

FAST FACTS

*Recent Statistics from the
Library Research Service*

Librarians, Teachers & Librarian/Teacher Ratio in U.S. Public Schools: State Variations & Trends, 1989-95



A consistent finding in research about school libraries is the importance of cooperation and collaboration between “librarians”* and teachers in fostering high academic achievement among students. The extent to

which such teamwork is possible, however, depends on the accessibility of these personnel to each other. Presumably within reason the higher the number of librarians relative to the number of teachers the better.

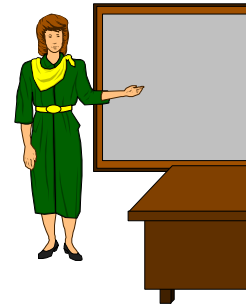
National Parameters. In 1995, public schools nationwide employed an average of only two librarians for every 100 teachers--Wyoming (2.03), Alaska (1.99), and Colorado (1.98) were the most typical states in this respect. Arkansas and Montana topped the list at approximately three-and-a-half (3.60 and 3.45, respectively) librarians per 100 teachers. California ranked lowest on this statistic, with less than one librarian for every 100 teachers (.39 per 100).

Colorado & the West. Ranking thirty-third among the states on this librarian/teacher ratio, Colorado fell behind several other Western (i.e., Western Plains, Mountain, and Pacific) states. Montana ranked second (having 3.45 librarians per 100 teachers). Kansas ranked third (3.16). Nebraska ranked sixth (2.87). And, Washington ranked twelfth (2.69).

Colorado & “Kindred” Southern States.

Colorado also ranked lower than all of the Southern states, including another “pro-education” state, Arkansas (3.60); another “high technology” state, North Carolina (2.97); and another “resort” state, Florida (2.23).

Changes in Students Per Teacher & Per Librarian. Another factor affecting librarian-teacher teamwork is the number of students with whom they must deal. Nationwide, from 1989 to 1995, the average number of students per teacher has remained virtually unchanged at 17.3 students per teacher. By contrast, the average number of students per librarian increased from 820.5 to 881.6 over the same interval—a 7.4 percent increase.



Source: Digest of Education Statistics 1997.

* In these statistics, the National Center for Education Statistics appears to be using the term “librarian” loosely. Almost certainly, individuals counted for this position were not necessarily educated or credentialed as school library media specialists. Had that been the case, the national average would not have been one “librarian” per 50 teachers. Also, because these are summary statistics for states, they mask the fact that some schools have no library media staff whatsoever.

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