

School Librarian Employment in the United States

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The School Library Investigation—Decline or Evolution?

The SLIDE Project

The status of school librarianship is the subject of a three-year research project funded by a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to Antioch University Seattle. The School Librarian Investigation—Decline or Evolution? (SLIDE) began in September 2020. Debra E. Kachel (dkachel@antioch.edu) is the project director and Keith Curry Lance, Ph.D. (keithcurrylance@gmail.com), is the principal investigator.

State Conditions Impacting School Library Employment, 2020

SLIDE's first report, "Contexts of School Librarian Employment," was released in fall 2020 (Kachel and Lance 2021a). It reports the findings of a survey of all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Respondents were designated representatives from a state library association or state library or education agency. The findings informed the analysis of federal school library staffing data and will inform the interpretation of interviews of school-staffing decision makers nationwide beginning in 2022.

The survey asked the following questions:

- Has your state adopted standards or guidelines for school library programs?
- Does your state have certification requirements for school librarians?
- Does your state have any legal requirements for school librarian staffing?
- Does your state have a state government employee assigned specifically to work with school libraries?
- Does any state agency or organization regularly collect school and/or district-level data about school librarian employment?
- Does your state provide direct funding to school libraries for any purpose? (Example: New York provides \$6.25 per student directly to each school library.)
- Does your state government provide access to licensed databases or other subscription-based e-resources, including e-books, to all schools in your state?
- List the institutions of higher education in your state that prepare school librarians or provide a link to such a list. Do not list completely online institutions that have no physical campus in your state.

Table 1 reports the answers to these questions state by state. These conditions—particularly the presence or lack of a legal requirement that schools employ school librarians and the number of higher education institutions that

train them—help to explain why school librarians are more prevalent in some states than others.

For example, while most states have certification requirements for public school librarians, only ten states plus the District of Columbia require public schools to employ school librarians and enforce that mandate. Sixteen other states require school librarians but do not enforce the requirement. Twenty-four states have no legal requirements for schools to employ school librarians. Five states no longer have any school librarian preparation programs within their states' institutions of higher education. (For lists of higher education institutions preparing school librarians by state, refer to "Contexts of School Librarian Employment" [Kachel and Lance 2021a, 9–10].) Other conditions explored in the report that may be factors in decision making around school-staffing issues will be explored in the SLIDE project's 2022–2023 interviews with school leaders.

Table 1 / Contexts of School Librarian Employment by State, Fall 2020

State	School Library Standards, Guidelines, or Both	School Librarian Certification	State Staffing Mandate	School Library Government Official	State Collected Staffing Data	Direct State Funding	State Funded * E-Resources	Number of Institutions Preparing School Librarians
AK	N	Y	N	FT	Y	N	Y	0
AL	Y	Y	Y	FT	Y	Y	Y	6
AR	Y	Y	Y	PT	Y	YN	Y	3
AZ	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	0
CA	Y	Y	YNE	PT	Y	N	Y	4
CO	Y	N	N	FT	Y	Y	N	2
CT	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	2
DC	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	1
DE	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	1
FL	N	Y	N	PT	Y	Y	N	2
GA	N	Y	YNE	PT	N	N	Y	4
HI	Y	Y	N	FT	Y	N	Y	1
IA	Y	Y	YNE	N	Y	N	Y	2
ID	N	N	N	FT	Y	N	Y	2
IL	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	5
IN	Y	Y	YNE	N	N	N	Y	1
KS	Y	Y	YNE	PT	Y	N	Y	3
KY	Y	Y	Y	PT	Y	N	N	4
LA	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	4
MA	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	3
MD	Y	Y	YNE	FT	Y	N	Y	4
ME	N	Y	YNE	PT	N	N	Y	1
MI	N	Y	N	PT	Y	N	Y	1
MN	Y	Y	N	PT	Y	N	Y	3
MO	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	3
MS	Y	Y	Y	FT	Y	N	N	1
MT	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	2
NC	Y	Y	N	PT	Y	N	Y	5
ND	Y	Y	Y	PT	Y	N	N	2
NE	Y	Y	Y	PT	Y	N	Y	2

Table 1 / Contexts of School Librarian Employment by State, Fall 2020 (cont.)

State	School Library Standards, Guidelines, or Both	School Librarian Certification	State Staffing Mandate	School Library Government Official	State Collected Staffing Data	Direct State Funding	State Funded E-Resources	Number of Institutions Preparing School Librarians
NH	N	Y	YNE	PT	N	N	N	1
NJ	N	Y	YNE	PT	Y	N	N	3
NM	Y	Y	YNE	N	N	Y	Y	0
NV	Y	Y	N	FT	N	N	Y	1
NY	Y	Y	YNE	FT	Y	Y	Y	6
OH	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1
OK	Y	Y	Y	PT	Y	Y	Y	4
OR	Y	Y	YNE	PT	Y	N	Y	0
PA	Y	Y	N	PT	Y	N	Y	2
RI	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	1
SC	Y	Y	Y	PT	Y	N	Y	1
SD	Y	Y	N	FT	Y	N	Y	2
TN	N	Y	YNE	N	N	Y	Y	6
TX	Y	Y	N	FT	N	N	N	8
UT	Y	Y	N	PT	N	Y	Y	1
VA	Y	Y	YNE	N	N	N	Y	3
VT	N	Y	YNE	N	Y	N	Y	1
WA	Y	Y	YNE	PT	Y	Y	Y	4
WI	Y	Y	Y	FT	Y	Y	Y	3
WV	Y	Y	N	PT	N	Y	Y	1
WY	N	Y	N	FT	Y	N	Y	0

YNE = Yes, but not enforced

DK = Don't know

PT/FT = Part-time / Full-time

* = Competitive funding from LSTA grants excluded

Source: Kachel and Lance (2021a). Contexts of school librarian employment. <https://libslide.org/pubs/contexts.pdf>.

Status of School Librarian Employment in 2018–2019

SLIDE’s second report, “Perspectives on School Librarian Employment in the United States, 2009–10 to 2018–19,” is being released in late spring 2021 (Lance and Kachel 2021d).

There were almost 42,280 school librarian full-time equivalents (FTEs) nationwide, according to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data for 2018–2019 (the latest available data). Notably, the number of positions represented by that FTE count is unknown. As there are almost 99,000 public schools nationwide, if those librarian FTEs were equally distributed across all schools in all states, the ratio of librarians to schools would be .43 FTE—less than a half-time librarian. Of course, in reality, school librarians are distributed very unequally across the states and across districts based on a variety of characteristics including enrollment, student poverty, per-pupil expenditures, and students’ race/

ethnicity, language status, and disability status. These equity issues are a major focus of SLIDE's spring 2021 report, "Perspectives on School Librarian Employment in the United States, 2009–10 to 2018–19" (Lance and Kachel 2021d).

Table 2 presents the latest available data on state-by-state differences in the number of school librarian FTEs and the ratios of school librarian FTEs to schools, students to librarian FTEs, and teacher FTEs to librarian FTEs.

Table 2 / School Librarians in Full-Time Equivalents and Ratios to Schools, Students & Teachers, by State, 2018–2019 School Year

State	School Librarians in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	Total Schools	Ratio of School Librarian FTEs to Schools	Total Student Enrollment	Ratio of Students to School Librarian FTEs	Teachers in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	Ratio of Teacher FTEs to Librarian FTEs
AK	133.60	507	0.26	130,963	980	7,656.78	57
AL	1,322.28	1,528	0.87	739,716	559	42,113.64	32
AR	967.49	1,079	0.90	495,291	512	38,019.16	39
AZ	426.17	2,344	0.18	1,141,511	2,679	48,510.41	114
CA	266.13	10,434	0.03	6,272,734	23,570	271,805.20	1,021
CO	546.26	1,915	0.29	911,536	1,669	53,146.65	97
CT	733.95	1,022	0.72	526,634	718	42,827.56	58
DC	114.75	228	0.50	88,493	771	7,312.33	64
DE	110.00	225	0.49	138,405	1,258	9,623.64	87
FL	1,986.85	4,181	0.48	2,846,444	1,433	164,398.70	83
GA	2,065.00	2,309	0.89	1,767,202	856	117,159.30	57
HI	134.50	292	0.46	181,278	1,348	12,132.10	90
IA	412.46	1,316	0.31	514,833	1,248	35,618.46	86
ID	46.71	746	0.06	310,522	6,648	16,745.31	358
IL	1,444.56	4,345	0.33	1,982,327	1,372	132,423.10	92
IN	575.38	1,916	0.30	1,055,706	1,835	61,154.81	106
KS	676.40	1,314	0.51	497,733	736	36,723.89	54
KY	1,030.74	1,534	0.67	677,821	658	41,826.90	41
LA	978.39	1,383	0.71	711,783	728	38,913.16	40
MA	621.15	1,852	0.34	962,297	1,549	73,868.49	119
MD	1,148.33	1,418	0.81	896,827	781	60,698.90	53
ME	194.30	599	0.32	180,461	929	15,033.90	77
MI	483.54	3,728	0.13	1,504,194	3,111	85,015.36	176
MN	512.66	2,540	0.20	889,304	1,735	57,698.44	113
MO	1,359.63	2,427	0.56	913,441	672	68,498.46	50
MS	762.03	1,054	0.72	471,298	618	31,962.71	42
MT	365.21	823	0.44	148,844	408	10,575.24	29
NC	2,043.05	2,657	0.77	1,552,497	760	100,220.30	49
ND	189.25	522	0.36	113,845	602	9,470.08	50
NE	534.36	1,081	0.49	326,392	611	23,911.60	45
NH	333.60	494	0.68	178,515	535	14,643.50	44
NJ	1,289.97	2,573	0.50	1,400,069	1,085	116,188.60	90
NM	209.92	882	0.24	333,537	1,589	21,139.21	101
NV	257.50	722	0.36	492,640	1,913	23,240.00	90
NY	2,553.65	4,796	0.53	2,700,833	1,058	212,156.90	83
OH	785.87	3,566	0.22	1,695,762	2,158	101,739.40	129
OK	900.89	1,807	0.50	698,891	776	42,447.90	47

Table 2 / School Librarians in Full-Time Equivalents and Ratios to Schools, Students & Teachers, by State, 2018–2019 School Year (cont.)

State	School Librarians in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	Total Schools	Ratio of School Librarian FTEs to Schools	Total Student Enrollment	Ratio of Students to School Librarian FTEs	Teachers in Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)	Ratio of Teacher FTEs to Librarian FTEs
OR	164.73	1,256	0.13	6,09,507	3,700	30,151.69	183
PA	1,599.38	2,969	0.54	1,730,757	1,082	123,350.40	77
RI	193.86	320	0.61	143,436	740	10,749.13	55
SC	1,095.60	1,265	0.87	780,882	713	52,729.50	48
SD	96.18	697	0.14	138,975	1,445	9,865.42	103
TN	1,532.00	1,862	0.82	1,007,624	658	64,116.00	42
TX	4,604.80	8,979	0.51	5,433,471	1,180	359,575.90	78
UT	227.71	1,061	0.21	677,031	2,973	29,753.40	131
VA	1,791.53	2,115	0.85	1,289,367	720	86,973.59	49
VT	197.24	312	0.63	87,074	441	8,316.97	42
WA	1,031.83	2,445	0.42	1,123,736	1,089	61,837.41	60
WI	929.04	2,255	0.41	859,333	925	59,483.65	64
WV	223.24	721	0.31	267,976	1,200	18,911.60	85
WY	77.35	363	0.21	94,313	1,219	7,327.39	95
U.S. Total	42,279.45	98,779	0.43	50,694,061	1,199	3,169,762.14	75
State Average	829.04	1,937	0.47	994,001	1,736	62,152.20	100
State Median	575.38	1,383	0.48	698,891	1,058	42,113.64	77

Source: Lance and Kachel (2021d). "Perspectives on School Librarian Employment in the United States, 2009–10 to 2018–19." <https://libslide.org/publications/>.

Notes:

A major dataset for the SLIDE project is the Common Core of Data (CCD) of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The data presented here are those reported by NCES for the 2018–2019 school year with some necessary adjustments.

CCD reports school librarians in FTEs at both state and district levels. It does not report school librarians at school (i.e., building) level. Like all other position titles for which it reports FTE data, NCES does not limit its librarian FTE count to state-certified individuals.

The state data file includes imputation for missing data, while the district data file does not. District-level librarian FTE data (not presented here) were adjusted as needed employing a combination of state data files, corrections from SLIDE's state intermediaries, and district-level imputation to fill one-year reporting gaps. If the state total from the district-level data file (including SLIDE adjustments) exceeded the figure NCES reported for a state, the larger district total replaced the smaller figure in the state file.

Visit SLIDE at <https://libslide.org> for access to both of these reports as well as unprecedented access to state and district-level data on school librarian employment and related district and demographic characteristics. The SLIDE website's interactive data tools enable users to isolate specific data of interest and display them in dynamically generated tables, charts, and maps. Visit the site regularly to stay abreast of the project's publications, presentations, and other communications and to observe how the interactive tools evolve throughout the grant period.

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References and Further Reading

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