Benchmarking Superintendent Salary and Benefits

In the following report, Hanover outlines compensation packages offered to superintendents of selected school districts nationwide, including annual base salary, vacation, insurance coverage, and retirement benefits.
Introduction & Key Trends

In this report, Hanover highlights the primary compensatory benefits afforded to superintendents in selected school districts across the country. This information was gathered from school district websites, news articles, and publicly available contracts between school boards and superintendents.

The depth of information provided by these sources varies significantly by district. For example, while contracts offer a comprehensive overview of a superintendent’s benefits package, many schools do not provide access to a copy of the agreement unless subject to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. As such, we were unable to locate any information for the following schools:

- Eanes Independent School District
- Ladue School District
- Shaker Heights City School District

Hanover selected two additional school districts: one from Minnesota, Bemidji Area Schools, and the second from Massachusetts, Acton-Boxborough Regional. Both school districts were selected using the National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) database.¹ The database allows for targeted searches based on region and student enrolment. Both districts have similar student enrolment—Bemidji student enrolment is 4,914 and Acton-Boxborough’s enrolment is 5,544.

Key Trends

Our research yielded the following key trends regarding superintendent compensation packages:

- **Annual Base Salary:** The superintendents’ annual base salaries typically range between $150,000 and $280,000. Some contracts offer a graduated scale with a fixed rate of increase for each contract year. While salaries may be adjusted, most contracts stipulate that they cannot be reduced.

- **Insurance:** Most school districts offer a comprehensive insurance package to superintendents, including full coverage for medical, dental, and life insurance; Acton-Boxborough Regional School District covers 75 percent of insurance costs. Some school districts extend these insurances to the superintendents’ dependents and offer coverage after termination of employment until the superintendent begins to receive Medicare coverage.

Annuities: A few superintendents are offered tax sheltered annuities with matching contributions from the school district that hover around 2 percent.

Retirement: Superintendents typically participate in the state retirement system utilized by school districts.

Vacation, Holidays, & Sick Leave: Superintendents are entitled to 25 – 30 vacation days annually. While some superintendents acquire an allotment of sick leave at the start of the year, others earn sick leave at a standard rate throughout the contract year. Both vacation days and sick leave may be carried over to the following year at varying limits.
Superintendent Compensation Practices

For each school district below, we outline the individual compensation packages offered to superintendents, highlighting salary schedules, supplemental and/or overload pay, amount and type of leave provided and other benefits.

New Trier District (Chicago, IL)

The table below outlines the salary, insurance, and entitlement benefits for the superintendent in New Trier District for the 2011-2012 term. According to the district’s Administrator and Faculty Compensation Report, the superintendent was entitled to twenty vacation days and fifteen sick days; in comparison, most teachers were entitled to 15 sick days and were not allotted any vacation days.

Figure 1: New Trier District Superintendent Compensation Report, 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Days</th>
<th>Base Salary</th>
<th>Employee Insurance Benefits</th>
<th>Pension Contribution</th>
<th>TRS 2.2/THIS Contribution</th>
<th>Medicare &amp; Social Security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>$242,408</td>
<td>$20,094 $466 $486 $200</td>
<td>10.3753%</td>
<td>2.12%</td>
<td>1.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Administrative Compensation Report

Palo Alto Unified (Palo Alto, CA)

The figure below shows the average and median district salaries for teachers, principals and the superintendent, and compares them to the state average.

Figure: Teacher & Administrative Salaries, 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>District Amount</th>
<th>State Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent Salary</td>
<td>$248,063</td>
<td>$194,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Teacher Salary</td>
<td>$51,422</td>
<td>$41,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Range Teacher Salary</td>
<td>$81,860</td>
<td>$65,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Teacher Salary</td>
<td>$103,836</td>
<td>$85,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Principal Salary (Elementary)</td>
<td>$134,213</td>
<td>$106,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Principal Salary (Middle)</td>
<td>$140,933</td>
<td>$111,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Principal Salary (High)</td>
<td>$155,707</td>
<td>$121,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Budget for Teacher Salaries</td>
<td>42.30 %</td>
<td>39.90 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Budget for Administrative Salaries</td>
<td>5.60 %</td>
<td>5.10 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: School Accountability Report Card

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2 New Trier District Administrative Compensation Report, 2011-12 as of September 1, 2011
Sycamore Community Schools (Cincinnati, OH)

Hanover obtained a copy of the contract between the superintendent and the board of education of the Sycamore Community Schools district. Originally formed in 2006, the contract was amended and renewed this year, terminating in July 2015. It contains key information regarding compensation and benefits, including:

- **Annual Salary:** The superintendent’s annual base salary for 2010-11, as stipulated by the contract’s amendment of August 18, 2010, is **$160,500**. Ohio law provides for a salary increase, but does not allow for a decrease during the term of the contract, except pursuant to a uniform plan affecting all employees of the District.

- **Retirement Benefits:** With regard to State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) contributions, the Board pays directly the “employee’s share of Superintendent’s total retirement contribution to the [STRS] on behalf of superintendent,” including all retirement contributions on the “picked-up” amount. The Board also agrees to pick up and pay the Superintendent’s share of Medicare contributions.

As provided by the Sycamore Administrator’s Benefit Package, the superintendent is entitled to full pay at current per diem rate for up to one-third of accumulated and unused sick leave, plus fifteen additional, as of the date of separation from employment.

- **Vacation:** The superintendent is entitled to **thirty vacation days annually**, and may be reimbursed for a maximum of eleven days not used in any one contract year at current per diem.

- **Expense Reimbursement:** The superintendent will be reimbursed for “actual and necessary expenses, including travel and travel-related expenses, including mileage at the Board approved rate, incurred...in conjunction with performance of her duties.”

- **Membership Dues:** Recognizing that the superintendent’s duties include networking with and participating in other organizations, the Board agrees to pay the associated costs of membership dues to the “Buckeye Association of School Administrators, the American Association of School Administrators, community organizations, and all other associations deemed necessary by the Superintendent, within the limits of appropriations for such expenditures.”

- **Outside Activities:** The superintendent may engage in teaching, lecturing, writing, consulting, testifying or serving as a mediator or referee in education-related matters, so long as such activities do not require more than five days of
regular work time during any calendar year; vacation days may be used for such activities without limitation. The compensation received for these outside activities must be approved by the board and does not reduce the compensation of the superintendent under the contract.

**West Bloomfield (West Bloomfield, MI)**

As reported in a recent news article, the base salary for the superintendent of West Bloomfield is **$153,425**, down from $170,000 in 2009. The superintendent also receives a $10,000 tax-sheltered annuity.⁴

**Westport Public Schools (Westport, CT)**

As reported in a recent news article, the base salary for the superintendent of Westport Public Schools is $288,000, a two percent increase from the previous base salary of $282,000.⁵

**Roseville Public School District (Roseville, MN)**

Below are the terms for compensation and benefits included in an unsigned draft of the superintendent’s contract with the school district.⁶

- **Annual Base Salary:** The superintendent’s annual salary is based on a graduated schedule:
  - July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011: **$189,583**
  - July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013: **$201,128**

  The superintendent’s salary may be subject to adjustment but may not be reduced below the amount for the contract year listed above.

- **Vacation, Holidays & Sick Leave:** The superintendent is entitled to twenty-six days of paid vacation annually. Any unused vacation days may accrue to a maximum of fifty-two days and shall be paid to the superintendent upon termination.

  The superintendent is entitled to ten paid holidays each contract year as designated by the board.

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The superintendent earns paid sick leave at the rate of one and one-half days for each working month, which can be accumulated without limit. Unused sick leave is paid to the superintendent, via the Health Care Savings Plan, upon termination of employment; the maximum number of eligible days for payment is 139.

Finally, the superintendent may also granted emergency leave during the contract year.

- **Disability:** If the superintendent exhausts all accumulated sick leave and is unable to perform regular duties due to personal illness or disability, the board may provide additional sick leave until the expiration of the waiting period for long-term disability. If the superintendent is unable to perform regular duties due to personal illness, exhausted all credited sick leave, and is eligible for long-term disability, he is eligible for medical leave for up to one year in duration without pay.

- **Insurance:** The district provides the superintendent and his/her dependents with hospitalization and dental insurance benefits under the school district’s group plan, at the expense of the school district. The superintendent may make an annual election to take the insurance benefits provided herein or take the cost of such insurance benefits as additional salary.

The district also provides the superintendent with a group term life insurance plan in the amount of four times the superintendent’s annual salary, payable to the superintendent’s named beneficiaries, at the expense of the school district.

The school district provides the superintendent, at the superintendent’s expense on a post-tax basis, with group long term disability coverage.

- **Retirement Insurance:** Upon the superintendent’s retirement, the school district continues to provide health, hospitalization, dental, and life insurance until the superintendent becomes eligible for Medicare or upon death of the superintendent, whichever comes first.

- **Tax Sheltered Annuities:** The district shall match annually up to two percent of the base salary up to $2,000 to either the Minnesota Deferred Compensation Plan, or an appropriate 403(b) annuity on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

- **Conferences and Meetings:** The associated expenses and fees for the superintendent’s attendance at professional conferences and meetings with other educational agencies are paid by the school district.
Outside Activities: Insofar as the superintendent is able to devote full time
due diligence to his/her responsibilities as superintendent of the school
district, the school board will grant up to seven days with pay per year for
outside activities, such as consultancy, with approval from the board.

Lexington Public Schools (Lexington, MA)\(^7\)

The agreement between the Lexington School Committee and the district
superintendent includes specific compensatory benefits, outlined below.

- **Annual Salary:** The agreement provides for a graduated salary schedule that
  increases by three percent each year:
  - July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009: $199,227
  - July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010: $208,204
  - July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011: $214,450
  - July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012: $220,884

- **Life Insurance:** In addition to minimum statutory plans or life insurance
  plans available to other employees in the district, the committee is also
  required to pay $7,000 annually toward the purchase of a life insurance policy
  selected by the superintendent.

- **Annuity Contract:** The original terms of the contract required the
  committee to make an annual payment of $7,000 to an insurance company of
  the superintendent’s choice for an annuity contract. In July 1, 2009, however,
  this figure was increased from $7,000 to $27,000 and the superintendent may
  elect to have these funds distributed as insurance premiums, annuity
  payments, and/or longevity payments so long as the total payments do not
  exceed $27,000 annually. The superintendent may add his own contribution
  to the compensation paid by the committee.

- **Vacation:** The original agreement entitled the superintendent to an
  allotment of twenty paid vacation days annually, credited at the start of the
  year. Upon the agreement’s most recent amendment in June 2011, this
  allotment was increased to thirty vacation days. Additionally, the
  superintendent may buy back up to ten vacation days per year at the per
  diem rate of pay then in effect for that contract year.

  The superintendent is allowed to accumulate a maximum of ten days of
  unused or unredeemed vacation days. This accumulated time will be paid to
  the superintendent (or his estate) in the next pay period following
  resignation, retirement, or death at the then effective per diem rate of pay

based on the actual number of days in each year the superintendent is required to work.

- **Sick Leave**: At the start of each contract year (July 1), the superintendent is credited fifteen days of sick leave. Unused sick leave shall carryover from year to year without limit, but cannot be bought back.

- **Personal Leave**: The superintendent may be absent for reasons that are unusual, imperative or emergency in nature. Such matters include legal proceedings, religious observances, family matters, medical emergencies, special travel arrangements, or attendance at funerals.

- **Professional Growth Expenses & Dues**: The agreement allows for a “reasonable reimbursement” to the superintendent for all expenses incurred as a result of professional activities attended or performed in fulfillment of his duties and responsibilities. Such expenses can include travel, registration fees, meals, and hotel costs. This reimbursement includes attendance at one national conference and two state conferences per year.

Additionally, the committee pays all dues and associated costs of membership for the superintendent in the following professional associations:

- Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
- American Association of School Administrators
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

- **Transportation Allowance**: The superintendent will be reimbursed for expenses and personal automobile use outside the District at the approved I.R.S. rate per mile.

**Highland Park Independent School District**

- **Annual Salary**: The superintendent’s annual base salary, according to the terms of the original contract signed in 2009 is $215,000. This salary may be subject to adjustment but in no event can be reduced. The Texas Tribune’s online database of superintendent salaries listed the superintendent’s salary for 2010-11 at $236,235.

- **Insurance**: The district provides and pays for the superintendent’s insurance coverage, including medical, dental, and life insurance.

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Vacations, Holidays & Sick Leave: The agreement between the board and the superintendent does not specify the amount of vacation days to which the superintendent is entitled.

Business Expenses: The district pays or reimburses the superintendent for “reasonable expenses” incurred as a result of his duties, “except for cellular phone equipment and usage expenses.”

Automobile Allowance: The superintendent receives, on a monthly basis at times deemed appropriate by the board, a $1,000 allowance for automobile and related expenses for intra-district travel and fully reimburses the superintendent for travel outside the district.

Professional Growth and Civic Activities: The board encourages the superintendent to attend and participate in appropriate professional meetings at the local, regional, state, and national levels. As such, the district pays or reimburses the superintendent for all reasonable expenses associated with his devotion to these professional commitments.

Housing: The board requires the superintendent to live within the district. During the term of the agreement, the superintendent resides, without rental charges, at a home owned by the district. The superintendent is responsible for the cost of utilities and general maintenance. Repairs to the home general maintenance are paid by the district.

Additionally, the district will make a tax gross-up payment to the Superintendent as compensation for the federal income and employment taxes that will be imposed upon the superintendent as a result of residing in the district-owned home.

Retirement: The superintendent participates in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.

Moving Expenses: The superintendent is reimbursed for reasonable and necessary moving expenses incurred as a result of relocating to the district.
Bemidji Area Schools (Bemidji, MN)\textsuperscript{10}

Below are the compensation and benefits included in the superintendent’s contract with the School Board of Independent School District No. 31 in Bemidji, Minnesota.

- **Annual Salary:** The superintendent’s annual salary is governed by a graduated schedule:
  - July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011: \$132,333
  - July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012: \$139,666
  - July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013: \$147,000

  The annual salary may be subject to adjustment but cannot be reduced during the term of the contract.

- **Vacation, Holidays and Sick Leave:** The superintendent is entitled to 25 working days of paid vacation days each contract year. Vacation days may be accumulated to no more than sixty days as of June 30 each year and a maximum of ten days per year can be taken as direct pay at the current salary.

  Additionally, the superintendent is entitled to twelve paid holidays each year. With regard to sick leave, the superintendent accrues sick leave at the rate of one day per month with a maximum accumulation of 200 days.

- **Insurance:** The district provides hospitalization and major medical insurance for the superintendent and dependents. The district also pays the superintendent up to \$1,600 each contract year as reimbursement for health and medical care expenses that are not covered by insurance.

  The district provides \$400,000 of term life insurance for the superintendent during the term of the contract.

  The district provides dental insurance for the superintendent and dependents in accordance with the basic insurance coverage provided to the administrative staff.

- **Tax Sheltered Annuities:** The superintendent is eligible to participate in a tax sheltered annuity plan. The amount of contributions matched by the district is \$2,500 in 2010-2011; \$3,000 in 2011-2012; and \$3,500 in 2012-2013.

- **Automobile Expense:** The superintendent receives an annual allowance of \$6,000 for business use of a private automobile.

\textsuperscript{10} Bemidji Area Schools Superintendent Contract.” 17 May 2010.  
Confident and Meetings: The district pays for associated expenses of membership in state and national organizations that are relevant to the duties of the superintendent. Similarly, the district will also pay the expenses and fees for attendance at professional conferences and meetings at the local, state and national levels, subject to budget constraints.

Severance Pay: The superintendent is entitled to severance pay upon resignation, retirement, death or disability that is equal to one month’s pay for each year fulfilled as superintendent of the school district for up to six months or 50 percent of the final year’s salary.

Retirement: Upon retirement and after six years of continuous employment, the superintendent is permitted to participate in the district’s health insurance and dental insurance programs. Additionally, the district pays the family premium for the retiree’s health and dental insurance until the superintendent is provided equivalent group family medical and dental insurance from a subsequent employer or for a period of up to ten years or until the superintendent qualifies for Medicare coverage, whichever comes first.

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (Acton, MA)\textsuperscript{11}

Below are the compensation and benefits stipulated in an unsigned draft of a contract between the Acton School Committee, Acton Boxborough Regional School District Committee, and the superintendent.

Annual Base Salary: The superintendent’s annual base salary (for 2009-2010) is $170,000 and cannot be reduced throughout the term of the contract. The superintendent may elect to have a portion of the salary paid into an annuity.

Medical and Life Related Insurances: The school district pays for 75 percent of the superintendent’s health insurance. The Committees provide the cost of the life insurance for the superintendent that covers 90 percent of the salary.

Additionally, the superintendent also receives liability insurance under the provision that governs the district’s Central Office Administrators.

Leaves of Absence: The superintendent receives an allotment of eighteen sick days each July 1\textsuperscript{st} throughout the term of the contract. The superintendent may also be eligible to receive extended sick leave.

Accumulated and unused sick leave shall be carried over from year to year. No payment will be made for unused accumulated sick leave.

The superintendent is entitled to three consecutive days of leave without loss of pay for bereavement.

The superintendent is granted five days of personal leave each year which cannot be carried over from year to year.

- **Vacation:** The superintendent is eligible twenty vacation days during the first ten years of employment; no more than 40 vacation days can carry over from year to year.
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