

Statewide Superintendent Salary Survey Released

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Contact: Mary Elizabeth Barrett, mary.barrett@tasb.org, 800.580.7782, ext. 6421

The *Education Reporter* provides background information on issues affecting Texas public schools districts. Following are highlights of a recent survey of district trends in superintendent salaries and benefits released by the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) and Texas Association of School Administrators. Information from the annual surveys is used by policymakers at the local and state level to made decisions about educator pay.

Texas trends in superintendent pay and benefits

Across our state, superintendent compensation trends in 2009–10 mirror what is happening in teacher pay: smaller increases in base salary and greater use of bonus pay for strategic purposes. As districts are forced to tighten their budget belts, more thoughtful approaches to using scarce payroll dollars are emerging. The survey report reveals interesting findings about compensation practices for superintendents in our state.

[Survey highlights](#) are posted on the TASB Web Site. Complete reports can be purchased through the [TASBStore](#). Also check tasb.org for a wealth of resources and information about public education and school governance.

Survey participants

Making sense of the data requires understanding the diverse characteristics of Texas public schools and our survey participants. Superintendent pay is largely based on district size and Texas has extreme diversity in that regard. The student enrollment of survey participants ranges from less than 100 students to more than 200,000. The representation of districts is very high across all enrollment groups. Eighty percent of all Texas districts—a total of 826—responded to the survey. In fact, every enrollment category had at least an 80 percent response rate with the exception of districts under 500 students. Among the 826 districts responding, 30 (3.6 percent) reported having an interim superintendent and are not included in the data analysis.

Profile of a superintendent

Superintendent compensation packages come in all shapes and sizes. Local boards should not make comparisons using statewide data, but rather should use a subset of comparably sized districts. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the typical profile of a majority of the superintendents in our state. During school year 2009–10, more than 50 percent of superintendents fit the following profile:

- Earn an average salary of \$117,372
- Have been in their current job for four years
- Have employee plus family health insurance, with 66 percent paid by the district
- Receive an allowance of \$1,182 for cell phone and internet service
- Other benefits are those required by state or federal law

Trends and changes in 2009–10

Superintendent turnover

Interestingly, the turnover rate for superintendents is about the same as teacher turnover. For 2009–10, the superintendent turnover rate among responding districts was 15.4 percent. The state teacher turnover rate measured in 2007–08 was 15.2 percent.

Salary increases

School boards gave their continuing superintendent a pay increase of 3.7 percent on average this year. At the same time, an increasing number of superintendents received no pay increase. Twenty-four percent of superintendents had their pay frozen, up 4 percent from the prior year.

Base salary

Although the average base salary is \$117,372, the variance among districts is extreme, reflecting the diversity of district size in our state. Average salaries for superintendents range from a low of \$81,985 in the smallest districts up to \$277,223 in districts with more than 50,000 students. Half of all superintendent salaries in the state are below \$102,000.

Enrollment	2009–10 Average Superintendent Salary
1 to 499	\$81,985
500 to 999	\$94,729
1,000 to 1,599	\$105,943
1,600 to 2,999	\$115,546
3,000 to 4,999	\$135,551
5,000 to 9,999	\$166,913
10,000 to 24,999	\$185,654
25,000 to 49,999	\$224,904
50,000 and over	\$277,223
All Respondents	\$117,375

Bonus pay

Like teachers, more districts are implementing strategic pay practices for their superintendents. Ten percent of superintendents received bonus pay this year compared to only 6 percent last year. This number represents the first noticeable increase in bonus pay for superintendents in several years. The 10 percent figure includes only bonuses that were actually paid in 2009–10. The average superintendent bonus is 5 percent of salary (\$6,468).

More districts have initiated the practice this year with potential payouts scheduled for 2010–11 based on goals reached during the 2009–10 school year. Most superintendent bonuses are based on achievement of performance objectives while others are paid as retention incentives. Large districts use bonus pay more often. Nearly a quarter of districts with more than 50,000 students paid a bonus to their superintendent in 2009–10.

Health insurance

Premium costs for health coverage rose by 4.5 percent and school boards covered the cost increase. The average district contribution to health insurance rose by 5 percent, maintaining the average district share of 80 percent of the cost of employee-only health coverage and 66 percent of employee-plus-family coverage.

Transportation

Nearly half of all districts (45 percent) provide their superintendent with a car allowance or a district-owned vehicle. The majority practice (84 percent) is to provide a car allowance of \$6,068 on average.

Investment contributions

The practice of contributing to a tax-deferred investment account for the superintendent showed a slight increase of 1 percent overall. Eleven percent (85) of all districts and 26 percent of large districts (more than 10,000 students) make investment contributions for the superintendent. The amount paid into an investment account is typically a percent of salary. The amounts paid rose by 3.6 percent to an average annual contribution of \$7,692 for this year. Most of these districts (74 percent) have vesting requirements as a retention strategy for the superintendent.

Other perks and benefits

The number of districts with other benefits remains small and stable. These include long-term disability insurance (4 percent); housing benefits (11 percent); and additional life insurance (8 percent). Common perks include paid memberships to civic, private, or professional organizations (42 percent). An annual allowance for other business expenses was reported by 5 percent of districts.

Mixing the superintendent compensation package

Like a good recipe, the mix of pay and benefits for the chief executive officer is uniquely crafted for each one. The value of benefits compared to salary in the total compensation package can vary from 10 percent to 40 percent, so comparing salary alone can be misleading to the public.

In general, benefits make up a bigger part of superintendent compensation among larger districts. Excluding the required state and federal benefits, other local benefits constitute about 7 percent of superintendent compensation in small districts and 13 percent in large districts. To get a true picture of how a superintendent's compensation package measures up, school boards need to examine the pay and benefits of superintendents in like districts.

TASB Public Information Office

Barbara Williams

800.580.8272, ext. 6418, barbara.williams@tasb.org