

PANDEMIC-ERA CHANGES IN URBAN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:

Superintendent
Characteristics,
Turnover, and Salaries



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in the 2019-2020 academic year, continues to challenge school district operations across the United States. Much of the conversation regarding the pandemic's impact on schools and learning focuses on the work being done in classrooms. Some discussions have emphasized the role of testing and curricula as key components of gauging student success, as well as other district 'inputs' such as educator hiring and retention and the availability of technology for internet-based remote learning.

BACKGROUND

The Council of the Great City Schools (Council or CGCS) has studied the extent to which some of our large school districts overcome the impact of low socioeconomic, English learner, and special education status for our students. The CGCS report, [Mirrors or Windows: How well do large city public schools overcome the effects of poverty and other barriers](#), describes the importance and unique challenges of educating our nation's students in abject poverty and other factors that influence student outcomes. The study found that strong and effective educational leadership, particularly through the role of superintendents, is critical in shaping the trajectory of school districts. As key figures overseeing administrative operations and policy implementation, superintendents are responsible for driving organizational excellence and student success. Over time, the superintendent's role has evolved from mere administrative oversight to strategic leadership, encompassing community engagement and crisis management. However, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a paradigm shift, necessitating adaptive leadership to navigate unprecedented challenges, foster innovation, and prioritize the well-being of students and staff (Love, 2023). In this context, superintendents serve as chief executives, guiding districts through complex terrain, balancing fiscal responsibilities, stakeholder expectations, and educational imperatives to cultivate inclusive, equitable learning environments.

This study updates [historical reports](#) on the superintendency conducted by the Council and aims to uncover trends in superintendent pay and turnover in system leadership by examining the characteristics of urban school district superintendents within the Councils' current 78 member districts. This study focuses on understanding the racial and gender demographics of superintendents, the prevalence of turnover within demographic groups as well as the relationship between superintendent and district characteristics and superintendent's base salaries. By addressing these questions, the Council seeks to provide some insight that may inform conversation on the challenges facing urban school district leadership and inform strategies to promote stability and effectiveness in urban district leadership roles.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How have the characteristics and backgrounds of superintendents within urban school districts changed over the last two decades and since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Do superintendent demographics (i.e., gender, race), district characteristics (i.e., student population size, student population racial makeup, FRPL student representation, school board type); influence base salary across Council member-districts?
3. Did superintendent demographics (i.e., gender, race), district characteristics (i.e., student population size, student population racial makeup, FRPL student representation, school board type), and superintendent base salary influence the turnover rate across Council member-districts during the period examined?

METHODOLOGY

Data collection for this research included 77 of 78 member districts, as Puerto Rico was not included in the study due to a lack of available information. In all, 59 different data points were collected. These included student enrollment in 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch in 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, and student racial demographic breakdown of each district in 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 as provided by the National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.

In addition, the composition of each district's school board was gathered, including whether the board is elected or appointed, how many members are on the board, and how many years members serve as publicly listed on district, municipal, and/or elections websites.

Finally, for each school year 2018-2019 (pre-pandemic), 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 (post-pandemic), we identified the name of the superintendents, their gender and race, highest education level completed, their pre-superintendency role and organization, salary (and changes in salary over time), as well as their post-superintendency role.

Information was gathered from more than 240 sources, including state education department and school district websites, school board documentation including meeting minutes and contracts available online, local news media outlets, and education publications.

Several methodologies were used to answer the research questions. Statistical models, summary statistics, and mean and correlation tests were run to examine trends and relationships between variables. In addition, based on the number of superintendents who left each district per year divided by the total number of superintendents multiplied by 100, we determined the superintendent turnover rate by year and then for the entire five years studied. We used a similar method to determine turnover rates by race and gender.

Finally, post-superintendency organizations were grouped into seven categories: higher-education institutions, public school districts, education-focused for-profit organizations, education-focused non-profit organizations or foundations, independent consulting, education-adjacent organizational leadership, and others. This categorization made it possible to identify trends in post-superintendent employment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The focal point of this report was to examine possible relationships between superintendent characteristics, the characteristics of the districts they lead, and elements of the position likely impacted by the pandemic: superintendent base pay and turnover rates among district leaders. The overall goal of this work was to garner a greater understanding of the changes in the position across Council of the Great City Schools (“Council” or “CGCS”) member-districts and to make comparisons—where possible—between the status of the workforce pre- and post-pandemic. This report also considered the often-noted disparities in pay, hiring, and retention at the superintendent level along the lines of gender. Listed below are some key findings:

OVERALL CHANGES IN DEMOGRAPHICS OF URBAN SUPERINTENDENTS.

- The pool of CGCS district superintendents has become increasingly diverse over the last 20 years, reflecting more of the diversity of student populations, with Black and Hispanic superintendents making up the majority of system leaders.
- Hispanic females have not seen significant benefits from the demographic shifts in urban superintendent roles.

SUPERINTENDENT SALARY WAS DETERMINED TO BE AFFECTED BY MANY OF THE FACTORS CONSIDERED IN THE ANALYSES.

- Being a leader of a larger CGCS district was associated with having a larger base salary.
- In smaller districts (under 35,000), the majority of superintendents are Black. In the largest districts (greater than 100,000), half of superintendents are Hispanic, while nearly half of superintendents in mid-sized districts (50,000-100,000) are White, potentially reflecting racial disparities in salary. No meaningful differences in salary between female superintendents and male superintendents were found among those leading CGCS districts.
- District leader salaries were not found to differ meaningfully when considering the representation of economically disadvantaged students in district populations.
- There was no meaningful difference in superintendent salary when considering school board types (i.e., appointed school boards, elected school boards).

THERE WERE FEWER FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER.

- Being a leader of a larger Council district was associated with higher rates of turnover.
- Being a leader of a CGCS district with lower representation of economically-disadvantaged students was associated with higher rates of turnover at the superintendent position.
- Higher post-pandemic salary was associated with higher rates of superintendent turnover.

RESULTS

Superintendent Demographics

Analyzing the demographic characteristics of urban school district superintendents from 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 reveals significant trends. Overall, the total number of superintendents serving in 77 member districts over five years from 2018-2019 through 2022-2023 was 148. Of these, 85 were male and 63 were female. There has been a slight increase in female representation among Council superintendents, with the percentage of female superintendents rising from the 2018-19 academic year. There has been an insignificant decrease in the number of Black superintendents since the 2018-19 academic year, and an insignificant increase in representation among White and Hispanic superintendents. Superintendents that are Asian, Pacific Islander, or Indigenous American continue to make up a very small portion of Council district superintendents.

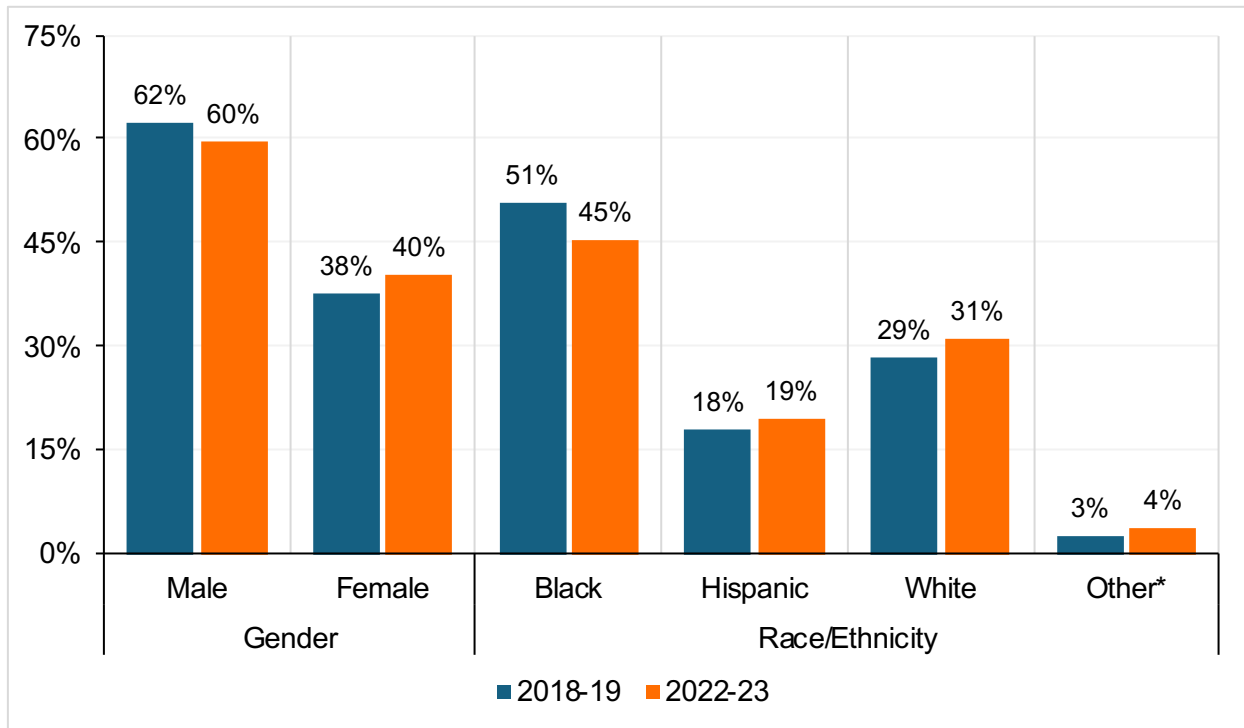


Figure 1. Gender and Race Representation among Council Member-District Superintendents

We must place the data within the broader context of historical trends in student enrollment from 2003 to 2023 and the corresponding changes in superintendent. As shown in Figure 2, there has been a notable increase in the percentage of Hispanic students in large urban school districts, currently 44% of the population. Black students (25%) and White students (18%) remain the second and third largest groups though their enrollment rates have been steadily declining over time. Enrollment of Asian students, the smallest group of students in urban school districts, has remained steady over time.

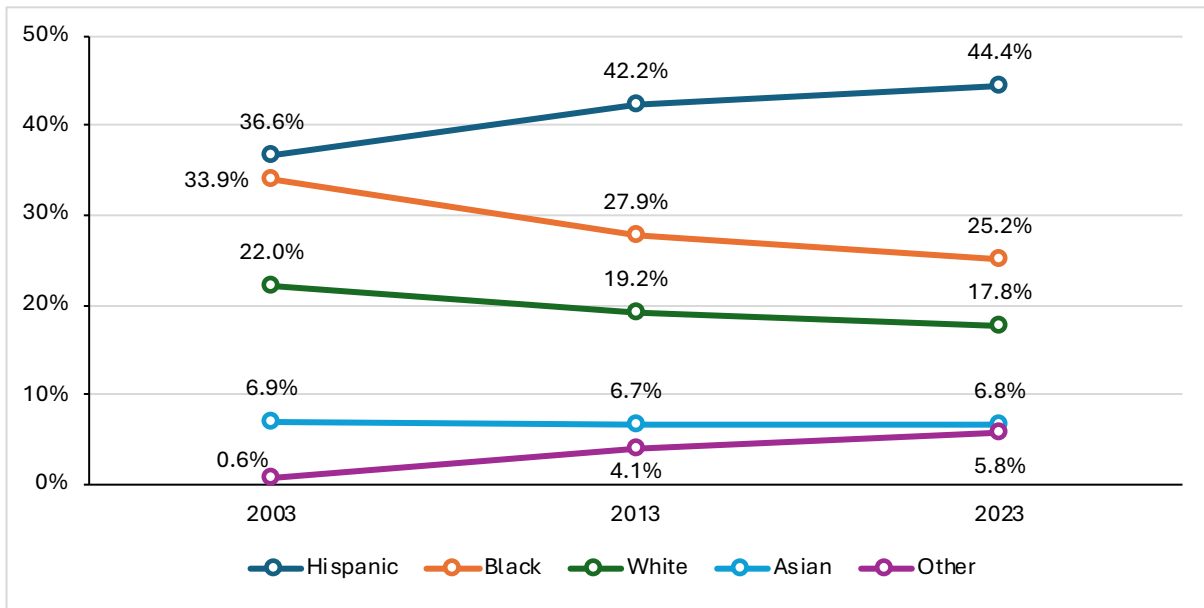


Figure 2. Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity among Council Member Districts, 2003 - 2023

Similarly, superintendent demographics over this same period of time have become more reflective of the student populations they serve. The most significant increase has been among Black female superintendents, followed by Hispanic males, White females, and Hispanic females. The largest decline has been in White male superintendents, though White superintendents remain the second largest group of urban superintendents. The majority of urban superintendents are now Black and Hispanic. Of note, however, is the very small increase in Hispanic female superintendents over the last 20 years (Figure 3).

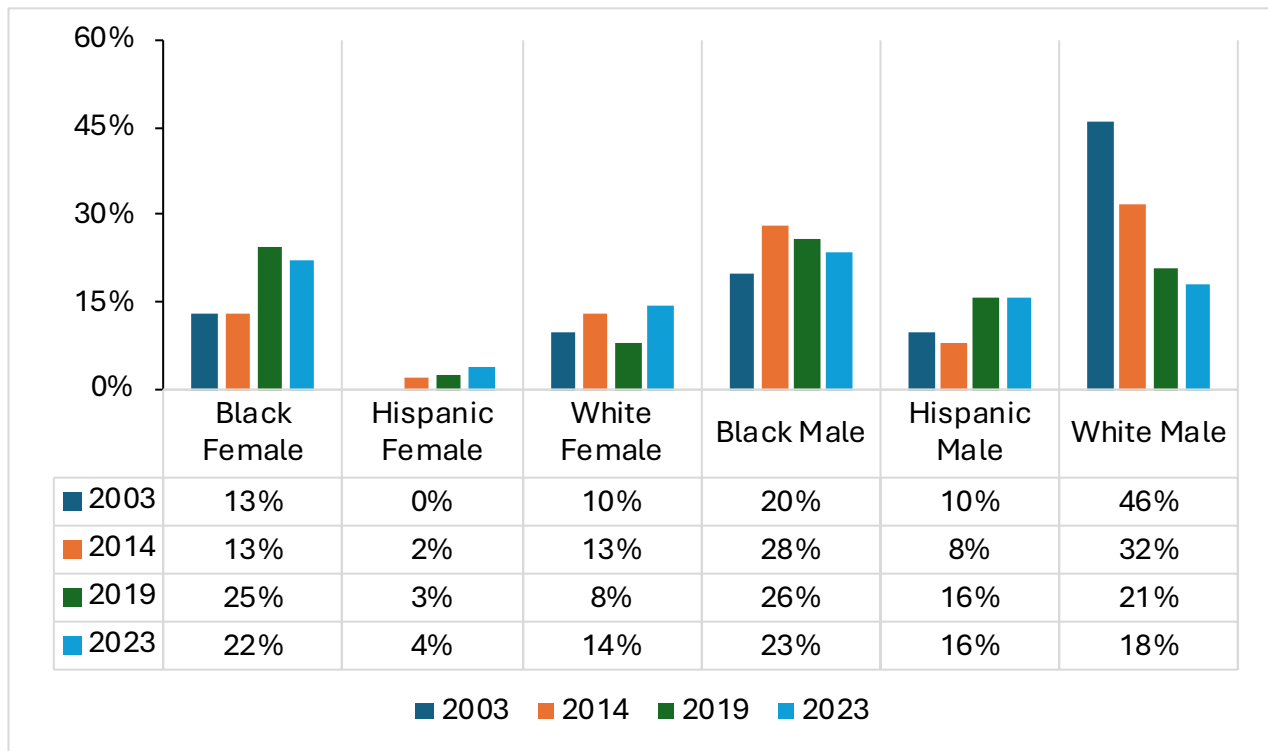


Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity and Gender of CGCS Superintendents: 2003, 2014, 2019, and 2023

Superintendent Turnover

Superintendent turnover is a critical issue in education leadership, influencing the stability and effectiveness of school districts. Understanding trends in superintendent turnover rates before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic is essential for assessing the impact of the crisis on the labor market for educational leaders. Continuity in the superintendent position is vital for large school districts as it ensures stable leadership and the consistent implementation of long-term educational strategies. Frequent turnover can disrupt progress, leading to fragmented policies and initiatives that hinder student and staff success.

Prior to the pandemic, superintendent turnover rates varied, but around 13 percent was considered normal (Schwartz, H. L. & Diliberti, M.K., 2022). However, superintendents serving mostly students of color were statistically more likely to leave (Schwartz, H. L. & Diliberti, M.K., 2022). Factors such as job stress, board relations, fiscal challenges, and district performance often influenced superintendent turnover during the pandemic (Schwartz, H. L. & Diliberti, M.K., 2022).

Among Council member-districts, approximately 73 percent replaced their district's chief executive between the 2018-19 and 2022-23 academic years. The average rate of turnover per year among Council districts was found to be around 23 percent. Figure 4 illustrates the rates of turnover each year during that span. In the 2019-20 year, Council district superintendents turned over at a rate of about 21 percent, followed by rates of about 14 percent in 2020-21, around 30 percent in 2021-22, and approximately 27 percent in 2022-23.

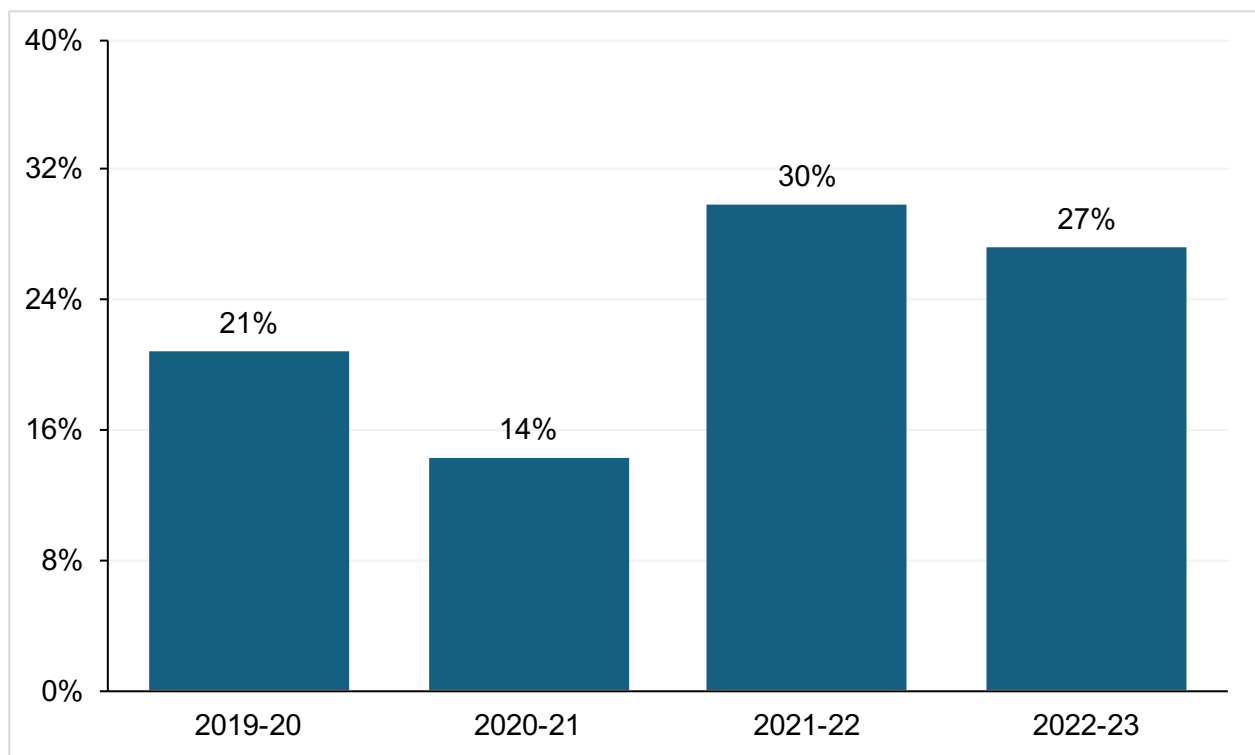


Figure 4. Rates of Superintendent Turnover across CGCS Districts, 2019-20 through 2022-23

Race/Ethnicity

Superintendent turnover along racial lines mirrored the overall trend observed across Council districts. Rates among districts led by Black superintendents tended to be greater than those seen across the Council, averaging 26 percent across the years considered. Hispanic superintendents in Council districts were among the most likely to turn over in the year examined prior to the pandemic, but have since seen rates of turnover that were lower than those observed across the Council overall. White superintendents tended to have rates of turnover that were slightly lower than those observed across Council member-districts as a whole and were typically lower than those seen across the racial groups considered—with rates from the 2021-22 year being the exception (Figure 5).

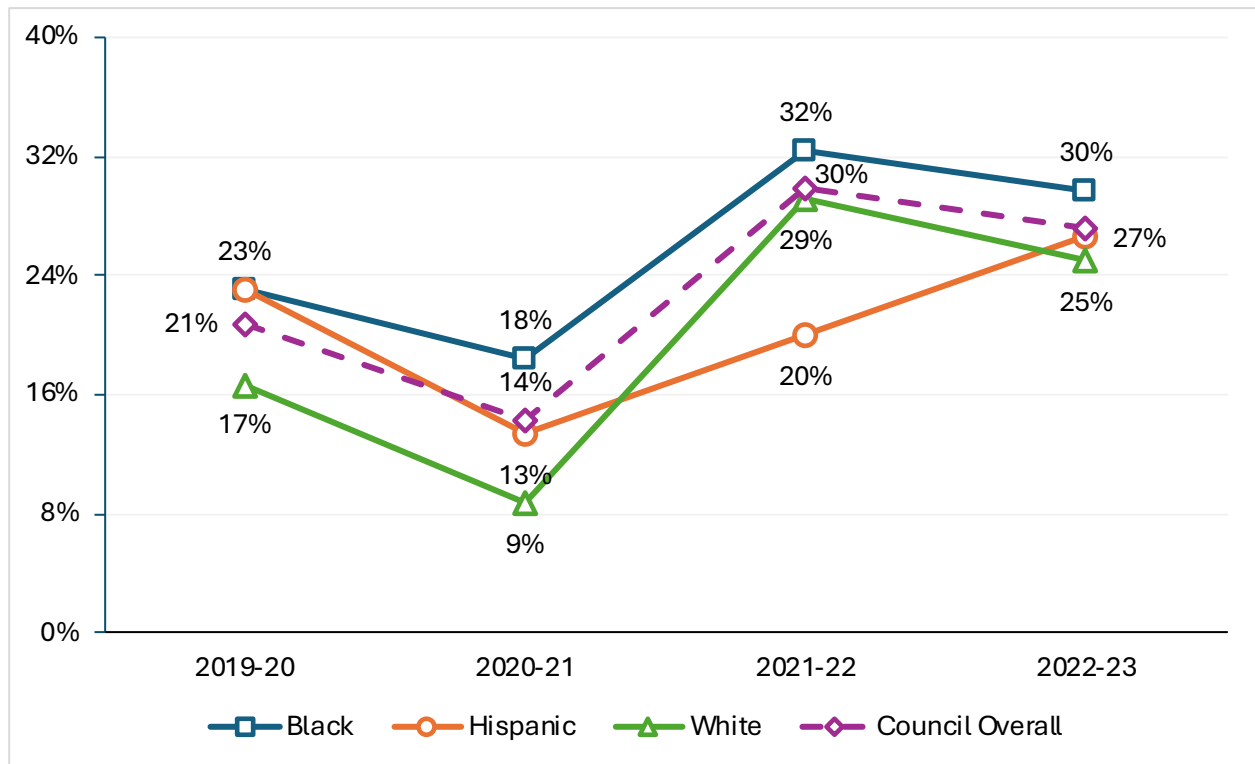


Figure 5. Superintendent Turnover Rates by Racial Group and Year

Gender

Before the onset of the pandemic, research indicated a gradual increase in female representation in the superintendency (Drake, 2023; Gullo & Sperandio, 2020; Wallace, 2015). Prior to the pandemic, women were already underrepresented in superintendent positions, comprising slightly more than a third of superintendents nationwide. The pandemic seems to have exacerbated this gap, with a rapid increase in the turnover of female leaders in districts undergoing leadership transitions (White, R. S., 2023). Despite some improvements in female representation, with the percentage of female superintendents leading Council districts increased only slightly from 38 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2023 (Figure 6).

The Council's historical analysis of women in the superintendency revealed increases in the representation of Black, Hispanic and White female superintendents from 2003 to 2023 across urban school districts, with the rate of Black female superintendents declining slightly from 2019 (24.7%) to 2023 (22.1%).

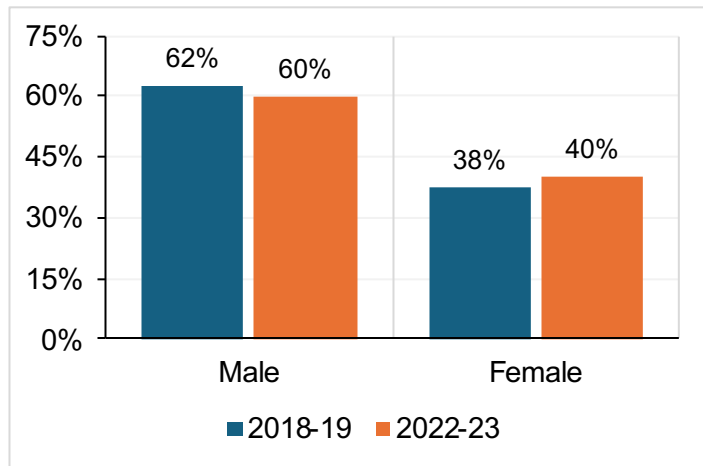


Figure 6: Representation across Council Districts, 2018 and 2023, by Gender

Pre-Superintendency Role

Discernible shifts in superintendent pre-superintendency roles are also apparent. As illustrated in Figure 4, pre-pandemic (2018-2019), superintendents came from a more diverse background of pre-superintendent roles than superintendents in the years during (2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022) and after (2022-2023) the COVID-19 pandemic. The greatest change is seen in the increase of superintendents who held deputy, area, or assistant superintendent roles, other district leadership positions, or leadership positions in state education departments before their current superintendent role (Figure 7).

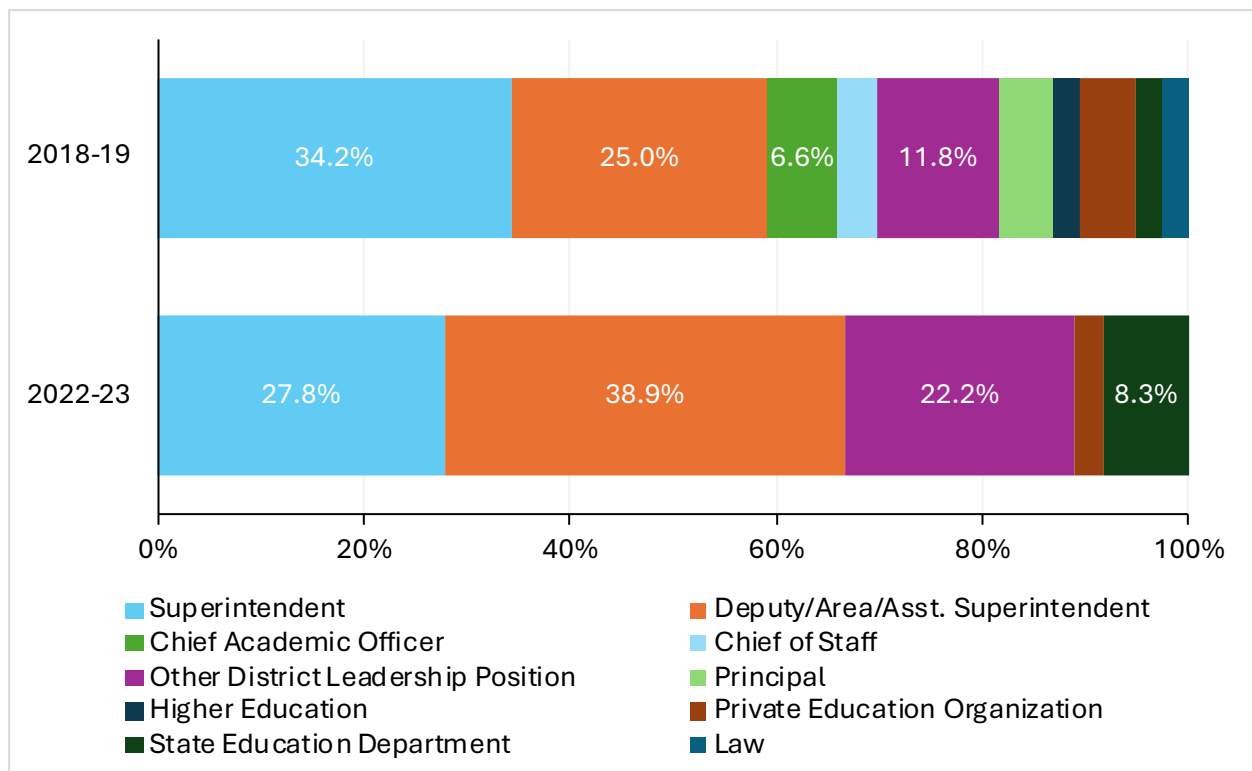


Figure 7. Pre-Superintendency Roles, 2018-19 and 2022-23 School Years

DISTRICT LEADER SALARY

Comparing average base salary of district leaders pre- and post-pandemic, it was found that there was a change of approximately five percent in average base salary from 2018-19, when the average superintendent salary across Council districts was \$283,685; to 2022-23, when average salary for system leaders across the Council was \$296,593. This section of the report examines the relationship between district characteristics, superintendent demographics, and superintendent salaries. It should be noted that inflation was high during these years and this analysis does not adjust for differences in costs of living.

Superintendent Salary by Student Population Size

When considering the impact of district size on superintendent salary, it was found that Council district leaders heading systems having more than 100,000 students enrolled had higher average salaries both before and after the pandemic. The change in average salary among superintendents in this group was also greater than districts of smaller sizes (Table 1). The increases in salary corresponding to increases in district size were found to be statistically significant in both the 2018-19¹ and 2022-23² academic years.

Student Population Size	2018-19		2022-23		% Change
	n	Avg. Salary	n	Avg. Salary	
Less than 35,000	18	\$235,087	23	\$251,992	7.2%
Between 35,000 and 49,999	21	\$278,968	18	\$286,749	2.8%
Between 50,000 and 100,000	20	\$305,199	20	\$320,866	5.1%
Greater than 100,000	18	\$313,880	16	\$338,650	7.9%

Table 1. Average Superintendent Salary by District Size, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Knowing the relationship between district size and superintendent base salary, we then examine district size by the race/ethnicity of superintendents. Our study found that the majority of superintendents in smaller districts are Black. Given the findings related to salary and district size, the distribution of superintendents by race and district size has implications affecting salary across racial lines as well.

When analyzing superintendent demographics by district size, we find that in smaller districts (less than 35,000 students), the majority (65.2%) of superintendents are Black – a slight decline from 72.2% in 2018-19. In contrast, half of superintendents in the largest urban school districts (greater than 100,000 students) are Hispanic (50%), a significant increase from 23.5% in 2018-19. Additionally, nearly half (45%) of superintendents in mid-sized urban districts (50,000-100,000 students) are White, rising from 21.1% in 2018-19 (Figure 8). These differences in placements of superintendents by district size are likely associated to salary disparities across racial groups.

¹ $\tau_b = .345, p = .001$

² $\tau_b = .493, p = .000$

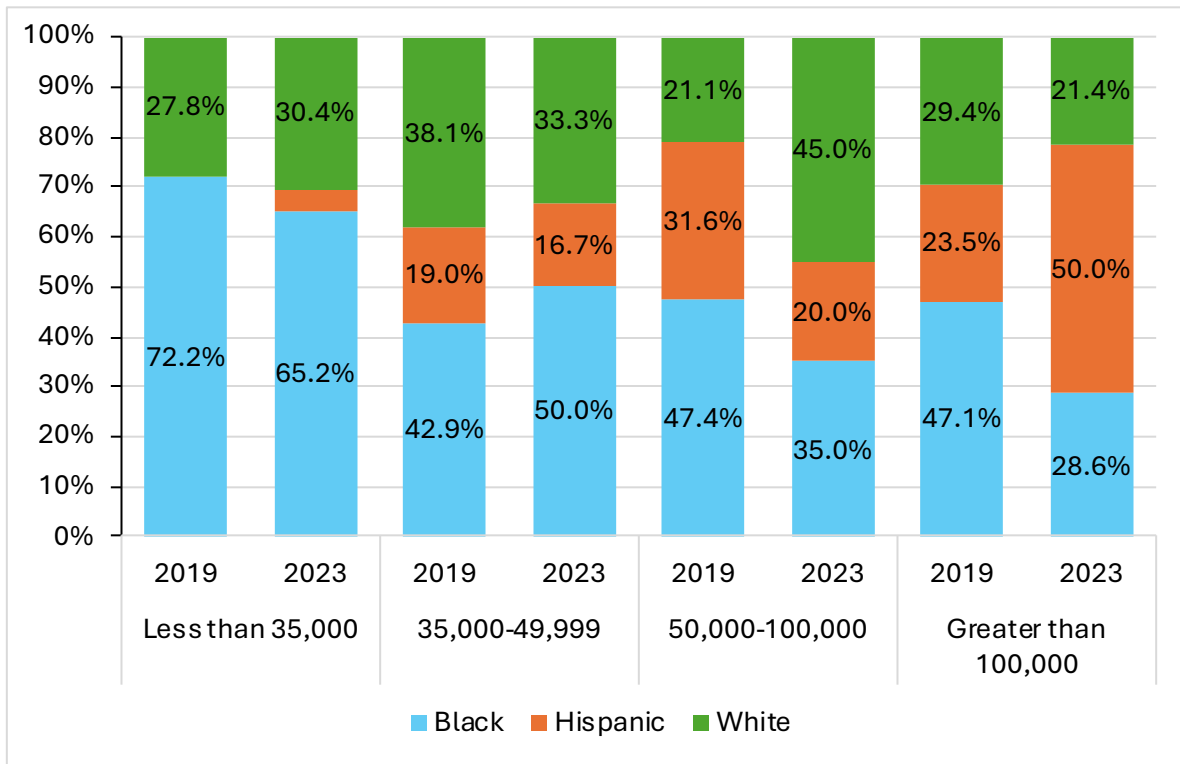


Figure 8. Proportional Distribution of Superintendents, District Size by Race/Ethnicity, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Salary by Student FRPL Rate

This section of the report provides a look at representation of economically disadvantaged students as measured by the rate of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) in districts relative to superintendent salaries. In these analyses, districts were grouped based on the percentage of FRPL students in the population in a manner that evenly distributes the number of districts (See Appendix Table A for quartile cut points). As can be seen in Table 2, there appears to be no discernible relationship between the percentage of FRPL students in the district and superintendent salaries.

FRPL Representation	2018-19		2022-23		% Change
	n	Avg. Salary	n	Avg. Salary	
1st Quartile (<25th %ile)	16	\$293,090	19	\$308,988	5.4%
2nd Quartile (25th-50th %ile)	19	\$268,397	19	\$284,009	5.8%
3rd Quartile (50th-75th %ile)	20	\$302,432	19	\$300,680	-0.6%
4th Quartile (>75th %ile)	19	\$273,269	19	\$292,695	7.1%

Table 2. Average Superintendent Salary by FRPL Student Representation, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Salary by Gender

Considerations of differences in salary across gender show only a slight gap between female and male superintendents across Council districts. While male superintendents have slightly greater salaries on average (Table 3), results of analyses of the relationship between gender among Council district leaders and superintendent salary indicate that the differences are not significant.

Superintendent Gender	2018-19		2022-23		% Change
	n	Avg. Salary	n	Avg. Salary	
Female	29	\$282,824	30	\$291,693	3.1%
Male	48	\$284,205	46	\$299,788	5.5%

Table 3. Average Superintendent Salary by Gender, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Salary by School Board Type

Turning to school board types, while superintendents in Council districts having elected school boards appear to have higher salaries on average (Table 4), there were no meaningful differences in district leader salaries across school board types.

Board Type	2018-19		2022-23		% Change
	n	Avg. Salary	n	Avg. Salary	
Appointed	9	\$280,308	9	\$292,392	4.3%
Elected	68	\$284,132	67	\$297,157	4.6%

Table 4. Average Superintendent Salary by School Board Type

DISTRICT LEADER TURNOVER

This portion of the report examines turnover among Council district leaders from 2018-19 academic year through the 2022-23 year, considering various district and superintendent characteristics. For the purposes of the analyses described in this section, “turnover” will be determined as the number of superintendents Council districts hired on a permanent basis during the aforementioned timespan. Between the 2018-19 and 2022-23 academic years: 21 Council districts retained the same superintendent, 41 districts hired two permanent superintendents, and 15 districts hired three permanent system leaders.

Superintendent Turnover by Student Population Size

Looking at district size by student enrollment, the average number of superintendents of larger districts were replaced during the pandemic appeared to higher in larger districts. This turned out to be statistically significant when correlational tests were conducted. In 2018-19, there was a clear pattern of increase in the number of superintendents hired by larger districts (Table 5)³.

³ District size (by enrollment) in 2018-19 was found to be positively correlated with the number of Council district superintendents permanently hired between 2018-19 and 2022-23 ($r(75) = .228, p = .046$).

Student Population Size	n	Avg. # Superintendents
Less than 35,000	18	1.8
Between 35,000 and 49,999	21	1.7
Between 50,000 and 100,000	20	2.0
Greater than 100,000	18	2.2

Table 5. Average Number of Superintendents from 2018 through 2023 by District Size, 2018-19

While the patterns were not as stark in the 2022-23 year (Table 6), tests for correlation determine that there was a significant statistical relationship between the number of superintendents hired by a Council district and district size⁴.

Student Population Size	n	Avg. # Superintendents
Less than 35,000	23	1.7
Between 35,000 and 49,999	18	2.0
Between 50,000 and 100,000	20	1.9
Greater than 100,000	16	2.2

Table 6. Average Number of Superintendents from 2018 through 2023 by District Size, 2022-23

Superintendent Turnover by Student Population Racial/Ethnic Demographics

Taking a look at how district student demographics relate to turnover among district leaders, it appears that districts having predominantly White student populations replaced their superintendents more often than those having predominantly non-White student populations (Table 7). The results of statistical tests, however, indicate that none of the differences are statistically significant.

Student Demographics	2018-19		2022-23	
	n	Avg. # Superintendents	n	Avg. # Superintendents
Predominantly Black	30	1.8	31	1.8
Predominantly Hispanic	33	2.0	34	2.0
Predominantly Other Races	3	1.7	3	1.7
Predominantly White	11	2.2	9	2.2

Table 7. Average Number of Superintendents from 2018 through 2023 by District Student Demographics, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Turnover by Student FRPL Rate

In looking at the relationship between representation of FRPL students and superintendent turnover, Table 8 illustrates what appears to be a pattern of Council districts having the greatest representation of economically disadvantaged students being slightly less likely to replace their superintendents after the pandemic. Statistical testing supports this assertion, as a significant negative correlation between FRPL student representation and number of superintendents hired from 2018 through 2023 was found⁵.

⁴ District size (by enrollment) in 2022-23 was also found to be positively correlated with the number of Council district superintendents permanently hired between 2018-19 and 2022-23 ($r(75) = .278, p = .014$).

⁵ There was a negative relationship between representation of FRPL students in Council districts in 2018-19 and number of superintendents hired by Council districts between 2018 and 2023 ($r(75) = -.395, p = .000$). Similarly, there was also a negative relationship between representation of FRPL students in Council districts in 2022-23 and number of superintendents hired by Council districts between 2018 and 2023 ($r(75) = -.395, p = .000$).

FRPL Representation	2018-19		2022-23	
	n	Avg. # Superintendents	n	Avg. # Superintendents
1st Quartile (<25th %ile)	16	2.2	19	2.2
2nd Quartile (25th-50th %ile)	19	2.1	19	2.1
3rd Quartile (50th-75th %ile)	20	1.9	20	2.0
4th Quartile (>75th %ile)	19	1.6	19	1.4

Table 8. Average Number of Superintendents from 2018 through 2023 by District FRPL Student Representation, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Turnover by Gender and Race

When examining turnover among Council district leaders across racial and gender lines, no meaningful differences were found. Between gender groups, districts originally led by female superintendents had an average of two superintendents from 2019 through 2023, districts originally led by male superintendents in 2019 had a similar average, with the difference not being significant. The trend was comparable along racial lines, with districts led by all comparable groups averaging approximately two superintendents between 2019 and 2023. Differences in superintendent turnover among racial groups were not significant. Taking race and gender together, districts led by the examined comparable race/gender groups had similar averages in the number of superintendents between 2019 and 2023, and differences were found to not be significant (Table 9).

Superintendent Characteristic	2018-19		2022-23	
	n	Avg. # Superintendents	n	Avg. # Superintendents
Gender				
Female	29	2.0	31	2.0
Male	48	1.9	46	1.8
Race				
Black	39	1.9	35	1.9
Hispanic	14	2.0	15	2.0
White	22	1.9	25	1.9
Race and Gender				
Black Female	19	2.0	17	1.9
Hispanic Female	2	2.0	3	2.3
White Female	6	2.2	11	2.1
Black Male	20	1.9	18	1.8
Hispanic Male	12	2.0	12	1.9
White Male	16	1.8	14	1.7

Table 9. Average Number of Superintendents from 2019 through 2023 by Race and Gender, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Turnover by School Board Type

Turning to superintendent turnover by school board type (appointed vs. elected), it appears that the average number of superintendents hired by Council member districts were nearly identical and that school board type had no effect on the rates at which superintendents left their positions during the pandemic (Table 10).

Board Type	n	Avg. # Superintendents
Appointed	9	1.9
Elected	68	1.9

Table 10. Average Number of Superintendents from 2018 through 2023 by School Board Type, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Turnover by Salary

In the case of superintendent salary, there appeared to be no discernible pattern in turnover by salary in the 2018-19 academic year. In the 2022-23 year, however, there is a noticeable trend where turnover appears to increase as salaries increase (Table 11). This trend was found to be significant when statistical tests were conducted⁹ (See Appendix Table B for salary quartile cut points).

Superintendent Salary	2018-19		2022-23	
	n	Avg. # Superintendents	n	Avg. # Superintendents
1st Quartile (<25th %ile)	19	1.9	18	1.7
2nd Quartile (25th-50th %ile)	19	1.7	20	1.9
3rd Quartile (50th-75th %ile)	20	1.9	19	2.0
4th Quartile (>75th %ile)	19	2.2	19	2.1

Table 11. Average Number of Superintendents from 2018 through 2023 by Superintendent Salary, 2018-19 and 2022-23

⁹ There was a positive relationship between superintendent salary in 2022-23 and number of superintendents hired by Council districts between 2018 and 2023 ($r(74) = .228, p = .048$).

SUMMARY

Two major points of focus in this report were superintendent base pay and turnover rates. The goal of gaining some understanding of changes in the position across large urban city school districts who are members of the Council of the Great City Schools and making comparisons—where possible—between the status of the workforce pre- and post-pandemic. Disparities in pay, hiring, and retention at the executive leadership level along the lines of race and gender are common points of tension in conversations on organizational management. This is especially the case when there is mismatch between the characteristics of the leaders of organizations and the populations that the districts serve.

The ten highest paid Council district superintendents in the 2022-23 academic year led districts in four states: California (5), Texas (3), Florida (1), and New York (1), which also happen to be the nation's most populous states—and largest economies—containing the two largest major cities boasting the country's largest Hispanic populations. Nine of the ten Council districts having the highest paid system leaders also had predominantly Hispanic student populations, and five of the ten superintendents in those districts were Hispanic.

Regarding turnover, however, no distinguishable patterns along the lines of race/ethnicity were found and any difference that may exist was not significant. The field of urban superintendency has become increasingly diverse over the past two decades, with the majority of superintendents now being Black or Hispanic.

Regarding gender, there were marginal differences in salary between female and male superintendents, and the gender of Council district leaders was determined to have no meaningful effect on the rate at which districts replaced their superintendent during the pandemic years. It should be noted that no significant relationship was found regarding student racial constitution and leadership turnover.

One of the more interesting findings in this analysis pertained to district FRPL rates—which indicated that, while superintendent salaries were determined to be unaffected by representation of economically-disadvantaged students in districts, turnover rates slightly increase among Council districts having lower FRPL rates. A recent RAND Corporation survey indicated that superintendents in large urban districts, which typically have higher FRPL rates, were significantly more likely to believe that the stresses and challenges of the role were ultimately worthwhile (RAND Corporation, 2023). While it is understood that there are a great number of elements that may have informed these perspectives, such as salary, career and/or political ambition, or commitment to mission-driven work, these insights highlight the complex dynamics between socioeconomic factors and leadership stability in education.

District size was related to superintendent salaries, as increases in student population correlate with increases in district leader pay. Turnover rates also increased as student populations increased. Differences in school board type were not associated with superintendent salary or turnover across Council member districts.

Finally, the study found that districts with higher rates of superintendent turnover were correlated with higher superintendent base salary. In other words, districts with lower base salary for superintendents experienced less turnover.

LIMITATIONS

The analyses contained in this report exclusively utilized secondary data, a limitation that is viewed as limiting the depth of the elements examined. The aforementioned limitations associated with relying exclusively on secondary data constrained data analysis. This study does not include the Puerto Rico Department of Education due to its unique structure and governance. The two-month data collection and analysis timeframe, conducted in February and March of 2023, allowed researchers to confine the study but may not capture all relevant dimensions of superintendent experiences during the school year. For example, some districts during the school year may have had multiple superintendents who varied in race/ethnicity, salary, and previous roles. The window allowed researchers to focus on a relatively stable snapshot in time. Finally, analyses and findings comparing superintendent base salaries do not include controls for differences in cost of living that are commonly attributed to locale.

CONCLUSION

The demographic composition of superintendents offers some perspective on gender and racial diversity within educational leadership roles. Most significantly, the demographic shift in superintendents to better reflect urban student enrollment highlights important progress toward creating more diverse and representative district leadership. The predominance of male superintendents highlights the ongoing challenges in gender representation among district leaders, strengthening the need for concerted efforts to foster gender equity, particularly for Black female (whose rates have substantially increased) and Hispanic female (whose rates have only slightly improved) superintendents in Council member districts in two decades. Similarly, the observed racial diversity among Council district superintendents reflects progress in addressing historical disparities. Still, persistent underrepresentation of certain groups emphasizes the necessity for continued promotion of diversity and inclusion in leadership ranks nationally, as results from a survey conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) indicate that less than ten percent of school district superintendents nationwide in 2022 were non-White (American Association of School Administrators, 2023).

The insights from this study have implications for school boards, and administrators focused on enhancing leadership stability in urban school districts. To address the demographic shifts and factors influencing superintendent turnover, it is essential to refine recruitment and retention strategies that emphasize racial and gender equity. Developing tailored mentorship and leadership programs can significantly aid career advancement for underrepresented groups. Moreover, enhancing professional development opportunities, especially in areas like crisis management, can empower superintendents to navigate challenges more effectively. These opportunities should also consider how gender influences differences within groups and the experiences of leaders in superintendent roles.

Finally, school boards should also prioritize governance training that underscores best practices in collaboration and transparent communication, strengthening superintendent-board relationships. Proactive efforts to bridge the gender gap and cultivate an organizational culture that appreciates diverse perspectives will enrich decision-making and policy development.

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APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES AND FIGURES

FRPL Representation	2018-19	2022-23
Minimum	29.4%	35.1%
1st Quartile (<25th %ile)	< 57.2%	< 59.9%
2nd Quartile (25th-50th %ile)	57.2%-68.9%	59.9%-75.2%
3rd Quartile (50th-75th %ile)	69%-82.8%	75.3%-83.2%
4th Quartile (<75th %ile)	> 82.8%	> 83.2%
Maximum	100%	100%

Table A. Cut Points for FRPL Student Representation Quartiles, 2018-19 and 2022-23

Superintendent Salary	2018-19	2022-23
Minimum	\$150,000	\$200,000
1st Quartile (<25th %ile)	< \$250,000	< \$255,000
2nd Quartile (25th-50th %ile)	\$250,000-\$279,999	\$255,000-\$287,499
3rd Quartile (50th-75th %ile)	\$280,000-\$320,000	\$287,500-\$330,781
4th Quartile (<75th %ile)	> \$320,000	> \$330,781
Maximum	\$477,753	\$440,000

Table A. Cut Points for FRPL Student Representation Quartiles, 2018-19 and 2022-23