

One Out of Four Colorado Public Schools Has No Librarian 100,000 Students in Schools Without Librarians, 150,000 in Schools Without Full-Time Librarians

The latest data on libraries in Colorado public schools indicates that endorsed, professionally-trained school librarians are not available to students in all schools.

- Over 25 percent of the state's public schools have no librarian at all.
- The shortage of school librarians is especially acute in elementary and combined schools. Almost 30 percent of elementary schools and almost 40 percent of combined schools (e.g., junior/senior highs, K-12 schools) report no librarian.

The numbers are even higher for schools with librarians on only a part-time basis (less than 20 or 30 hours per week).

- One-third of all schools are staffed with librarians less than 20 hours per week, and over 36 percent, less than 30 hours per week.
- Of elementary schools, more than 37 percent have librarians on staff less than 20 hours per week, and over 39 percent, less than 30 hours per week.
- The majority of combined schools have no or only part-time librarians. Over half report librarian staffing of less than 20 hours per week, and almost 58 percent, less than 30 hours per week.

Table 1. Colorado Public Schools by School Level and Level of Endorsed Librarian Staffing, 2001

| School Level | Schools by level of endorsed librarian staffing | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | No librarian at all | | Less than 20 HPW | | Less than 30 HPW | | Total schools * | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Elementary | 253 | 29.5% | 318 | 37.1% | 338 | 39.4% | 857 | 100.0% |
| Middle | 40 | 15.1% | 60 | 22.6% | 68 | 25.7% | 265 | 100.0% |
| High | 46 | 19.0% | 63 | 26.0% | 73 | 30.2% | 242 | 100.0% |
| Combined | 29 | 39.7% | 37 | 50.7% | 42 | 57.5% | 73 | 100.0% |
| Total | 368 | 25.6% | 478 | 33.3% | 521 | 36.3% | 1,437 | 100.0% |

* Total schools refers to school buildings. This figure excludes pre-K and Kindergarten-only schools as well as alternative high schools and some other schools from which the Colorado Department of Education collects some data.



The numbers and percentages of students affected by the lack of school librarians at different levels is substantial. Across all school levels, almost 16 percent of public school students—over 100,000—attended a school with no librarian at all. The figure exceeds 20 percent of students—when including another 50,000 students who attended schools with only part-time librarians.

CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Keith Curry Lance, Director - Library Research Service
201 East Colfax Ave., Suite 309 - Denver, CO 80203-1799
Tel.: 303.866.6737 - Fax: 303.866.6940
E-mail: lance_k@cde.state.co.us - Web site: www.lrs.org

Table 2. Colorado Public School Students by School Level and Level of Endorsed Librarian Staffing, 2001

| School Level | Students by level of endorsed librarian staffing | | | | | | Total students * | |
|--------------|--|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| | No librarian at all | | Less than 20 HPW | | Less than 30 HPW | | Total | Percent |
| | Total | Percent | Total | Percent | Total | Percent | Total | Percent |
| Elementary | 79,779 | 23.7% | 97,519 | 29.0% | 104,246 | 31.0% | 336,759 | 100.0% |
| Middle | 13,333 | 8.8% | 20,962 | 13.8% | 22,411 | 14.8% | 151,379 | 100.0% |
| High | 11,201 | 5.6% | 21,602 | 10.8% | 23,020 | 11.5% | 200,614 | 100.0% |
| Combined | 6,281 | 33.0% | 8,211 | 43.2% | 9,032 | 47.5% | 19,024 | 100.0% |
| Total | 110,593 | 15.6% | 148,294 | 21.0% | 158,709 | 22.4% | 707,776 | 100.0% |

* Total students figure excludes those in pre-K and Kindergarten-only schools as well as alternative high schools and some other types of schools from which the Colorado Department of Education collects some data.

Why does the lack of librarians in Colorado schools matter?

Research has demonstrated repeatedly that student performance on standards-based academic achievement tests is likely to be higher where there is a well-stocked, well-funded school library managed by an endorsed, professionally-trained school librarian. Where school librarians are not present or work only part-time, schools are deprived of the services of a specialist whose job is two-fold: 1) to choose, organize, and facilitate access to books, online databases, and other learning resources that support content standards, and 2) to teach both students and teachers in ways that foster the mastery of information literacy skills across the curriculum.



In 2000, a Colorado study found that students in schools with stronger school libraries—well-staffed, well-stocked, and well-funded ones—averaged CSAP reading scores that were 18 percent higher at the elementary level and 10 percent higher at the secondary level.

