SCHOOL LIBRARY
BENCHMARKS
COLORADO 2010

The benchmarks for school libraries in Colorado are ratios for library resources (e.g., collection, funding) and services (e.g., visits, circulation) that make it easier to compare your school library with other school libraries in the state.

To use these benchmarks, first identify the statistics on which you would like to evaluate your school library. Then choose the 50th, 75th, or 95th percentile according to your self-determined standard for each statistic. If you choose the 50th percentile you are comparing your library to a typical one. If you choose the 95th percentile you are comparing your library to an exceptionally good one.

The benchmarks are produced by weighting the survey data to reflect the universe of school libraries in Colorado and then calculating ratios. In 2010, over 800 Colorado school libraries completed the survey and were included in the calculations for the benchmarks. Data from school libraries that left substantial parts of the survey incomplete was not included in the benchmark calculations so that the weighting would be accurate. This school library survey includes only traditional K-12 public educational institutions. (Alternative schools and kindergarten-only schools are not included, so the universe numbers for this survey may differ from figures from the Colorado Department of Education.)

WEEKLY SERVICE RATIOS

Benchmarks for weekly library services are provided by six ratios: library visits per student, library group visits per 100 students, information skills instruction (IS) visits per student, IS group visits per 100 students, circulation transactions per student, and the interlibrary loan (ILL) per 100 items circulated ratio.

Library Visits by Individual Students and by Groups

Library visits per student is calculated as the number of visits to the library by individual students divided by the number of students enrolled in the school. Each of the weekly service ratios is calculated in the same manner as library visits per student. For example:

# of Student visits to Library ÷ Students Enrolled = Library Visits per Student

This ratio is a measure of the frequency with which students use the library in general. In lieu of figures on uses of electronic information resources, this ratio is an important supplement to the circulation ratio.

Circulation Transactions per Student

Circulation transactions per student is calculated as the number of times library materials are charged out to users divided by the number of students enrolled in the school:

Charge-outs ÷ Students Enrolled = Circulation Transactions per Student

This ratio is the traditional library use measure, but also includes non-book formats such as issues of print magazines, video materials, and computer software packages, when such items are circulated.

Interlibrary Loans per 100 Students Ratio

The *ILL/100 student ratio* is calculated as the number of items borrowed or rented by the library divided by student enrollment, divided by 100:

Items Borrowed/Rented ÷ (Students Enrolled ÷ 100) = ILL per 100 Students Ratio

This ratio is another measure of the extent to which the school library participates in resource sharing among libraries and exploits other resources available commercially.

Caution: While generally it is good for a library to have a high figure for this ratio, an excessively high one--especially if coupled with low collection and circulation ratios--may indicate the need to review the library's collection development policy.

COLLECTION RATIOS

Benchmarks for library collection development are provided by five ratios: volumes per student, print subscriptions per 100 students, audio materials per 100 students, video materials per 100 students, and computer software per 100 students.

Volumes per Student

Volumes per student is calculated as the number of print volumes in the library collection divided by the number of students enrolled in the school:

Print Volumes ÷ Students Enrolled = Volumes per Students

This ratio indicates the size of the library's book collection in relation to the size of the student body it is designed to serve.

It is important to consider this ratio in relation to collection ratios for other formats (e.g., electronic subscriptions and videos), as well as the circulation ratio. These can show whether the library's collection is well-used or contains many books that don't circulate.

Print Subscriptions per 100 Students

Print subscriptions per 100 students is calculated as the number of periodicals (magazines and newspapers) to which the library subscribes in print divided by the number of students enrolled in the school divided by 100:

Print Periodicals ÷ (Students Enrolled ÷ 100) =
Print Subscriptions per 100 Students

This ratio indicates the scope of the library's print periodical holdings in relation to the size of the student body.
Over the next few years, it will be particularly important to monitor changes in this ratio relative to those for electronic subscriptions. Changes in the ratio should also be related to the change in per student spending for print and electronic subscriptions, as well as the capital investment in equipment required to access electronic formats.

Library Computers per 100 Students

Library computers per 100 students is calculated as the total number of computers in the library or under direct supervision of the library that have access to school resources divided by the number of students enrolled in the school divided by 100:

Library Computers ÷ (Students Enrolled ÷ 100) = Library Computers per 100 Students

With the increasing importance of electronic access to information, computers have become an indispensable library tool. This ratio will help to measure how well equipped the school library is to help students access electronic information such as subscription databases, reference titles, and the Internet.

School Computers per 100 Students

School computers per 100 students is calculated as the total number of computers in the school with access to library resources divided by the number of students enrolled in the school divided by 100:

School Computers ÷ (Students Enrolled ÷ 100) = School Computers per 100 Students

This ratio will help to measure how well equipped the school is to help students access electronic information such as subscription databases, reference titles, and the Internet.

FUNDING RATIOS

Benchmarks for library funding are provided by five ratios: print materials expenditures per student, non-print materials expenditures per student, electronic access and materials expenditures per student, and total operating expenditures per student.

Collection Expenditures per Student

Collection expenditures per student is calculated as total spending for collection materials divided by the number of students enrolled in the school:

Collection Expenditures ÷ Students Enrolled = Collection Expenditures per Student

This ratio indicates the level of spending on the collection relative to the size of the student body. From year to year, maintenance of a library's buying power depends on increases in such funding to account for increases in enrollment and/or increases in costs for books and periodicals.

Other Expenditures per Student

Other expenditures per student is calculated as total spending for non-collection items divided by the number of students enrolled in the school:

Other Expenditures ÷ Students Enrolled = Other Expenditures per Student

This ratio indicates the level of spending on non-print materials relative to the size of the student body.

Total Operating Expenditures per Student

Total operating expenditures per student is calculated as the sum of print materials, electronic format acquisitions, electronic access, and other non-print materials costs and supplies and other operating costs divided by the number of students enrolled in the school:

(Collection Expenditures + Other Expenditures) ÷ Students Enrolled = Total Materials Expenditures per Student

This ratio indicates the overall cost to the library of providing access to its collection and electronically networked information.