

Gender Pay Gaps Among New Jersey Teachers and Principals

Salary guides nearly close the gap for teachers. It persists for principals, and in which districts and jobs women hold.

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Data: NJDOE certificated staff files, 2017-18 to 2023-24

Key findings

Women in New Jersey public schools earn less than men in every certificated leadership role and in teaching. For teachers the gap mostly reflects where and what they teach. For principals a gap of about 2.5–3.3% remains between women and men in the same district with the same credentials.

- **Teachers.** In 2023-24 the median full-time woman teacher earned \$79,069, against \$83,510 for men. That is 94.7 cents on the dollar, a \$4,441 difference. Comparing teachers in the same district, with the same degree, experience, job code, school level and school size, shrinks the gap to 0.6%, roughly \$520 a year.
- **Principals.** The median woman principal earned \$145,500, against \$155,567 for men (93.5 cents on the dollar, \$10,067). Within the same district, at the same school level and size and with the same degree and experience, women principals earned 3.3% less in 2023-24. That is roughly \$4,800 a year, about five times the teacher gap.
- **Assistant principals and superintendents.** Women assistant principals earn about 2% less than comparable men in the same district. Women superintendents earn about 2% less than men leading districts of the same enrollment.
- **Leadership representation.** Women hold 76% of teaching jobs but 48% of principalships, 31% of high school principalships and 37% of superintendencies.
- **Trend.** The raw gap widened from 2018 to 2024 for both teachers and school leaders. The within-district gap for principals and assistant principals grew from 2.0% to 2.6%. For teachers it stayed flat at 0.5–0.8%.

Three structural patterns drive the raw gaps:

- **District type.** Elementary-only districts are 86% women and pay 5.7% below average for the same degree and experience. High school/regional districts (59% women) and county vocational districts (53% women) pay 2.4% and 5.7% above it.
- **Principals do not mirror their staffs.** Principals are 48% women, against 80% of the teachers in their own schools, a shortfall of about 30 points at every school level.
- **Men lead the high schools.** A quarter of men principals lead high schools, against an eighth of women. Women who do lead high schools run smaller ones, in lower-paying districts and charters.

Data and methods

The analysis uses the New Jersey Department of Education certificated staff files for 2017-18 through 2023-24. These are individual-level records of every certificated employee, with salary, highest degree, years of experience, job code, and school and district assignment.

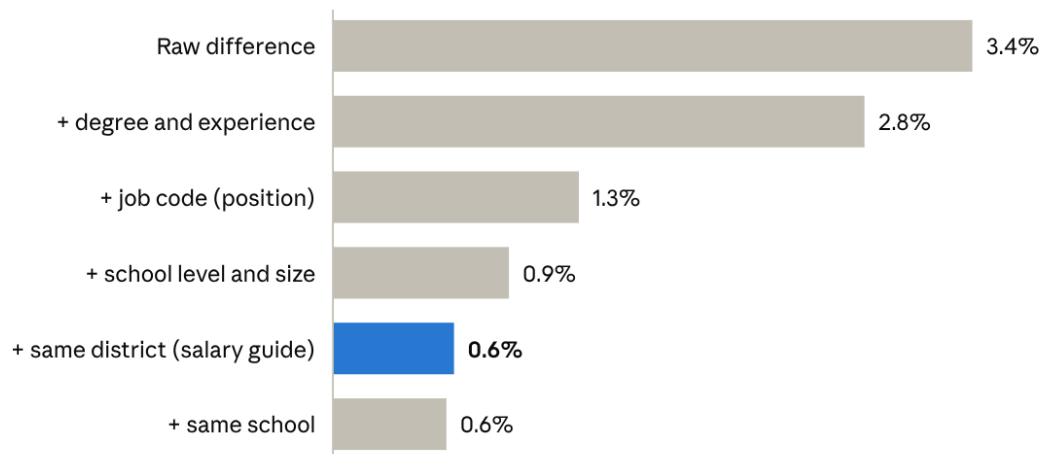
- **Sample.** Full-time staff (total FTE = 1.0) in five roles: teachers (job codes 1000–2999, excluding instructional coaches), principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and supervisors/directors. From 2021-22 on, a person can appear on several assignment rows; each person is counted once, under their largest assignment. The pooled file holds 814,236 person-years, 111,000–121,000 a year.
- **Gender.** The files do not record gender. Gender is assigned from first names using Social Security Administration birth-name counts, 1935–2017. Each name's share of female births is computed in an 11-year window around the person's estimated birth year (school year – 23 – years of experience). Names at least 95% female or 95% male are classified, which covers 90.6% of the sample. Ambiguous names such as Kelly, Dana and Jamie are set aside.
- **School context.** School enrollment and grade mix come from NJDOE fall enrollment files. Each school is labeled elementary, middle or high by its largest grade band, and placed in one of five size bands, from under 300 to 1,000 or more students. 99% of teachers and 97% of principals match to a school.
- **Models.** Log salary is regressed on a female indicator, adding controls in stages: degree and single-year experience (each by year), job code, school level and size, then district-by-year fixed effects. The last step compares men and women who work under the same district salary guide. Standard errors are clustered by district.

Teachers

Most of the \$4,441 median gap between women and men teachers comes from who teaches what, and where. Adding job code cuts the gap left after degree and experience by more than half.

The teacher pay gap falls from 3.4% to 0.6% once job and district are held constant

Women teachers' salary shortfall vs. men, %, full-time teachers, 2023-24, as controls are added



Each bar adds its controls to those above it. Log-salary regressions.

Figure 1. Source: NJDOE certificated staff file, 2023-24; 93,263 full-time teachers with name-classified gender.

Men teachers are concentrated in high schools, in larger schools, and in fields such as science, industrial arts, vocational education and social studies, and those placements pay more. In 2023-24 the median gap was \$9,519 in industrial arts, \$5,553 in vocational education and \$5,079 in science. It was near zero or reversed in English, health/PE and business. Experience and degree differences explain little, because women and men teachers have similar profiles.

The gap that remains within a district depends on the assignment:

Group (2023-24)	Within-district gap
Elementary schools	0.2%
Middle schools	0.3%
High schools	1.0%
Schools with 1,000+ students	1.0%
Teachers with 25+ years of experience	0.0–0.2%
Doctorate holders	2.0%

Part of the within-district gap comes from pay outside the salary guide. In 2022-23 and 2023-24, men teachers' supplements averaged \$1,460 against \$814 for women; 26% of men and 22% of women received one. Measured on base salary alone, the within-district gap falls from 0.71% to 0.39%. Supplements such as coaching and club stipends therefore account for roughly 45% of it. The rest is consistent with men being placed higher on the same guide than their recorded experience and degree would predict, for example through credit granted for prior or outside experience.

Principals and administrators

The principal gap is larger than the teacher gap and does not go away when principals are compared within their own district. Women principals earn 2.5% less than comparable men across 2018–2024, and 3.3% less in 2023-24.

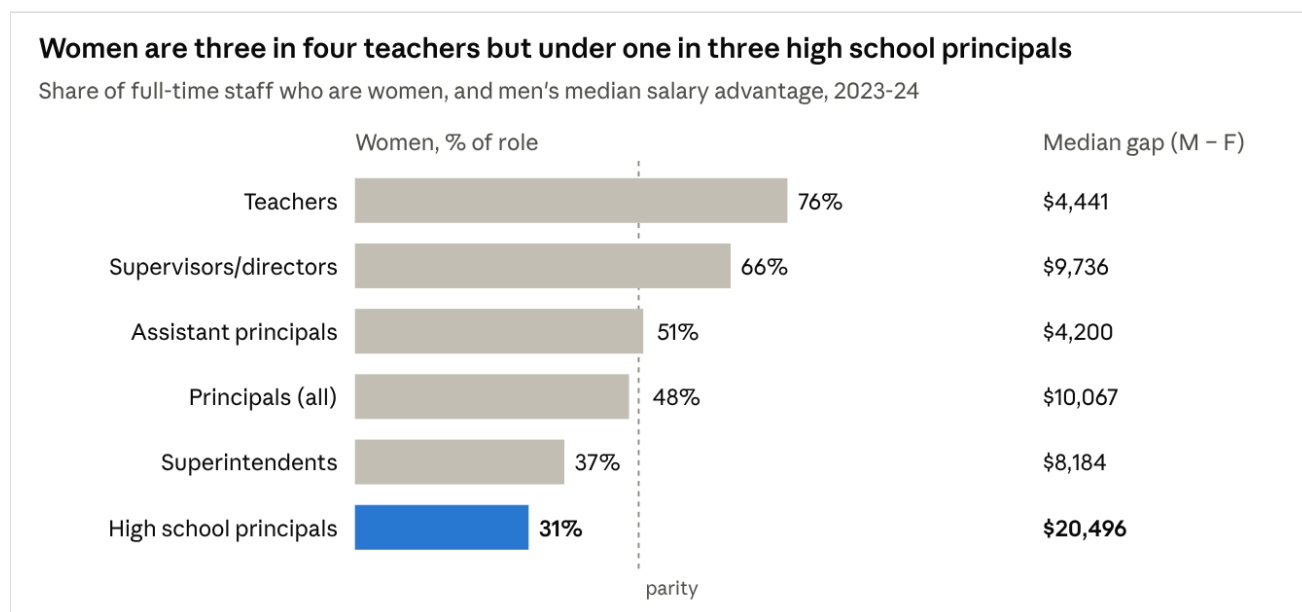


Figure 2. Source: NJDOE certificated staff file, 2023-24; full-time staff with name-classified gender.

The raw gap is widest where men are most concentrated. Among high school principals, 31% of whom are women, the median woman earned \$148,600 against \$169,096 for men, \$20,496 less. At schools of 1,000 or more students the median gap was \$23,847.

The within-district gap, however, is similar at every level and size:

Principals, 2018–2024	Within-district gap
Elementary principals	2.6%
Middle/junior high principals	2.3%
High school principals	3.0%
Fewer than 15 years' experience	2.0%
25+ years' experience	3.2%
Doctorate holders	1.3%

The within-district principal gap widens with experience, from 2.0% below 15 years to 3.2% at 25 years or more. This pattern fits pay that is negotiated person by person and compounds over a career, rather than set by a common guide.

Other administrative roles show similar gaps:

- **Assistant principals:** 2.1% within district in 2023-24, 1.9% pooled.

- **Superintendents:** 5.2% raw, and 2.0% after accounting for degree, experience and district enrollment. That estimate is less precise, with a standard error of 1.1 points.
- **Supervisors and directors:** 4.7% after degree, experience and job code.

District type: different staffs, different pay scales

New Jersey's district structure sorts women and men teachers onto different salary guides. Elementary-only districts are 86% women and pay about 6% below the state average for the same degree and experience. High school/regional districts and county vocational districts are 53–59% women and pay 2–6% above it.

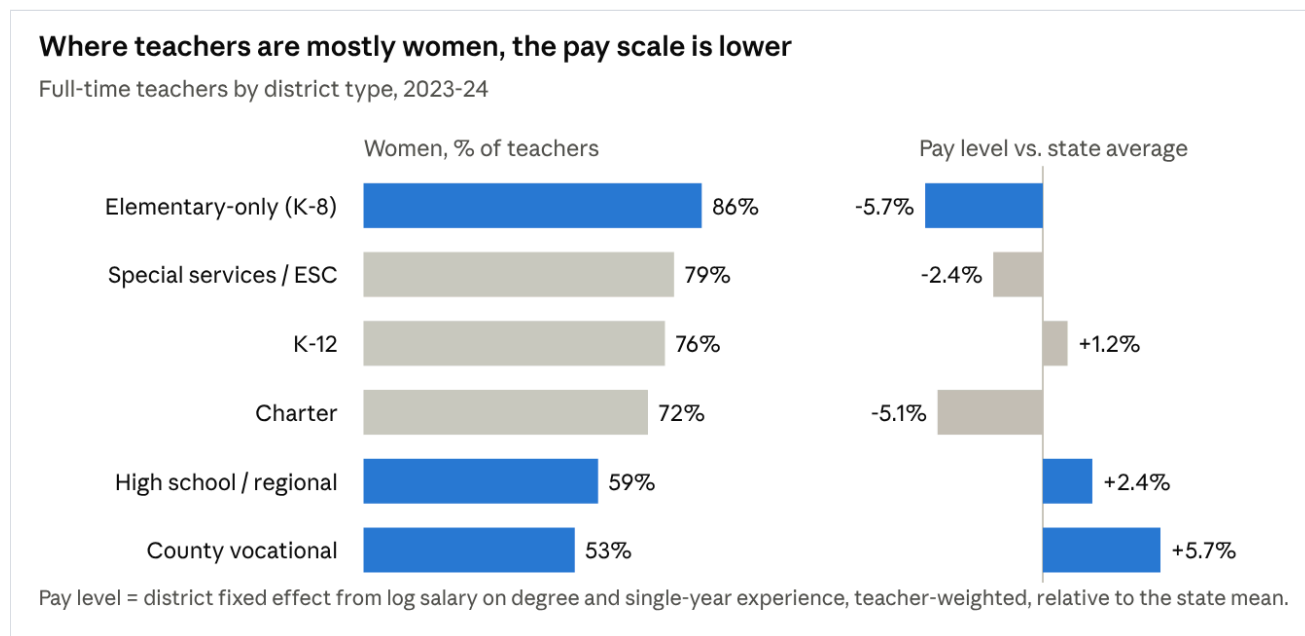


Figure 3. Source: NJDOE certificated staff and enrollment files, 2023-24. District type from grade enrollment and district name. Pay level = district fixed effect on log salary net of degree and single-year experience, teacher-weighted, relative to the state mean.

- **Men teachers are overrepresented in the higher-paying district types.** 8.0% of men teachers work in high school/regional districts, against 3.6% of women, and 4.9% of men work in county vocational districts, against 1.7% of women. 18.5% of women teach in elementary-only districts, against 10.0% of men.
- **The difference is in the guide, not just the job mix.** Comparing teachers with the same job code as well as the same degree and experience, elementary-only districts still pay 5.1% below average. High school/regional districts pay 0.7% above and vocational districts 2.2% above.
- **The pattern holds district by district.** Across districts with at least 20 classified teachers, each 10 points more women on the teaching staff goes with a pay level about 3.5% lower (correlation -0.35).

Taken together, district placement accounts for about 23% of the raw teacher gap in 2023-24. Half of that comes from differences between district types and half from differences between districts of the same type. The rest of the gap breaks down as follows:

Share of raw gap, 2023-24	Teachers	Principals
Experience and degree	17%	0%
School level	28%	17%
Job code	10%	—
School size	2%	5%
District type	12%	8%
District within type	11%	20%
Unexplained (same district, same job)	19%	51%

This is a Gelbach decomposition of the raw log gap (3.4% for teachers, 6.2% for principals), which assigns each component its contribution regardless of the order in which controls are added. For principals, school level is identified from the job code. For teachers, school level, job code and school size overlap heavily: together they account for 41% of the gap.

Principals compared with their own teachers

Principals are far more likely to be men than the teachers they supervise, at every school level. In 2023-24, 48% of principals were women, compared with 80% of the teachers in their schools.

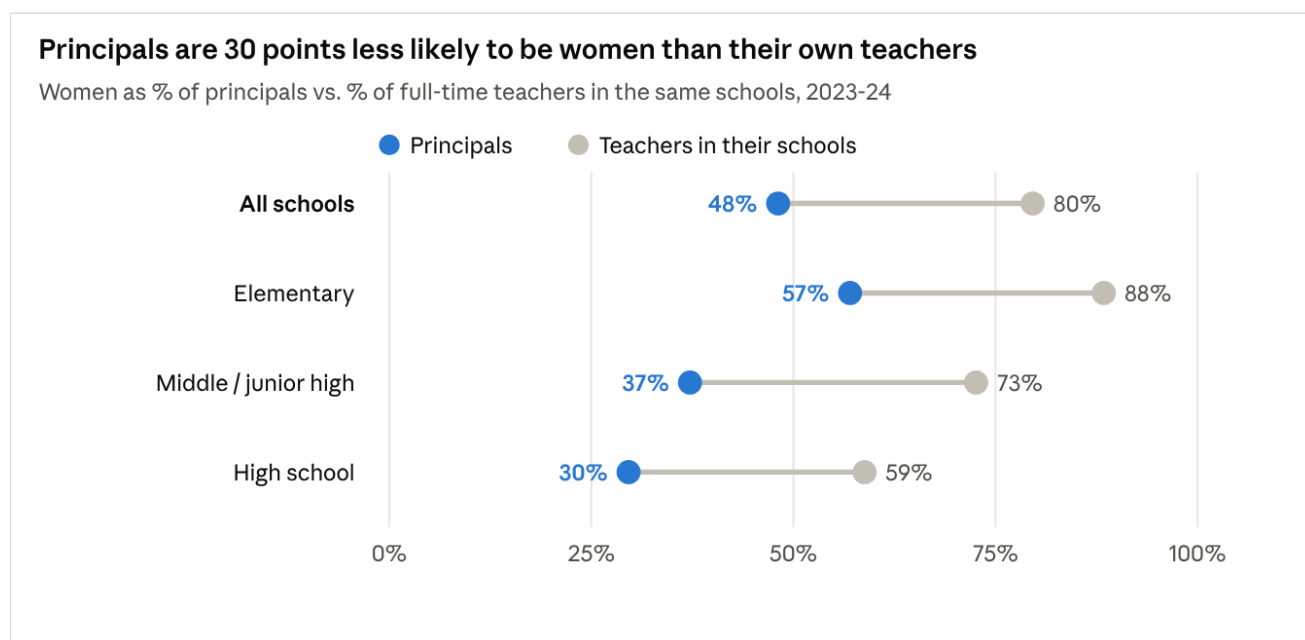


Figure 4. Source: NJDOE certificated staff files, 2023-24; 1,967 principals matched to schools with 10+ classified full-time teachers.

- **The shortfall is about 30 points at every level.** Elementary principals are 57% women against 88% of their teachers; high school principals are 30% women against 59%.
- **Even heavily female staffs are led by men at high rates.** In schools where 90% or more of teachers are women, 56% of principals were women over 2018–2024. In schools under 60% women, 29% were.

- **About 620 women are “missing.”** If each school's principal were as likely to be a woman as its teachers, about 1,565 of the 1,967 matched principals in 2023-24 would be women; 946 were.
- **Assistant principals are closer to their staffs, but still short.** They are 50% women against 70% of the teachers in their schools, a 19-point shortfall, widest in middle schools (28 points).

Who leads high schools and junior highs

Men principals are twice as likely as women to lead a high school, the best-paid principal job. Women high school principals collect little of the premium that comes with it.

Principals, 2023-24	Men	Women
Share leading elementary schools	50%	71%
Share leading middle/junior high schools	22%	14%
Share leading high schools	25%	12%
Median salary, elementary	\$152,230	\$145,481
Median salary, middle/junior high	\$152,469	\$145,235
Median salary, high school	\$169,096	\$148,600

- **Sorting by level explains a fifth of the gap.** If men principals were spread across levels like women, at men's pay for each level, their average would fall by \$1,884, about 20% of the \$9,451 difference in means. The decomposition above gives a similar 17%.
- **The high school premium goes mostly to men.** Men high school principals earn \$16,867 more at the median than men elementary principals. For women the premium is \$3,120.
- **Women high school principals lead smaller and lower-paying high schools.** Their schools' median enrollment is 735, against 1,022 for men's. 11% of women high school principals lead charter schools, against 2% of men. In regional high school districts, 7 of 50 high school principals are women.
- **Inside the same district the high school gap is 3.0% (2018–2024 pooled).** That is close to the gap at other levels. The large raw high school gap therefore comes mainly from which districts and which schools women lead, not from different pay for the same post.

Trends, 2018–2024

The raw gap grew for both groups over six years, but only school leaders saw the gap within districts grow.

The raw gap widened for everyone; the within-district gap grew only for leaders

Women's salary shortfall vs. men, %, full-time staff, 2017-18 to 2023-24

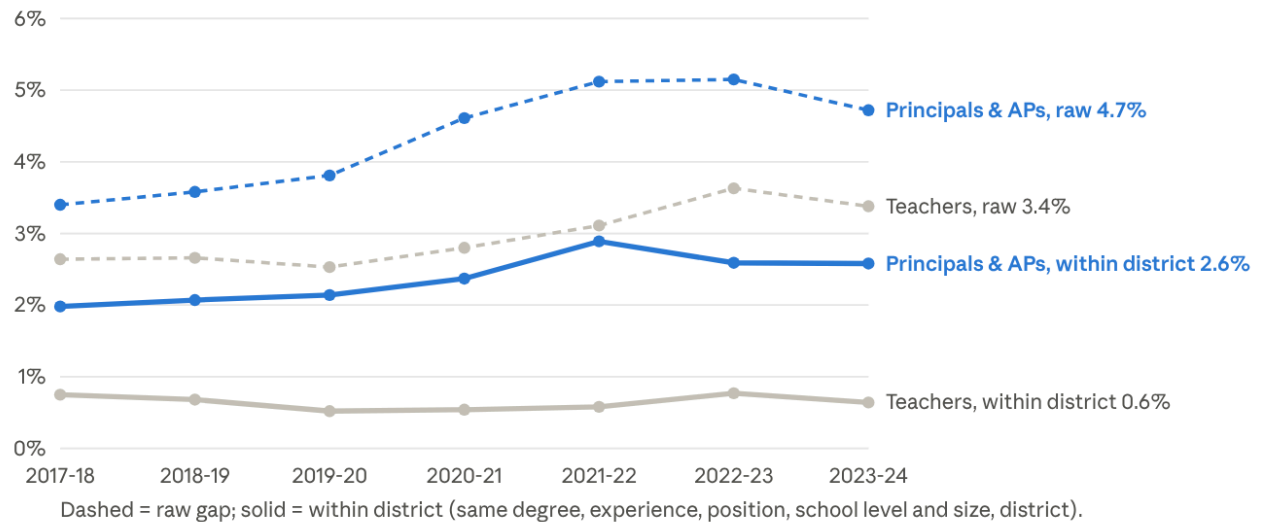


Figure 5. Source: NJDOE certificated staff files, 2017-18 to 2023-24; log-salary regressions by year.

For teachers, the widening raw gap reflects growing differences between women and men in assignments and districts. Women and men under the same district guide stayed within about 0.5–0.8% of each other every year. For principals and assistant principals, the within-district gap rose from 2.0% in 2017-18 to a peak of 2.9% in 2021-22. It settled at 2.6% in 2023-24.

Robustness and limitations

The estimates barely move when gender is classified differently:

Within-district gap, 2018–2024	Teachers	Principals
Names ≥95% one gender (main)	0.64%	2.53%
Names ≥90% one gender	0.64%	2.54%
Names ≥99% one gender	0.68%	2.43%
All names, probability of female	0.64%	2.56%

Limitations:

- **Gender is inferred, not recorded.** Name-based classification misassigns some people, and staff with ambiguous or uncommon names are excluded from the main estimates. Random misclassification would bias gaps toward zero, so the true gaps may be slightly larger.
- **Experience is as reported.** The experience field is total prior experience as districts report it. Credited service on a salary guide can differ, for example for military service or outside work.
- **Salary is contracted pay.** Supplements appear in salary but are separated only in 2022-23 and 2023-24. Summer pay and extra-duty pay outside the contract are not observed.

- **No persistent person ID.** The yearly files cannot be linked person to person without fuzzy matching on names, so the pooled models treat each year as a cross-section.
- **Unobserved factors.** Principal estimates do not capture prior administrative tenure, school climate or district bargaining. They describe pay differences that persist after the observable factors are accounted for; they do not prove discrimination.

Policy implications

The pattern points to a simple lesson: where pay follows a published guide, the gap nearly disappears; where it is negotiated individually, it persists.

1. **Bring administrator pay onto transparent guides.** Teacher guides hold the within-district gap under 1%. Principal and assistant principal contracts, which are often set individually, leave 2–3%. Districts could publish administrator salary guides, or at least the criteria for placement on them.
2. **Audit placement and supplements.** Districts should check how prior-experience credit and step placement are applied to new hires by gender. They should also review how stipend positions such as coaching, department chairs and club advisors are assigned and paid. Supplements account for roughly 45% of the remaining teacher gap.
3. **Enforce pay transparency in school leadership hiring.** New Jersey's pay transparency law (S2310, effective June 1, 2025) requires a salary or range in postings for new jobs and for internal transfer and promotion opportunities. The 2024-25 and later staff files can test whether the principal gap narrows once ranges are posted.
4. **Publish the gender data the state already collects.** NJDOE's NJSLEDS staff submission requires each staff member's sex, but the public certificated staff file omits it. Releasing it, with a stable de-identified person ID, would allow exact rather than name-inferred monitoring.
5. **Widen the leadership pipeline.** Women are 76% of teachers but 31% of high school principals and 37% of superintendents. The largest dollar gaps sit in the jobs where women are scarcest.

Sources

- New Jersey Department of Education, certificated staff files, 2017-18 to 2023-24, and fall enrollment files.
- Social Security Administration national baby names, 1880–2017, via the babynames R package (github.com/hadley/babynames).
- Polsinelli, “Effective June 2025: New Jersey Pay Transparency Requirements” (polsinelli.com).
- NJDOE, NJSLEDS Staff Management Submission Data Handbook (nj.gov/education/sleds).