

LEAN FROG

CONSULTING SERVICES

COMPENSATION STUDY

Williamson County Schools

Compensation Study: Board Summary

Findings and Recommendations

Prepared by LEAN Frog Business Solutions

Board Work Session draft

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theleanleap.com

info@theleanleap.com

(877) 853-4543

Study Purpose and Scope

What this study is designed to deliver

PURPOSE

- Evaluate the structural integrity of WCS compensation across all employee groups
- Benchmark WCS pay against peer districts and the relevant labor market
- Identify internal equity, compression, and inversion concerns
- Develop recommendations for schedule design and implementation

SCOPE

- Certified staff: Teachers, Psychologists, Curriculum Specialists
- Leadership: Assistant Principals, Principals, Central Office Directors, Assistant Superintendents
- Classified staff: 54 salary schedules covering hourly and annual pay structures
- Incentive pay programs and placement rules for experience credit
- Retirement eligibility analysis across 5,494 full-time employees (excludes part-time, seasonal, interim, and rehired-retiree staff)

Compensation Study Process

Three-phase methodology applied to all employee groups

01

DATA GATHERING

- Compensation program and pay data review
- Documentation of all schedules and placement rules
- Retirement eligibility analysis by position group
- Collaborative benchmark position selection

02

ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

- Peer district benchmarking across 8 Tennessee districts
- Market analysis using third-party survey data
- Internal equity, compression, and inversion review
- Policy review for new hires, promotions, and transfers

03

REPORTING AND DISCUSSION

- Iterative findings reviews with district leadership
- Workshop presentation of overall findings
- Board progress update delivered June 11, 2026
- Final report with recommendations and roadmap

Executive Summary

What we found, what to do, and how to sequence implementation

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

- Teacher pay starts competitive but loses ground by mid-career. WCS cannot sustain market position against neighboring districts beyond Step 10.
- Schedules are structurally shorter than peers across every employee group. Career-long earning potential is constrained, and competitiveness erodes mechanically as peer schedules continue.
- Promotion premiums are positive at entry but invert with tenure, discouraging advancement where succession risk is highest.
- Long-tenured employees have no defined pay path. Hundreds are paid above formal schedules.
- Market position varies by position group. School leaders, non-teaching professional roles, and central office leadership lead the market. Maintenance trades, food service, and school secretary positions lag significantly.

STRATEGIC INSIGHT

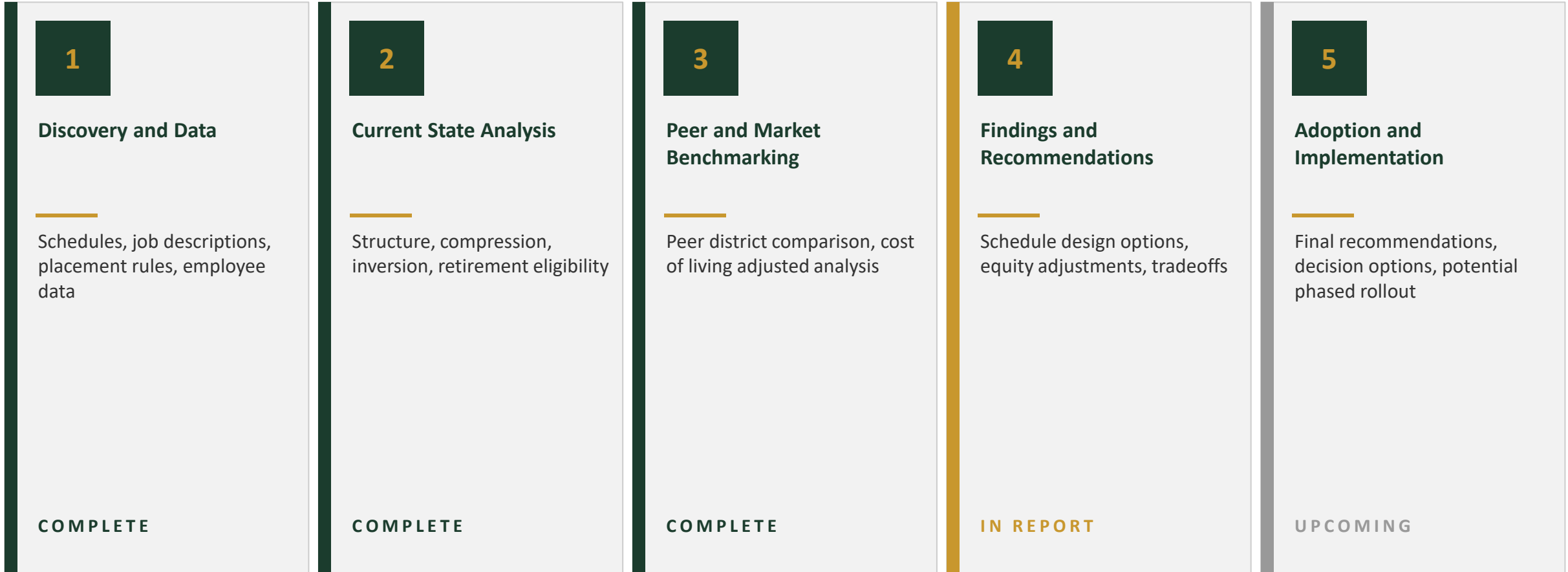
- The largest opportunity is design, not market position.
- Starting pay and documented placement rules are strengths to preserve.
- Schedule architecture, progression logic, and top-of-scale treatment are the primary drivers of competitiveness gaps and internal compression.
- Solutions are available through redesign rather than broad percentage increases.

RECOMMENDED DIRECTION

- Five recommendations across schedule architecture, promotion progression, and targeted equity adjustments.
- Phased implementation can be used to manage fiscal impact while addressing the highest-risk gaps first.

Where We Are in the Study

All analytical phases complete; recommendations and implementation ahead



PART 1

Key Findings

Key Findings

Four structural themes plus one position-level finding

01

STRUCTURAL THEME

Teacher Pay Competitiveness

Starting BA lags 2 of 9 peers. By Step 10, WCS lags all peers except Hamilton.

02

STRUCTURAL THEME

Promotion Compression in Leadership Path

Premiums are positive at entry but compress with tenure. Assistant Principal to Principal and Senior Principal to Executive Director invert to a pay cut by Year 5.

03

STRUCTURAL THEME

Banded Progression and Limited Schedule Length

Classified schedules deliver 5 pay changes across 16 years. Peer average is 26 tiers across 25 steps.

04

STRUCTURAL THEME

Top of Scale Pay Inconsistency

Every WCS schedule ends before the average career does. 663 Teachers are paid above scale.

05

POSITION-LEVEL FINDING

Market Position by Position Group Is Mixed

School leaders and professional roles lead the market. Maintenance trades, food service, and school secretary positions lag significantly.

Teacher Pay Competitiveness

Starting pay lags direct geographic competitors; cost of living amplifies the gap

DIRECT PEER PAY (BA)

- WCS starting BA \$51,102; trails only Franklin Special and Metro Nashville
- By Step 10, WCS falls behind all peers except Hamilton
- Rutherford pays \$5,033 above WCS at Step 10
- WCS Teacher schedule has only 21 steps; peer schedules average 25 to 30
- Most WCS annual steps increase 0.99 to 2.0 percent; the Step 21 jump exceeds 10 percent and is the only step where WCS exceeds all peers

COST OF LIVING CONTEXT

- Williamson County median home value is the highest in the peer region
- Median rent also exceeds all peer counties
- After housing adjustment, most peer districts exceed WCS purchasing power at multiple career stages
- Knox, Hamilton, Maury, and Sumner effectively exceed WCS by 19 to 28 percent at starting pay on a housing-adjusted basis

[peer list](#)

Peer Salary Schedule Ranking (25/26): Teacher

Starting Salary and Step 10

STARTING SALARY (BA)

School System	Salary	Variance
Franklin Special	\$53,736	\$2,634
Metro Nashville	\$53,610	\$2,508
Williamson County	\$51,102	—
Sumner County	\$50,500	(\$602)
Maury County	\$50,006	(\$1,096)
Hamilton County	\$50,000	(\$1,102)
Rutherford County	\$49,565	(\$1,537)
Knox County	\$48,532	(\$2,570)
Wilson County	\$48,419	(\$2,683)

STEP 10 SALARY (BA)

School System	Salary	Variance
Metro Nashville	\$65,445	\$7,963
Rutherford County	\$62,515	\$5,033
Knox County	\$62,327	\$4,845
Franklin Special	\$61,783	\$4,301
Wilson County	\$58,195	\$713
Maury County	\$58,008	\$526
Sumner County	\$57,747	\$265
Williamson County	\$57,482	—
Hamilton County	\$56,659	(\$823)

WCS starts third of nine peers in BA pay. By Step 10, WCS falls to eighth of nine. The peer schedule structure (25 to 30 steps with consistent annual increases) outpaces WCS once early-career advantage erodes.

Peer Salary Schedule Ranking (25/26): Teacher

Step 20 and Step 21

STEP 20 SALARY (BA)

School System	Salary	Variance
Knox County	\$76,044	\$6,700
Metro Nashville	\$75,386	\$6,042
Franklin Special	\$75,114	\$5,770
Rutherford County	\$71,483	\$2,139
Williamson County	\$69,344	—
Wilson County	\$67,507	(\$1,837)
Maury County	\$67,396	(\$1,948)
Sumner County	\$66,036	(\$3,308)
Hamilton County	\$65,951	(\$3,393)

STEP 21 SALARY (BA)

School System	Salary	Variance
Williamson County	\$76,578	—
Knox County	\$76,044	(\$534)
Metro Nashville	\$75,717	(\$861)
Franklin Special	\$75,377	(\$1,201)
Rutherford County	\$72,020	(\$4,558)
Wilson County	\$68,903	(\$7,675)
Maury County	\$68,420	(\$8,158)
Sumner County	\$66,927	(\$9,651)
Hamilton County	\$65,951	(\$10,627)

WCS regains the top rank only at Step 21, due to the 10 percent end-of-schedule jump. This is a structural artifact, not sustained market competitiveness. Peers reach higher pay through more steps, not through a single end-of-schedule increase. WCS Teachers above Step 21 receive only COLA.

Peer Comparisons Adjusted for Cost of Living

Housing-adjusted BA salary at starting and Step 10

HOUSING ADJUSTMENT FACTOR

School System	Median Home	Median Rent	Weight
Williamson	\$751,900	\$1,895	1.00
Franklin SSD	\$751,900	\$1,895	1.00
Wilson	\$428,000	\$1,370	1.16
Metro Nashville	\$417,400	\$1,485	1.15
Sumner	\$393,100	\$1,339	1.19
Rutherford	\$382,600	\$1,405	1.18
Maury	\$355,700	\$1,206	1.24
Knox	\$320,900	\$1,180	1.27
Hamilton	\$312,800	\$1,163	1.28

ADJUSTED BA SALARY (STARTING)

School System	Adjusted	Variance
Hamilton	\$64,134	\$13,032
Maury	\$62,047	\$10,945
Knox	\$61,719	\$10,617
Metro Nashville	\$61,554	\$10,452
Sumner	\$59,996	\$8,894
Rutherford	\$58,482	\$7,380
Wilson	\$56,376	\$5,274
Franklin SSD	\$53,736	\$2,634
Williamson	\$51,102	—

ADJUSTED BA SALARY (STEP 10)

School System	Adjusted	Variance
Knox	\$79,262	\$21,780
Metro Nashville	\$75,142	\$17,660
Rutherford	\$73,761	\$16,279
Hamilton	\$72,675	\$15,193
Maury	\$71,976	\$14,494
Sumner	\$68,606	\$11,124
Wilson	\$67,758	\$10,276
Franklin SSD	\$61,783	\$4,301
Williamson	\$57,482	—

Promotion Compression and Inversion in Leadership Path

Promotion premiums are front-loaded and invert for the most experienced movers

QUANTIFIED COMPRESSION

- Premiums compress with tenure: the longer a leader waits to promote, the smaller the smaller the raise, until it inverts
- Assistant Principal to Principal: inverts by Year 5 and reaches a 5% to 9% cut at the top of the Assistant Principal schedule
- Principal to Executive Director: a cut at the top step for Middle (1% to 2%) and High School (6% to 8%) Principals; High School inverts by Year 5
- Root cause: placement rules credit a promoted leader only for experience comparable to the higher role, not time in the current one

DOLLAR IMPACT AND SUCCESSION RISK

- Principals: 10 of 52 are eligible to retire within the year
- District Leaders: 11 of 52 are eligible to retire within the year
- Current architecture discourages internal promotion at the stages with greatest succession risk
- Replacing retiring leaders with external hires increases cost and reduces institutional knowledge
- WCS is already experiencing pipeline failure: internal Assistant Principals pass on Principal openings, and external replacements often do not retain

Promotion Compression in Leadership Path

Values = percent change vs the prior role's entry rate, at each experience benchmark. All figures are based on daily rate.
Green = gain, red = pay below the prior role.

Promotion Path	Entry	Year 5	Year 10	Max	Pattern
TEACHER TO ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL					
Teacher → Assistant Principal	+ 66.4 to + 91.4%	+ 57.1 to + 80.7%	+ 49.6 to + 72.0%	+ 12.3 to + 29.1%	<i>Strong gain at every stage</i>
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL TO PRINCIPAL					
AP Elementary → Principal Elementary	+ 4.0 to + 7.3%	- 1.5 to + 1.6%	- 4.0 to - 1.0%	- 8.6 to - 5.7%	<i>Below prior role by Year 10</i>
AP Middle → Principal Middle	+ 4.0 to + 7.0%	- 1.6 to + 1.3%	- 3.9 to - 1.1%	- 8.2 to - 5.5%	<i>Below prior role by Year 10</i>
AP High → Principal High	+ 3.9 to + 6.7%	- 1.6 to + 1.1%	- 3.8 to - 1.1%	- 7.8 to - 5.3%	<i>Below prior role by Year 10</i>
PRINCIPAL TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR					
Principal Elem (≤20 staff) → Exec Director	+ 21.6%	+ 15.2%	+ 12.4%	+ 7.0%	<i>Strong gain at every stage</i>
Principal Elem (21–40) → Exec Director	+ 19.8%	+ 13.6%	+ 10.8%	+ 5.6%	<i>Strong gain</i>
Principal Elem (> 40) → Exec Director	+ 17.9%	+ 11.9%	+ 9.2%	+ 4.2%	<i>Strong gain, narrows by Max</i>
Principal Middle (≤30) → Exec Director	+ 13.2%	+ 7.4%	+ 4.8%	+ 0.1%	<i>Gain, flat by Max</i>
Principal Middle (31–50) → Exec Director	+ 11.6%	+ 5.9%	+ 3.4%	- 1.2%	<i>Gain; slight cut at Max</i>
Principal Middle (> 50) → Exec Director	+ 10.0%	+ 4.5%	+ 2.0%	- 2.4%	<i>Gain; cut by Max</i>
Principal High (≤50) → Exec Director	+ 5.9%	+ 0.3%	- 1.9%	- 6.0%	<i>Compresses by Year 10</i>
Principal High (51–70) → Exec Director	+ 4.5%	- 1.0%	- 3.1%	- 7.1%	<i>Compresses by Year 5</i>
Principal High (> 70) → Exec Director	+ 3.1%	- 2.2%	- 4.3%	- 8.2%	<i>Compresses by Year 5</i>
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT					
Executive Director → Asst Superintendent	+ 14.3%	+ 14.3%	+ 14.3%	+ 14.3%	<i>Strong gain</i>

Scale: near flat Target role for Principals = Executive Director (daily rate \$598.33). Detail by school size: see Appendix.

Banded Progression and Limited Schedule Length

Classified schedules use banded structure across a shortened career window

WCS CLASSIFIED SCHEDULES

- 5 pay changes across 16 years of service
- Banded progression means most classified employees receive no step increase in most years
- Top of scale reached at Year 16
- Long-tenured classified employees receive no step-based progression beyond Year 16, only COLA increases

PEER DISTRICT PRACTICE

- Franklin Special, Metro Nashville, Wilson, and Rutherford use 25 to 26 step schedules
- Most peers provide annual step increases through Year 25 or beyond
- Peer average for classified schedules is approximately 26 tiers across 25 steps
- WCS is an outlier in using banded structure over a shortened schedule

Top of Scale Pay Inconsistency

Every WCS schedule ends before the average career does

WHERE WCS SCHEDULES END

- Teachers: Step 21
- Classified: Year 16
- Assistant Principals and Principals: Year 15
- Departmental Directors and above: flat rate, 0 steps
- Every WCS schedule ends before the average career does

WHAT HAPPENS AT TOP OF SCALE

- Once employees reach the final step, annual COLA increases compound on individual salaries with no schedule guidance
- New hire Teachers are credited for experience up to 21 years only
- 663 10-month Teachers are paid above Step 21, with only COLA increases
- \$35,000 informal pay spread above the formal schedule, demonstrates potential inequity
- 43 classified employees are paid above their schedules

Market Position by Position Group Is Mixed

Where WCS pays above, at, and below the market across employee groups

WHERE WCS LEADS THE MARKET

- School leadership daily rates exceed peer averages across all Assistant Principal and Principal positions, with WCS leads of 13 to 25 percent at end of scale
- Curriculum Specialist leads peers by 27 percent at start, 6 percent at end
- Central Office leaders, Nurse RN, Social Worker, and Speech Language Pathologist all lead peer averages
- Recruitment positioning for these groups is a strength to preserve

WHERE WCS LAGS THE MARKET

- Classified Support Positions:
 - Maintenance Plumber, Electrician, HVAC, and General Maintenance lag at start and are 15 to 18 percent below at end of scale
 - Food Service Cafe Manager lags 10 to 25 percent below peer at every step
 - School Secretary lags 5 percent at start, 22 percent at end

POSITION-LEVEL PATTERN

These position-level gaps reinforce the structural pattern. Many Classified positions start at or above peer average and fall behind as peer schedules continue beyond Year 16. The benchmark comparison slides that follow show this dynamic at the position level for Classified, Professional, School and Central Office Leadership.

Support / Classified

Peer schedule comparison; sorted by Start/Low variance ascending

Position	Salary Grade	Emp.	Type	Start	Mid 1	Mid 2	End
Food Service Cafe Manager (Peer Min)	Grade 1F	47	Hourly	(14.81%)	(17.36%)	(18.42%)	(25.29%)
Food Service Cafe Manager (Peer Max)	Grade 1F	47	Hourly	(10.32%)	(12.58%)	(10.86%)	(17.76%)
Maintenance Plumber	Grade 5H A	10	Hourly	(9.98%)	(11.56%)	(8.28%)	(14.93%)
Maintenance Electrician	Grade 5H B	9	Hourly	(9.91%)	(11.93%)	(8.73%)	(15.18%)
School Secretary	Grade 2H A	72	Hourly	(5.47%)	(11.76%)	(15.65%)	(21.65%)
Department Assistant (Peer Max)	Grade 5H A	30	Hourly	(5.17%)	(4.08%)	(1.84%)	(11.89%)
Maintenance HVAC Technician	Grade 5H B	10	Hourly	(4.23%)	(5.44%)	(2.69%)	(12.34%)
Maintenance General	Grade 3H A	19	Hourly	(3.93%)	(11.84%)	(11.50%)	(18.14%)
Maintenance Painter	Grade 4H A	4	Hourly	(1.29%)	(11.96%)	(5.01%)	(9.99%)
Attendance Secretary	Grade 2H A	n/a	Hourly	(0.41%)	(9.49%)	(11.38%)	(18.25%)
Food Service Associate	Grade 1F	36	Hourly	1.31%	(4.18%)	(4.31%)	(14.82%)
Department Assistant (Peer Min)	Grade 5H A	36	Hourly	1.81%	(0.38%)	1.06%	(6.19%)

Percent variances reflect WCS pay relative to peer average. Negative values indicate WCS pays below peer average. Maintenance trades and school clerical positions show the widest end-of-scale gaps.

Support / Classified

Peer schedule comparison continued; sorted by Start/Low variance ascending

Position	Salary Grade	Emp.	Type	Start	Mid 1	Mid 2	End
Accountant (Peer Min)	Grade 6H A	3	Annual	1.88%	(10.85%)	(10.15%)	(9.48%)
School Bookkeeper (Peer Max)	Grade 4H A / 5H A	51	Hourly	1.99%	(1.16%)	1.57%	(7.24%)
Accounting Clerk (Peer Max)	Grade 6H A	6	Hourly	2.43%	(2.31%)	2.87%	(5.22%)
School Bookkeeper (Peer Min)	Grade 4H A / 5H A	51	Hourly	4.46%	(2.02%)	(0.57%)	(10.45%)
Maintenance Foreman	Not in schedule	12	Annual	5.31%	(2.03%)	2.68%	1.37%
Bus Driver	Grade 1T	212	Hourly	8.22%	4.62%	11.50%	(1.07%)
Accounting Clerk (Peer Min)	Grade 6H A	6	Hourly	8.49%	0.75%	6.02%	0.12%
Accountant (Peer Max)	Grade 6H A	3	Annual	9.86%	0.39%	5.23%	3.02%
Paraprofessional Special Ed	Grade 3H B	755	Hourly	10.90%	(3.75%)	(0.09%)	(10.27%)
Paraprofessional General Ed	Grade 2H A	126	Hourly	11.17%	(3.92%)	0.66%	(9.88%)
Network Technician	Grade 1IT	32	Annual	12.97%	0.17%	3.18%	(5.17%)

Many positions start at or above peer average but fall behind by end of scale. This reinforces Finding 3 (banded progression and limited schedule length) and Finding 4 (top-of-scale inconsistency). The end-of-scale gap is the most consistent indicator of structural drift.

Support / Classified

Market consensus comparison; WCS salary schedule shown as percent of Combined Data Market Consensus; sorted by Start % of Market ascending.

Position	Salary Grade	Emp.	Basis	Market Consensus	Start (% of Market)	End (% of Market)	Market Position
Maintenance - Electrician	Grade 5H B	9	Hourly	\$27.96	73.97%	101.09%	Below start, within at end
Maintenance - General	Grade 3H A	19	Hourly	\$24.28	75.42%	94.53%	Below start, within at end
Maintenance - HVAC Technician	Grade 5H B	10	Hourly	\$26.70	77.45%	105.84%	Below start, within at end
Maintenance - Plumber	Grade 5H A	10	Hourly	\$25.46	79.70%	108.92%	Below start, within at end
Department Assistant	Grade 5H A	30	Hourly	\$25.31	80.17%	109.57%	Below start, within at end
Maintenance - Foreman	Not in schedule	12	Annual	\$66,958	80.58%	113.36%	Below start, above at end
Maintenance - Painter	Grade 4H A	4	Hourly	\$23.77	82.85%	107.34%	Below start, within at end
Mechanic	Grade 1T	4	Hourly	\$24.29	85.08%	116.32%	Below start, above at end
Accountant	Grade 6H A	3	Annual	\$69,605	88.78%	119.85%	Below start, above at end
Accounting Clerk	Grade 6H A	6	Hourly	\$23.97	94.22%	129.39%	Within start, above at end

Support positions are competitive at the top of the schedule but lag at the start. Nine of ten positions begin below the market consensus range, with starting steps between 74 and 89 percent of market, while every position reaches within range or above by the ending step. Maintenance trades show the widest starting gaps, and only Accounting Clerk starts within range. As with other employee groups, the exposure is concentrated in compressed starting pay rather than ending pay.

Percentages reflect WCS salary schedule starting and ending steps relative to the Combined Data Market Consensus. Values below 90 percent fall below the market consensus range of 90 to 110 percent and are shown in red. Basis is hourly except Accountant and Maintenance Foreman, which are salaried and shown annually. Employee counts reflect positions in each schedule.

Non-Teaching Professional

Peer schedule comparison; sorted by Start/Low variance ascending

Position	Emp.	Type	Start	Mid 1	Mid 2	End
Speech Language Pathologist (10M) - Certified	62	Annual	3.95%	(0.66%)	7.79%	3.40%
Social Worker (10M) - Master's	13	Annual	14.97%	8.05%	16.68%	12.93%
Nurse (RN) - Bachelor's	45	Annual	24.30%	7.45%	8.75%	4.91%
Curriculum Specialist - Master's	25	Annual	27.44%	22.17%	13.26%	6.14%

Professional positions are a comparative strength for WCS. Curriculum Specialist and Nurse roles lead peers substantially at starting pay. However, the lead narrows at the end of scale, particularly for Curriculum Specialist (27 percent above peers at start, 6 percent above at end). This compression of lead-to-peers reinforces the structural pattern observed across all employee groups.

Non-Teaching Professional

Market consensus comparison; WCS salary schedule shown as percent of Combined Data Market Consensus; sorted by Start % of Market ascending.

Position	Emp.	Market Consensus (Hourly)	Start (% of Market)	End (% of Market)	Market Position
Speech Language Pathologist (10M) - Certified	62	\$43.35	97.77%	142.89%	Within range, above at end
Nurse (RN) - Bachelor's	45	\$37.28	99.51%	125.63%	Within range, above at end
Nurse (RN) - Master's	10	\$38.03	102.83%	129.82%	Within range, above at end
Occupational Therapist (10M)	39	\$46.72	105.39%	142.28%	Within range, above at end
Social Worker (10M) - Master's	13	\$30.78	131.87%	195.42%	Above market throughout

On an hourly basis, all five positions meet or exceed the market consensus range at the starting step and rise well above it by the ending step. Four positions start within the market range of 90 to 110 percent and Social Worker starts above it, while every position ends above 110 percent of market. This hourly view is materially stronger than the annual view, in which the same positions start below market. The difference reflects WCS work calendars, which reduce annualized pay relative to competitive hourly rates.

Percentages reflect WCS salary schedule starting and ending steps relative to the Combined Data Market Consensus (hourly). Values above 110 percent exceed the market consensus range of 90 to 110 percent. Employee counts reflect positions in each schedule.

School Leadership

Peer schedule comparison; sorted by Start/Low variance ascending (daily rates, Master's degree)

Position	Emp.	Type	Start	Mid 1	Mid 2	End
Assistant Principal Elementary (Peer Max)	38	Daily	35.99%	30.99%	20.74%	13.06%
Assistant Principal Elementary (Peer Min)	38	Daily	37.31%	32.19%	21.76%	13.99%
Assistant Principal Middle (Peer Max)	23	Daily	41.39%	36.31%	23.68%	15.86%
Assistant Principal Middle (Peer Min)	23	Daily	42.50%	37.32%	24.53%	16.63%
Assistant Principal High (Peer Max)	40	Daily	57.45%	49.97%	31.86%	24.23%
Assistant Principal High (Peer Min)	40	Daily	59.19%	51.52%	33.06%	25.33%
Principal Elementary (Peer Min)	29	Daily	36.75%	30.23%	20.43%	13.88%
Principal Elementary (Peer Max)	29	Daily	37.09%	30.67%	20.97%	14.50%
Principal Middle (Peer Min)	12	Daily	38.56%	32.37%	21.95%	15.49%
Principal Middle (Peer Max)	12	Daily	39.53%	33.37%	22.98%	16.58%
Principal High (Peer Max)	11	Daily	47.84%	39.98%	25.89%	18.96%
Principal High (Peer Min)	11	Daily	50.12%	41.90%	27.28%	20.14%

WCS leads peers across all school leadership positions on daily rate, with the lead widest at High School Assistant Principal (over 57 percent). End-of-scale lead remains positive but narrowed. This positions school leaders well from a recruitment standpoint but reinforces the promotion compression observed in Finding 2 (promotion compression in leadership path).

Central Office Leadership

Peer schedule comparison; WCS flat annual salary compared to peer annual salary ranges; sorted by leadership tier

Position	Peers	WCS Annual	Peer Range (Annual)	Peer Avg Midpoint	WCS vs Midpoint	Vs Peer Max
Director - Food Service	5	\$137,024	\$58,533 - \$155,123	\$99,718	+37.4%	Above 4 of 5
Director - Transportation	5	\$137,024	\$49,759 - \$155,123	\$101,466	+ 35.0%	Above 3 of 5
Director - Maintenance	5	\$137,024	\$46,826 - \$155,123	\$103,459	+32.4%	Above 3 of 5
Exec Director - IT	6	\$155,566	\$64,386 - \$155,123	\$111,688	+39.3%	Above all 6
Exec Director - Student Support	5	\$155,566	\$87,389 - \$161,472	\$128,743	+20.8%	Above 4 of 5
Asst Superintendent - Elem/Sec	4	\$177,890	\$98,575 - \$171,163	\$137,516	+29.4%	Above all 4
Asst Superintendent - Finance	4	\$177,890	\$93,923 - \$171,550	\$134,004	+32.8%	Above all 4

Across all seven central office and operational leadership roles, WCS pays a single flat salary rather than a step range. On an annual basis WCS sits 21 to 39 percent above the peer average midpoint in every role and exceeds the maximum of most peers. For both Assistant Superintendent roles and the Executive Director of Information Technology, WCS exceeds every peer maximum. This reflects a deliberate flat-salary structure for senior leadership rather than positioning within a market range.

Peer range spans the lowest peer minimum to the highest peer maximum among comparable positions identified (annual, BA or MA schedule where applicable). Peer average midpoint is the mean of each peer range midpoint. WCS values reflect flat salary. Schedules were unavailable for several peers, so peer counts vary by role.

Central Office Leadership

Market consensus comparison; WCS salary schedule shown as percent of Combined Data Market Consensus; sorted by Start % of Market ascending.

Position	Emp.	Type	WCS Annual	Market	WCS % Market	Position
Assistant Superintendent - Finance	1	Annual	\$177,890	\$203,986	87.21%	Below
Executive Director - Information Technology	1	Annual	\$155,566	\$142,681	109.03%	Within
Director - Maintenance	1	Annual	\$137,024	\$113,605	120.61%	Above

Central Office leaders are paid flat salaries with no step schedule, so comparison is framed against market consensus rather than peer averages. Where comparison data exists: Assistant Superintendent Finance is below market consensus (87 percent); Director of Maintenance is above (121 percent); Executive Director IT is within range.

Differentiated Pay Programs

Where WCS stands relative to 21 Tennessee school systems

WCS PROGRAMS IN PLACE

- Sign-on bonus: \$6,000 early signing; \$1,000 general hiring bonus
- Retention: \$600/year general HTS; \$1,200/year Special Education
- National Board Certification: \$2,500/year
- Sixth Section Supplement, Career Ladder, Extended Contract Pay
- Classified Longevity: \$50 per year of service after 5 years
- Building level leadership role: \$700 to \$3650 based on the role

PEER LANDSCAPE

- 13 of 21 school systems implemented hard-to-staff pay programs
- 20 of 21 school systems implemented instructional role stipends
- 10 of 21 school systems offer sign-on or recruitment bonuses
- Jackson-Madison County is the only school system with performance-based pay
- Sign-on bonuses range from \$2,000 (Bartlett) to \$10,000 (Arlington, Jackson-Madison Self-Contained SpEd)
- WCS is the only school system with a differentiated SpEd retention rate (double the general hard-to-staff rate)

PART 2

Recommendations

Extend Teacher Salary Schedule Architecture

WHAT WAS FOUND

- WCS Teacher schedule has 21 steps versus a peer average of 25 to 30
- Annual step increases are 0.99 to 2.0 percent except for the Step 21 jump exceeding 10 percent
- WCS leads peers only at Step 21 due to this artificial end-of-schedule increase, then falls behind as peers continue to add steps

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Extend Teacher schedule from 21 to 25 steps minimum
- Smooth annual increases to 2.0 to 2.5 percent across the schedule, eliminating the Step 21 jump
- Maintain BA, BA+, MA, MA+, EDS, and DR degree lanes
- Revise placement rules to credit external Teacher experience up to 25 years
- Validate compared to peer schedule structures (Rutherford, Knox, Metro Nashville)

Repair Leadership Promotion Progression

WHAT WAS FOUND

- Promotions pay a premium at entry, but the premium compresses with tenure and inverts for the most experienced movers
- Assistant to Principal: a 5% to 9% cut at the top of the Assistant Principal scale, inverting by Year 5. Senior High School Principal to Executive Director: a 6% to 8% cut at the top, inverting by Year 5
- With 10 of 52 Principals and 11 of 52 district leaders eligible to retire within the year, the structure discourages experienced internal candidates from advancing

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Establish a minimum promotion differential rule: no internal promotion may result in a pay cut at entry
- Reset the experience credit ceiling for leadership positions to account for administrative experience in a standard manner
- Apply revised rules prospectively to new promotions and on a defined cycle to current incumbents

Redesign/Realign Classified Schedules Extending Length and Progression

Logic

WHAT WAS FOUND

- Classified schedules deliver 5 banded pay changes across 16 years, then end
- Peer average is 26 tiers across 25 steps
- Most peer Classified employees receive a pay change in nearly every year of service; WCS is an outlier in using a banded structure over a shortened schedule
- Step/level increases for Classified schedules currently vary from grade to grade
- Within the WCS Classified schedules, some share equal rates. Of the 23 schedules with annual pay, 17 are unique. Of the 31 schedules with hourly pay, 19 are unique

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Replace banded structure with annual step progression on all Classified schedules
- Extend Classified schedules from 16 to 25 years of service minimum
- Standardize Classified salary differentials by job grade, position, and education credit
- Collapse and/or regrade positions using comparison data for guidance
- Adopt consistent step increase logic across all Classified schedules
- Migrate existing employees by mapping systematically to ensure equity

Formalize Top of Scale Pay Logic Across All Employee Groups

WHAT WAS FOUND

- Every WCS schedule ends before the average career does
- 663 ten-month Teachers and 43 Classified employees are paid above formal schedule with no defined logic beyond COLA
- The district cannot describe a defined pay path for long-tenured employees in any category; this is a \$35,000 informal pay spread above the Teacher schedule

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Define a longevity progression rule for each employee group beyond the schedule end
- Adopt 1 of 3 options: (a) formal longevity steps every 5 years, (b) percentage-based annual longevity supplement, or (c) extended schedule (preferred if Recommendations 1 and 3 are adopted) and credit full experience with new hires
- Apply consistent rule across Teachers, Classified, and Leadership groups

Targeted Adjustments for Lagging Classified Positions

WHAT WAS FOUND

- Specific Classified positions start below peer averages, while other align with the market
- A subset falls below peer averages throughout the salary range, not only at the starting rate
- These positions are operationally critical and exposed to active labor market competition

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Adjust starting pay for positions below peer and market comparisons
- Evaluate regrading or grade tier adjustments for positions where current compensation trails peer averages, prioritizing the largest competitive gaps
- Adjust correlated positions and grades together to preserve equity and avoid compression
- Apply targeted adjustments in coordination with Recommendation 3 (Classified redesign) to avoid duplicative changes
- Make additional regrade reassignments where comparison data supports them as Recommendation 3 (Classified Redesign) is completed.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Williamson County Schools

Compensation Study Board Summary

PROJECT CONTACT

Chasitie White

Principal Consultant

chasitie@theleanleap.com

256.606.4066 cell | 256.690.5145 office

PROJECT TEAM

Tresa Webre, Consultant

tresa@theleanleap.com

Miranda Summer, Senior Technician

miranda@theleanleap.com

4920 Corporate Dr., Suite B | Huntsville, AL 35805 | theleanleap.com

Methodology: Study Scope and Analysis Types

Benchmark positions were selected across functional areas and levels. Each position was analyzed using peer comparison, published market survey data, or both.

38

Benchmark positions analyzed

84.8% of all WCS employees represented

BENCHMARK POSITIONS (38 ROLES)

Certified / Professional

Curriculum Specialist, Nurse (RN), Occupational and Speech Therapists, Social Worker, Psychologist-aligned roles

School & Central Office Leadership

Assistant Principal, Principal, Assistant Superintendent, Executive and Program Directors

Classified / Support

Accountant, Bookkeeper, Bus Driver, Food Service, Maintenance trades, Mechanic, Paraprofessionals, IT and Network roles

ANALYSIS TYPES

Peer Comparison

Compared to peer-district salary schedules. Used where market matches are limited (e.g., Assistant Principal, Principal, Assistant Superintendent, Bus Driver, several paraprofessional and instructional-support roles).

Market Survey

Compared to published salary-survey consensus, geographically adjusted for Williamson County.

Peer + Market (most roles)

Both methods applied, providing the broadest competitive view for the majority of benchmark positions.

Benchmark positions represent 4,886 of 5,762 employees (84.8%) in the employee data provided.

Methodology: Peer Systems and Job Matching

Peer School System	# Students	# Schools	Grad Rate (2025)	Econ. Disadv. %
Williamson County Schools	40,992	52	97.4%	3%
Franklin Special School District	3,027	8	unavailable	10%
Hamilton County Schools	44,855	82	94.2%	32%
Knox County Schools	58,329	93	92.0%	19%
Maury County Schools	12,752	24	90.6%	24%
Metro Nashville Public Schools	78,040	159	83.6%	33%
Rutherford County Schools	51,318	54	96.8%	15%
Sumner County Schools	30,232	53	97.0%	14%
Wilson County Schools	20,410	25	97.6%	11%

Source: TDOE report cards, SY2024-25.

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JOB-MATCHING APPROACH

Data Sources

Published survey data (base salary and bonus) and actual peer salary schedules.

Weighted Matching Factors

Job content, education requirements, internal hierarchy, organization size and profile, industry, and geographic region.

Matching Principle

Positions matched on duties and relevant peers, not job title alone.

Methodology: Market Data Sources and Consensus Logic

MARKET CONSENSUS DEFINITIONS

Education Surveys Market Consensus

Published education-industry surveys, geographically adjusted for Williamson County, TN.

All Industries Surveys Market Consensus

Published surveys with no specific industry, geographically adjusted for Williamson County, TN.

Combined Market Consensus

Average of the Education and All Industries consensus values.

HOW MARKET VALUE IS DETERMINED

Mean simple average of the data points.

Median middle value (50th percentile).

Market Consensus average of mean and median; the best estimate of market value.

Competitive range within +/- 10% of the market value for the position.

PUBLISHED SURVEY SOURCES

Survey	Publisher	Year	Scope / Geography
Salary Assessor	ERI (Economic Research Institute)	2025	Education and All Industries; ZIP 37064
CompAnalyst	Salary.com Subscription Service	2025	Education and All Industries; ZIP 37064
OEWS Query System	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics	2024	All Industries; Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin MSA

Cost of Living Adjustment Methodology

How peer salaries were adjusted to reflect Williamson County purchasing power

HOW THE ADJUSTMENT IS CALCULATED

- 1. Compare housing to Williamson.** Each district's median home value and median gross rent are divided by Williamson's. Williamson is the benchmark at 1.00.
- 2. Average into one housing figure.** The home and rent ratios are averaged 50/50 into a single balanced housing measure, reflecting both buyers and renters.
- 3. Weight housing at 30 percent of the budget.** Housing is about 30 percent of a typical household budget; the rest is treated as equal across the metro. Factor = $0.70 + 0.30 \times$ (Williamson housing / peer housing).
- 4. Apply the factor to each peer salary.** This restates peer pay in Williamson purchasing power terms. A higher adjusted figure means that district's pay buys more locally.

INPUTS AND KEY CHOICES

- **Data source:** U.S. Census ACS 5 year estimates, median home value and median gross rent, county level.
- **Housing only:** regional price levels are effectively identical across the nearest peers, so housing is the one large, measurable difference.
- **Balanced 50/50:** home value and rent weighted equally to capture both ownership and rental cost.
- **30 percent weight:** reflects housing's approximate share of household spending.
- **Applied at each step:** starting, Step 10, Step 21, and ending pay, for both BA and MA lanes.

WORKED EXAMPLE (*Rutherford, starting BA*)

Rutherford housing averages about 63 percent of Williamson's, so Williamson costs about 1.6 times as much. Factor: $0.70 + 0.30 \times 1.6 =$ about 1.18. Rutherford \$49,565 x 1.18 = about \$58,482 in Williamson terms, roughly \$7,380 above WCS actual starting pay of \$51,102.

How to read it: Adjusted figures show what each peer salary is worth in Williamson purchasing power terms. Nominal salaries are retained for transparency. On this basis, most peers exceed WCS at multiple career stages.