

FAST FACTS

Recent Statistics from the
Library Research Service

The Status of Library Media Center Staffing and Its Effect on Student Achievement

The study **How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards** found that school library media centers are instrumental in students' academic achievement, including getting higher CSAP scores. In addition to the library media center's collection and funding, key factors impacting student performance include adequate staffing of library media centers and the professional role of the endorsed library media specialist as an educator and leader.

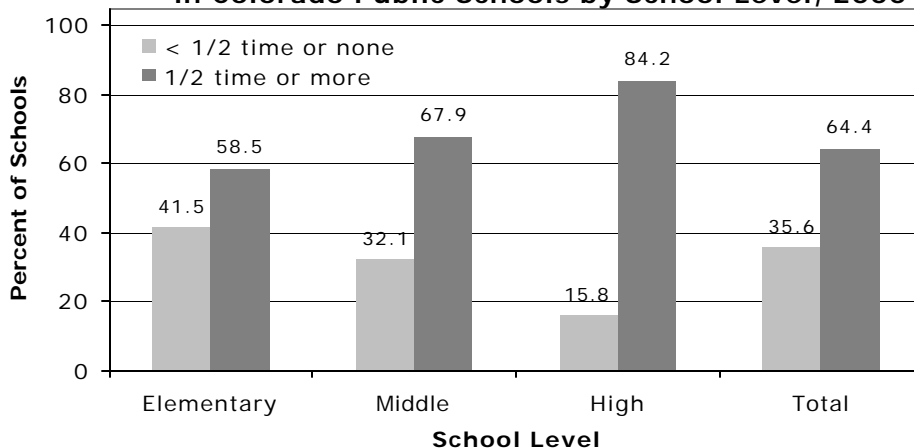
Given the importance of library media centers and their staffing to student achievement – and with so much riding on the CSAP scores – a critical question must be, "Is Colorado adequately staffing library media centers in public schools?" This FAST FACTS discusses this question for both endorsed library media specialists and the total library media center staff.

Highlights

- More than one in three public schools have either no library media specialist or one who works less than half-time. For elementary schools, that proportion is two out of five.
- Statistics from 2000 indicate a trend to staff LM centers with the equivalent of one full-time person, moving away from more than one, as well as less than one full-time equivalent.
- Almost one in five public schools is staffed by less than one full-time LM center employee. In addition, close to a quarter of elementary schools have less than 40 hours a week of such staffing.
- The total LM center staff-to-student ratio dropped 24 percent in the last six years from 5 per 1,000 students in 1994 to 3.8 in 2000. However, LMS-to-student ratios remained relatively stable, going from 1.4 in 1994 to 1.7 in 2000.
- Fewer LM center staff can mean that library media specialists are spending less time in the role of teachers and leaders, and as reported in *How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards*, this can adversely affect student academic achievement and ultimately lower CSAP scores.

Figure 1

Level of Library Media Specialist Staffing in Colorado Public Schools by School Level, 2000



Endorsed Library Media Specialists

In 2000, over one-third of all schools lacked adequate endorsed library media specialist (LMS) staffing. Only 64 percent of schools had a LMS working half-time or more, leaving over 35 percent of schools with no LMS or one working at less than half-time.

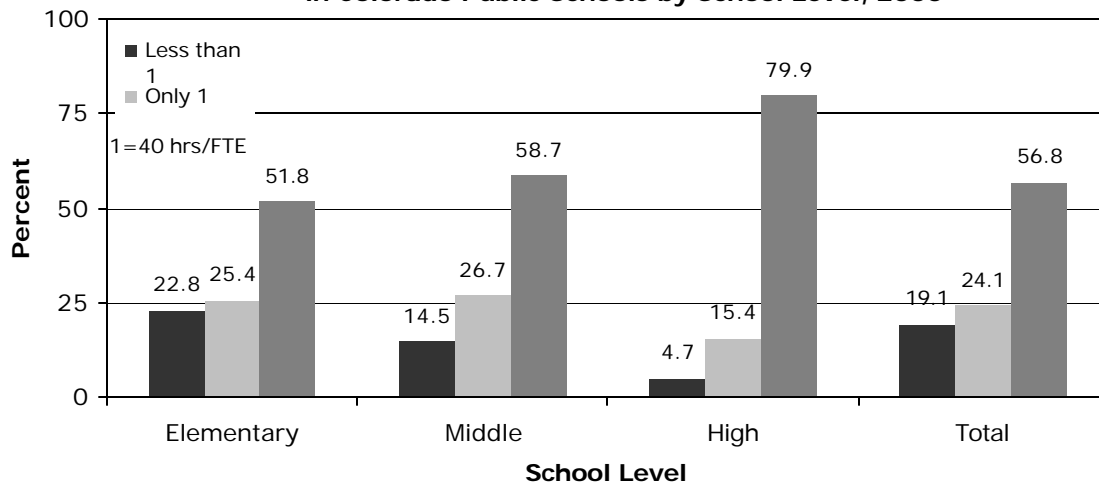
(See Figure 1.)

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Although a significant number of schools are still lacking a LMS, there was an increase over 1999 of almost 5 percent in LMS staff working half-time or more.

- **Elementary schools:** 2 in 5 had either no LMS or one who worked less than half-time – the highest proportion of all types of schools with over 40 percent of schools lacking adequate staffing
- **Middle schools:** 1 in 3 had either no LMS or one who worked less than half-time
- **High schools:** approximately 1 in 7 had either no LMS or one who worked less than half-time

Figure 2
Level of Total Staffing in Library Media Centers
in Colorado Public Schools by School Level, 2000



All Staff

Total staffing, LMS and paraprofessionals combined, dropped for all schools combined, as well as for each individual school level. In 1999, 59.1 percent of schools had a LM center staff of more than one person (one FTE/40 hours), but in 2000 that percentage dropped to 56.8 percent. This leaves close to half of the schools with one person or less of library media center staff. Interestingly, the survey also shows a decrease in the number of schools with LM center staff with less than one person. Overall the survey points to a trend toward a single person staff in school library media centers. (See Figure 2.)

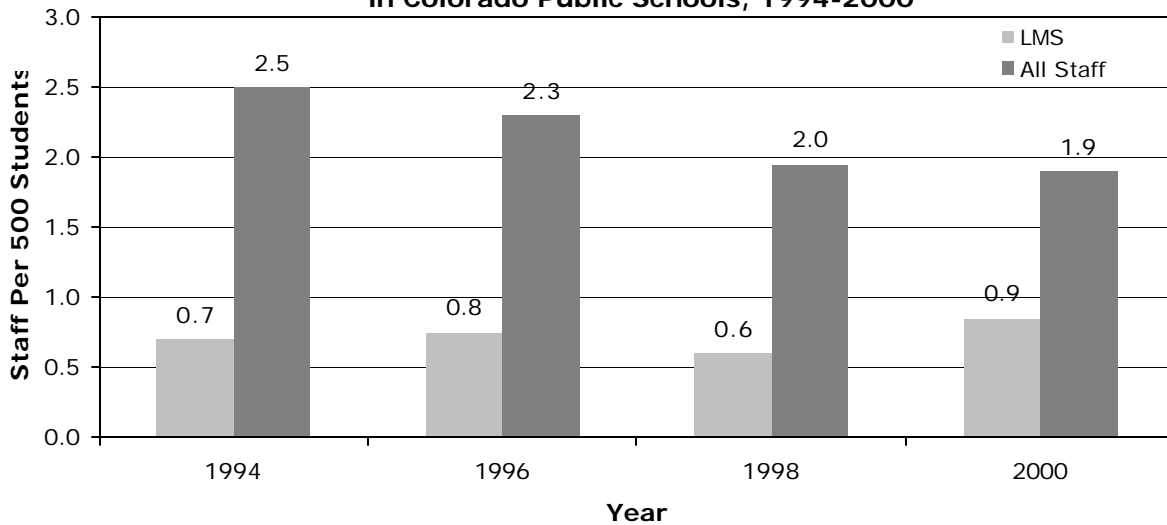
- **Elementary schools:** almost 1 in 2 have one or less library media center staff person
- **Middle schools:** more than 2 in 5 have one or less library media center staff person
- **High schools:** 1 in 5 have one or less library media center staff person – with almost 80 percent having more than one LM center staff person

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Staff-to-Student Ratio

The total LM center staff-to-student ratio dropped 24 percent in the last six years from 2.5 per 500 students in 1994 to 1.9 in 2000. However, LMS-to-student ratios remained relatively stable, going from .7 in 1994 to .9 in 2000. It should be noted that all ratios include both part-time and full-time LM center staff. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3
Staff-to-Student Ratios in Library Media Centers
in Colorado Public Schools, 1994-2000



Implications

Fewer library media center staff hours mean the endorsed library media specialists are spending less time on leadership activities, collaboration with teachers, and information skills instruction. Instead of fulfilling their role as educators, the library media specialists are spending more time on routine tasks that are essential to the smooth operation of the LM center, but are more effectively handled by support staff.

In the study, *How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards*, it was found that when a library media specialist spends more time in collaborative and leadership activities student academic achievement is positively impacted. Therefore with library media specialists spending less time teaching, coordinating with teachers, and integrating information literacy into the curriculum, students do not have full benefit of the LM center resources. As a result, student academic achievement may be adversely affected and ultimately lower CSAP scores may be recorded.

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