

FAST FACTS

Recent Statistics from The Library Research Service

ED3/110.10/No. 126

August 1, 1997

THE STATUS OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTERS IN COLORADO, NEIGHBORING STATES, AND THE UNITED STATES 1993-94

The youngest of the national statistical surveys on libraries is the one for school library media centers. The first installment of this survey, which is scheduled for every five years, was conducted during the 1993-94 school year. Some preliminary results have just been published in **SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results**. Though certainly dated, these results provide some important insights into the status of school library media centers in Colorado. To give those results context, they are also compared here with the results for neighboring states as well as the nation.

Highlights

- *Elementary schools more likely to lack library media specialists.*
- *Poorer Colorado schools more likely to have understaffed LMCs, particularly to lack library media specialists.*
- *Smallest Colorado schools more likely to have understaffed LMCs.*
- *Colorado teachers indicate higher awareness of library media specialist's role in instructional process.*



Presence of a Library Media Center

During the 1993-94 school year, nine out of 10 public schools reported having a library media center. The proportion of Colorado public schools that reported having an LMC was even higher (95 percent). (See Table 1.)

Keith Curry Lance ■ Director ■ Library Research Service
State Library & Adult Education Office ■ Colorado Department of Education
Library & Information Services Department ■ University College ■ University of Denver
201 East Colfax Avenue, Suite 309 ■ Denver, Colorado 80203-1799
Voice 303.866.6737 ■ Fax 303.866.6940 ■ E-mail <lance_k@cde.state.co.us>

Table 1. Percentage of Public Schools with Fewer than 300 Students with Library Media Centers, United States, Colorado, and Neighboring States, 1993-94

State	Percentage
Nebraska	98.2%
Colorado	94.9%
Kansas	94.7%
Wyoming	94.6%
Arizona	93.6%
United States	88.9%
New Mexico	86.3%
Utah	79.6%

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997

Presence of a Full- or Part-Time Library Media Specialist

While only five percent of Colorado public schools reported not having LMCs, almost 13 percent—nearly three times as many schools—reported that they did not have full- or part-time library media specialists. Elementary schools were more likely not to have professionally trained staff than secondary



schools. Staffing levels were even worse in some neighboring states—New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and Nebraska—where a quarter or more of schools did not have library media specialists. These states fell significantly below the national norms. The absence of professionally trained staff was especially acute in these states among elementary schools. (See Table 2.)

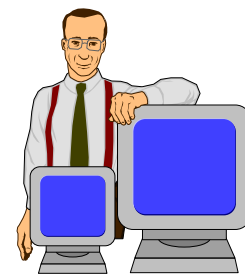


Table 2. Percentage of Public School Library Media Centers Without Full- or Part-Time Library Media Specialists by School Level, United States, Colorado, and Neighboring States, 1993-94

State	All Schools	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools
Kansas	2.7%	2.9%	2.3%
Colorado	12.5%	13.6%	9.7%
United States	13.5%	15.5%	6.3%
Arizona	13.8%	17.1%	4.0%
New Mexico	23.5%	30.5%	3.3%
Utah	25.4%	28.2%	13.3%
Wyoming	26.7%	33.2%	12.4%
Nebraska	28.8%	40.3%	3.2%

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997

Generally, schools with smaller enrollments were also likely to report having LMCs without full- or part-time library media specialists. Colorado, however, is an exception. More than 10 percent of Colorado’s smallest public schools, those with enrollments of less than 300, reported an absence of professionally trained staff; but, this percentage was less than half the national norm and a fraction of the percentages reported by some neighboring states (New Mexico, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Utah). Curiously, too, almost 10 percent of Colorado’s largest public schools, those with enrollments of 600 or more, also reported an absence of professionally trained staff. The only state with a worse percentage was Utah at over 14 percent. (See Table 3.)

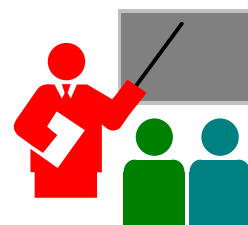


Table 3. Percentage of Public School Library Media Centers Without Full- or Part-Time Library Media Specialists by Enrollment Range, United States, Colorado, and Neighboring States, 1993-94

State	Less than 300	300-599	600 or More
Kansas	3.5%	2.0%	0.0%
Colorado	11.1%	14.6%	9.4%
United States	23.1%	12.9%	6.0%
New Mexico	24.2%	34.4%	4.5%
Wyoming	30.5%	25.0%	0.0%
Nebraska	35.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Utah	47.2%	31.9%	14.1%
Arizona	-----	13.0%	6.7%

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997



Most alarming of all is the role of economic inequity in LMC staffing in Colorado. Among the states richest schools (those with fewer than 20 percent of their students eligible for free/reduced-price lunches), only seven percent report not having a library media specialist. Among the state’s poorer schools (those with up to 50 percent free/reduced-price lunch students), over 22 percent—more than three times as many—reported a lack of professionally trained staff. This level of economic inequity in access to library media specialists is not found nationwide and is unknown in neighboring states. (See Table 4.)

Table 4. Percentage of Public School Library Media Centers Without Full- or Part-Time Library Media Specialists by Percentage of Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Recipients, United States, Colorado, and Neighboring States, 1993-94

State	Less than 20%	20-49%	50% or More
Kansas	0.0%	2.7%	-----
Colorado	7.2%	22.2%	-----
United States	11.7%	13.6%	15.9%
Arizona	12.8%	11.9%	16.8%
New Mexico	16.7%	19.3%	28.2%
Wyoming	23.1%	28.9%	-----
Utah	27.4%	18.6%	41.3%
Nebraska	48.9%	7.9%	-----

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997

AASL and AECT Recommended Staffing Levels



The American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology recommend that every school library media center be staffed with a minimum of one full-time library media specialist and one full-time library media aide. Nationally, over a quarter of public school LMCs fail to meet this recommendation. In Colorado, one out of six LMCs fail to meet these staffing levels. In some neighboring states (Utah, Wyoming, Kansas, Nebraska), the proportion of LMCs that fail to meet such levels runs from one third to half. Nationally and across Colorado and neighboring states, elementary schools are more likely to fail these recommendations than secondary schools. (See Table 5.)

Table 5. Percentage of Public School Library Media Centers That Do Not Meet AASL and AECT Recommended Staffing Levels by School Level, United States, Colorado, and Neighboring States, 1993-94

State	All Schools	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools
Arizona	16.3%	16.6%	15.7%
Colorado	17.5%	18.5%	13.6%
New Mexico	17.7%	17.7%	18.0%
United States	27.7%	30.8%	17.3%
Utah	32.1%	36.0%	18.1%
Wyoming	43.0%	46.2%	36.0%
Kansas	43.2%	45.1%	40.4%
Nebraska	56.9%	67.7%	30.0%

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997

The size of a school's enrollment is a critical factor in determining whether or not it meets AASL/AECT recommended staffing levels for LMCs. Nationally, the smallest schools (those with enrollments of less than 300) are more than twice as likely to fail

these standards. In Colorado, they are five times more likely to do so. In Kansas and Nebraska more than two-thirds of the smallest schools fail these staffing standards, and, in Utah, nine out of ten. (See Table 6.)

Table 6. Percentage of Public School Library Media Centers That Do Not Meet AASL and AECT Recommended Staffing Levels by Enrollment Range, United States, Colorado, and Neighboring States, 1993-94

State	Less than 300	300-599	600 or More
Colorado	41.5%	8.9%	4.1%
New Mexico	43.9%	8.1%	0.0%
United States	59.0%	22.9%	7.1%
Wyoming	56.7%	20.9%	0.0%
Kansas	64.7%	16.0%	0.0%
Nebraska	68.8%	-----	0.0%
Utah	89.9%	23.8%	22.2%
Arizona	-----	19.0%	0.0%

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997

In Colorado, the level of poverty in the community served by a school is also a major factor in determining whether or not it meets AASL/AECT staffing recommendations. Poorer Colorado schools (those with 20 to 49 percent free/reduced-price lunch students) are almost twice as likely to report not meeting staffing recommendations. Nationally, the differences between richer and poorer schools are miniscule, and, in some other states, poorer schools are more rather than less likely to meet these staffing standards. (See Table 7.)



Table 7. Percentage of Public School Library Media Centers That Do Not Meet AASL and AECT Recommended Staffing Levels by Percentage of Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Recipients, United States, Colorado, and Neighboring States, 1993-94

State	Less than 20%	20-49%	50% or More
New Mexico	9.8%	15.3%	21.6%
Colorado	12.9%	22.7%	-----
Arizona	13.9%	14.8%	19.8%
United States	25.7%	29.5%	28.2%
Utah	35.1%	27.6%	-----
Kansas	37.2%	44.9%	48.4%
Wyoming	49.2%	35.5%	-----
Nebraska	68.7%	42.8%	-----

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997

Teacher and Principal Awareness



Colorado ranks above the national norms for teachers' and principals' awareness of library media specialist involvement in the instructional process. Nationally and in Colorado, about one out of six principals acknowledges this involvement. Nationally, almost a quarter of teachers acknowledge the involvement of library media specialists in instruction, and, in Colorado, almost a third of teachers acknowledge it. That is the highest percentage among Colorado and its neighboring states. (See Table 8.)

Table 8. Percentage of Public School Teachers and Principals in Schools with Library Media Centers Who Report Library Media Specialist Involvement in the Instructional Process, 1993-94

State	Principals	Teachers
Wyoming	24.3%	26.2%
New Mexico	18.7%	27.6%
Kansas	18.2%	23.5%
Nebraska	17.2%	22.1%
Colorado	17.1%	31.8%
United States	15.3%	24.8%
Utah	14.6%	24.8%
Arizona	13.0%	23.0%

Source: SASS by State, 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey: Selected State Results (NCES 96-312), National Center for Education Statistics, 1997

Inequities To Be Addressed

The 1993-94 SASS data on school library media programs indicate several inequities which advocates of quality education in Colorado should seek to address:

- Elementary schools are more likely than secondary schools to lack library media specialists. Considering recent research reports about critical early learning during a child's preschool and elementary years, the presence of library media specialists at the elementary level should be at least as important as at the secondary level.
- The poorer a Colorado school is the more likely it is to have an understaffed LMC, and particularly to lack library media specialists. Poorer schools face enough disadvantages without having to suffer inadequately staffed library media programs. As demonstrated in **The Impact of School Library Media Centers on Academic Achievement** (Keith Curry Lance, Lynda Welborn, and Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Castle Rock, CO: Hi Willow, 1993), a well-staffed library media program can be one of the most powerful weapons in combating poverty in schools.
- Smallest Colorado schools more likely to have understaffed LMCs. These schools are often envied for their teacher-pupil ratios, but they are more likely to have inadequately staffed library media programs. This deficiency is further aggravated for the likelihood that such schools are located in outlying, even isolated, areas, where alternative learning resources are also less available.