

ERS Survey: 2008–09 Salaries of School Business Officials

By Chris Licciardi and Nancy Protheroe



How much were school business officials being paid during the 2008–09 school year? How do their salaries compare with those of other administrators, with those of classroom teachers, and with increases in the cost of living? In this article, we provide school business officials with information to address these and related questions.

The data come from the National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools, conducted annually by Educational Research Service (ERS). Each year since 1973, school districts throughout the United States have reported salary and wage data to ERS for 33 professional and support positions. Reporting school districts for the 2008–09 school year form a stratified

sample of school districts selected by ERS to represent school districts of various sizes across the United States.

This information serves as a national database for school management and policy decisions concerning staff compensation. For example, the data can be used to compare compensation in a local school district with that of other districts. In addition, trend data provide comparisons of changes in salaries over time with changes in the consumer price index.

Current Salary Comparisons: School Business Officials

The ERS National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools reports the annual salaries of chief business officials in one of two categories, depending on their title. The salaries of chief business officials with the title “assistant superintendent” are included in a single classification, along with assistant superintendents having other responsibilities. The salaries of chief business officials with titles other than assistant superintendent (e.g., director, administrator, or coordinator) are included in the classification “director of finance and business.” This reporting procedure is used to allow for the differences in salary level sometimes present in these two categories.

The survey reports \$119,755 as the mean of the average salaries of assistant superintendents and \$98,590 as the mean of the average salaries of directors of finance and business in school districts reporting 2008–09 salaries for these positions. Statisticians term this type of average the “mean of the means,” but hereafter it will be referred to as simply the “average.” Table 1 shows average salaries for assistant superintendents and for directors of finance and business, plus 11 other professional positions.

The salary a school district pays its chief business official is generally related to three important variables: (a) the region of the country in which the district is located, (b) the enrollment size of the district, and (c) the per-pupil expenditure level of the district.

Geographic Region

The geographic region of a school district can make a sizable difference in salary level. For example, school districts in the Mideast (Delaware, District of Columbia,

Table 1. Average Salaries of School Personnel in Selected Professional Positions, 2008-09

Position	Average Annual Salary
Superintendents (contract salary)	\$155,634
Assistant superintendents ^a	119,755
Directors of instructional services	102,322
Directors of finance and business	98,590
Directors of staff personnel	100,620
Subject-area supervisors	80,290
Principals:	
Elementary school	88,062
Junior high/middle school	93,478
High school	99,365
Assistant principals:	
Elementary school	71,893
Junior high/middle school	77,476
High school	81,083
Classroom teachers	52,900

^aIncludes chief business officials with title “assistant superintendent.”

Table 2. Average Salaries Paid Assistant Superintendents by Geographic Region, 2008-09

Region ^{a,b}	Amount	Comparison of National Average
New England	\$112,851	-5.8%
Mideast	134,048	11.9
Southeast	111,193	-8.1
Great Lakes	118,051	-1.4
Plains	118,186	-1.3
Southwest	110,803	-7.5
Rocky Mountains	115,101	-3.9
Far West	130,806	-9.2
Average all regions	\$119,755	

^aStates included in geographic region: **New England** (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont); **Mideast** (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania); **Southeast** (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia); **Great Lakes** (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin); **Plains** (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota); **Southwest** (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas); **Rocky Mountains** (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming); **Far West** (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Washington).

^bData categorized by geographic region may be subject to considerable sampling and response variation and should be used only as general indicators of the current relationships among the categories. These data are not appropriate for year-to-year trends.

Table 3. Average Salaries Paid Directors of Finance and Business by Geographic Region, 2008-09

Region ^{a,b}	Amount	Comparison of National Average
New England	\$97,488	-1.1%
Mideast	109,494	11.1
Southeast	93,817	-4.8
Great Lakes	95,487	-3.1
Plains	95,803	-2.8
Southwest	93,958	-4.7
Rocky Mountains	92,422	-6.3
Far West	106,677	8.2
Average all regions	\$98,590	

^aStates included in geographic region: **New England** (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont); **Mideast** (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania); **Southeast** (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia); **Great Lakes** (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin); **Plains** (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota); **Southwest** (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas); **Rocky Mountains** (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming); **Far West** (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Washington).

^bData categorized by geographic region may be subject to considerable sampling and response variation and should be used only as general indicators of the current relationships among the categories. These data are not appropriate for year-to-year trends.

Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania) pay assistant superintendents an average salary of \$134,048, 11.9% more than the \$119,755 average for all reporting districts. In contrast, reporting districts in the Southwest (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas) pay assistant superintendents a salary of \$110,803, 7.5% less than the average of all reporting districts.

Moving on to salaries paid directors of finance and business, we find an average salary of \$109,494 for school districts in the Mideast, which is 11.1% more than the \$98,590 average paid by all districts reporting throughout the United States. School districts in the Rocky Mountains (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming), on the other hand, paid their directors of finance and business an average of \$92,422, which is 6.3% less than the average of all reporting systems. These comparisons are shown for the eight geographic regions in Tables 2 and 3.

Enrollment Size

The enrollment of a district can also make a difference in salaries paid school business officials, with larger districts—on average—paying higher salaries. For example, the average salary for assistant superintendents in all reporting school districts (\$119,755) would rank

fairly low among salaries paid by districts enrolling 25,000 or more pupils (between the 25th and 30th percentiles). The same national average salary ranks much higher—between the 75th and 80th percentiles—for reporting districts enrolling 300 to 2,499 pupils (see Table 4). A similar pattern is present for the average salary paid directors of finance and business. The average salary for all reporting districts for that position is \$98,590, which falls between the 25th and 30th percentiles for districts enrolling 25,000 or more pupils and between the 80th and 90th percentiles for districts with enrollments of 300 to 2,499 pupils (see Table 5).

Per-Pupil Spending

Table 6 provides a view of salaries from the perspective of a school district's per-pupil expenditure level. Turning again to the \$119,755 average salary paid to assistant superintendents, we find it ranks between the 40th and 50th percentiles in districts spending \$11,000 or more per pupil and, in comparison, between the 60th and 70th percentiles for responding school districts spending less than \$8,000 per pupil. This relationship between per-pupil expenditure and salary is even less strong for salaries paid directors of finance and business. For example, the \$98,590 national average salary for directors of finance and business ranks between the 40th and 50th percentiles among districts spending more than \$11,000 per pupil and between the 50th and 60th percentiles for districts spending less than \$8,000 (see Table 7).

Comparing Salaries across Districts

Taken together, tables 4–7 can be used to compare salaries paid by your school district with those of similar districts by using the following procedure:

- Use the salary of the assistant superintendent for business or the director of finance and business in your district for the 2008–09 school year.
- Identify the appropriate enrollment and per-pupil expenditure categories for your district. (Please note that, in calculating pupil enrollment, ERS requests that school districts count half-day kindergarten students as half pupils. Per-pupil expenditures are calculated by dividing the general operating budget by pupil enrollment.)
- Locate the appropriate enrollment group in table 4 or 5 and find the percentile ranking for your district's salary amount.
- Locate the appropriate per-pupil expenditure level in table 6 or 7 and find the percentile ranking for your district's salary amount.

Trends and Comparisons with Teacher Salaries

The ERS salary data also enable you to view salaries over time—perhaps comparing trends in salary increases for the two business official positions with changes in the consumer price index or with salaries of other school district employee groups.

During the past five-year period (2003–04 to 2008–09), the average salary paid assistant superintendents increased 18.8% and directors of finance and

Table 4. Percentile Distribution of Average Salaries Paid Assistant Superintendents by Enrollment Group, 2008–09

Salary Distribution	Enrollment Group				
	All Reporting Systems	25,000 or More	10,000–24,999	2,500–9,999	300–2,499
95th percentile	\$161,625	\$160,365	\$165,285	\$158,954	\$140,414
90th percentile	148,225	151,280	150,519	145,320	133,500
80th percentile	136,516	144,654	140,962	131,040	121,292
75th percentile	133,542	142,467	136,516	126,698	119,500
70th percentile	130,595	139,770	133,856	123,453	114,646
60th percentile	123,462	134,743	129,326	116,433	107,250
50th percentile	117,000	132,010	123,091	112,883	101,824
40th percentile	112,079	125,000	117,000	109,372	94,577
30th percentile	107,946	120,476	110,546	106,374	90,250
25th percentile	105,255	116,141	109,075	104,193	85,655
20th percentile	102,415	114,000	107,544	100,200	85,000
10th percentile	92,651	105,182	100,456	92,446	78,885
5th percentile	86,000	99,809	93,405	87,598	75,684
Number providing data	514	96	137	220	61
Average	\$119,755	\$129,987	\$124,940	\$116,386	\$104,159
Low	50,000	84,034	82,422	76,965	50,000
High	199,737	180,248	185,445	199,737	182,000

Table 5. Percentile Distribution of Average Salaries Paid Directors of Finance and Business by Enrollment Group, 2008-09

Salary Distribution	Enrollment Group				
	All Reporting Systems	25,000 or More	10,000-24,999	2,500-9,999	300-2,499
95th percentile	\$146,623	\$181,709	\$137,102	\$135,181	\$115,000
90th percentile	131,333	168,346	131,325	124,080	105,815
80th percentile	118,392	140,622	123,874	112,241	96,000
75th percentile	113,235	136,555	118,602	109,076	90,742
70th percentile	110,052	131,565	114,232	106,296	88,645
60th percentile	104,000	123,504	110,618	100,105	81,932
50th percentile	97,365	118,457	106,706	93,709	74,758
40th percentile	90,759	112,587	102,316	90,723	70,040
30th percentile	85,000	104,076	98,000	86,000	65,000
25th percentile	81,216	93,989	95,510	84,110	62,852
20th percentile	75,750	91,360	91,250	81,150	57,450
10th percentile	65,319	82,506	80,057	71,500	49,472
5th percentile	56,969	78,509	70,585	64,675	45,840
Number providing data	684	104	159	269	152
Average	\$98,590	\$120,703	\$106,366	\$97,203	\$77,778
Low	41,000	67,270	53,875	48,032	41,000
High	221,988	221,988	158,379	180,000	157,304

Table 6. Percentile Distribution of Average Salaries Paid Assistant Superintendents by Per-Pupil Expenditure Level, 2008-09

Salary Distribution	Per-Pupil Expenditure Level ^a					
	All Reporting Systems	\$10,000 or More	\$9,000-\$9,999	\$8,000-\$8,999	\$7,000-\$7,999	Less than \$7,000
95th percentile	\$161,625	\$165,426	\$155,291	\$146,336	\$162,806	\$148,000
90th percentile	148,225	157,621	146,646	135,946	145,569	140,000
80th percentile	136,516	146,564	138,360	130,242	135,181	131,687
75th percentile	133,542	140,414	135,225	127,525	132,967	128,915
70th percentile	130,595	135,879	131,066	124,540	131,366	123,000
60th percentile	123,462	130,000	125,829	115,054	122,926	116,256
50th percentile	117,000	123,137	118,006	110,821	117,000	111,250
40th percentile	112,079	118,375	111,878	107,004	110,475	105,707
30th percentile	107,946	114,000	109,324	102,601	109,075	101,602
25th percentile	105,255	110,000	107,664	97,391	106,737	98,982
20th percentile	102,415	108,101	103,965	92,573	105,182	96,214
10th percentile	92,651	100,464	94,627	86,000	98,232	90,525
5th percentile	86,000	93,231	89,116	78,959	90,542	82,422
Number providing data	514	174	60	85	91	104
Average	\$119,755	\$126,383	\$119,855	\$111,811	\$121,031	\$113,985
Low	50,000	77,316	50,000	65,859	85,000	75,001
High	199,737	199,737	168,420	163,368	185,445	170,890

^aData categorized by per-pupil expenditure level may be subject to considerable sampling and response variation and should be used only as general indicators of the current relationships among the categories. These data are not appropriate for year-to-year trends.

business increased 19.8%, slightly higher than the 17.0% increase in the consumer price index over the same period. Thus, average salaries paid to these two

categories of personnel gained slightly in purchasing power. Figure 1a depicts the year-to-year variations for the two salary categories and the consumer price index.

Table 7. Percentile Distribution of Average Salaries Paid Directors of Finance and Business by Per-Pupil Expenditure Level, 2008–09

Salary Distribution	Per-Pupil Expenditure Level ^a					
	All Reporting Systems	\$10,000 or More	\$9,000–\$9,999	\$8,000–\$8,999	\$7,000–\$7,999	Less than \$7,000
95th percentile	\$145,500	\$155,000	\$128,662	\$135,479	\$122,521	\$146,972
95th percentile	\$146,623	\$155,177	\$145,362	\$131,685	\$135,181	\$131,500
90th percentile	131,333	143,886	135,592	127,300	130,611	125,808
80th percentile	118,392	122,200	121,321	116,397	115,151	112,758
75th percentile	113,235	117,006	116,142	112,447	112,031	107,614
70th percentile	110,052	112,241	113,747	109,492	106,258	105,865
60th percentile	104,000	107,449	105,815	102,672	100,068	100,000
50th percentile	97,365	100,980	95,772	98,753	92,809	94,272
40th percentile	90,759	92,166	91,370	89,799	89,250	87,236
30th percentile	85,000	85,517	86,340	80,997	86,108	80,896
25th percentile	81,216	83,200	82,285	77,962	82,989	77,659
20th percentile	75,750	78,278	80,558	72,858	78,000	73,584
10th percentile	65,319	66,150	70,766	59,000	66,000	64,255
5th percentile	56,969	56,925	65,150	50,441	60,905	57,450
Number providing data	684	236	89	118	112	129
Average	\$98,590	\$101,987	\$101,643	\$95,388	\$97,614	\$94,044
Low	41,000	41,000	43,505	42,000	46,389	45,000
High	221,988	190,918	221,988	178,214	204,456	151,627

^aData categorized by per-pupil expenditure level may be subject to considerable sampling and response variation and should be used only as general indicators of the current relationships among the categories. These data are not appropriate for year-to-year trends.

Similar comparisons are made in Figures 1b and 1c. In figure 1b, the year-to-year trends for average salaries of assistant superintendents and directors of finance and business are compared with average percentage increases for all central-office administrators. The five-year percentage increase for this aggregate of employees is 19.3%, compared with the 18.8% and 19.8% increases for the two business-related positions. For all school employees (see figure 1c), the percentage increase over five years is 17.2%.

Important benchmarks for reviewing both current salaries paid by school districts and salary trends are data on teacher salaries. Using data from the 2008–09 school year found in table 1, we can compare the average salary paid teachers with those paid assistant superintendents and directors of finance and business. The average salary for assistant superintendents (\$119,755) is 126.4% of the average teacher salary (\$52,900), whereas the average paid directors of finance and business (\$98,590) is 86.4% above this benchmark. The gap between teacher salaries and those for the two business-related positions narrows when maximum scheduled salaries are used as the basis for comparison. For example, the average maximum scheduled salary for assistant superintendents (\$127,620) is 78.7% higher

than that reported for teachers (\$71,409), whereas the figure for directors of business and finance (\$109,403) is 53.2% higher than that reported for teachers (see Tables 8 and 9).

However, these comparisons do not take into account the differences in the number of days worked by people in the three employee categories (average of 239 days per contract years reported for assistant superintendents; 241 days for directors of finance and business; and 188 days for teachers). Using the data in Tables 10 and 11, we see that the differences between teacher salaries and those of the other two positions narrow. The average daily rate paid assistant superintendents is 78.6% higher than teachers (average daily rate of \$504.18 and \$282.29, respectively) and that paid directors of finance and business averages 45.7% above that paid teachers (\$411.38 and \$282.29, respectively).

Finally, we can analyze trends in salaries paid people in the two positions, using teacher salaries as a benchmark and asking whether increases in their salaries have kept pace with increases in teacher salaries. Figure 1d depicts the relationship among annual increases in average salaries paid for the three positions. Although there was one year when the average percentage change in teacher salaries was significantly greater than that

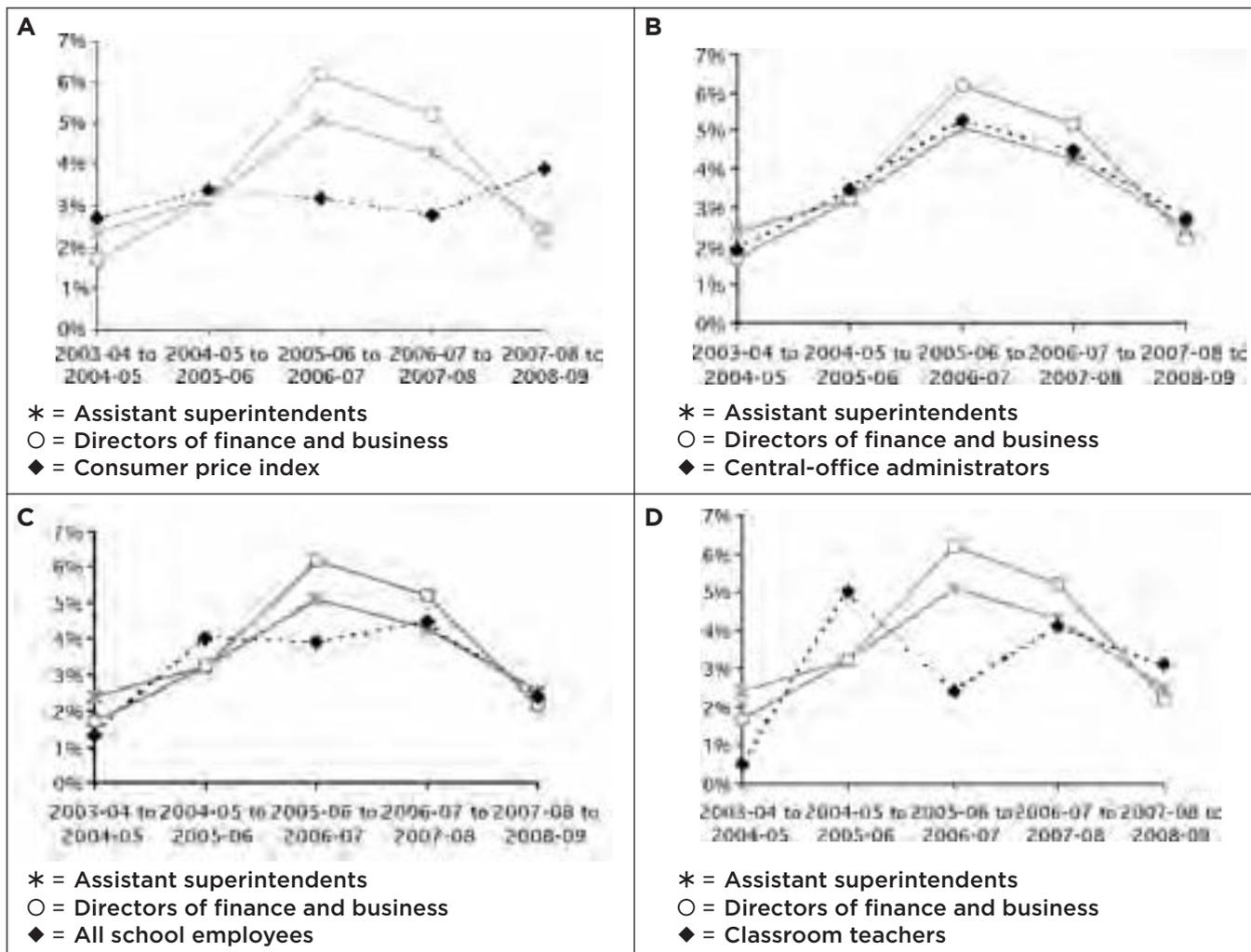


Figure 1. Trends in increases in average salaries of assistant superintendents and directors of finance and business compared with (a) consumer price index, (b) central-office administrators, (c) all school employees, and (d) classroom teachers, 2003-04 to 2008-09.

Table 8. Average Maximum Scheduled Salaries of Assistant Superintendents and Classroom Teachers, 2003-04 to 2008-09

Year	Assistant Superintendents	Classroom Teachers	Percentage above Teachers' Salaries
2003-04	\$104,032	\$60,943	70.7
2004-05	106,972	61,203	74.8
2005-06	112,854	64,283	75.6
2006-07	118,348	66,510	77.9
2007-08	123,555	69,512	77.7
2008-09	127,620	71,409	78.7
Percentage increase 2003-04 to 2008-09	22.7	17.2	

for the other two positions, most were years when the percentage change for teacher salaries was about the same or smaller. Thus, over the five-year period from 2003-04 to 2008-09, the salaries for business officials more than kept pace (15.9% increase for teachers,

18.8% for assistant superintendents, and 19.8% for directors of finance and business).

Tables 8 and 9 provide data on similar trends—one that looks at average maximum scheduled salaries for each of six years and also over the period as a whole.

Table 9. Average Maximum Scheduled Salaries of Directors of Finance and Business and Classroom Teachers, 2003-04 to 2008-09

Year	Directors of Finance & Business	Classroom Teachers	Percentage above Teachers' Salaries
2003-04	\$88,242	\$60,943	44.8
2004-05	91,644	61,203	49.7
2005-06	96,224	64,283	49.7
2006-07	101,371	66,510	52.4
2007-08	106,736	69,512	53.6
2008-09	109,403	71,409	53.2
Percentage increase 2003-04 to 2008-09	24.0	17.2	

Table 10. Average Daily Rates Paid Assistant Superintendents and Classroom Teachers, 2008-09

Enrollment Group	Assistant Superintendents	Classroom Teachers	Percentage above Teachers' Salaries
25,000 or more	\$545.87	\$281.39	94.0
10,000 to 24,999	528.55	286.23	84.7
2,500 to 9,999	488.97	292.66	67.1
300 to 2,499	437.57	267.17	63.8
All systems	\$504.18	\$282.29	78.6

Table 11. Average Daily Rates Paid Directors of Finance and Business and Classroom Teachers, 2008-09

Enrollment Group	Directors of Finance and Business	Classroom Teachers	Percentage above Teachers' Salaries
25,000 or more	\$499.38	\$281.39	77.5
10,000 to 24,999	444.77	286.23	55.4
2,500 to 9,999	406.20	292.66	38.8
300 to 2,499	324.28	267.17	21.4
All systems	\$411.38	\$282.29	45.7

Between 2003-04 and 2008-09, the cumulative increase in the average of maximum scheduled salaries for each of the two positions was higher than that of teachers (17.2% for teachers; 22.7% for assistant superintendents; and 24.0% for directors of finance and business).

References

The data contained in this article were excerpted from the ERS publication *Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2008-09*. Readers interested in information about the data or how they were computed are referred to this publication, which can be purchased from ERS. To order, contact ERS, 1001 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Phone: 800-791-9308; fax: 800-791-9309; e-mail: ers@ers.org; Web site: www.ers.org.

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