

# 2024 Minnesota K-12 School Library Census Results

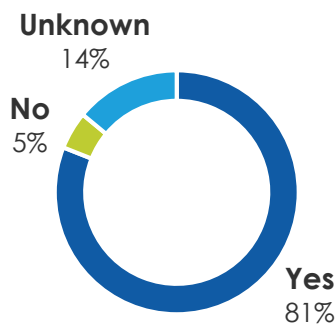
## Executive Summary

### Invest in school libraries: A call to action

Results from the census indicate that school libraries are struggling and need support. By adequately staffing library media centers and equipping them with the resources necessary to update and expand their collections, Minnesota can improve access to the knowledge, tools, and literacy students need to succeed. Buy-in from state, district, and school leaders on the value of school libraries is critical to equipping them with the proper resources and ensuring they realize the full benefits of aid provided by the state.

**81% of schools in Minnesota reported that they have a library media center**

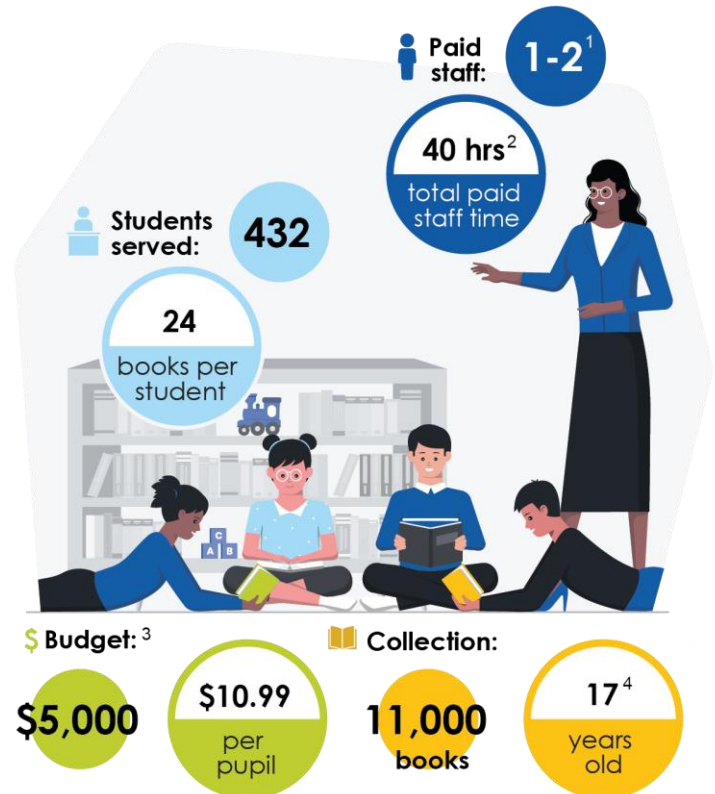
### PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS WITH A LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER



## Background

In spring 2024, the Multicounty Multitype Library Systems, supported by State Library Services, conducted a census of K-12 public and charter schools in Minnesota to learn about the status of school libraries. A total of 1,528 out of 1,777 eligible schools completed the census. The findings can help legislators, school staff, librarians, and families support effective school library programs across Minnesota.

### AVERAGE SCHOOL'S LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER STATISTICS



<sup>1</sup> most likely a licensed media specialist or a paraprofessional  
<sup>2</sup> among all LMC staff (regardless of licensure or FTE status)  
<sup>3</sup> without grants and excluding salaries, furniture, and printing  
<sup>4</sup> year 2007

Note. The above numbers are from schools with a Library Media Center. They represent the median.

## The American Association of School Librarians (AASL)
















Recommends that all schools, regardless of size, have a full-time licensed media specialist managing the library media center and a full-time support staff.




**Only 6% of Minnesota schools are meeting the standard identified by AASL**

### Minnesota state statute

Requires that an LMC is served by a licensed media specialist or licensed school librarian (Minnesota Statutes 2023, section 124D.911).

**55% are meeting the legislative requirement codified in state statute**

LMS	Non-LMS	% of Schools
	 or 	44%
		6%
		19%
		5%
		8%
		11%
		6%

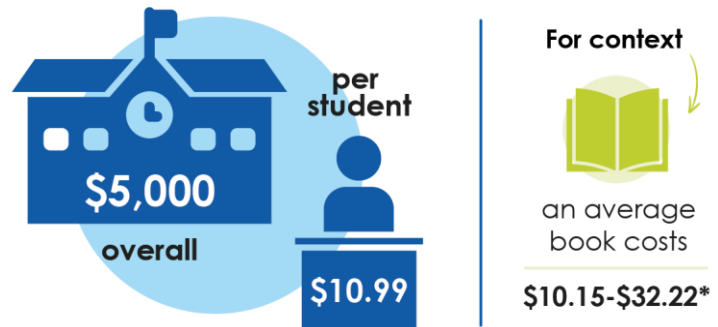
 Full-time    Part time    None

## Definitions

A **library media center (LMC)** is a centralized educational resource that provides comprehensive media information services to students and staff. Typically, these centers combine traditional library functions with modern multimedia and technology resources to support teaching and learning (AASL, 2019).

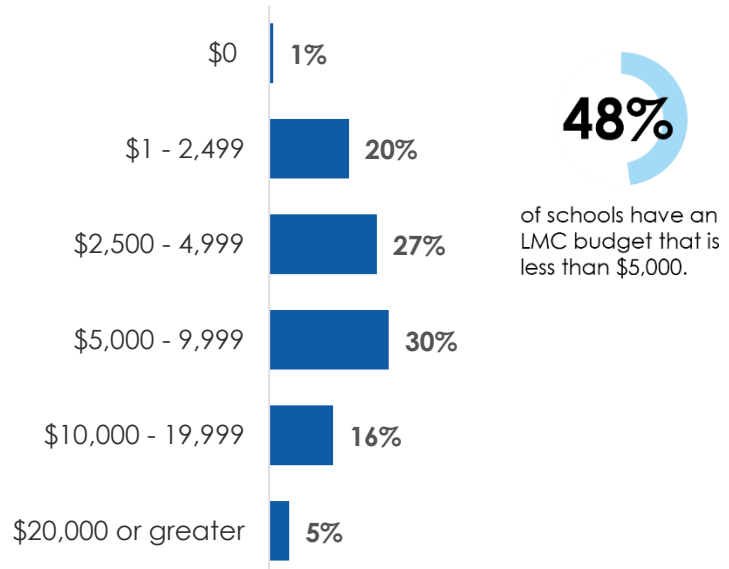
A **licensed media specialist (LMS)** is a licensed teacher who has obtained specific state certification to manage and support a school's library media center (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing Standards Board, 2024).

### MEDIAN SCHOOL LMC BUDGET



Note. Depending on the audience (e.g., children, young adult) and type (e.g., paperback, hardcover; fiction, nonfiction) (SLJ Library Staff, 2024). Budget calculations exclude salaries/benefits, furniture, printing, and grants/donations.

### LMC BUDGET TOTALS ACROSS CENSUS RESPONDENTS (N=974)



Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

## The most frequently cited challenge by library staff is budget and funding

### GREATEST CHALLENGES LMC STAFF FACE IN THEIR JOB

Budget and funding sources **67%**

Collection development and maintenance **56%**

More staff persons or hours are needed **48%**

Administration's value of library and/or LMS **47%**

Duties assigned that are unrelated to library **42%**

Condition of facilities and furnishings **24%**

Note. Respondents were asked to rank their top three challenges. This analysis combines responses and reports the percentage of respondents that selected each option as one of their top three.

As of fiscal year 2024, school districts and charter schools receive an automatic distribution of school library aid from the state to fund staff, technology, and infrastructure needs (Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 124D.992).

**40% of respondents were unaware of state School Library Aid received by the school district. Among those that were aware, nearly one-half reported they were unaware of the impact of those funds on the school library**

"I am disappointed that our district used funding to pay salaries of existing employees instead of investing some of the money into materials that directly impact students."

"School Library Aid legislation needs to properly fund 1.0 FTE for a media specialist and then fund our libraries separately for materials."

"We are grateful for the state funding that will allow our district to not make drastic cuts to our district media program amidst declining enrollment."

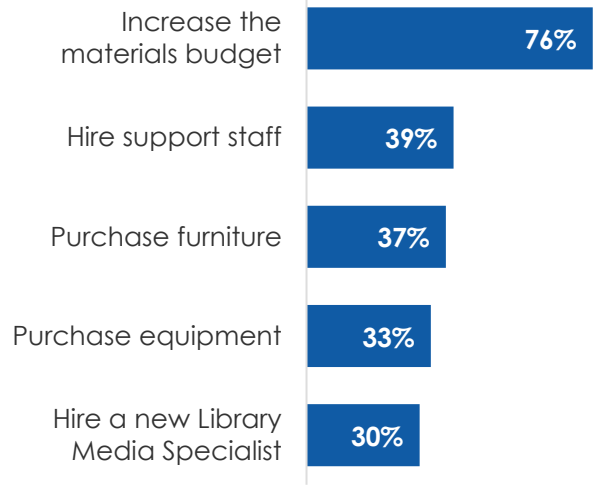


Eighty-six percent of library staff say that the majority of their budget is spent on library books and materials. Still, they reported the need for more funds for materials as a top priority. The school's LMC collection was 17 years old (median), indicating a need for weeding and updating.

“If we want to increase literacy, we need to have great books and plenty of them for students to read.”

## By far, the top priority for library staff is an increase in their materials budgets

### TOP PRIORITIES FOR LMC STAFF TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACCESS TO AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY (N=1,038)



Note. Respondents were asked to select their top priority, their second priority, and their third priority. This analysis combines responses and reports the percentage of respondents that selected each option as one of their three top priorities.



## Critical Insights

- 1. There is more work to be done to ensure all schools have a library media center.** Schools may not have an LMC for many reasons, such as a lack of resources (e.g., budget, space, staffing). However, schools that reported not having an LMC were still eligible to receive School Library Aid.
- 2. School districts should hire licensed media specialists and support staff, support teachers and other staff in seeking licensure, and increase overall staff hours.** An effective school library media center is managed by a licensed media specialist. More Minnesota school districts and schools should hire licensed media specialists and protect their time to run the media center. In addition to the need for staff with necessary training (licensure), many LMCs would benefit from additional support staff and overall staff hours.
- 3. More schools across Minnesota would benefit from district-level staff supporting the work of licensed media specialists.** Ideally, district staff play a key role in the effectiveness of a school library. The district-level school library supervisor formulates and administers a district-wide school library vision, advocating for equitable resources and leading the implementation of National School Library Standards. They ensure adherence to policies on intellectual property and digital citizenship; provide professional development; evaluate library effectiveness; promote data-driven dialogue on library impact; and curate diverse, high-quality materials (AASL, 2021).
- 4. Students and teachers will be better equipped for academic and instructional success with the support of a licensed media specialist.** It is possible that students who attend a school without an LMS are not receiving beneficial instruction such as reading support, information literacy skills, and support for research projects and digital learning. And teachers have less support for aspects that enhance learning, such as integrating technology into lessons and access to curriculum-aligned materials.
- 5. Schools need resources to curate their collections to meet the needs of students and a licensed media specialist to ensure this is done in a way that carries the greatest educational value.** Updating school library collections ensures students have access to accurate, current, and diverse materials that support their learning while removing outdated or damaged resources. Staff should instruct students to use eLibraryMN.org, a free resource available to all Minnesota schools.
- 6. The Minnesota Department of Education should consider strategies to enforce state statute regarding the definition of a school library, the requirement that LMCs be served by a licensed media specialist, and the use of School Library Aid.** Findings call into question whether the 2023 school library legislation is having the intended impact of supporting LMC staffing and infrastructure. LMC staff input into the use of state School Library Aid may help ensure funds address critical needs.

Note. Survey design and data collection by Counting Opinions. Data preparation, analysis, and reporting by Wilder Research.

This summary presents highlights of The State of School Libraries in Minnesota.

For more information about this report, contact Anna Granas at Wilder Research, 651-280-2701 or [anna.granas@wilder.org](mailto:anna.granas@wilder.org)

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