

AASL Executive Summary

NCES Schools and Staffing Survey 2011-2012

Prepared by the AASL Research & Statistics Committee

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The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) is a federal entity charged with collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. The Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) collects data from a national sample of schools and school libraries in each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia. The first survey was conducted for the 1987-88 school year and subsequent surveys have been conducted in 1990-91, 1993-94, 1999-2000, 2003-4, and 2007-8. The most recent survey was conducted in 2011-12 with a “first look” at this data released in five reports.

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The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) has released five reports from the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey. These reports provide data regarding the characteristics of 1. Public School Districts (NCES2013-311), 2. Public and Private Elementary and Secondary Schools (NCES 2013-312), 3. Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Principals (NCES 2013-313), 4. Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers (NCES 2013-314), and 5. Public Elementary and Secondary School Library Media Centers (NCES 2013-315).

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About 11,000 traditional and charter public schools, public school principals, and public school library media centers were included in the sample. Data about private schools and teachers and principals at private schools are included but not school libraries in private schools. These five reports provide descriptive, tabular data about topics ranging from graduation rates of school systems to professional development activities of teachers. Data are often reported by geography (rural, suburban, town, and city), grade span (e.g. elementary), and free and reduced lunch rates.

Selected Findings from the School Library Media Center survey for 2011-12 include:

- 79,000 of the 85,500 traditional public schools in the US reported having a library media center
- 2,200 of the 4,500 public charter schools reported having a library media center.
- 67% of school library media centers in traditional public schools had full-time, paid, state certified library media center specialists.
- School library media centers spent an average of \$9,340 for all information resources including an average of \$6,010 for the purchase of books.
- During a full week of school there were an average of 100 visits to the library media center per 100 students with an average of 110 materials checked out per 100 students.

Statistics are also provided about clerical staff, volunteers, computer work stations, internet access, access to online databases, library holdings, types of scheduling, access for community members who don't attend the school, family literacy activities, and programs to encourage reading.

Given that the data are reported by certain school characteristics, researchers interested in rural education, poverty (as measured by free and reduced lunch statistics), or comparing charter and traditional public schools could use this data to develop a comparative picture of staffing, resources, and access. Interesting questions about trends might be explored through the set of

surveys compiled since SASS began in 1989. This data might be analyzed by school characteristic as well to examine whether trends have impacted particular kinds of schools or students.

The survey data provokes at least as many questions as it answers. While data are provided about schools that provide online access to databases, no data are provided about how students access that data (e.g. on what devices, or beyond the school day and building). While we are told that 67% of school libraries are staffed with a school librarian who has state certification, the survey doesn't address the variety of certification requirements among states.

The surveys of principals and teachers asked questions that were not asked of school librarians such as how many hours they spent a week on school-related work and how many of those involved student contact. Principals were asked the level of influence they perceived they had in decisions about budgeting, professional development, and curriculum. Teachers reported about the kinds of professional development they attended. Each of these questions would be interesting to include in a survey of school librarians and the data could be compared to these reports for principals and teachers. For example, a study of how school librarians spend their time could expand on the questions asked of principals and teachers about average work weeks and contact hours with students. Additionally, data are provided regarding the gender, ethnicity and age of teachers and principals. Questions about the diversity of school library staff and potential aging of the profession might be addressed through similar survey questions for school librarians.

These reports provide a rich source of data for practicing school librarians, grant writers, and researchers interested in educational and school library statistics.

For more information about and reports from the NCES Schools and Staffing Survey, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass>.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), <http://nces.ed.gov>, is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. It fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States; conduct and publish reports and specialized analyses of the meaning and significance of such statistics; assist state and local education agencies in improving their statistical systems; and review and report on education activities in other countries.

The American Association of School Librarians, www.aasl.org, a division of the American Library Association (ALA), promotes the improvement and extension of library services in elementary and secondary schools as a means of strengthening the total education program. Its mission is to advocate excellence, facilitate change and develop leaders in the school library field.