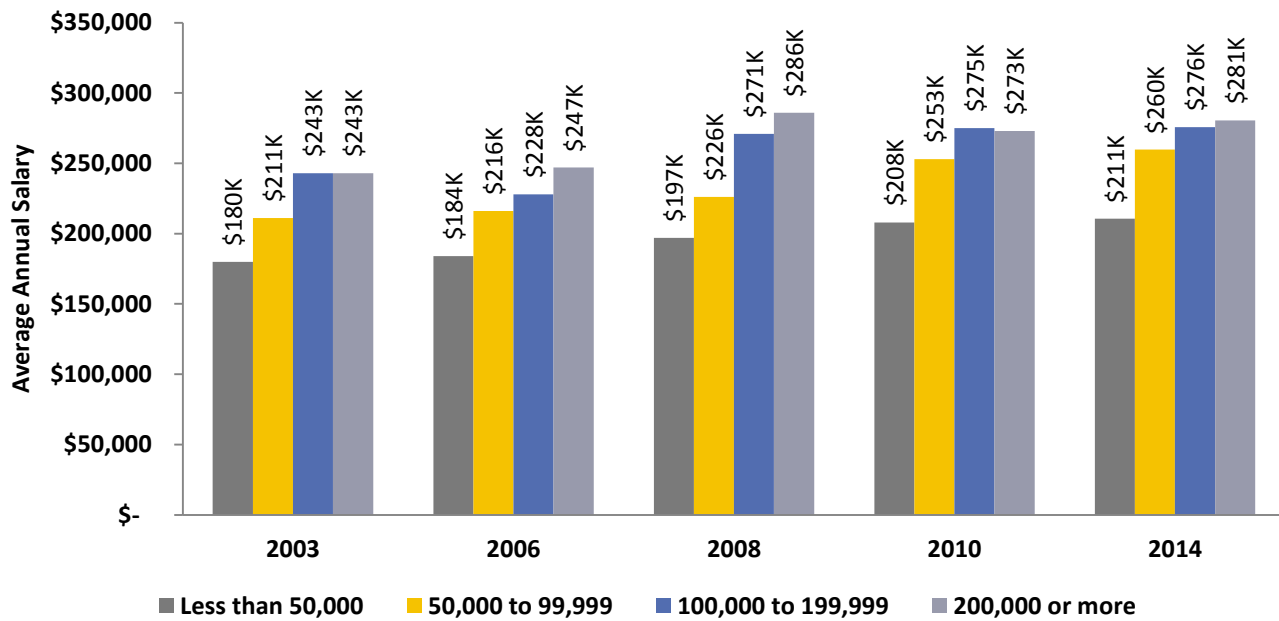


Table 1. Average Salary and Tenure by Race, Gender and District Size

	Average Salary	Average Tenure
Large	\$ 277,765	2.81
Female	\$ 264,670	3.5
Male	\$ 284,313	2.47
Small	\$ 231,359	3.29
Female	\$ 203,496	3.80
Male	\$ 241,310	3.1
Large	\$ 277,765	2.81
African-American/Black	\$ 275,000	1.08
Other	\$ 300,000	1.83
Hispanic	\$ 315,000	5.67
White	\$ 271,023	3.01
Small	\$ 231,359	3.29
African-American/Black	\$ 231,489	2.85
Asian-American/Pacific	\$ 250,000	0.92
Hispanic	\$ 239,707	2.56
White	\$ 227,735	4.16
Grand Total	\$ 242,497	3.18

Figure 10. Average CGCS Superintendent Salary Compared to Average Salary of Superintendents Nationwide with 25,000 students

Surveys were received from the following districts:

Albuquerque Public Schools	Indianapolis Public Schools
Anchorage School District	Jackson Public Schools
Atlanta Public Schools	Jefferson County Public Schools
Austin Independent School District	Kansas City Public Schools
Birmingham City Schools	Little Rock School District
Boston Public Schools	Long Beach Unified School District
Bridgeport Public Schools	Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Charleston County School District	Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	Milwaukee Public Schools
Chicago Public Schools	Minneapolis Public Schools
Cincinnati Public Schools	Norfolk Public Schools
Clark County School District	Oakland Unified School District
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	Omaha Public Schools
Columbus City Schools	Pittsburgh Public Schools
Dallas Independent School District	Providence Public School District
Dayton Public Schools	Richmond Public Schools
Des Moines Independent Community School District	Rochester City School District
Denver Public Schools	San Diego Unified School District
Detroit Public Schools	San Francisco Unified School District
District of Columbia Public Schools	Seattle Public Schools
Duval County Public Schools	St. Louis Public Schools
East Baton Rouge Parish School System	St. Paul Public Schools
Fort Worth Independent School District	The School District of Palm Beach County
Fresno Unified School District	The School District of Philadelphia
Guilford County Schools	Toledo Public Schools
Hillsborough County Public Schools	Wichita Public Schools
Houston Independent School District	