

# More School Librarians for Metro Areas, Fewer for Non-Metro

ED3/110.10/No. 264

September 23, 2008

Colorado has experienced tremendous population growth over the last several years, and the number of students attending Colorado schools has increased along with the population. On the surface, it appears that the rise in the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) school librarians—as defined by NCES—has kept up with and even surpassed the rise in the student population. However, a closer look reveals that the increase in librarians is primarily benefiting metropolitan-area students.<sup>2</sup>

Figures reported by school districts and collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)<sup>3</sup> indicate that the state’s schools saw an overall increase of 10 percent in the number of students from 1999 to 2005. The number of FTE school librarians in schools grew 15 percent in that same time period (see Table 1).

## NCES Data and Definitions

Each year the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects data for the Common Core of Data (CCD). This collection is conducted by state education agencies and includes data reported by all public schools and districts in the U.S. The data presented here is from the CCD and is used to describe the number of librarians in Colorado’s schools and districts.

Accordingly, the definition of a librarian used throughout this Fast Facts is the NCES definition: “A professional staff member or supervisor assigned specific duties and school time for professional library services activities. These include selecting, acquiring, preparing, cataloging, and circulating books and other printed materials; planning the use of the library by students, teachers, and instructional staff; and guiding individuals in the use of library books and material maintained separately or as a part of an instructional materials center.”<sup>1</sup>

Note, this definition *does not differentiate* between positions requiring a Colorado Department of Education school librarian endorsement and those not requiring such credentials.

Table 1

Colorado K-12 Public Schools (1999 – 2005) Student Enrollment & Total FTE Librarians					
	1999	2001	2003	2005	Percent Change
Number of Students	707,436	741,319	756,319	778,842	10.09%
FTE Librarians	724.4	848.4	840.7	838.30	15.72%

As would be expected, there is a disparity in population increases between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of Colorado. In metropolitan areas, student population has increased nearly 12 percent. In non-metropolitan areas, the number of students has increased only 1 percent (see Table 2).



Table 2

Colorado K-12 Public Schools (1999 – 2005) Student Enrollment Metro vs. Non-Metro					
	1999	2001	2003	2005	Percent Change
Metropolitan	592,044	624,681	640,894	662,251	11.86%
Non-Metropolitan	115,392	116,638	115,425	116,592	1.04%

### Districts Without Librarians

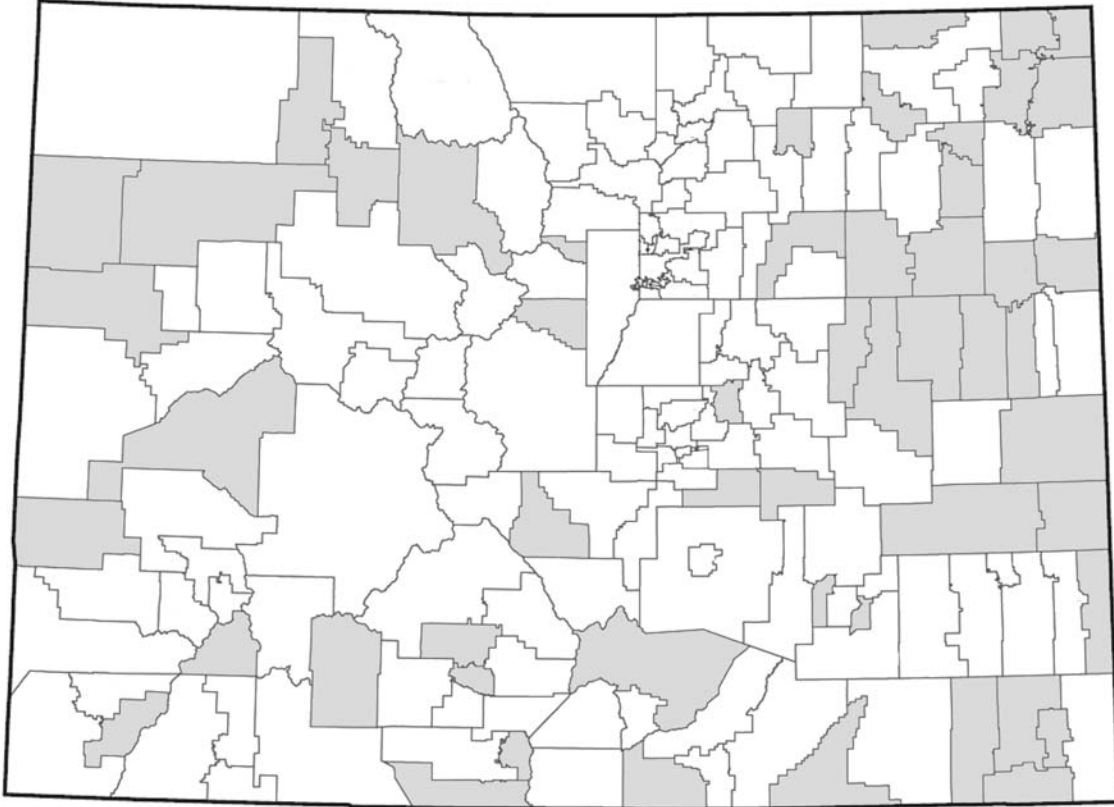
Despite this rise in number of students and librarians over this six year period, there was an increase in the number of school districts without any school librarians, rising from 39 such districts in 1999 to 51 in 2005. However, as a group metropolitan districts were not affected by this trend. In fact, the number of districts in metropolitan areas without a school librarian dropped from 8 to 5. Whereas, the number of districts outside of metropolitan areas without a librarian increased by almost 50 percent, from 31 to 46 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Colorado K-12 Public Schools (1999 – 2005) Number and Percentage of School Districts <u>Without</u> a Librarian				
	1999	2001	2003	2005
Number (Percentage in Each Geography)				
Metropolitan	8 (14.8%)	6 (11.1%)	5 (9.3%)	5 (9.3%)
Non-Metropolitan	31 (25.4%)	36 (29.5%)	42 (34.4%)	46 (37.7%)

This can be seen graphically on a map of school districts in Figure 1. The shaded districts are those without school librarians as reported by the school districts in 2005 (see *NCES Data and Definitions*, page 1).



**Figure 1: Presence of School Librarian in Colorado School Districts, 2005**


Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core Data (CCD).

This trend is mirrored when we look at the number of FTE librarians per 1,000 students in metropolitan versus non-metropolitan areas. The ratio of librarians per student in metropolitan school districts grew 9 percent between 1999 and 2005. In non-metropolitan areas that number actually fell 11 percent (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

Colorado K-12 Public School Districts (1999 – 2005) Total FTE Librarians Per 1,000 Students					
	1999	2001	2003	2005	Percent Change
Metropolitan	0.97	1.13	1.10	1.06	9.47%
Non-Metropolitan	1.29	1.23	1.20	1.15	-11.11%

These figures indicate a troubling trend for school libraries in non-metropolitan areas. It appears that gains made in the number of school librarians are only in school districts near large urban areas. As various studies<sup>4</sup> have shown that students at schools with well-developed school library programs fare better on standardized tests, it is important to not take the loss of these library positions for granted.

1. The National Center for Education Statistics defines a school librarian as “A professional staff member or supervisor assigned specific duties and school time for professional library services activities. These include selecting, acquiring, preparing, cataloging, and circulating books and other printed materials; planning the use of the library by students, teachers, and instructional staff; and guiding individuals in the use of library books and material maintained separately or as a part of an instructional materials center.” Source: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pdf/psu051agen.pdf>

2. The concept of a metropolitan area for this report is derived from the U.S. Census Bureau: “The general concept of a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area is that of a core area containing a substantial population nucleus, together with adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core.... Each metropolitan statistical area must have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more inhabitants.” Source: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/aboutmetro.html>  
 For our purposes, metropolitan area school districts were those that are in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, El Paso, Jefferson, Larimer, Mesa, Pueblo, and Weld Counties.

3. Source: NCES Common Core Data. The Common Core of Data (CCD) survey annually collects data about all public schools, public school districts, and state education agencies in the United States. See: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>.

4. See “How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards : The Second Colorado Study (2000)” by Keith Curry Lance et al, <http://www.lrs.org/impact.php>

#### CONTACT ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Author: Zeth Lietzau, Associate Director & Regina Avila, University of Denver Research Fellow  
 Library Research Service • 201 East Colfax Avenue, Suite 309 • Denver, Colorado 80203-1799  
 Phone 303.866.6900 • E-mail: [LRS@LRS.org](mailto:LRS@LRS.org) • Web site: [www.LRS.org](http://www.LRS.org)

Fast Facts – Recent Statistics from the Library Research Service

Colorado State Library • Colorado Department of Education

Library & Information Science Program Morgridge College of Education • University of Denver

© 2008 • Permission granted to reproduce for nonprofit purposes

