AASA
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

2025–2026

SUPERINTENDENT SALARY & BENEFITS STUDY

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March 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025–2026 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study marks the fourteenth consecutive edition of this report. The national survey tracked the demographics, salary, benefits, and other elements of the employment agreements of school superintendents throughout the country.

This year's study results are based on 1,951 complete responses. The survey was distributed online and relied on superintendents responding to 66 items with the understanding that the report of findings would contain no personally identifiable information. Therefore, readers must consider the data descriptive and not necessarily representative of all superintendents. The study is intended to provide superintendents with actionable information needed to negotiate and manage their compensation and benefits.

Prior to the AASA efforts to study this topic, most school superintendents relied on the annual salary study sponsored by the Education Research Service (ERS) to benchmark their compensation and benefits. The closure of ERS in 2011 created a void in data about superintendent salary and benefits.

AASA responded to the need for data by developing a comprehensive study of the salary and benefits of school superintendents that far exceeded previous studies undertaken on this topic. AASA is particularly well suited for this task because it represents the vast majority of school superintendents in the country and has been the most active in collecting and disseminating to its members critical data needed to inform superintendent decision making about a host of topics.

AASA is committed to refining this work over time, thus maximizing the benefit to superintendents. The earlier editions of this study are available on the AASA website and provide valuable retrospective data (http://www.aasa.org/research.aspx).

METHODOLOGY

The research team was comprised of Tara Thomas, AASA Government Affairs Manager; Dr. Christopher H. Tienken, AASA Research Professor in Residence, Professor of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy, Seton Hall University, NJ, and External Member of the Faculty in the Department of Education Sciences at the University of Catania, Italy; Dr. Jennifer Timmer, Assistant Professor of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy, Seton Hall University, NJ; Dr. Li Kang, University of Alabama, AL; Dr. Sean Cronin, Matawan School District, NJ; and Seton Hall University Education Leadership doctoral students Jennifer Pasuit, Brianna Rizzi, and Timothy Yang. The research was conducted under the supervision of Noelle Ellerson Ng, AASA Associate Executive Director, Advocacy and Governance.

An extensive survey instrument was originally developed in 2012 with the assistance of Professors Theodore J. Kowalski (University of Dayton), I. Phillip Young (University of South Carolina), Terry Orr (Bank Street College), and Christopher C. Stream (University of Nevada, Las Vegas). The survey instrument was revised over the years to reflect changes in the compensation landscape. The latest revision occurred between July 2024 – August 2025 under the direction of Dr. Christopher Tienken for the current edition of the study. Peer review feedback of the survey was received by nine superintendents:

- Dr. Daniel Hile, Noblesville School District, Noblesville, IN.
- Dr. Bryan Luizzi, New Canaan Public Schools, New Canaan, CT.
- Dr. Jennifer Kelsall, Ridgewood Community High School, Norridge, IL.
- Dr. Lance Evans, Superintendent, New Albany City School District, New Albany, MS.
- Heidi Sipe, Superintendent, Umatilla School District 6R, Umatilla, OR.
- Randall W. Squier, Coxsackie-Athens Central School District, NY.
- Dr. Rupak Gandhi, Fargo School District 1, Fargo, ND.
- Dr. Dan J. Schnoes, Educational Services Unit #3, LaVista, NE.
- Dr. Eric Conti, Burlington Public Schools, Burlington, MA.

Using a commercially prepared mailing list of public school superintendents in the United States, email invitations to participate in the survey were distributed during the months of September and October 2025. State association executive directors were contacted to encourage their members to respond to the online survey.

No official exact count of the number of public school superintendents exists. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that there were 19,071 school districts as of the last count in 2021, but that number includes non-operating districts, counties that have multiple districts but only one superintendent, and districts that share a superintendent. The population for the study was approximately 13,000 active superintendents. The population excluded state superintendents and superintendents of state or regional education service centers.

REPORT OF FINDINGS

This 81-page report of findings is divided into 11 sections with 95 tables and relies on measures of central tendency for the analysis of the data collected. In some cases, the data are disaggregated by gender, district enrollment, and racial/cultural group.

As noted in previous reports, there are limitations on the proper use of the data:
When the responses for certain items are disaggregated by racial/cultural group and enrollment, the number of responses may be insufficient to support decision making.
Care should be exercised in generalizing results to all superintendents in the country.
In addition, some survey fatigue is commonly reported by superintendents and could have impacted the return rate.

After each data display in the report, authors offer general statements of findings. It is the intent of the authors to allow the readers the opportunity to disaggregate the data in a manner they find useful in working with their boards of education.

There were 1,951 total valid responses to the survey. Readers will note that respondents omitted responses to some questions. Therefore, the n-value fluctuates among the questions and can be less than 1,951 in some cases. In addition, some percentages in the tables presented may total

between 99% and 101% due to rounding. Note that some percentage totals have been rounded to the nearest full percentage point to aid in readability.

*** Care should be exercised in drawing conclusions or inferences from the very small numbers of respondents in some of the racial/cultural groups, other than the fact that superintendents who identified as White (not Hispanic) constitute the largest racial group represented in the study. Other racial/cultural groups appear to be underrepresented in the superintendent ranks, especially when compared to the racial/cultural profile of American public school student enrollment.

Having clearly identified the limitations inherent in a study of this magnitude, the report that follows is replete with important information that can prove very useful to superintendents for the purpose of contract negotiations.

END NOTES:

Many additional data elements were collected beyond those reported in this document. AASA members interested in investigating an element of this study in greater depth beyond those reported herein or are interested in offering suggestions for improvement of this research undertaking are invited to contact Tara Thomas directly at AASA, The School Superintendents Association.

Those citing the data presented herein and/or findings are asked to include acclamation of AASA and use appropriate APA citation style. Requests to use the data from this study or those that preceded it should contact Tara Thomas at AASA for details and requirements. Finally, AASA reserves all rights to the ownership and use of these data.

Special thanks are extended to Noelle Ellerson Ng, AASA Associate Executive Director, Advocacy and Governance, for her support and guidance and to AASA Government Affairs Manager Tara Thomas for her expertise and efforts to manage the nearly 133,000-cell spreadsheet containing the data collected for this study. The authors acknowledge Maree Sneed of Hogan and Lovells for her ongoing advice and input.

Citation: Tienken, C. H., Timmer, J., Kang, L., Cronin, S., Thomas, T., Pasuit, J., Rizzi, B., & Yang, T. (2026, February). *2025–2026 AASA superintendent salary and benefit study.* American Association of School Administrators.

Christopher H. Tienken, Ed.D.
March 2026

The 2025-2026 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study is powered by:

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KEY FINDINGS

- The survey received 1,951 valid responses from 49 states and the sample was generally representative of the larger population of superintendents.

- Respondents reported having an average of 7.3 years of experience as a superintendent. Contrary to the often-cited statistic of average tenure of a superintendent being less than 3 years, respondents reported an average time in the current position as 5.4 years.

- A significantly higher percentage of superintendents reported declining economic conditions this year (38%) compared to last year (30%).

- Higher percentages of superintendents in districts with enrollments of 1,000 or more students reported stable or growing economic conditions, whereas higher percentages of superintendents leading districts with fewer than 1,000 students reported declining economic conditions.

- A noticeably higher percentage of females held a doctorate (50.63%) compared to males (40.52%).

- Higher percentages of superintendents who identified as Black or African American (80.41%) held a doctorate compared to those who identified as White (41%) and Hispanic or Latino (57.7%).

- Similar to findings over the last three years, almost 9/10 (88.88%) of respondents intend to remain as superintendent in their current district for the upcoming 2026–2027 school year.

- Female superintendents earned approximately 98% of what males earned in 2025–2026.

- Base salary correlated strongly with enrollment. Salaries increased as district enrollment increased.

- Pay ratios are more equitable in public education than in the corporate world. The average ratio of superintendent salary to starting teacher salary was 3.53:1 compared to approximately 285:1 in the S&P 500 group of for-profit corporations.

- The majority of superintendents (59.59%) received 11–15 days of sick leave per year and 56% of superintendents received between 16–25 vacation days.

- Only 14% of superintendents have an incentive/performance clause or a defined provision providing a reward for accomplishing a predetermined task or objective.

- Almost 61% of school districts used legal counsel in contract negotiations compared to only 37% of superintendents who utilized legal counsel to negotiate their contracts. A higher percentage of female respondents (43%) used legal counsel compared to male superintendents (35%).

SECTION #1:
DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1.1. Respondent count by state (Q7)

State	Frequency	Percent
Alabama	24	1.23%
Alaska	23	1.18%
Arizona	53	2.72%
Arkansas	45	2.31%
California	92	4.72%
Colorado	31	1.59%
Connecticut	21	1.08%
Delaware	1	0.05%
Florida	4	0.20%
Georgia	23	1.18%
Idaho	16	0.82%
Illinois	174	8.92%
Indiana	53	2.72%
Iowa	33	1.69%
Kansas	44	2.25%
Kentucky	19	0.97%
Louisiana	7	0.36%
Maine	19	0.97%
Maryland	9	0.46%
Massachusetts	52	2.67%
Michigan	82	4.20%
Minnesota	102	5.23%
Mississippi	7	0.36%
Missouri	95	4.87%
Montana	37	1.90%
Nebraska	31	1.59%

State	Frequency	Percent
Nevada	8	0.41%
New Hampshire	10	0.51%
New Jersey	75	3.84%
New Mexico	7	0.36%
New York	175	8.97%
North Carolina	17	0.87%
North Dakota	52	2.67%
Ohio	57	2.92%
Oklahoma	37	1.89%
Oregon	23	1.18%
Pennsylvania	107	5.48%
Rhode Island	13	0.66%
South Carolina	15	0.76%
South Dakota	40	2.05%
Tennessee	22	1.12%
Texas	41	2.10%
Utah	1	0.05%
Vermont	8	0.41%
Virginia	23	1.18%
Washington	42	2.15%
West Virginia	4	0.20%
Wisconsin	45	2.20%
Wyoming	3	0.15%
Missing	37	1.89%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: A total of 1,951 valid responses were received. The total return is one of the largest since the inception of the project in 1999 and compares favorably with recent editions of the study:

2024–2025 N=2,077 2023–2024 N=2,706 2022–2023 N=2,444
2021–2020 N=1,785 2020–2021 N=1,509 2019–2020 N=1,259
2018–2019 N=1,433 2017–2018 N=1,172

A total of 49 states were represented. No responses were received from the District of Columbia or Hawaii.

Table 1.2A. Age (Q4)

Age	Frequency	2025	2023
≤30	4	0.20%	0%
31-40	67	3.42%	3.23%
41-50	656	33.57%	31.48%
51-60	1,012	51.89%	53.09%
61-70	176	9.03%	10.03%
70+	14	0.71%	0.74%
Missing	22	1.17%	1.43%
Total	1,951	100%	100%

Findings: The mean age of the superintendent was 52.33, about the same as 2022–2023. The median age was 54.5. The modal response was 51-60 years of age (52%) and 34% of respondents were 50 years old or younger in 2025–2026 compared to 38% in 2024–2025.

Approximately 89% of respondents were ages 41-60 years old. The percentage of superintendents ages 60+ decreased from 19.48% in 2012 to just 9.74% in 2025–2026.

Table 1.2B. Race/cultural group (Q6)

Race / Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	1,709	87.69%
Black or African American	87	4.46%
Hispanic or Latino	75	3.85%
Asian	8	0.41%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	16	0.82%
Two or more races	25	1.28%
Prefer not to answer	24	1.23%
Other	5	0.26%
Total	1,949	100%

Findings: Approximately 87% of respondents identified as White followed by almost 4.5% Black or African American and 4% Hispanic or Latino.

Table 1.2C. Gender (Q5)

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	1,369	70.21%
Female	581	29.79%
Prefer Not to Answer	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Total	1,950	100%

Findings: There was a three-percentage point increase in female superintendents. This finding is congruent with findings from the *2025 American Superintendent Study: Mid-Decade Update.*

Table 1.2D. Gender (Q5) and age (Q4)

Age	Male	Female	Missing	Total
≤30	4	0	0	4
	0.29%	0%	0%	0.20%
31-40	47	20	0	67
	3.43%	3.44%	0%	3.42%
41-50	476	176	1	653
	35.06%	30.46%	10%	33.57%
51-60	701	313	0	1,014
	51.35%	54.04%	0%	51.89%
61-70	119	57	0	176
	8.77%	9.81%	0%	9.03%
70+	9	5	0	14
	0.66%	0.86%	0%	0.71%
Missing	6	8	9	23
	0.44%	1.38%	90%	1.17%
Total	1,364	579	10	1,951
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Findings: Similar to the previous year, slightly higher percentage of females fell within the 51-60 age range compared to males (54% versus 51%).

Table 1.3A. Enrollment (Q8)

	Frequency	Percent
Fewer than 300	235	12.04%
300 to 999	559	28.62%
1,000 to 2,999	609	31.17%
3,000 to 4,999	219	11.22%
5,000 to 9,999	176	9.03%
10,000 to 24,999	108	5.56%
25,000 to 49,999	29	1.48%
50,000 to 99,999	5	0.26%
100,000 or more	4	0.20%
Missing	7	0.41%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Consistent with national trends, approximately 70% of district enrollment for the sample ranges from 300 to 2,999 students.

Table 1.3B. Gender (Q5) and district enrollment (Q8)

	Men	Women	Total
Fewer than 300	141	95	236
	10.30%	16.35%	12.10%
300 to 999	403	158	561
	29.44%	27.19%	28.77%
1,000 to 2,999	445	165	610
	32.51%	28.40%	31.28%
3,000 to 4,999	149	71	220
	10.88%	12.22%	11.28%
5,000 to 9,999	120	57	177
	8.77%	9.81%	9.08%
10,000 to 24,999	85	24	109
	6.21%	4.13%	5.59%
25,000 to 49,999	21	7	28
	1.53%	1.20%	1.44%
50,000 to 99,999	4	1	5
	0.29%	0.17%	0.26%
100,000 or more	1	3	4
	0.07%	0.52%	0.21%
Total	1,369	581	1,950

Findings: There was little difference where numbers were sufficient. Overall, approximately 70% of females and males in the sample worked in a district with fewer than 3,000 students.

Table 1.3C. Enrollment (Q8) and race/cultural group (Q6)

	White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Asian	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	American Indian or Alaska Native	Two or more races	Prefer not to answer	Other	Total
Fewer than 300	210	4	6	0	0	2	7	7	0	236
%	88.98%	1.69%	2.54%	0.00%	0.00%	0.85%	2.97%	2.97%	0.00%	100%
300 to 999	511	11	15	0	0	9	6	5	2	559
%	91.41%	1.97%	2.68%	0.00%	0.00%	1.61%	1.07%	0.89%	0.36%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	548	19	19	3	0	3	9	7	3	611
%	89.69%	3.11%	3.11%	0.49%	0.00%	0.49%	1.47%	1.15%	0.49%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	194	12	11	2	0	0	0	1	0	220
%	88.18%	5.45%	5.00%	0.91%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.45%	0.00%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	153	14	6	0	0	0	1	3	0	177
%	86.44%	7.91%	3.39%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.56%	1.69%	0.00%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	72	18	11	3	0	2	2	1	0	109
%	66.06%	16.51%	10.09%	2.75%	0.00%	1.83%	1.83%	0.92%	0.00%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	15	6	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
%	53.57%	21.43%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
%	60.00%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
%	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	1,709	87	75	8	0	16	25	24	5	1,949
% Race/Cultural Group	87.69%	4.46%	3.85%	0.41%	0.00%	0.82%	1.28%	1.23%	0.26%	100%

Findings: Where sufficient numbers existed, there were differences by race/cultural group and enrollment. Approximately 74% of superintendents who identified as White worked in districts with enrollments of fewer than 3,000 students compared to 53% of superintendents who identified as Black or African American and as Hispanic or Latino.

Table 1.4A. District description (Q9)

	Frequency	Percent
Rural	1,248	63.93%
Suburban	542	27.93%
Urban	152	7.81%
No Response	9	0.46%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: As is the case nationally, over 60% of the superintendents in this sample worked in rural districts.

Table 1.4B. District description (Q9) and enrollment (Q8)

	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	220	9	4	1	234
	94.07%	3.81%	1.69%	0.42%	100%
300 to 999	493	51	13	0	557
	88.41%	9.27%	2.32%	0.00%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	396	179	33	0	608
	64.98%	29.62%	5.40%	0.00%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	73	125	22	0	220
	33.18%	56.82%	10.00%	0.00%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	40	98	39	0	177
	22.60%	55.37%	22.03%	0.00%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	24	53	32	0	109
	22.02%	48.62%	29.36%	0.00%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	0	22	7	0	29
	0.00%	75.86%	24.14%	0.00%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	0	4	1	0	5
	0.00%	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	1	1	2	0	4
	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	100%
Missing	0	0	0	8	8
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	100%
Total	1,247	542	153	9	1,951
	63.93%	27.81%	7.81%	0.46%	100%

Findings: Not surprisingly, there was a relationship between enrollment and urbanicity. As enrollment increased, the percentage of districts categorized as urban and suburban increased and those categorized as rural decreased.

Table 1.4C. District description (Q9) and race/cultural group (Q6)

	Rural	Suburban	Urban	No Response	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	1,143	467	90	1	1,707
	67.12%	27.50%	5.32%	0.06%	100%
Black or African American	23	31	33	0	87
	26.44%	35.63%	37.93%	0.00%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	31	24	20	0	75
	41.33%	32.00%	26.67%	0.00%	100%
Asian	0	5	3	0	8
	0.00%	62.50%	37.50%	0.00%	100%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
American Indian or Alaska Native	14	1	1	0	16
	87.50%	6.25%	6.25%	0.00%	100%
Two or more races	17	7	1	0	25
	68.00%	28.00%	4.00%	0.00%	100%
Other	2	3	0	0	5
	40.00%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to say	17	4	3	0	24
	70.83%	16.67%	12.50%	0.00%	100%
Total	1,249	542	151	9	1,947
	63.93%	27.81%	7.81%	0.46%	100%

Findings: Where sufficient numbers existed, higher percentages of superintendents who identified as White (67%) worked in rural districts compared to superintendents who identified as Black or African American (26%) and Hispanic or Latino (41%).

Conversely, higher percentages of superintendents who identified as Black or African American (38%) and Hispanic or Latino (27%) worked in urban districts compared to superintendents who identified as White (5%).

Table 1.4D. District description (Q9) and gender (Q5)

Type	Male	Female	Other	Prefer not to say	Missing	Total
Rural	887	360	0	0	1	1,248
	65.01%	62.31%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	63.93%
Suburban	379	162	0	0	0	541
	27.83%	28.23%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	27.81%
Urban	97	55	0	0	1	153
	7.09%	9.47%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	7.81%
Missing	1	0	0	0	8	9
	0.07%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	80.00%	1.46%
Total	1,364	577	0	0	10	1,951
	100%	100%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	100%

Findings: There were slight differences by gender and district description. A slightly higher percentage of males (65%) worked in rural districts compared to females (62%). Conversely, a slightly higher percentage of females (9.5%) worked in urban districts compared to males (7%).

Table 1.5A. Years as superintendent (Q11)

Years	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	41	2.09%
1-5 years	909	46.53%
6-10 years	508	26.02%
11-15 years	301	15.46%
16-20 years	116	6.02%
21-25 years	50	2.55%
26-30 years	13	0.66%
31-35 years	2	0.10%
36-40 years	1	0.05%
40+ years	0	0.00%
No Response	10	0.51%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Respondents reported an average of 7.3 years of experience as a superintendent. Similar to the results from 2022 and 2023, almost half — 47.95% — of respondents had five years or less experience as a superintendent.

Table 1.5B. Years as superintendent (Q11) and enrollment (Q8)

	Fewer than 300	300 to 999	1,000 to 2,999	3,000 to 4,999	5,000 to 9,999	10,000 to 24,999	25,000 to 49,999	50,000 to 99,999	100,000 or more	Total
Less than 1 year	7	15	11	2	5	1	0	0	0	41
	17.07%	36.59%	26.83%	4.88%	12.20%	2.44%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
1-5 years	128	250	285	108	85	39	13	1	2	911
	14.04%	27.41%	31.36%	11.84%	9.32%	4.28%	1.43%	0.11%	0.22%	100%
6-10 years	60	162	154	56	39	28	7	2	2	510
	11.76%	31.76%	30.20%	10.98%	7.65%	5.49%	1.37%	0.39%	0.39%	100%
11-15 years	27	85	93	35	27	29	5	2	0	303
	8.91%	28.05%	30.69%	11.55%	8.91%	9.57%	1.65%	0.66%	0.00%	100%
16-20 years	5	28	41	14	20	8	2	0	0	118
	4.24%	23.73%	34.75%	11.86%	16.95%	6.78%	1.69%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
21-25 years	7	15	20	3	1	4	0	0	0	50
	14.00%	30.00%	40.00%	6.00%	2.00%	8.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
26-30 years	1	5	3	2	0	0	2	0	0	13
	7.69%	38.46%	23.08%	15.38%	0.00%	0.00%	15.38%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
31-35 years	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
36-40 years	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	0.00%	0.00%	100%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
40+ years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0%
No Response	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	236	561	610	220	177	109	29	5	4	1,951
	12.04%	28.62%	31.17%	11.22%	9.03%	5.56%	1.48%	0.26%	0.20%	100%

Findings: There did not appear to be a strong relationship between years of experience as a superintendent and enrollment.

Table 1.5C. Years as superintendent (Q11) and gender (Q5)

Years	Male	Female	Total
Less than 1 year	23	18	41
	1.68%	3.10%	2.095
1-5 years	576	336	912
	42.07%	57.83%	46.53%
6-10 years	372	136	508
	27.17%	23.41%	26.02%
11-15 years	236	67	303
	17.24%	11.53%	15.46%
16-20 years	105	13	118
	7.67%	2.24%	6.02%
21-25 years	43	7	50
	3.14%	1.20%	2.55%
26-30 years	10	3	13
	0.73%	0.52%	0.66%
31-35 years	2	0	2
	0.15%	0	0.10%
36-40 years	1	0	1
	0.07%	0	0.05%
40+ years	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Missing	1	1	8
	0.07%	0.17%	0.51%
Total	1,369	581	1,950
	100%	100%	100%

Findings: Approximately 60% of female superintendents had five years or less of experience as a superintendent compared to a little more than 43% of male superintendents.

Tables 1.5D. Years as superintendent (Q11) and race/cultural group (Q6)

	Less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	36-40 years	40+ years	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	36	778	454	267	108	48	13	2	1	0	1,707
	2.11%	45.52%	26.57%	15.62%	6.32%	2.81%	0.76%	0.12%	0.06%	0.00%	100%
Black or African American	2	54	18	11	2	0	0	0	0	0	87
	2.30%	62.07%	20.69%	12.64%	2.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	0	41	19	14	1	0	0	0	0	0	75
	0.00%	54.67%	25.33%	18.67%	1.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Asian	1	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
	12.50%	62.50%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Native Hawaiian or other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	5	3	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	16
	0.00%	31.25%	18.75%	18.75%	31.25%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Two or more races	1	12	7	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	25
	4.00%	48.00%	28.00%	16.00%	4.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to answer	1	11	6	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	24
	4.17%	45.83%	25.00%	12.50%	4.17%	8.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Other	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	0.00%	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Missing	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	0.00%	18.18%	9.09%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	41	912	510	303	118	50	13	2	1	0	1,950
	2.09%	46.53%	26.02%	15.46%	6.02%	2.55%	0.66%	0.10%	0.05%	0.00%	100%

Findings: Where numbers were sufficient, there were differences by race/cultural group and years of experience as a superintendent. Approximately 54% of superintendents who identified as White had more than five years of experience compared to superintendents who identified as Black or African American (36%) and Hispanic or Latino (45%).

Table 1.6A. Years in present position (Q10)

Years	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	37	1.89%
1-5 years	1,221	62.30%
6-10 years	430	21.94%
11-15 years	201	10.26%
16-20 years	43	2.19%
21-25 years	13	0.66%
26-30 years	3	0.15%
31-35 years	2	0.10%
36-40 years	0	0.00%
40+ years	0	0.00%
Total	1,950	100%

Findings: Contrary to the often-cited statistic of average tenure of a superintendent being less than three years, the respondents reported the average years in the current position was 5.4. As a group, almost 62% of superintendents had been in their current position fewer than six years. There was not a relationship between time in current position and enrollment.

Table 1.6B. Years in present position (Q10) and gender (Q5)

Years	Male	Female	Total
Less than 1 year	21	16	37
	1.53%	2.75%	1.90%
1-5 years	832	388	1,220
	60.77%	66.78%	62.56%
6-10 years	309	120	429
	22.57%	20.65%	22.00%
11-15 years	150	51	201
	10.96%	8.78%	10.30%
16-20 years	38	5	43
	2.78%	0.86%	2.20%
21-25 years	13	0	13
	0.95%	0.00%	0.66%
26-30 years	3	0	3
	0.22%	0.00%	0.15%
31-35 years	1	1	2
	0.07%	0.17%	0.10%
36-40 years	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
40+ years	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Missing	2	0	2
	0.15%	0.00%	0.03%
Total	1,369	581	1,950
	100%	100%	100%

Findings: Overall, males had slightly more time in their current present positions than females. A larger percentage of females (69%) had fewer than six years of experience in their current positions compared to males (62%).

Table 1.6C. Years in present position (Q10) and race/cultural group (Q6)

	Less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	36-40 years	40+ years	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	32	1,046	394	179	39	12	3	2	0	0	1,707
	1.87%	61.21%	23.05%	10.47%	2.28%	0.70%	0.18%	0.12%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Black or African American	3	67	12	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	87
	3.45%	77.01%	13.79%	3.45%	1.15%	1.15%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	2	48	14	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	75
	2.67%	64.00%	18.67%	14.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Asian	0	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
	0.00%	75.00%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Native Hawaiian or other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00 %
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	8	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	16
	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%	12.50%	12.50 %	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Two or more races	0	21	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
	0.00%	84.00%	4.00%	12.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to answer	0	18	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	24
	0.00%	75.00%	12.50%	8.33%	4.17%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Other	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	0.00%	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Missing	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	0.00%	27.27%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	37	1,221	430	201	43	13	3	2	0	0	1,950
	1.89	62.30%	21.94%	10.26%	2.19%	0.66%	0.15%	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%	100%

Findings: Where numbers were sufficient, there were some differences based on race/cultural group and years in present position. A higher percentage of superintendents who identified as Black or African American (80%) indicated they were in their present positions fewer than six years compared to superintendents who identified as White (63%) or Hispanic or Latino (67%).

Table 1.7A. Economic condition of district (Q21)

Economic condition of the district	Frequency	Percent
Declining economic condition	747	38.11%
Growing economic condition	208	10.61%
Stable economic condition	991	50.56%
Missing	5	0.7%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: A significantly higher percentage of superintendents reported declining economic conditions this year (38%) compared to last year (30%).

Table 1.7B. Economic condition of district (Q21) and enrollment (Q8)

District Enrollment	Declining economic condition		Stable economic condition		Growing economic condition		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fewer than 300	115	15.39 %	107	10.80 %	13	6.25%	235	12.04 %
300 to 999	263	35.21 %	262	26.44 %	35	16.83 %	560	28.62 %
1,000 to 2,999	226	30.25 %	319	32.19 %	62	29.81 %	610	31.17 %
3,000 to 4,999	67	8.97%	131	13.22 %	22	10.58 %	220	11.22 %
5,000 to 9,999	40	5.35%	98	9.89%	39	18.75 %	177	9.03%
10,000 to 24,999	24	3.21%	58	5.85%	27	12.98 %	109	5.56%
25,000 to 49,999	10	1.34%	12	1.21%	7	3.37%	29	1.48%
50,000 to 99,999	0	0.00%	4	0.40%	1	0.48%	5	0.26%
100,000 or more	2	0.27%	0	0.00%	2	0.96%	4	0.20%
Missing							2	0.41%
Total	747	100%	991	100%	208	100%	195 1	100%

Findings: Higher percentages of superintendents leading districts with enrollments of 1,000 or more students reported experiencing stable or growing economic conditions, whereas higher percentages of superintendents leading districts with fewer than 1,000 students reported experiencing declining economic conditions.

Table 1.8A. Terminal degree (Q12)

Terminal Degree	Frequency	Percent
Masters	739	37.81%
MBA	12	0.61%
CPA	3	0.15%
JD	10	0.51%
EdS	282	14.44%
EdD	723	37.04%
PhD	122	6.33%
Other	59	3.11%
No Response	0	0.00%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: More than four of ten (44%) of respondents held some form of a doctorate (EdD, PhD, or JD), a slight increase from last year.

Table 1.8B. Terminal degree (Q12) and gender (Q5)

	Male		Female		Prefer Not to Answer		Other		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
CPA	2	0.13%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	0.10%
EdD	517	34.06%	219	39.89%	2	33.33%	1	100%	739	35.58%
EdS	246	16.21%	53	9.65%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	300	14.44%
JD	5	0.33%	2	0.36%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	7	0.34%
Masters	603	39.72%	194	35.34%	3	50.00%	0	0.00%	801	38.57%
MBA	9	0.59%	4	0.73%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	13	0.63%
PhD	93	6.13%	57	10.38%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	151	7.27%
Other	43	2.83%	20	3.64%	1	16.67%	0	0.00%	64	3.08%
Missing	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total	1,518	100%	549	100%	6	100%	1	100%	2,077	100%

Findings: Where numbers were sufficient, a noticeably higher percentage of females held a doctorate (50.63%) compared to males (40.52%).

Table 1.8C. Terminal degree (Q12) and race/cultural group (Q6)

	CPA	EdD	EdS	JD	Masters	MBA	PhD	Other	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	2	602	270	10	663	9	103	50	1,709
	0.12%	35.23%	15.80%	0.59%	38.79%	0.53%	6.03%	2.93%	100%
Black or African American	0	55	2	0	16	1	12	1	87
	0.00%	63.22%	2.30%	0.00%	18.39%	1.15%	13.79%	1.15%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	1	40	2	0	26	1	3	2	75
	1.33%	53.33%	2.67%	0.00%	34.67%	1.33%	4.00%	2.67%	100%
Asian	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	8
	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	5	2	0	9	0	0	0	16
	0.00%	31.25%	12.50%	0.00%	56.25%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Two or more races	0	8	5	0	7	1	4	0	25
	0.00%	32.00%	20.00%	0.00%	28.00%	4.00%	16.00%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to answer	0	7	2	0	15	0	0	0	24
	0.00%	29.17%	8.33%	0.00%	62.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Other	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
	0.00%	80.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	3	725	283	10	740	12	123	53	1,951
	0.15%	37.04%	14.44%	0.51%	37.81%	0.61%	6.33%	3.11%	100%

Findings: Where numbers were sufficient, differences existed by race/cultural group. Higher percentages of superintendents who identified as Black or African American (80.41%) held a doctorate compared to those who identified as White (41%) and those who identified as Hispanic or Latino (57.7%).

Note: As indicated in the introduction, care should be exercised in drawing conclusions or inferences from the small numbers of respondents in some of the racial/cultural groups, other than the fact that White (not Hispanic) superintendents were the largest group represented in the study. Other racial/cultural groups appeared to be underrepresented in the superintendent ranks, especially when compared to the racial/cultural profile of American public school enrollment.

Table 1.9A. Professional plans at the conclusion of this school year (Q19)

Professional Plans	Count	%
Continue serving as superintendent at my current district	1,741	88.88%
Continue working in education, but pursue a different (non-superintendent) position	12	0.61%
Leave education for other reason (Specify Reason):	41	2.09%
Leave education to retire	7	0.36%
Leave education to work in a non-education field	17	0.87%
Retire and work as an interim superintendent	9	0.46%
Retire, and then be re-hired to continue working in a different district within the same state	7	0.36%
Retire, and then be re-hired to continue working in education in another state	14	0.71%
Retire, and then be re-hired to continue working in my current district	33	1.68%
Retire, and then pursue an education-related position outside of K-12 public schools	51	2.60%
Serve as superintendent at a different district within the same state	3	0.15%
Serve as superintendent in another state	9	0.46%
Omitted	7	0.77%
Total	1,951	100.%

Findings: Similar to findings over the last three years, almost 9/10 (88.88%) of respondents intend to remain as superintendent in their current district for the upcoming 2026–2027 school year. Overall, approximately 90% reported they would continue to serve in the position of superintendent. There were no significant differences by gender.

Care should be taken when interpreting these numbers as sampling bias may influence the results.

Table 1.10A. Per pupil spending (Q20)

Projected 2025-26 per pupil expenditure	Frequency	Percent
Less than $5,000	48	2.46%
$5,000-7,499	218	11.16%
$7,500-9,999	327	16.74%
$10,000-12,499	461	23.59%
$12,500-14,999	346	17.69%
$15,000+	514	26.30%
Missing	37	2.05%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Approximately 40% of districts spend $7,500-$12,499 per pupil, down from 44% in 2024–2025.

Table 1.10B. Per pupil spending (Q20) and enrollment (Q8)

Enrollment	Fewer than 300		300 to 999		1,000 to 2,999		3,000 to 4,999		5,000 to 9,999		10,000 to 24,999		25,000 to 49,999		50,000 to 99,999		100,000 +	
Per Pupil Spending	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than $5,000	17	7.33%	8	1.45%	15	2.53%	2	0.91%	3	1.70%	3	2.80%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
$5,000-$7,499	28	12.07%	69	12.52%	63	10.64%	21	9.59%	27	15.34%	7	6.54%	3	10.71%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
$7,500 - $9,999	29	12.50%	101	18.33%	119	20.10%	33	15.07%	21	11.93%	17	15.89%	5	17.86%	0	0.00%	2	50.00%
$10,000 - $12,499	45	19.40%	151	27.40%	121	20.44%	51	23.29%	44	25.00%	39	36.45%	8	28.57%	1	20.00%	1	25.00%
$12,500 - $14,999	40	17.24%	106	19.24%	105	17.74%	34	15.53%	33	18.75%	21	19.63%	7	25.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
$15,000+	73	31.74%	116	21.05%	169	28.55%	78	35.62%	48	27.27%	20	18.69%	5	17.86%	4	80.00%	1	25.00%
Total*	232	100%	551	100%	592	100%	219	100%	176	100%	107	100%	28	100%	5	100%	4	100%

Findings: Approximately 60% of districts with enrollments 10,000–24,999 students spend more than $10,000 per student compared to 68% of districts with enrollments below 10,000.

*N count was 1770.

SECTION #2: SALARY

Table 2.1. Superintendent base salary 2025–2026 (Q13) and enrollment (Q8)

	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	N
Fewer than 300	50,000	100,000	**117,850**	140,000	220,000	236
300 to 999	60,000	125,535	**144,342**	166,229	268,000	561
1,000 to 2,999	80,000	150,000	**173,163**	200,000	435,000	610
3,000 to 4,999	108,000	184,625	**214,100**	239,250	388,052	220
5,000 to 9,999	113,000	203,000	**227,000**	260,000	374,000	177
10,000 to 24,999	150,000	215,941	**248,000**	290,350	412,002	109
25,000 to 49,999	200,000	245,000	**295,000**	324,000	452,000	29
50,000 to 99,999	320,000	326,568	**363,982**	375,950	426,000	5
100,000 or more	125,000	173,750	**254,000**	319,750	325,000	4
Total						1,951
Mean Salary			**178,111**			

Findings: Consistent with results since the inception of the study, median salaries generally demonstrate an increase as district enrollments increase. However, caution should be taken with interpretations for enrollments above 24,999 due to smaller sample sizes.

Table 2.2. Superintendent base salary (Q13) and gender (Q5)

	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	N
Female	60,000	134,475	**165,000**	214,000	382,000	581
Male	50,000	136,980	**168,677**	212,090	452,000	1,369
Total						1,950

Findings: Keeping mind that males are overrepresented in the superintendency (73%) compared to females (26%), the median salary of male superintendents was slightly higher than that of females for only the 7th time in the last 14 years.

Female superintendents earned approximately 98% of what males earned in 2025–2026.

Table 2.3. Superintendent base salary (Q13) and racial/cultural group (Q6)

Race/Cultural Group	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	N
American Indian or Alaska Native	83,000	115,750	**139,276**	165,002	266,610	16
Asian	221,162	239,028	**262,000**	272,500	412,002	7
Black or African American	83,480	178,725	**225,000**	266,443	375,950	87
Hispanic or Latino	80,000	170,750	**224,350**	266,250	452,000	74
Two or more races	86,957	122,000	**150,993**	190,962	309,000	25
White (not Hispanic or Latino)	50,000	135,000	**165,000**	205,000	435,000	1,706
Other	130,000	165,000	**192,000**	195,000	239,000	5
Prefer not to answer	80,000	128,750	**157,756**	206,250	374,000	24
Total						1,944

Findings: As in previous editions of the study, where sufficient numbers of respondents existed, some variation was noted in median salaries. Superintendents who identified as Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino had higher median salaries than superintendents who identified as White.

Care should be taken in interpreting the data because of the small number of respondents in some groups and the overrepresentation of superintendents who identified as White, making definitive analysis difficult, if not inappropriate. Some of the variation in median salaries may be due to the fact that higher percentages of superintendents who identified as Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino worked in larger and more urbanized districts and those contexts associate with higher median salaries.

Table 2.4. Superintendent base salary (Q13) and terminal degree (Q12)

Degree Type	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	Count
CPA	175,000	183,146	**191,292**	208,146	225,000	3
Ed.D	80,000	160,000	**196,000**	236,750	452,000	723
Ed.S	60,000	120,000	**140,000**	166,567	291,700	283
J.D	124,000	208,496	**223,125**	263,500	298,500	10
M.A./M.S./M.Ed (Master's degree)	50,000	130,000	**153,235**	185,000	394,000	740
MBA	96,000	164,625	**189,500**	231,708	290,700	12
Ph.D	79,000	153,625	**196,875**	229,250	360,000	124
Other	83,835	157,500	**182,000**	211,626	340,000	47
Total						1,942

Findings: Where sufficient numbers of responses existed, superintendents with either an EdD or PhD had higher median salaries.

Table 2.5. Superintendent base salary (Q13) and district description (Q9)

Type	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	N
Rural	50,000	125,206	**147,000**	174,000	311,488	1,253
Suburban	92,700	188,643	**220,000**	257,282	435,000	545
Urban	79,000	185,761	**217,500**	264,250	452,000	153
Total						1,951

Findings: The median salary in rural districts was lower than that of suburban and urban. Some of the difference is likely related to rural districts having smaller enrollments on average than suburban and urban districts.

Table 2.6. Associate superintendent base salary (Q14) and district enrollment (Q8)

Enrollment	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	Omitted	N
Fewer than 300	81,000	86,580	**112,000**	132,000	154,000	217	236
300 to 999	56,000	105,000	**125,000**	141,250	241,322	445	561
1,000 to 2,999	76,150	120,000	**138,911**	160,000	275,000	189	610
3,000 to 4,999	89,000	135,000	**165,000**	190,000	285,000	13	220
5,000 to 9,999	85,000	142,046	**174,500**	195,000	310,000	3	177
10,000 to 24,999	92,000	151,146	**175,000**	200,000	301,200	1	109
25,000 to 49,999	120,000	180,000	**200,000**	220,000	270,000	1	29
50,000 to 99,999	179,000	205,544	**221,352**	239,985	275,000	1	5
100,000 or more	165,000	191,666	**218,331**	239,166	260,000	1	4
Total						873	1,951

Findings: Consistent with findings in previous editions of the study, base salary for assistant/associate superintendents increased as enrollment increased. It is noted that in districts with lower enrollments, these positions often do not exist.

Table 2.7. High school principal base salary (Q15) and district enrollment (Q8)

Enrollment	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	Omitted	N
Fewer than 300	50,000	74,000	**85,000**	95,000	143,000	91	236
300 to 999	52,424	90,000	**100,000**	115,000	228,913	74	561
1,000 to 2,999	65,000	103,000	**120,000**	133,500	275,000	55	610
3,000 to 4,999	70,000	115,000	**135,000**	161,798	265,000	21	220
5,000 to 9,999	82,000	124,675	**144,000**	170,469	240,000	9	177
10,000 to 24,999	89,000	120,000	**140,000**	165,000	215,000	8	109
25,000 to 49,999	100,000	130,000	**157,000**	170,000	209,000	0	29
50,000 to 99,999	135,000	146,250	**152,012**	154,334	155,267	1	5
100,000 or more	85,000	118,750	**152,500**	178,250	188,000	0	4
Total						261	1,951

Findings: Consistent with findings in previous editions of the study, in almost all cases, the larger the student enrollment of the district, the higher the mean base salary for the high school principal when sample sizes exceeded 28 responses. Omitted responses are due mostly to some districts not having high schools or the position of high school principal.

Table 2.8. Middle school principal base salary (Q16) and district enrollment (Q8)

Enrollment	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	Omitted	Count
Fewer than 300	50,000	74,750	**84,500**	95,000	155,000	160	236
300 to 999	52,424	85,000	**98,385**	115,000	185,000	251	561
1,000 to 2,999	60,000	98,000	**114,090**	130,000	255,000	63	610
3,000 to 4,999	69,000	108,990	**129,359**	152,949	225,000	16	220
5,000 to 9,999	80,000	112,614	**130,000**	154,552	230,000	13	177
10,000 to 24,999	86,000	105,000	**125,000**	155,000	207,000	5	109
25,000 to 49,999	80,000	125,000	**148,000**	157,500	195,000	2	29
50,000 to 99,999	120,000	135,000	**142,140**	145,679	149,876	1	5
100,000 or more	120,000	127,500	**135,000**	156,500	178,000	1	4
Total						514	1,951

Findings: Similar to their high school counterparts, middle school principal base median salaries were related to district enrollment and generally increased as district enrollment increased.

Table 2.9. Elementary school principal base salary (Q17) and district enrollment (Q8)

Enrollment	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	Omitted	N
Fewer than 300	50,000	75,000	**82,000**	93,000	166,500	106	236
300 to 999	58,000	85,000	**95,000**	110,000	256,000	43	561
1,000 to 2,999	50,000	94,375	**107,535**	125,000	250,000	25	610
3,000 to 4,999	60,000	100,000	**120,000**	145,000	205,000	12	220
5,000 to 9,999	75,000	104,486	**124,780**	150,000	220,000	11	177
10,000 to 24,999	82,864	100,000	**120,000**	142,500	196,000	6	109
25,000 to 49,999	70,000	112,500	**129,818**	145,000	195,000	2	29
50,000 to 99,999	105,000	123,750	**132,785**	138,947	149,079	1	5
100,000 or more	85,000	111,250	**121,500**	134,250	168,000	0	4
Total						208	1,951

Findings: Elementary school principals generally followed the same trend as their high school and middle school counterparts: median salary increased as enrollment increased. Since the study's inception, median base salaries in districts with enrollments of fewer than 1,000 students have yet to exceed $100,000.

Table 2.10. Beginning teacher base salary (Q18) and district enrollment (Q8)

Enrollment	Min	25%	**Median**	75%	Max	Omitted	N
Fewer than 300	34,000	41,408	**43,000**	48,005	74,500	9	236
300 to 999	33,000	42,661	**46,056**	50,252	132,000	6	561
1,000 to 2,999	35,000	45,000	**50,000**	54,400	140,000	10	610
3,000 to 4,999	36,000	48,000	**53,441**	60,000	130,000	6	220
5,000 to 9,999	40,000	48,195	**52,143**	60,000	115,000	7	177
10,000 to 24,999	35,000	48,760	**52,750**	60,000	80,000	1	109
25,000 to 49,999	40,000	50,150	**55,000**	60,000	80,000	0	29
50,000 to 99,999	53,610	55,403	**58,000**	60,426	61,703	1	5
100,000 or more	48,943	51,039	**53,369**	56,250	60,000	0	4
Total						42	1,951

Findings: As in previous years, where numbers were sufficient, there appeared to be a relationship between district enrollment and beginning teacher salary in this year's results.

Table 2.11. Ratio of median superintendent salary (Q13), beginning teacher salary (Q18), and district enrollment (Q8) 2025–2026

Enrollment	Superintendent Median Salary	Beginning Teacher Median Base Salary	4–year Comparison
Fewer than 300	**117,850**	**43,000**	**2.74:1 (25–26)** 2.73:1 (24–25) 2.74:1 (23–24) 2.65:1 (22–23) 2.60:1 (21–22)
300 to 999	**144,342**	**46,056**	**3.13:1 (25–26)** 3.02:1 (24–25) 3.10:1 (23–24) 3.00:1 (22–23) 3.10:1 (21–22)
1,000 to 2,999	**173,163**	**50,000**	**3.46:1 (25–26)** 3.38:1 (24–25) 3.50:1 (23–24) 3.45:1 (22–23) 3.45:1 (21–22)
3,000 to 4,999	**214,100**	**53,441**	**4.00:1 (25–26)** 3.84:1 (24–25) 4.00:1 (23–24) 3.92:1 (22–23) 3.80:1 (21–22)
5,000 to 9,999	**227,000**	**52,143**	**4.35:1 (25-26)** 4.07:1 (24-25) 4.21:1 (23-24) 4.25:1 (22–23) 4.20:1 (21–22)
10,000 to 24,999	**248,000**	**52,750**	**4.70:1 (25–26)** 4.54:1 (24–25) 4.53:1 (23–24) 4.70:1 (22–23) 5.00:1 (21–22)

Note: Samples sizes were not sufficiently robust for meaning analysis for enrollments above 24,999 students.

Findings: A metric of importance in the private sector is the ratio of the entry level worker compensation to the base salary (without incentives) of the CEO. The four-year calculations for median entry-level base salary of teachers were presented compared with the median base salary of superintendents arrayed by district size. **The average ratio of superintendent salary to starting teacher salary was 3.53:1.** This year's data suggest that the ratios between median superintendent salary and median salary for a starting teacher are consistent with those reported over last five years across enrollment groups and much lower than those found in the for-profit business environment.

For comparison, the AFL-CIO (2025) reported in their *Executive Pay Watch* study that the 2024 ratio of CEO base salary to entry level employee base salary for the 500 largest publicly traded corporations in the United States was 285:1. Source: https://aflcio.org/paywatch

SECTION #3: EVALUATION

Table 3.1. Frequency of performance evaluations (Q49)

Frequency of Evaluation	Frequency	Percent
Annually	1,730	88.40%
Biennially (every 2 years)	27	1.38%
More than once a year	130	6.73%
Never	29	1.49%
Other	25	1.28%
Missing	14	0.72%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 88% of superintendents were evaluated annually, whereas only 2% were evaluated every two years. There were no differences in frequency of evaluation based on gender.

Table 3.2. Does your employment agreement specify the process, measures, and indicators to be used for your formal performance evaluation? (Q45)

	Count	Percent
Yes	877	44.95%
No	1,055	54.05%
Missing	19	1.00%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Similar to the previous three years, approximately 45% of superintendents have the process, measures, and indicators used for their formal evaluation specified in their employment agreement. There was no significant difference by gender.

Table 3.3. Is your formal performance evaluation linked to goals, objectives or directions specified in the previous year's performance? (Q46)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1,283	65.77%
No	646	33.06%
Missing	22	1.17%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: There was a significant increase in the percentage of superintendents who have their performance linked to objectives/directions from previous evaluations. Approximately 66% of respondents reported having the provision, compared to 50% last year.

Table 3.4. Formal performance evaluation linked to student outcomes/performance? (Q47)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	739	37.83%
No	1,190	60.94%
Missing	22	1.23%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Similar to last year, approximately 38% of superintendents had their formal performance evaluations linked to student outcomes/performance. Since 2015–2016, percentages have fluctuated between 34.1% in 2015–2016 to almost 43% in 2020–2021. There were no differences noted by gender.

Table 3.5A. Formal performance evaluation linked to student outcomes/performance (Q47) and race/cultural group (Q6)

Race / Cultural Group	Yes	No	Missing	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	625	1,065	14	1,705
	36.69%	62.49%	0.82%	100%
Black or African American	49	38	0	87
	56.32%	43.68%	0.00%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	42	31	2	75
	56.00%	41.33%	2.67%	100%
Asian	3	5	0	8
	37.50%	62.50%	0.00%	100%
American Indian or Native Alaska	3	13	0	16
	18.75%	81.25%	0.00%	100%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Two or more races	9	16	0	25
	36.00%	64.00%	0.00%	100%
Other	1	4	0	5
	20.00%	80.00%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to answer	7	17	7	35
	22.86%	54.29%	22.86%	100%
Total	742	1,194	24	1,951
	37.86%	60.92%	1.22%	100%

Findings: Similar to previous years, where numbers were sufficient, there appeared to be a relationship between race/ethnicity and the performance evaluation being linked to student outcomes. However, this should be interpreted carefully, as evidence suggests that the relationship may be related to enrollment rather than race and the fact that more superintendents of color worked in larger districts compared to superintendents who identified as White (See Table 1.3 and 3.5B).

Table 3.5B. Formal performance evaluation linked to student outcomes (Q47) and enrollment (Q8)

Enrollment	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	66	169	1	236
	27.97%	71.61%	0.42%	100%
300 to 999	178	377	4	559
	31.91%	67.38%	0.71%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	223	379	7	609
	36.66%	62.19%	1.15%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	101	118	1	220
	45.91%	53.64%	0.45%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	90	87	0	177
	50.85%	49.15	0.00%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	58	49	2	109
	53.21%	44.95%	1.83%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	17	11	1	29
	58.62%	37.93%	3.45%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	5	0	0	5
	100%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	2	2	0	4
	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	100%
Missing	0	0	3	3
	0.00%	0.00%	100%	100%
Total	742	1,194	19	1,951
	37.86%	60.92%	1.22%	100%

Findings: There was a positive relationship between enrollment and this provision. As enrollment increased, the frequency of having the formal performance evaluation linked to student outcomes increased.

Table 3.6A. Is the outcome of your formal performance evaluation released to the public? (Q48)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, by State Law	563	28.83%
Yes, by Employment Agreement	223	11.43%
No	1,132	57.96%
Missing	33	1.79%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Almost 40% of superintendents had the outcomes of their formal evaluation released to the public — an increase from 34% the previous year. Most of those superintendents who had their outcomes released were compelled to do so by state law. When considered by gender, there were no notable differences.

Table 3.6B. Enrollment (Q8) and is the outcome of your formal performance evaluation released to the public? (Q48)

Enrollment	Yes, by State Law	Yes, by Employment Agreement	No	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	63	23	146	4	236
	26.69%	9.75%	61.86%	1.69%	100%
300 to 999	141	55	355	7	558
	25.31%	9.80%	63.64%	1.25%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	191	68	338	12	609
	31.42%	11.13%	55.48%	1.96%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	72	25	122	1	220
	32.73%	11.36%	55.45%	0.45%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	59	26	91	1	177
	33.33%	14.69%	51.41%	0.56%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	29	18	61	1	109
	26.61%	16.51%	55.96%	0.92%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	6	6	16	1	29
	20.69%	20.69%	55.17%	3.45%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	1	1	3	0	5
	20.00%	20.00%	60.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	1	2	1	0	4
	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%	100%
Missing	0	0	0	3	3
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%	100%
Total	565	224	1,136	35	1,951
	28.83%	11.43%	57.96%	1.79%	100%

Findings: Where responses were sufficient, where was a relationship between enrollment and this provision. As enrollment increased the prevalence of this provision increased.

Table 3.7. Does your employment agreement include a specific and detailed listing of your duties and responsibilities? (Q43)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	971	49.74%
No	960	49.13%
Missing	20	1.12%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 50% of all superintendents had a detailed agreement regarding duties and responsibilities in their employment contract.

Table 3.8. Does your employment agreement include a specific and detailed process for handling complaints/criticisms? (Q44)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	530	27.17%
No	1,410	72.27%
Missing	11	0.56%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Only about one in four superintendents had a process in their contract for handling complaints /criticisms.

Table 3.9. Does your employment agreement include a provision detailing how communications between the board and superintendent are to occur? (Q42)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	337	17.27%
No	1,583	81.13%
Missing	31	1.60%
Total	1,951	100%

Finding: Less than 18% of superintendents did not have this provision in their employment agreement.

SECTION #4: RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Table 4.1. Is your retirement plan/system contribution based on your salary? (Q52)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1606	82.27%
No	146	7.48%
District does not contribute on my behalf to a retirement plan/system	86	4.41%
Unsure how the contribution is calculated	101	5.17%
Missing	12	0.67%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 82% of superintendents indicated that their retirement contribution was based on annual salary, down from a high of 93% in 2022–2023.

Table 4.2. Does the school district contribute to a tax-deferred annuity or private retirement account on your behalf? (Q54)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes (Less than $1,000)	29	1.49%
Yes ($1,000–$3,000)	134	6.86%
Yes ($3,001–5,000)	132	6.76%
Yes ($5,001–7,000)	88	4.51%
Yes ($7,001–10,000)	106	5.43%
Yes (More than $10,000)	277	14.19%
Amount varies because it is recalculated annually	61	3.13%
No	1,110	56.92%
Missing	14	0.72%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 42% of superintendents had a provision in their contract that included a contribution to an annuity by the district, an increase of a little more than 4% from 2022–2023. The most common contribution amounts were more than $10,000 (14.19%) and $1,000–$5,000 (13.44%). There was no significant difference by gender.

Table 4.3. Enrollment (Q8) and does the school district contribute to a tax-deferred annuity or private retirement account on your behalf? (Q54)

	Yes (Less than $1,000)	Yes ($1,000-$3,000)	Yes ($3,001-5,000)	Yes ($5,001-7,000)	Yes ($7,001-10,000)	Yes (More than $10,000)	Amount varies: Recalculated annually	No	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	7	9	5	4	1	9	7	193	1	259
	2.97%	3.81%	2.12%	1.69%	0.42%	3.81%	2.97%	81.78%	0.42%	100%
300 to 999	9	54	61	26	19	30	7	349	6	602
	1.60%	9.63%	10.87%	4.63%	3.39%	5.35%	1.25%	62.21%	1.07%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	9	50	41	29	46	80	17	335	3	633
	1.47%	8.18%	6.71%	4.75%	7.53%	13.26%	2.78%	54.83%	0.49%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	2	10	19	14	19	42	10	103	1	239
	0.91%	4.55%	8.64%	6.36%	8.64%	19.09%	4.55%	46.82%	0.45%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	1	7	4	9	13	49	16	78		195
	0.56%	3.95%	2.26%	5.08%	7.34%	27.68%	9.04%	44.07%	0.00%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	0	4	2	3	4	49	4	41	2	98
	0.00%	3.67%	1.83%	2.75%	3.67%	44.95%	3.67%	37.61%	1.83%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	0	0	0	2	3	14	0	9	1	34
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	6.90%	10.34%	48.28%	0.00%	31.03%	3.45%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	9
	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	40.00%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	3
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	29	134	132	88	106	277	61	1111	14	1,951
	1.49%	6.86%	6.76%	4.51%	5.43%	14.19%	3.13%	56.92%	0.72%	100%

Findings: Where the numbers were sufficient, there was a positive relationship with receiving an annuity above $10,000 and enrollment.

SECTION #5: INSURANCE BENEFITS

Table 5.1 What health insurance coverage, paid by the district, do you receive in your employment agreement? (Q56)

	Frequency	Percent
All EXCEPT Disability and/or Vision	291	14.91%
Medical/Hospital/Dental & Vision & Disability	1,090	55.89%
Something less than Medical/Hospital/Dental & Vision & Disability	290	14.86%
I waive/ do not accept/ do not need insurance coverage	261	13.37%
Medical/Hospital	19	0.97%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Almost 56% of superintendents had Medical/Hospital/Dental & Vision & Disability insurance coverage as part of their compensation package, an increase over the previous year (41%).

Table 5.2. Does the school district contribute to the premiums on a life insurance policy apart from the insurance benefits provided for all employees? (Q55)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	871	44.62%
No	1,057	54.20%
Missing	23	1.18%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: There was a decrease in the percentage of superintendents who received contributions toward premiums on a life insurance policy apart from the insurance benefits provided for all employees compared to last year: 45% versus 49%.

Table 5.3A. District contributes to post-retirement health insurance coverage (Q58)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	433	22.18%
No	1498	76.74%
Missing	20	1.08%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 22% of superintendents had a provision in which the district contributed to post-retirement health insurance, compared to 2020–2021 when 35% of superintendents indicated they had such a provision.

Table 5.3B. District contributes to post-retirement health insurance coverage (Q58) and enrollment (Q8)

	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	21	214	1	236
	8.90%	90.68%	0.42%	100%
300 to 999	108	446	6	561
	19.25%	79.50%	1.25%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	149	455	7	611
	24.39%	74.47%	1.15%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	68	150	2	220
	30.91%	68.18%	0.91%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	54	123	0	177
	30.51%	69.49%	0.00%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	26	81	2	109
	23.85%	74.31%	1.83%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	6	22	1	29
	20.69%	75.86%	3.45%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	0	4	1	5
	0.00%	80%	20%	100%
100,000 or more	1	3	0	4
	25%	75%	0.00%	100%
Total	433	1,498	20	1,951
	22.18%	76.74%	1.08%	100%

Findings: Where a sufficient number of respondents existed, there was a partial relationship between enrollment and having a provision for post-retirement contributions to health insurance from the district. The percentage of superintendents with the provision increased as enrollment increased up through 9,999 students.

Table 5.3C. District contributes to post-retirement health insurance coverage (Q58) and gender (Q5)

	Male	Female	Missing	Total
Yes	317	116	0	433
	23.16%	19.97%	0.00%	22.18%
No	1039	457	2	1,497
	75.89%	78.66%	100%	76.74%
Missing	13	8	0	21
	0.95%	1.38%	0.00%	1.08%
Total	1,369	581	2	1,951
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Findings: Approximately 22% of superintendents had this provision, an increase of 5% compared to last year. There was a difference, by gender, in the percentage of superintendents who had their districts contribute to post-retirement health insurance (Male = 23.16%; Female = 19.97%)

Table 5.4 Percentage of retirement contribution paid by your district (Q53)

	Frequency	25–26 Percent	24–25 Percent
0–24%	815	41.75%	47.28%
25–49%	148	7.58%	8.62%
50–74%	298	15.27%	12.08%
75–100%	538	27.56%	25.90%
No state funded pension	72	4.15%	2.99%
Missing	80	3.69%	3.13%
Total	1,951	100%	100%

Findings: Some changes occurred in the percentage of retirement contribution paid by the district. Overall, about 57% of superintendents receive some type of paid contribution.

SECTION #6:
RETIREMENT SYSTEM PARTICIPATION

Table 6.1. Is there a maximum salary cap on the calculation of your state retirement benefits? (Q51)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	309	15.83%
No	1214	62.24%
Not sure	407	20.85%
Missing	21	1.08%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 62% of superintendents did not have a cap on the calculation of their state retirement benefits, representing an increase of approximately 9 percentage points from 2022–2023 and similar to last year. Almost 21% were not sure whether a salary cap existed.

Table 6.2. Is your retirement calculation based on your salary? (Q52)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1,605	82.27%
No	146	7.48%
District does not contribute on my behalf to a retirement plan/system	86	4.41%
Unsure how the contribution is calculated	101	5.17%
Missing	13	0.67%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Most superintendents (82.27%) had their retirement calculations based on salary.

Table 6.3. Enrollment (Q8) and what portion of your state funded pension contribution is paid by the school district? (Q53)

Enrollment	0–24%	25–49%	50–74%	75–100%	No state funded pension	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	102	4	37	68	17	8	236
	43.22%	1.69%	15.68%	28.81%	7.20%	3.39%	100%
300 to 999	234	43	84	154	24	22	561
	41.71%	7.66%	14.97%	27.45%	4.28%	3.92%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	248	50	98	172	16	27	610
	40.59%	8.18%	16.04%	28.15%	2.62%	4.42%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	94	19	35	59	5	8	220
	42.73%	8.64%	15.91%	26.82%	2.27%	3.64%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	79	18	20	46	5	9	177
	44.63%	10.17%	11.30%	25.99%	2.82%	5.08%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	48	12	13	28	3	5	109
	44.04%	11.01%	11.93%	25.69%	2.75%	4.59%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	5	1	8	11	2	2	29
	17.24%	3.45%	27.59%	37.93%	6.90%	6.90%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
	60.00%	0.00%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	2	1	1	0	0	0	4
	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	815	148	298	538	72	81	1,951
	41.75%	7.58%	15.27%	27.56%	3.69%	4.15%	100%

Findings: Enrollment did not have a strong relationship to the percentage of retirement contribution paid by the district.

SECTION #7: MISCELLANEOUS BENEFITS

Table 7.1. Master list of miscellaneous benefits (Q50)

Benefits	Number	Frequency	Percent
Deferred compensation (e.g., tax sheltered annuity)	b1	823	42.16%
Option at end of year or at the end of contract to convert unused sick, personal, and/or vacation days to payment into a deferred compensation plan	b2	373	19.11%
Life insurance (accumulates value for you)	b3	1,004	51.43%
Conference attendance with fees paid	b4	1,645	84.27%
Support for a coach or mentor for the superintendent	b5	341	17.47%
District pays all or a portion of the state retirement contribution	b6	1,121	57.43%
Professional liability coverage in excess of any amount specified in state or local law	b7	411	21.06%
Tuition reimbursement (e.g., doctorate, additional degree, etc.)	b8	497	25.46%
College savings plan	b9	12	0.61%
Provision allowing you to engage in outside consulting	b10	591	30.28%
Provision allowing you to engage in outside teaching	b11	468	23.98%
Smart phone or similar communications device	b12	1,069	54.76%
Computer (e.g., laptop, iPad, etc.)	b13	1,213	62.14%
District credit card	b14	726	37.19%
Auto/vehicle stipend	b15	391	20.03%
Mileage stipend	b16	728	37.30%
District vehicle	b17	180	9.22%
Home internet stipend	b18	71	3.64%
Membership dues paid for professional organization(s)	b19	1,723	88.27%
Other		83	4.25%

Findings: Top eight most common miscellaneous benefits included in contracts:

b19 – Membership dues paid for professional organizations (88.27%)
b4 – Conference attendance with fees paid (84.27%)
b13 – Computer/laptop/tablet (62.14%)
b12 – Smart phone or similar device (57.46%)
b2 – District pays for all or a portion of state retirement contribution (57.43%)
b3 – Life insurance that accumulates value for you (51.43%)
b1 – Deferred compensation/annuity (42.16%)
b16 – Mileage stipend (37.30%)

Table 7.2A. Annual days of sick leave (Q28)

Number of Sick Days	Count	Percent
0–3 Days	43	2.23%
4–6 Days	34	1.73%
7–10 Days	321	16.40%
11–15 Days	1165	59.59%
16–20 Days	265	13.60%
21–25 Days	71	3.69%
26+	44	2.29%
Missing	8	0.47%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: The majority of superintendents (59.59%) received 11–15 days of sick leave per year. As was the case in previous surveys, the findings for days of sick leave demonstrated little difference by gender. In addition, sick leave across various district types (i.e., rural, urban, suburban), was generally distributed evenly except for 15+days of leave. Superintendents in urban districts were somewhat more likely to receive more than 15 days of sick leave annually than superintendents in rural and suburban districts.

Table 7.2B. Cap on sick leave carryover (Q37)

	Count	%
Yes	548	28.26%
No	1380	70.76%
Missing	21	1.07%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 70% of superintendents did not have a cap on sick leave carryover — a decrease of 2% from last year and the same as 2022–2023. There was not a significant difference when gender was considered.

Table 7.3A. Annual vacation days (Q30)

Annual vacation days	Count	Percent
0–3 Days	66	3.37%
4–6 Days	23	1.17%
7–10 Days	134	6.89%
11–15 Days	266	13.62%
16–20 Days	557	28.62%
21–25 Days	566	29.03%
26+	317	16.17%
Missing	22	1.12%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Approximately 29% of superintendents received 21–25 days of vacation leave, followed by 27% of superintendents who received 16–20 days. No significant differences were found by gender or race/cultural group.

Table 7.3B. Enrollment (Q8) and cap on vacation leave carryover (Q38)

District Student Enrollment	Yes		No		Missing		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fewer than 300	174	74.15%	59	25.00%	2	0.85%	235	100%
300 to 999	451	80.75%	102	18.18%	6	1.07%	560	100%
1,000 to 2,999	492	81.01%	104	17.18%	11	1.80%	610	100%
3,000 to 4,999	181	82.73%	37	16.82%	1	0.45%	219	100%
5,000 to 9,999	146	82.49%	30	16.95%	1	0.56%	177	100%
10,000 to 24,999	86	78.90%	22	20.18%	1	0.92%	109	100%
25,000 to 49,999	18	62.07%	10	34.48%	1	3.45%	29	100%
50,000 to 99,999	2	40.00%	3	60.00%	0	0.00%	5	100%
100,000 or more	4	100.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	4	100%
No Response	0	00.00%	0	00.00%	3	100.00 %	3	100%
Total	1,557	79.64%	367	18.78%	26	1.58%	1,951	100%

Findings: Similar to years past, almost 80% of superintendents had a cap on vacation leave carryover. Where numbers were above n=30, some differences existed by enrollment. Superintendents in districts with fewer than 300 students were the most likely not to have a cap (25%), whereas those in districts with enrollments of 3,000 to 4,999 were the most likely to have a cap (83%), followed by those in districts with enrollments of 5,000 to 9,999 (82%).

Table 7.4A. Cap on personal leave carryover (Q39)

	Count	Percent
Yes	1,362	69.81%
No	549	28.13%
Missing	40	2.06%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Approximately 70% of superintendents had a cap on personal leave carryover, compared to 68% last year. There were no discernable differences when gender or race/cultural background were considered.

Table 7.4B. Enrollment (Q8) and cap on personal leave carryover (Q39)

District Student Enrollment	Yes		No		Missing		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fewer than 300	163	69.49%	67	28.39%	5	2.12%	235	100%
300 to 999	403	71.66%	152	27.09%	7	1.25%	562	100%
1,000 to 2,999	428	70.05%	171	27.99%	12	1.96%	611	100%
3,000 to 4,999	149	68.18%	66	30.00%	4	1.82%	219	100%
5,000 to 9,999	124	70.06%	49	27.68%	4	2.26%	177	100%
10,000 to 24,999	73	66.97%	34	31.19%	2	1.83%	109	100%
25,000 to 49,999	17	58.62%	10	34.48%	2	6.90%	29	100%
50,000 to 99,999	5	100.00 %	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	5	100%
100,000 or more	3	75.00%	1	25.00%	0	0.00%	4	100%
Total	1,360	69.69%	548	28.06%	36	2.24%	1,951	100%

Findings: Where numbers were sufficient, superintendents in districts with 300–999 students were the most likely to have a cap (72%).

Table 7.5. Upon departure from the district, how is sick leave accrual handled? (Q34)

Method	Count	Percent
Credited to retirement	505	25.92%
No payment for accrued sick leave upon departure	492	25.26%
Payment made to superintendent calculated at a daily rate	520	26.58%
Payment made to superintendent calculated at a negotiated rate below daily rate	413	21.12%
Missing	21	1.12%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Similar to last year, approximately 27% of superintendents received payment at a daily rate for accrued sick leave upon departure, whereas 21% received a payment calculated below a daily rate. There were no meaningful differences in this provision based on gender.

Table 7.6. Upon departure from the district, how is vacation leave accrual handled? (Q35)

Method	Count	Percent
Credited to retirement	83	4.90%
No payment for accrued vacation leave upon departure	552	28.27%
Payment made to superintendent calculated at a daily rate	1,157	59.23%
Payment made to superintendent calculated at a negotiated rate below daily rate	135	6.94%
Missing	24	1.28%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: The majority of superintendents (59%) received a payment calculated at a daily rate. This percentage was similar to last year (58%). However, the percentage was lower than in 2021–2022 (62.33%). Gender did not impact how vacation leave accrual upon departure was handled.

Table 7.7. Upon departure from the district, how is personal leave accrual handled? (Q36)

Method	Count	Percent
Credited to retirement	261	13.42%
No payment for accrued personal leave upon departure	1008	51.63%
Payment made to superintendent calculated at a daily rate	426	21.84%
Payment made to superintendent calculated at a negotiated rate below daily rate	219	11.22%
Missing	36	1.89%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: More than half (approximately 52 %) of superintendents were in a "use it or lose it" situation and did not receive payment for accrued personal leave upon departure. There were not meaningful differences when gender was considered.

Table 7.8. If there is a cap on vacation/personal leave days that can be carried over and that cap is exceeded, how are days exceeding the cap handled? (Q40)

Method	N	Percent
Credited toward retirement	66	3.37%
Forfeited with no additional compensation	864	44.18%
Paid out as additional compensation	613	31.33%
There is no cap	245	12.55%
Other	116	6.07%
Missing	47	2.50%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: The most common provision was that days exceeding the cap were forfeited (44%). Approximately 31% of superintendents had unused days paid out as additional compensation. Superintendents in districts with 3,000+ students were somewhat more likely to have their days paid as additional compensation.

Table 7.9A. Term of current employment contract (Q22)

Term of current employment contract	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	49	2.50%
1 year	166	8.47%
2 years	297	15.20%
3 years	837	42.86%
4 years	244	12.45%
5+ years	354	18.11%
Missing	4	0.41%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Similar to the last three years, approximately 43% of superintendents had a three-year contract, followed by 18% with contracts of five years or more. There were no significant differences noted when race/cultural group were considered.

Table7.9B. Term of current employment contract (Q22) and gender (Q5)

Term of employment contract	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 1 year	10	1.72%	39	2.85%	49	2.50%
1 year	62	10.67%	104	7.60%	166	8.47%
2 years	92	15.83%	206	15.05 %	298	15.20%
3 years	231	39.76%	609	44.49 %	840	42.86%
4 years	80	13.77%	163	11.91 %	244	12.45%
5+ years	106	18.24%	248	18.12 %	355	18.11%
Missing					8	0.41%
Total	581	100%	1369	100%	1950	100%

Findings: Slight differences were noted by gender. A higher percentage of females (11%) reported having a 1-year contract compared to males (8%) and a lower percentage of females reported having a 3-year contract (40%) compared to males (44%).

Table 7.10. Does your present employment agreement have an incentive/performance clause (i.e., a defined provision providing a reward for accomplishing a predetermined task or objective)? (Q23)

Incentive/ performance clause	Count	Percent
Yes	263	13.52%
No	1666	85.31%
Missing	22	1.17%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Similar to last year, almost 14% of superintendents had a performance clause in their contracts compared to 10% in 2019–2020.

Table 7.11. Does your contract have a severance (buyout) clause? (Q25)

	Count	Percent
Yes	695	35.56%
No	1231	63.11%
Missing	25	1.33%
Total	1951	100.00%

Findings: Similar to the last several years, a little more than one-third (almost 36%) of superintendents had a severance/buyout provision.

Table 7.12. Does your contract have a longevity clause (i.e., a lump sum payment you will receive for the number of years you remain in the position)? (Q27)

Longevity Clause	Count	Percent
Yes	274	14.04%
No	1657	84.93%
Missing	20	1.13%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Approximately 14% of superintendents had this provision, up from 12% last year. There were no differences found by gender or racial/cultural group.

Table 7.13. Is your employment agreement base salary subject to a cap? (Q41)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, based on district policy regulation or practice	99	5.10%
Yes, based on state law	97	4.95%
No	1,709	87.45%
Other	19	1.02%
Missing	27	1.48%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Similar to last year, approximately 87% of all superintendents did not have a salary cap on their base salary. There was not a meaningful difference based on gender.

Table 7.14. Evergreen (rollover) provision (Q24)

Evergreen (rollover) provision	Count	Percent
Yes	580	29.74%
No	1354	69.39%
Missing	17	0.87%
Total	1951	100%

Findings: Approximately 30% of superintendents had a rollover provision. The data are similar to the findings from 2021-2022. There was no significant difference based on gender.

Table 7.15. Indemnification/hold harmless (Q26)

Indemnification/hold harmless Clause	Count	Percent
Yes	984	50.24%
No	559	28.75%
Not necessary as it is already provided by law	373	19.22%
Missing	35	1.79%
Total	1951	100.00%

Findings: Approximately 50% of superintendents had an indemnification/hold harmless provision in their contracts; a slight increase since 2021–2022 (46%). There was little difference based on gender.

SECTION #8: USE OF LEGAL COUNSEL

Table 8.1A. Did you employ legal counsel or other outside agents to assist in the development and/or negotiations of your employment agreement? (Q60)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	725	37.14%
No	1216	62.35%
Missing	10	0.51%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: As was the case in 2024–2025, approximately 37% of superintendents used legal counsel or other outside agents to assist in the development/negotiations of the employment contract. There has been an increase of almost 13 percentage points since 2015 when 24.6% of respondents indicated they used legal counsel or other outside agents. However, the percentage of superintendents using legal counsel or other outside agents to assist with their contracts continues to lag behind the percentage of boards of education that use such services.

Table 8.1B. Gender (Q5) and did you employ legal counsel or other outside agents to assist in the development and/or negotiations of your employment agreement? (Q60)

Gender	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Male	474	887	7	1,368
	34.62%	64.86%	0.51%	100%
Women	250	328	3	581
	43.03%	56.45%	0.52%	100%
Other	1	1	0	2
	50%	50%	0%	100%
Total	725	1,217	10	1,951
	37.14%	62.35%	0.51%	100%

Findings: A significantly higher percentage of female respondents (43%) used legal counsel or other outside agents to assist in the development and/or negotiations of their employment agreement compared to male superintendents (35%).

Table 8.1C. Enrollment (Q8) and did you employ legal counsel or other outside agents to assist in the development and/or negotiations of your employment agreement? (Q60)

	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	58	178	0	236
	24.58%	75.42%	0.00%	100%
300 to 999	174	383	3	560
	31.02%	68.45%	0.53%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	244	363	4	611
	39.93%	59.41%	0.65%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	110	109	1	220
	50.00%	49.55%	0.45%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	66	111	0	177
	37.29%	62.71%	1.03%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	46	62	1	109
	42.20%	56.88%	0.92%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	20	8	1	29
	68.97%	27.59%	3.45%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	4	1	0	5
	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	3	1	0	4
	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	725	1,217	10	1,951
	37.14%	62.35%	0.51%	100%

Findings: Where a sufficient number of respondents existed, there was somewhat of a relationship between enrollment and superintendent use of legal counsel or other outside agents. In general, as enrollment increased, so, too, did the use of legal counsel or outside agents.

Table 8.1D. Race/cultural group (Q6) and did you employ legal counsel or other outside agents to assist in the development and/or negotiations of your employment agreement? (Q60)

	Yes	No	Missing	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	600	1100	8	1,708
	35.11%	64.42%	0.47%	100%
Black or African American	53	34	0	87
	60.92%	39.08%	0.00%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	36	37	2	75
	48%	49.33%	2.67%	100%
Asian	7	1	0	8
	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	100%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	13	0	16
	18.75%	81.25%	0.00%	100%
Two or more races	11	14	0	25
	44%	56%	0.00%	100%
Other	3	2	0	5
	60%	40%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to say	11	13	0	24
	45.83%	54.17%	0.00%	100%
Missing	1	2	0	3
	33.33%	66.67%	0%	100%
Total	725	1,217	10	1,951
	37.14%	62.35%	.51%	100%

Findings: Where responses were sufficient, there was evidence of variance in the percentages of superintendents who employed legal counsel or other outside agents. Approximately 61% of superintendents who identified as Black or African American and 48% of superintendents who identified as Hispanic or Latino employed legal counsel or other outside agents compared to 35% of superintendents who identified as White. As noted earlier in the report, care should be taken in

interpreting these findings. The data suggest that enrollment might be a contributing factor to the differences between race/cultural group results.

Table 8.2A. Did the school district use legal counsel to assist in the development and/or negotiations of your employment agreement? (Q61)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1182	60.60%
No	757	38.78%
Missing	12	0.61%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Almost 61% of school districts used legal counsel to assist in the development and/or negotiations of the superintendents' employment contract, slightly lower than 2020–2021 (65%). There were no differences based on gender of the superintendent.

Table 8.2B. Enrollment (Q8) and did the school district use legal counsel in negotiating the employment agreement? (Q61)

	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Fewer than 300	89	145	2	236
	37.71%	61.44%	0.85%	100%
300 to 999	261	297	3	561
	46.52%	52.94%	0.53%	100%
1,000 to 2,999	396	209	5	610
	64.98%	34.21%	0.82%	100%
3,000 to 4,999	174	46	0	220
	79.09%	20.91%	0.00%	100%
5,000 to 9,999	139	38	0	177
	78.53%	21.47%	0.00%	100%
10,000 to 24,999	91	17	1	109
	83.49%	15.60%	0.92%	100%
25,000 to 49,999	24	4	1	29
	82.76%	13.79%	3.45%	100%
50,000 to 99,999	5	0	0	5
	100%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
100,000 or more	3	1	0	4
	75%	25%	0.00%	100%
Total	1,183	757	12	1,951
	60.60%	38.78%	0.61%	100%

Findings: Where a sufficient number of respondents existed, there was a relationship between enrollment and district use of legal counsel or other outside agents in superintendent contract negotiations. The district use of counsel increased as enrollment increased.

Table 8.2C. Race/cultural group (Q6) and did the school district use legal counsel in negotiating the employment agreement? (Q61)

Race / Cultural Group	Yes	No	Missing	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	1004	694	10	1,708
	58.81%	40.61%	0.59%	100%
Black or African American	71	16	0	87
	81.61%	18.39%	0.00%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	60	13	2	75
	80%	17.33%	2.67%	100%
Asian	7	1	0	8
	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	100%
American Indian or Native Alaska	5	11	0	16
	31.25%	68.75%	0.00%	100%
Two or more races	19	6	0	25
	76%	24%	0.00%	100%
Other	5	0	0	5
	100%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to answer	10	14	0	24
	41.67%	58.33%	0.00%	100%
Missing	1	2	0	3
	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	100%
Total	1,1839	757	12	1,951
	60.60%	38.78%	0.61%	100%

Findings: Superintendents of color were significantly more likely to have their employing districts use legal counsel or other outside agency in negotiating the employment agreement compared to superintendents who identified as White.

Note, as with other results related to race/ethnicity, this finding can be influenced by enrollment, as superintendents of color tend to work in larger districts, and larger districts tend to employ legal counsel at a higher percentage than districts with lower levels of enrollment.

Table 8.3. Are you drawing retirement from one state and working as a superintendent in another state? (Q62)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	80	4.10%
No	1859	95.29%
Missing	12	0.61%
Total	1951	100%

Finding: Less than 5% of superintendents are drawing a pension or retirement from one state and working in another.

SECTION #9: MEMBERSHIPS

Table 9.1. AASA membership (Q63)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1,541	79%
No	395	20.24%
Missing	15	0.77%
Total	1,951	100%

Findings: Exactly 79% of respondents were AASA members, a slight increase from last year and similar to the results from 2020 (80%).

Table 9.2. AASA membership (Q63) and gender (Q5)

	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Men	1071	285	12	1,368
	78.31%	20.82%	0.88%	100%
Women	468	110	3	581
	80.55%	18.93%	0.52%	100%
Missing	2	0	0	2
	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	1,556	517	4	1,951
	74.92%	24.89%	0.19%	100%

Findings: No significant differences by gender existed.

Table 9.3. AASA membership (Q63) and race/cultural group (Q6)

	Yes	No	Missing	Total
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	1,346	351	11	1,708
	78.82%	20.54%	0.64%	100%
Black or African American	84	2	1	87
	96.55%	2.30%	1.15%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	48	24	3	75
	64%	32%	4%	100%
Asian	5	3	0	8
	62.50%	37.50%	0.00%	100%
American Indian or Alaska Native	12	4	0	16
	75%	25%	0.00%	100%
Two or more races	19	6	0	25
	76%	24%	0.00%	100%
Other	5	0	0	5
	100%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Prefer not to say	20	4	0	24
	83.33%	16.67%	0.00%	100%
Missing	2	1	0	3
	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	100%
Total	1,542	395	15	1,951
	79.00%	20.24%	0.77%	100%

Findings: Where numbers were sufficient, there were some differences in membership by race/cultural background. A slightly higher percentage of superintendents who identified as Black or African American were AASA members compared to superintendents who identified as White or Hispanic and Latino.

Table 9.4. AASA membership (Q63) and district type (Q9)

Type	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Rural	928	315	9	1,252
	74.14%	25.14%	0.72%	100%
Suburban	479	60	6	545
	87.89%	11.01%	1.10%	100%
Urban	134	19	0	153
	87.58%	12.42%	0.00%	100%
Missing	0	1	0	1
	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100%
Total	1,542	395	15	1,951
	79.00%	20.24%	0.77%	100%

Findings: Superintendents in rural districts were 13 percentage points less likely to be AASA members compared to those in urban and suburban districts.

Table 9.5. Professional association membership dues paid by the school district (Q59)

	Frequency	Percent
Community Organizations (e.g., Rotary, Chamber of Commerce)	895	45.85%
Regional Professional Organizations (e.g., state association)	1,808	92.62%
National Professional Organizations (e.g., AASA)	1,560	79.92%
None of these	50	2.56%

Findings: Almost 93% of superintendents had regional organizations paid for in their contract. There was a relationship between enrollment and membership dues paid by the district. As enrollment increased, the percentage of superintendents who have various members' dues paid by the district increased.

Table 9.6. Do you presently belong to a state superintendent association? (Q64)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1851	94.88%
No	90	4.61%
Missing	10	0.51%
Total	1,951	100%

Finding: Approximately 95% of superintendents belong to a state superintendent association. There was no difference by gender. However, superintendents who identified as White (96%) or Black or African American (93%) were more likely to be members than superintendents who identified as Hispanic or Latino (80%).

Table 9.7. Other national education organizations to which you belong (Q65)

A. American Federation of School Administrators
B. Association of Educational Service Agencies
C. Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators
D. Association of School Business Officials, International
E. ASCD
F. Chiefs for Change
G. Council of Administrators of Special Education
H. Council of the Great City Schools
I. International Society for Technology in Education
J. National Alliance of Black School Educators
K. National Association of Elementary School Principals
L. National Association of Secondary School Principals
M. National Indian Education Association
N. National Rural Education Association
O. National Superintendents Roundtable
P. The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
Q. Urban Superintendents Association of America
R. District Administrators Leadership Institute
S. National Association of School Superintendents
T. California Catholic Conference
U. Association of Career Technical Educators, National Career and Technical Leadership Association
V. Forum for Western Pennsylvania Superintendents
W. National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

SECTION #10: CREATIVE CONTRACT PROVISIONS

*Note: This section is reserved for members.

The following are 50 contract inclusions, separated by theme, provided by members who participated in the 2025-2026 AASA Salary and Benefits Study

Compensation, Salary & Bonuses

1. **The "Compounding" Performance Bonus** Structure an annual performance bonus (e.g., 5% of salary) where 50% is paid as a lump sum and the other 50% is added to the ensuing year's base salary. This allows the bonus to compound over time, significantly raising the base salary for retirement calculations.
2. **Automatic Salary Formula (The "Peace of Mind" Clause)** Tie the superintendent's salary to the teacher salary schedule plus a responsibility factor (e.g., "Step 20 MA+90 multiplied by a 1.15 responsibility factor"). This ensures the administrator automatically receives the same percentage increase as staff without needing to negotiate annually.
3. **"Me-Too" Salary Indexing** Ensure salary adjustments are, at a minimum, equal to the percentage increase given to other certificated employees through state salary funding allocations. This guarantees the superintendent's raises track with the broader staff.
4. **"Me-Too" Plus Multiplier** Negotiate a clause where the superintendent receives the same raise percentage as teachers, multiplied by a factor (e.g., 1.4x) to account for the difference in work days (260 days vs. 185 days), applied either to the base or as a stipend.
5. **Performance-Based Escalators** Tie salary increases to objective district ratings: for example, a 2% increase for an "A" rating from the State Department of Education, and a 1% increase for a "B" rating.
6. **Inflation & Construction Floor** Ensure the annual salary increase is never less than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus the percentage of new construction revenue applicable to the district tax base.
7. **Enrollment Growth Incentive** Receive a specific percentage (e.g., 2%) of the state's per-pupil allocation funding for every enrollment increase within the district, directly rewarding the superintendent for district growth.
8. **Longevity Base Salary Increase** Include a provision for a 3% addition to the base salary for every five years of service as the superintendent, rewarding retention and long-term commitment.
9. **Annual Retention Bonus** Structure a fixed retention payment (e.g., $10,000) to be paid annually upon contract renewal.
10. **Legislative "Pick-Up" Indemnification** Include a clause stating that if state laws change to prohibit the district from "picking up" retirement contributions, the superintendent will automatically receive a corresponding increase in base salary to offset the loss.
11. **Negotiator Stipend** Include a separate stipend for serving as the district's chief negotiator during collective bargaining, recognizing this as a distinct and demanding duty.

Retirement & Financial Planning

12. **10% 457(b) Contribution** Require the district to contribute an amount equal to 10% of the base monthly salary into a 457(b) deferred compensation plan on behalf of the superintendent.
13. **17% Employer Contribution to 403(b)** Negotiate a high-percentage employer contribution (e.g., 17% of base salary) to a 403(b) plan, paid monthly, independent of the employee's contribution.

14. **Total Retirement "Pick-Up"** The district pays 100% of the superintendent's required contribution to the State Retirement System (e.g., TRS), either by direct payment or reimbursement.
15. **Retirement Contribution Reimbursement** If the state requires a percentage of the salary to be deducted for the State Retirement System, negotiate a clause where the district reimburses that amount. This effectively covers the employee's required contribution, acting as additional salary while growing the retirement account.
16. **Pension Maximization (Salary-Loading)** Negotiate to have benefits such as car allowances, technology stipends, and health insurance costs added directly to the base salary (and then deducted via Section 125 or paid out). This increases the "creditable earnings" used to calculate the superintendent's permanent pension.
17. **Retirement Health Savings Conversion** Negotiate a sum equivalent to the family insurance rate to be deposited into a 403(b) or similar account for a set period (e.g., three years) in exchange for waiving post-retirement health insurance.
18. **Student Loan "Swap"** Upon the completion of a doctoral program, convert existing tuition reimbursement funds into a student loan repayment benefit (e.g., not to exceed 10% of base salary).
19. **Health Insurance Cash-Out** If the superintendent can opt out of district health insurance (e.g., coverage via a spouse), negotiate a cash payout equal to 50% of the average yearly cost the district saves on premiums.
20. **Post-Employment Consulting Per Diem** Establish a defined per diem rate for the outgoing superintendent to be available for consulting, transition assistance, or calls after the contract term ends.

Leave, Schedule & Work-Life Balance

21. **Flexible "Professional Schedule" Leave** Replace traditional pre-determined leave accrual with a structure allowing the superintendent to take leave at their professional discretion, determined by the "ebb and flow" of the workload. This acknowledges the 24/7 nature of the role and focuses on deliverables rather than hours logged.
22. **The 220-Day "Professional" Contract** Define the contract as 220 days of service (vs. the standard 260), with an additional bank of vacation days. This effectively raises the per diem rate and allows the superintendent to take non-work days at their professional discretion without depleting leave banks.
23. **Seasonal Remote Work (The "July Clause")** Stipulate that during specific low-traffic months (e.g., July) or school breaks, the superintendent may work remotely or be on an "on-call" status while maintaining full salary.
24. **Paid Sabbatical (Short-Term)** Negotiate the ability to take a one-month paid sabbatical after a specific tenure (e.g., three years) to encourage longevity and prevent burnout.
25. **Sabbatical Provision (Long-Term)** After a set tenure (e.g., 10 years), the superintendent earns a fully paid sabbatical year or semester.
26. **Upfront Sick Day "Banking"** Upon hiring, negotiate a grant of additional sick days (e.g., 30 days) to be immediately "banked." This compensates for leave used earlier in a career (such as for family or medical leave) and contributes toward years of service for retirement systems.
27. **Leave Buy-Back** Include the ability to cash out unused vacation and/or sick days annually (e.g., up to 20 days) at the daily per diem rate, rather than losing them.
28. **Unrestricted Leave Buy-Back** Include the ability to cash out unused vacation or sick days at the daily per diem rate at any time during the fiscal year, rather than only upon retirement.
29. **Religious Observance Leave** Negotiate specific paid leave days for religious holidays that do not count against personal or vacation leave.

Job Security, Governance & Protection

30. **Evaluation Metric Protection (Anti-Flip Provision)** Include a provision stating that the Board cannot alter the Policy Governance Model, Board-Superintendent Policies, or evaluation metrics without mutual consent. This protects the administrator from a "Board majority flip" where new members immediately change success markers without a transition period.
31. **Governance & Chain of Command Protection** A clause stating individual Board members cannot give direction to the superintendent or staff; the Board must act only as a collective body. It should also require Board members to refer all complaints promptly to the superintendent.
32. **Board Interference Clause** Add specific language defining what constitutes Board interference in day-to-day operations, the process for addressing it, and the consequences (including the right to resign "for cause" with payout) if the Board fails to rectify the behavior.
33. **Supermajority Vote for Termination** Negotiate a clause requiring a supermajority vote (rather than a simple majority) for the Board to terminate the contract without cause. This provides stability against minor political shifts on the Board.
34. **"Just Cause" vs. "Cause"** Negotiate for termination only for "Just Cause" rather than "Cause." In many legal jurisdictions, "Just Cause" requires a significantly higher burden of proof and due process from the Board.
35. **Moral Turpitude Shield** A provision that the Board may not place the superintendent on unpaid leave except in proven cases of moral turpitude, protecting income during investigations or disputes.
36. **Comprehensive Indemnification** A robust clause requiring the Board to defend, hold harmless, and indemnify the superintendent from all civil claims and legal judgments arising within the scope of employment (excluding criminal litigation).
37. **Evaluation-Triggered Extension** Include a clause where a "Satisfactory" or "Favorable" annual evaluation automatically extends the contract by an additional year (or three) and triggers a pre-set raise (e.g., 5%).
38. **Evergreen "Silence" Clause** If the Board takes no action to notify the superintendent of non-renewal by a specific date (e.g., December 31), the contract automatically renews for the following year.
39. **Reciprocal One-Year Notice** Establish a requirement for a one-year written notice for non-renewal. This applies to both the Board and the superintendent, providing ample time for the administrator to secure new employment and for the district to plan a transition.
40. **The "Fall-Back" Right (for Interims)** If serving as an Interim Superintendent, include a clause ensuring the right to return to the previous administrative role (e.g., Assistant Superintendent) if not selected for the permanent position.

Benefits, Health & Wellness

41. **Vesting Health Insurance in Retirement** Create an "elevator" clause for retirement health coverage: 55% coverage after Year 1, rising to 95–100% district-paid family premiums if retiring with 9+ years of service in the district.
42. **Cash-in-Lieu for Whole Life Policy** If opting out of district health insurance, use the "cash-in-lieu" payment to fund a portable Whole Life Insurance policy rather than taking it as taxable income.
43. **Annual Executive Physical** The district covers the full cost of a comprehensive annual executive physical exam.

44. **Wellness Honorarium** A discretionary “Health and Wellness” annual stipend (e.g., $2,000) for the superintendent to use on gym memberships, physicals, or mental health support, separate from standard insurance.

Allowances, Lifestyle & Professional Support

45. **Percentage-Based Stipends** Set stipends for travel, technology, or mobile devices as a percentage of salary (e.g., 0.4% per month) rather than a flat dollar amount. This ensures the stipend grows automatically alongside salary increases.
46. **Technology Ownership** A technology allowance (e.g., $2,200) where devices purchased (laptops, tablets) become the personal property of the superintendent upon purchase or after a set vesting period.
47. **Housing Allowance** Negotiate a separate monthly stipend designated for housing costs, independent of the base salary.
48. **District Housing Rights** If district housing is provided, explicitly negotiate tenant rights within the contract, including the right to keep pets, have overnight guests, and possess alcohol in the home, to ensure a normal private life on district property.
49. **Philanthropic Fund Allowance** Secure a specific annual budget (e.g., $3,000) for the superintendent to use for philanthropic giving to community organizations or boards that benefit the school division's relationships.
50. **Executive Coaching and Networking Support** Explicitly include funding for an executive coach and membership in specific leadership networks (including diversity or affinity-based leadership groups) to support professional growth.

SECTION #11: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

REVISED: 7-2025

General Demographics

In an effort to better understand trends and patterns in superintendent turnover, attrition, and retention, as well as to explore trends in your AASA Salary & Benefits Survey responses across district types, we are offering respondents the opportunity to identify themselves and share their district name.

Your participation in this section of the AASA Annual Superintendent Salary & Benefits Survey is completely voluntary. If you choose to provide your own and/or your district's name, these responses will remain confidential, and no personally identifiable information will ever be publicized or shared. Responses to these questions will only be used for statistical purposes to connect district data to superintendent survey response data.

To maintain the integrity of the data, please only complete this survey if you are a full-time superintendent with a contract.

1. Name (optional)
2. District Name (optional)
3. Zip code of District (optional)

Demographic Information: Superintendent and District

4. Your age:

   _____ [*Note: Actual age asked for; not dropdown*]

5. Your gender:

   A. Male
   B. Female
   C. Other
   D. Prefer not to answer

6. Your race/cultural group:

   A. American Indian or Alaska native
   B. Asian
   C. Black or African American
   D. Hispanic or Latino
   E. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
   F. White (not Hispanic or Latino)
   G. Two or more races
   H. Other
   I. Prefer not to answer

7. State where your school district is located

[*Note: Dropdown of all states*]

8. 2023–24 District student enrollment
    A. Fewer than 300
    B. 300 to 999
    C. 1,000 to 2,999
    D. 3,000 to 4,999
    E. 5,000 to 9,999
    F. 10,000 to 24,999
    G. 25,000 to 49,999
    H. 50,000 to 99,999
    I. 100,000 or more
9. My school district is best described as: (Select one option)
    A. Rural
    B. Suburban
    C. Urban

Professional Profile – Superintendent

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10. How many years have you been employed in your present position?
    A. Less than 1
    B. 1–5 years
    C. 6–10 years
    D. 11–15 years
    E. 16–20 years
    F. 21–25 years
    G. 26–30 years
    H. 31–35 years
    I. 36–40 years
    J. 40+ years
11. How many years of experience do you have as a superintendent?
    A. Less than 1 year
    B. 1–5 years
    C. 6–10 years
    D. 11–15 years
    E. 16–20 years
    F. 21–25 years
    G. 26–30 years
    H. 31–35 years
    I. 36–40 years
    J. 40+ years
12. Terminal degree (Please select the last degree completed, not certification)
    A. MA/MS/MED (Masters)
    B. EdD

C. PhD
D. JD
E. MBA
F. EdS
G. CPA
H. Other (Textbox)

13. What is your present (2025–26) annual base salary? (**Please use whole numbers <u>without</u> commas**.)

$_____

Workforce Profile

14. What is the estimated average annual base salary for an associate/assistant/deputy superintendent position in your district?
15. What is the estimated average annual base salary for a high school principal position in your district?
16. What is the estimated average annual base salary for a middle school principal position in your district?
17. What is the estimated average annual base salary for an elementary school principal position in your district?
18. What is the estimated average beginning base salary, Step 1, for a 10-month teacher with a bachelor's degree, no advanced degree, and no experience?
19. Which of the following best describes your professional plans at the conclusion of this current school year? *Mark one*.

- Continue serving as superintendent at my current district
- Serve as superintendent at a different district within the same state
- Serve as superintendent in another state
- Serve as superintendent at a non-public school
- Continue working in education, but pursue a different (non-superintendent) position
- Retire, and then be re-hired to continue working in my current district
- Retire, and then be re-hired to continue working in a different district within the same state
- Retire, and then be re-hired to continue working in education in another state
- Retire, and then pursue an education-related position outside of K–12 public schools
- Retire and work as an interim superintendent
- Leave education to retire
- Leave education to work in a non-education field
- Leave education for other reasons (insert reason)

Fiscal Profile

20. What is your projected 2025–2026 per pupil expenditure from the general fund?
    A. Less than $5,000
    B. $5,000–7,499

C. $7,500–9,999
D. $10,000–12,499
E. $12,500–14,999
F. $15,000 +

21. What is your perception of the general economic condition in the area in which the district is located?

A. Growing economic condition
B. Stable economic condition
C. Declining economic condition

Contract Terms

22. What is the complete duration of your latest employment agreement?

A. Less than 1 year
B. 1 year
C. 2 years
D. 3 years
E. 4 years
F. 5+ years

23. Does your present employment agreement have an incentive/performance clause (i.e., a defined provision providing for a reward for accomplishing a predetermined task or objective)?

A. Yes
B. No

24. Does your present employment contact have a rollover (evergreen) provision (meaning the contract automatically renews on a periodic basis)?

A. Yes
B. No

25. Does your employment agreement have a severance (buyout) clause?

A. Yes
B. No

26. Does your employment agreement contain an indemnification/hold harmless provision?

A. Yes
B. No
C. Not necessary as it is already provided by state law

27. Does your employment agreement have a longevity clause (i.e., a lump sum payment you will receive for the number of years you remain in the position)?

A. Yes
B. No

28. How many days of sick leave are you provided annually?

A. 0–3 Days

B. 4–6 Days
C. 7–10 Days
D. 11–15 Days
E. 16–20 Days
F. 21–25 Days
G. 26+ Days

29. What is the maximum accrual of sick leave for all years of employment?
    A. 0–25 Days
    B. 26–50 Days
    C. 51–75 Days
    D. 76–100 Days
    E. 101–150 Days
    F. 151–200 Days
    G. 200+ Days

30. How many days of vacation leave are you provided annually?
    A. 0–3 Days
    B. 4–6 Days
    C. 7–10 Days
    D. 11–15 Days
    E. 16–20 Days
    F. 21–25 Days
    G. 26+ Days

31. What is the maximum accrual of vacation leave for all years of employment?
    A. 0–25 Days
    B. 26–50 Days
    C. 51–75 Days
    D. 76–100 Days
    E. 101–150 Days
    F. 151–200 Days
    G. 200+ Days

32. How many days of personal leave are you provided annually?
    A. 0–3 Days
    B. 4–6 Days
    C. 7–10 Days
    D. 11–15 Days
    E. 16–20 Days
    F. 21–25 Days
    G. 26+ Days

33. What is the maximum accrual of personal leave for all years of employment?
    A. 0–25 Days
    B. 26–50 Days
    C. 51–75 Days
    D. 76–100 Days
    E. 101–150 Days
    F. 151–200 Days

G. 200+ Days

34. Upon your departure from the school district, how is sick leave accrual handled?
    A. Credited to retirement
    B. Payment made to superintendent calculated at daily rate
    C. Payment made to superintendent calculated at a negotiated rate below daily rate
    D. No payment for accrued sick leave upon departure
35. Upon your departure from the school district, how is vacation leave accrual handled?
    A. Credited to retirement
    B. Payment made to superintendent calculated at daily rate
    C. Payment made to superintendent calculated at a negotiated rate below daily rate
    D. No payment for accrued vacation leave upon departure
36. Upon your departure from the school district, how is personal leave accrual handled?
    A. Credited to retirement
    B. Payment made to superintendent calculated at daily rate
    C. Payment made to superintendent calculated at a negotiated rate below daily rate
    D. No payment for accrued personal leave upon departure
37. Is there a cap on the number of sick leave days that can be carried over from one year to the next year?
    A. Yes
    B. No
38. Is there a cap on the number of vacation leave days that can be carried over from one year to the next year?
    A. Yes
    B. No
39. Is there a cap on the number of personal leave days that can be carried over from one year to the next year?
    A. Yes
    B. No
40. If there is a cap on vacation/personal leave days that can be carried over and that cap is exceeded, the days exceeding the cap are: (e.g., cap is 10 days but superintendent does not use 15 days)
    A. Paid out as additional compensation
    B. Forfeited with no additional compensation
    C. Credited toward retirement
    D. Other, please explain (Need a text box here)
    E. There is no cap
41. Is your employment agreement base salary subject to a “cap” imposed by any of the following? (Select one option)
    A. Yes, based on state law
    B. Yes, based on district policy, regulation, or practice
    C. No
    D. Other

42. Does your employment agreement include a provision detailing how communications between the Board and superintendent are to occur? (e.g., from individual board members to the chair of the Board to the superintendent)
    A. Yes
    B. No
43. Does your employment agreement include a specific and detailed listing of your duties and responsibilities?
    A. Yes
    B. No
44. Does your employment agreement include a specific and detailed process for handling complaints/criticisms?
    A. Yes
    B. No

Performance Evaluation

45. Does your employment agreement specify the process, measures, and indicators to be used for your formal performance evaluation?
    A. Yes
    B. No
46. Is your formal performance evaluation linked to goals, objectives, or directions specified in the previous year's performance?
    A. Yes
    B. No
47. Is your formal performance evaluation linked to student outcomes/performance?
    A. Yes
    B. No
48. Is the outcome of your formal performance evaluation made public?
    A. Yes, by employment agreement
    B. Yes, by state law
    C. No
49. How frequently are you evaluated according to your employment agreement?
    A. Annually
    B. More than once a year
    C. Biennially (every 2 years)
    D. Never
    E. Other

Miscellaneous Benefits

50. Which of the following benefits are provided in your employment agreement? Mark all that apply.
    A. Deferred compensation (e.g., tax sheltered annuity)

B. Guaranteed vesting in a retirement plan
C. Life insurance (accumulates value for you)
D. Conference attendance with fees paid
E. Support for a coach or mentor for the superintendent
F. Physical exam
G. Professional liability coverage in excess of any amount specified in state or local law
H. Tuition reimbursement (e.g. doctorate, additional degree, etc.)
I. College savings plan
J. Provision allowing you to engage in outside consulting
K. Provision allowing you to engage in outside teaching
L. Smart phone or similar communications device
M. Computer (e.g., laptop, iPad, etc.)
N. District credit card
O. Auto/vehicle stipend
P. Mileage stipend
Q. District vehicle
R. Home internet stipend
S. Membership dues paid for professional organization(s)
T. Other (MAKE THIS A TEXT BOX)

51. Is there a maximum salary cap on the calculation of your state retirement benefits?

A. Yes
B. No
C. Not sure

52. Is your contribution to the retirement plan/system calculated based on your salary?

A. Yes
B. No
C. The district does not contribute on my behalf to a retirement plan/system.
D. Unsure how the contribution is calculated

53. What portion of your state funded pension contribution is paid by the school district?

A. 0–24%
B. 25–49%
C. 50–74%
D. 75–100%
E. No state funded pension

54. Does the school district contribute to a tax-deferred annuity or private retirement account on your behalf?

A. Yes (Less than $1,000)
B. Yes, ($1,000 -$5,000)
C. Yes, ($5,001-$10,000)
D. Yes, (More than $10,000)
E. No
F. Amount varies because it is recalculated annually

55. Does the school district contribute to the premiums on a life insurance policy apart from the insurance benefits provided for all employees?
    A. Yes
    B. No
56. What health insurance coverage, paid by the district, do you receive in your employment agreement?
    A. Medical/Hospital
    B. Dental
    C. Vision/Optical
    D. Disability
    E. All the above
    F. All EXCEPT Disability and/or Vision
57. What health insurance coverage, paid by the district, do you receive in your employment agreement for your family?
    A. Medical/Hospital
    B. Dental
    C. Vision/Optical
    D. Disability
    E. All the above
    F. All EXCEPT Disability and/or Vision
58. Do you receive any post-retirement health insurance coverage as part of your contract?
    A. Yes
    B. No
59. Which of your professional association membership dues are paid by the school district? (Select all that apply)
    A. Community organization (e.g., Rotary, Chamber of Commerce)
    B. Regional Professional Organizations (e.g., state association)
    C. National Professional Organizations (e.g., AASA)

Legal Counsel Use / Hire-Rehire

60. Did you employ legal counsel or other outside agents to assist in the development and/or negotiations of your employment agreement?
    A. Yes
    B. No
61. Did the school district use legal counsel to assist in the development and/or negotiations of your employment agreement?
    A. Yes
    B. No
62. Are you drawing retirement from one state and working as a superintendent in another state?

A. Yes
B. No

Other Information

63. Do you presently belong to AASA, The School Superintendents Association?

A. Yes
B. No

64. Do you presently belong to a state superintendent association?

A. Yes
B. No

65. Please list other national education organizations to which you belong:

A. American Federation of School Administrators
B. Association of Educational Service Agencies
C. Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators
D. Association of School Business Officials, International
E. ASCD
F. Chiefs for Change
G. Council of Administrators of Special Education
H. Council of the Great City Schools
I. International Society for Technology in Education
J. National Alliance of Black School Educators
K. National Association of Elementary School Principals
L. National Association of Secondary School Principals
M. National Indian Education Association
N. National Rural Education Association
O. National Superintendents Roundtable
P. The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
Q. Urban Superintendents Association of America
R. Other (Please specify)

66. AASA is interested in collecting and disseminating information about unique and creative contract clauses that superintendents have been able to use to advocate for themselves and incorporate into their contracts. Please use the space below to provide your feedback.

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Dr. Mark Secaur
Superintendent
Smithtown Central School District, NY

The Sogolytics' research team has been an extraordinary help to our division and our schools. I have been continuously impressed by their rock-solid dependability and quality and am profoundly grateful to have had the chance to work with and learn from them. They made my work exponentially easier.

Former Superintendent
Falls Church City Public Schools, VA

The team was very responsive to the diverse needs of our school leaders. I was consistently impressed by the level of support and teamwork provided by the Research Team. The support provided made it easier to tackle our complex survey needs in our large school division.

Administrative Leader
Fairfax County Public Schools, VA

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