

Growth in School Librarian Positions Fails to Keep Pace with Growth in Teacher Positions, 1993-98

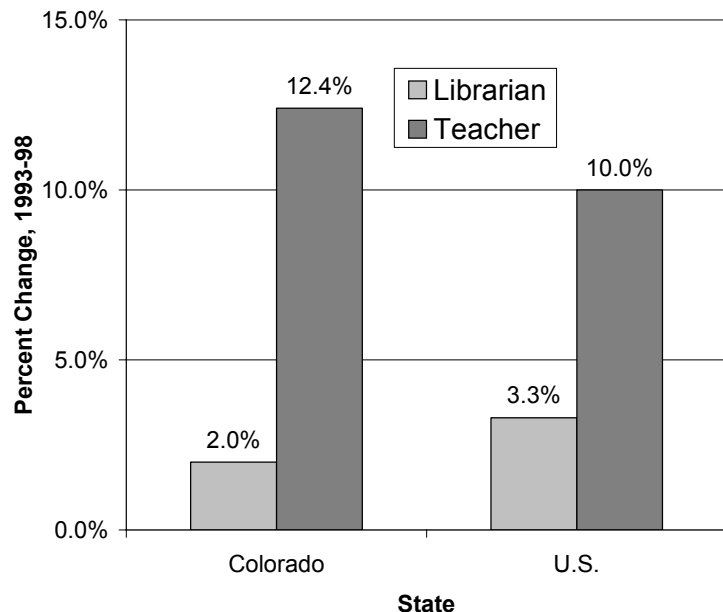
From 1993 to 1998, growth in the number of school librarian positions failed to keep pace with growth in the number of classroom teacher positions. This was true at both the state and national levels, although the situation was more extreme for Colorado than the nation. This trend is an issue for concern because research has shown that professionally-staffed library media programs have a significant positive effect on academic achievement of students, as measured by standards-based tests like the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). (See For More Information on next page.)

Throughout the U.S., between 1993 and 1998, the number of school librarian positions grew a scant 3.3 percent. At the same time, the number of classroom teachers nationwide grew by 10 percent—more than three times the growth rate for librarian positions. (See Chart 1.)

In Colorado, over that five-year period, the number of school librarian positions grew at just two percent. During the same interval, the number of classroom teachers grew 12.4 percent—six times the rate of growth for librarian positions. Thus, the disparity in relative growth rates was twice as bad for Colorado as for the nation as a whole.

From 1993 to 1998, when the number of classroom teachers nationwide increased by almost a quarter million, the number of librarians rose by less than 1,700. During the same period, when the number of classroom teachers in Colorado increased by almost 4,200, the number of librarians rose by only 14. (See Table 1.)

Chart 1. Percent Change in School Librarian and Teacher Positions, Colorado and U.S., 1993-98



Wise school administrators will find the money to reverse this trend. Professional librarians can and do increase student achievement.

Tim Snyder

author of [Getting Lead-Bottomed Administrators Excited About School Library Media Centers](#)

Recruitment to the profession ... needs a great deal of attention. ... Our students are the ones who will be at risk academically.

Harriet Selverstone

President,
American Association of School Librarians

Table 1. Numbers of School Librarian and Teacher Positions, Colorado and U.S., 1993-1998

School Year	Colorado		U.S.	
	Libra-rians	Teachers	Libra-rians	Teachers
1993-94	704	33,661	50,501	2,505,074
1994-95	709	34,894	50,687	2,552,199
1995-96	700	35,388	50,862	2,598,220
1996-97	715	36,398	51,464	2,667,419
1997-98	718	37,840	52,172	2,744,493

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How do the library media and education communities respond to this situation? Leaders indicate that there are two needs to be addressed: more recruitment and training of library media specialists by library schools to fill the profession's dwindling ranks, and increasing understanding among administrators of the importance of library media programs.

In response to these figures, Harriet Selverstone, President of the American Association of School Librarians, said "Recruitment to the profession of school librarianship needs a great deal of attention." She also expressed concern about the status of the library media specialty in graduate

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library education programs, and the variability of certification requirements from state to state. If these issues are not addressed, she said, "Our students are the ones who will be at risk academically. They deserve a quality education."



Tim Snyder, Superintendent of the Monte Vista and Sargent (Colorado) School Districts and author of **Getting Lead-Bottomed Administrators Excited About School Library Media Centers** (Libraries Unlimited, 2000), said "An underlying issue for school administrators is the number of paraprofessionals taking the place of qualified, professional librarians. Wise school administrators will find the money to reverse this trend. Professional librarians can and do increase student achievement."

POSTSCRIPTS

Defining "Librarian"

According to **Evaluation of Definitions and Analysis of Comparative Data for the School Library Statistics Program** (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998), the Common Core of Data's state nonfiscal survey defines "librarian" in terms that permit counting individuals as librarians even if they are not certified by their state as librarians. In most states, one cannot be recognized as a professional school librarian without state certification. The implication of the more loose definition of "librarian" employed by CCD is that the numbers of librarians reported here are inflated figures, making the situation look better than it actually is.

The Latest National Data?

Readers should not be misled that this report is referring to a survey that updates the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey of School Library Media Centers. The somewhat dubious, inflated count of school librarians is the only library-related statistic in the CCD reports examined. Library aides, for instance, are not counted separately from other instructional aides. There is still no data about school library collections, technology, usage, or funding more recent than the 1993-94 SASS survey.

SOURCES

Key Statistics on Public Elementary and Secondary Schools and Agencies

- v **School Year 1993-94**, July 1997 (NCES 97-528)
- v **School Year 1995-96**, September 1999 (NCES 1999-324)
- v **School Year 1997-98**, April 2001 (NCES 2001-304R)

To access these publications via the World Wide Web, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/search.asp>, enter the term "key statistics," and search by title.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Library Research Service website for related information about **How School Librarians Help Kids Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study** and similar studies in Alaska and Pennsylvania (http://www.lrs.org/html/about/school_studies.html), and selected recent issues of **FAST FACTS** (http://www.lrs.org/html/fastfacts/fast_facts_2001.html):

- Library Media Center Collections Suffer as Print Spending Drops, No. 173, April 10, 2001;
- The Status of Library Media Center Staffing and Its Effect on Student Achievement, No. 174, April 10, 2001; and
- The Status of Salaries for School Library Media Specialists & Aides in Colorado, 1999, No. 175, April 13, 2001.