

DOWNWARD TREND IN COLORADO SCHOOL LIBRARY STAFFING, 2000-02

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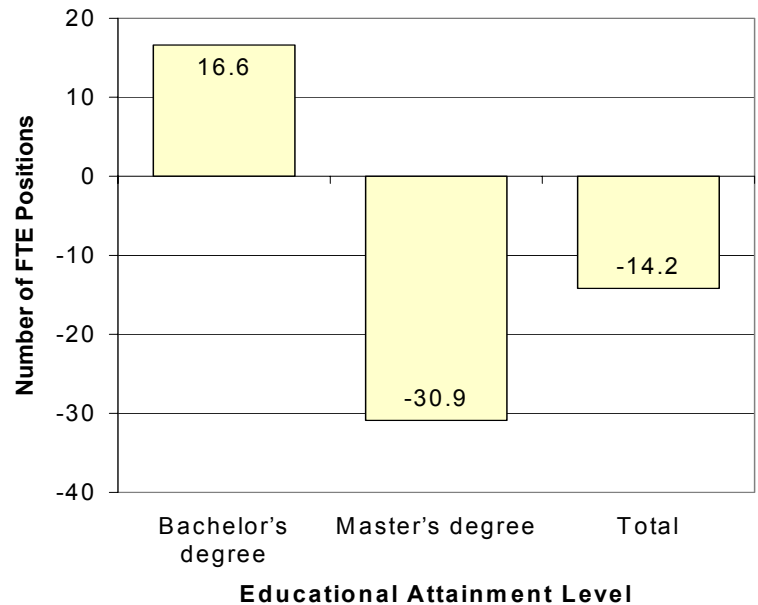
Recent trends in library staffing for Colorado public schools are cause for concern. Changes in the numbers of school librarians and library aides between 2000 and 2002, and particularly their changing educational composition, suggest that school librarianship in Colorado is being de-professionalized. Because research links the presence and involvement of professional school librarians with higher CSAP test scores, this trend is an alarming one.

Net Loss in Number of School Librarians

Between 2000 and 2002 ...

- There was a net loss of 14 school librarian positions.
- While 17 additional librarians with bachelor's degrees were added, 31 librarians with master's degrees were lost.

Chart 1.
Change in Number of School Librarians by Educational Attainment, 2000-02



If professional staffing continues to deteriorate in Colorado schools, the result will be lower reading levels and lower test scores. Students will not receive information literacy instruction, which is directly linked to the ability to analyze and evaluate information.

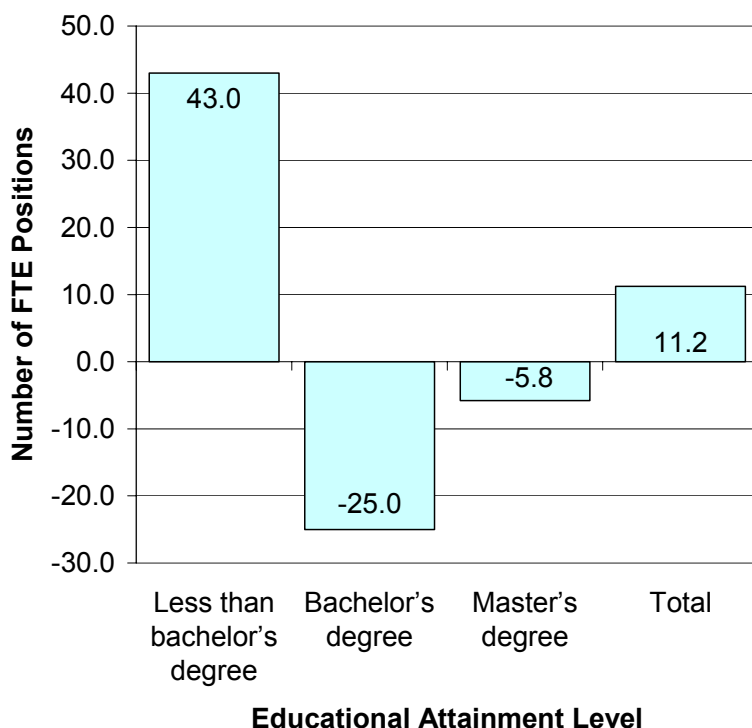
Dawn Vaughn
President, American Association of School Librarians

Table 1. School Librarians by Educational Attainment, 2000 & 2002

| School librarians by educational attainment | 2000 | 2002 | Change | Percent change |
|---|-------|-------|--------|----------------|
| Bachelor's degree | 161.7 | 178.3 | 16.6 | 10.3% |
| Master's degree | 612.2 | 581.3 | -30.9 | -5.0% |
| Doctorate | 8.0 | 8.1 | 0.1 | 1.3% |
| Total | 781.9 | 767.7 | -14.2 | -1.8% |



**Chart 2.
Change in Number of School
Library Aides by Educational
Attainment, 2000-02**



**Gain in Number of School
Library Aides Fails to
Match Loss of Librarian
Positions**

Between 2000 and 2002 ...

- There was a net gain of 11 school library aide positions.
- While 43 additional library aides with less than a bachelor's degree were added, 32 aides with a bachelor's degree or higher were lost.

Our teacher/librarian not only knows how to help me combine information literacy skills with my required curriculum but also co-teaches all parts of our collaborative projects... This would be difficult if she were not a trained teacher. This benefits our students greatly.

Anne Marie Nebeker
Teacher, Stott Elementary
Jefferson County, Colorado

Table 2. School Library Aides by Educational Attainment, 2000 & 2002

| School library aides by educational attainment | 2000 | 2002 | Change | Percent change |
|--|-------|-------|--------|----------------|
| Less than bachelor's degree | 207.9 | 250.9 | 43.0 | 20.7% |
| Bachelor's degree | 65.7 | 40.7 | -25.0 | -38.1% |
| Master's degree | 17.1 | 11.3 | -5.8 | -33.9% |
| Doctorate | 1.0 | 0.0 | -1.0 | -100.0% |
| Total | 291.7 | 302.9 | 11.2 | 3.8% |



Loss of More Experienced Librarians and Library Aides

Between 2000 and 2002 ...

- Average years of experience for new hires as school librarians were cut in half—from 6 to 3 for those with a bachelor’s degree and from 10 to 5 for those with a master’s degree.
- Average years of experience for new hires as library aides increased from 2 to 5. This change suggests that, perhaps, some of those who might have been classified as librarians in 2000 were classified as library aides in 2002. However, it may simply reflect the fact that new hires with bachelor’s degrees lacked teaching or library media licensure.

For school libraries to be effective in enhancing student growth, and supporting classroom teachers, they must be staffed with highly qualified librarians and educational assistants... These professionals must not only be well versed in the efficient operation of a library, but masters at collaboration. They must also be talented teachers in their own right. Such collaborative efforts with school libraries acting as the ‘instructional hub’ of a school makes all the difference for students and teachers who are expected to perform like never before.

Kevin Carroll
Principal, Devinity Elementary
Jefferson County, Colorado

Table 3. Average Years of Experience for New Hires as School Librarians and Library Aides, 2000 & 2002

| Average years of experience by educational attainment | 2000 | 2002 | Change | Percent change |
|---|------|------|--------|----------------|
| School librarians with | | | | |
| Bachelor’s degree | 6 | 3 | -3 | -50% |
| Master’s degree | 10 | 5 | -5 | -50% |
| School library aides with | | | | |
| Less than bachelor’s degree | 1 | 0 | -1 | -100% |
| Bachelor’s degree | 2 | 5 | 3 | 150% |

Whether a licensed school librarian or a paraprofessional, advanced education and training are essential...Often times the people who do the hiring and staffing fail to consider that the librarian’s role is as a master teacher who understands resource based learning and the best ways to integrate information literacy and educational technology with the curriculum... With the downward trend in library hours and staffing, I fear the preparation of our students for standardized tests, higher education, and life will suffer. We are in the information age, yet we are withholding the keys that unlock the door.

Su Eckhardt
District Teacher Librarian
Cherry Creek Schools, Colorado

Loss of Better Educated School Librarians and Library Aides

Between 2000 and 2002 ...

- The net effect of these changes in the composition of the school library workforce was to lower the overall educational attainment levels of librarians and library aides.
- The fairly dramatic drop in educational attainment for library aides—who are increasingly likely to lack the supervision of an endorsed school librarian—is especially worrisome.



Table 4. Percentages of School Librarians and Library Aides by Educational Attainment, 2000 & 2002

| Percentage by educational attainment | 2000 | 2002 | Change | Percent change |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|
| School librarians with | | | | |
| Bachelor's degree | 20.7% | 23.2% | 2.5% | 12.1% |
| Master's degree | 78.3% | 75.7% | -2.6% | -3.3% |
| School library aides with | | | | |
| Less than bachelor's degree | 71.3% | 82.8% | 11.5% | 16.1% |
| Bachelor's degree | 22.5% | 13.4% | -9.1% | 40.4% |

References

- Colorado Education Statistics / Fall 2000 & 2002 Staff Data / Full-Time Equivalence (FTE), Average Salary, and Average Experience by College Preparation. Available at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stats.htm.
- School Library Impact Studies (including How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study). Available at: <http://www.lrs.org/impact.asp>.

Methodological Note

Data employed in this analysis come from the Colorado Department of Education to whom they are reported by all local education agencies. Through 2003, the LRS also collected staffing data via its annual sample survey of school libraries statewide. Beginning in 2004, the LRS will rely upon the data collected by CDE as its collection and reporting are Federal requirements. By taking this action, we will be taking advantage of the completeness of the CDE data, while relieving school libraries of some of the burden associated with the voluntary LRS survey.

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