

# How Prepared Are First-Year Students? Faculty Perspectives on Media and Information Literacy Readiness

ARLD Day 2026

A Collaborative Study Sponsored by Minnesota State, University of Minnesota Libraries,  
Minitex, the Multicounty Multitypes, PALS, St. Catherine University, and MLA/ITEM

# Welcome and Introductions



Ann Kaste, Outreach and Instruction Librarian,  
Minitex



Ashley Dress, SELS Librarian for School Media  
Centers, SELCO/SELS. ITEM Co-President.

Jenny Turner, Professor  
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Coordinator, MSU-Mankato

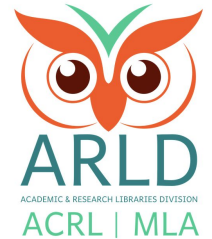


Stephanie Sparrow, Agriculture and Social Science  
Librarian, UMN-TC. ARLD Legislative Liaison.

# Let's set the stage....January 2025

- Trump administration attacks federal gov.
  - March 14, 2025 Executive Order “eliminates” IMLS
- In Minnesota
  - [“State of School Libraries in Minnesota: A 2024 Census of K-12 School Libraries”](#) presented to K-12 Education Finance committee
  - 2025 Minnesota State Budget passed June 2025
    - School Library Aid (established in 2023) saw a nearly **\$20 million budget cut**

**Both ITEM legislative liaisons on the MLA Leg. Committee lost their jobs as licensed media specialists directly tied to these budget cut**



# ITEM Standards

## Four Strands:

- Information Literacy
- Digital Citizenship
- Technology and Innovation
- Literacy Engagement

[Access the Standards](#)



Join

Minnesota's only professional organization for school librarians & technology educators

- Connect with colleagues from across the state
- Learn at our annual conference and earn CEUs
- Find support for intellectual freedom issues and professional rights.
- Become a school library advocate by joining our community

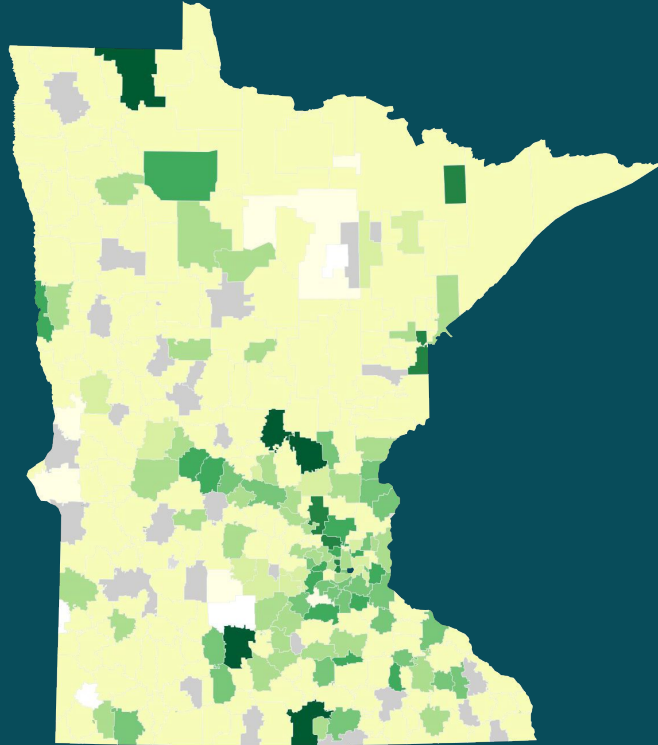
Questions? Email: [president@mnitem.org](mailto:president@mnitem.org)

Join now at [www.mnlibraryassociation.org](http://www.mnlibraryassociation.org)

Make your voice heard!



# School Library Staffing in Minnesota



## School Library Staffing Index

[Interactive Datawrapper](#)

[Raw Data \(.csv\)](#)

### Average Staffing Index Across District's Schools

- No response
- No library
- 0 = No library staff
- 1 = 0 LMS and PT or FT Non-LMS
- 2 = PT LMS and 0 Non-LMS
- 3 = PT LMS and PT Non-LMS
- 4 = PT LMS and FT Non-LMS
- 5 = FT LMS and 0 Non-LMS
- 6 = FT LMS and PT Non-LMS
- 7 = FT LMS and FT Non-LMS

# AASL Position Statement on School Library Staffing

The following minimum school library staffing requirements define an effective school library structured to transform teaching and learning throughout the school community:



One or more **certified school librarians working full-time** in the school library to ensure access to resources and teaching and learning opportunities that engage all learners.



Each school employs **at least one full-time technical assistant, clerk, or paraprofessional** to enable the school librarian to perform professional duties in the area of teaching and learning.



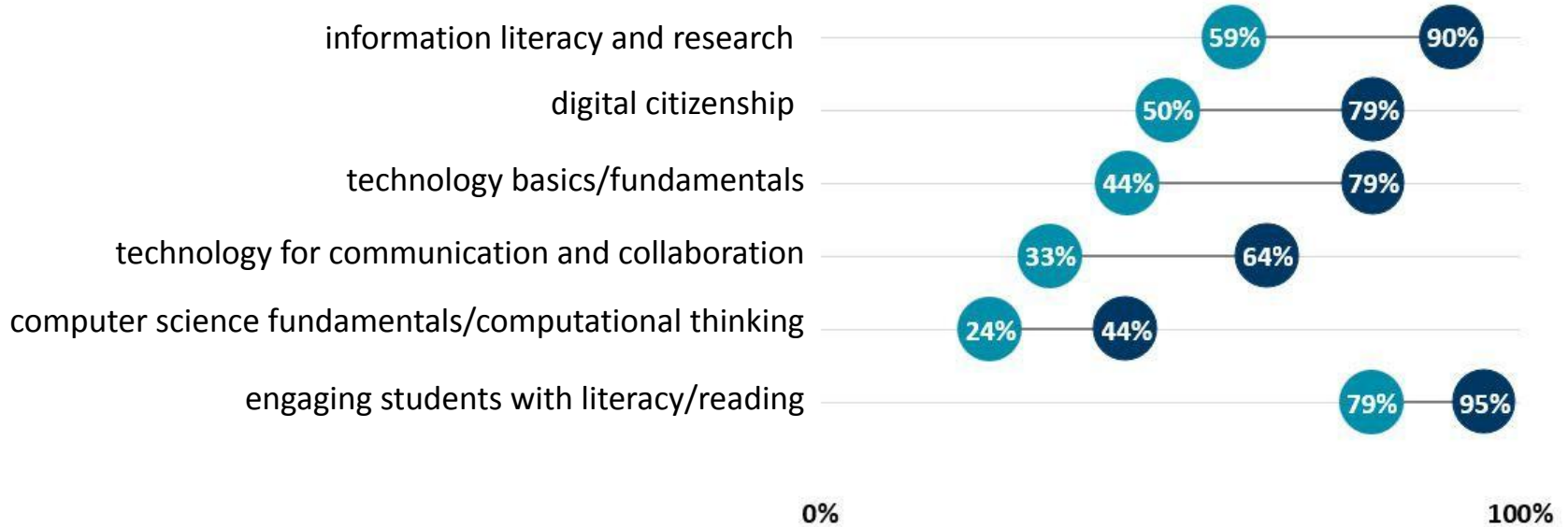
A **district-level school library supervisor with school library certification** or experience provides leadership, vision, and support for the building-level school libraries and school librarians.

The district school library supervisor is **a member of the administrative team** and is instrumental in determining criteria and policies for the district's curriculum and

Part-time (<35 hrs) ● Full-time (>=35 hrs) ●  
n=316 n=258

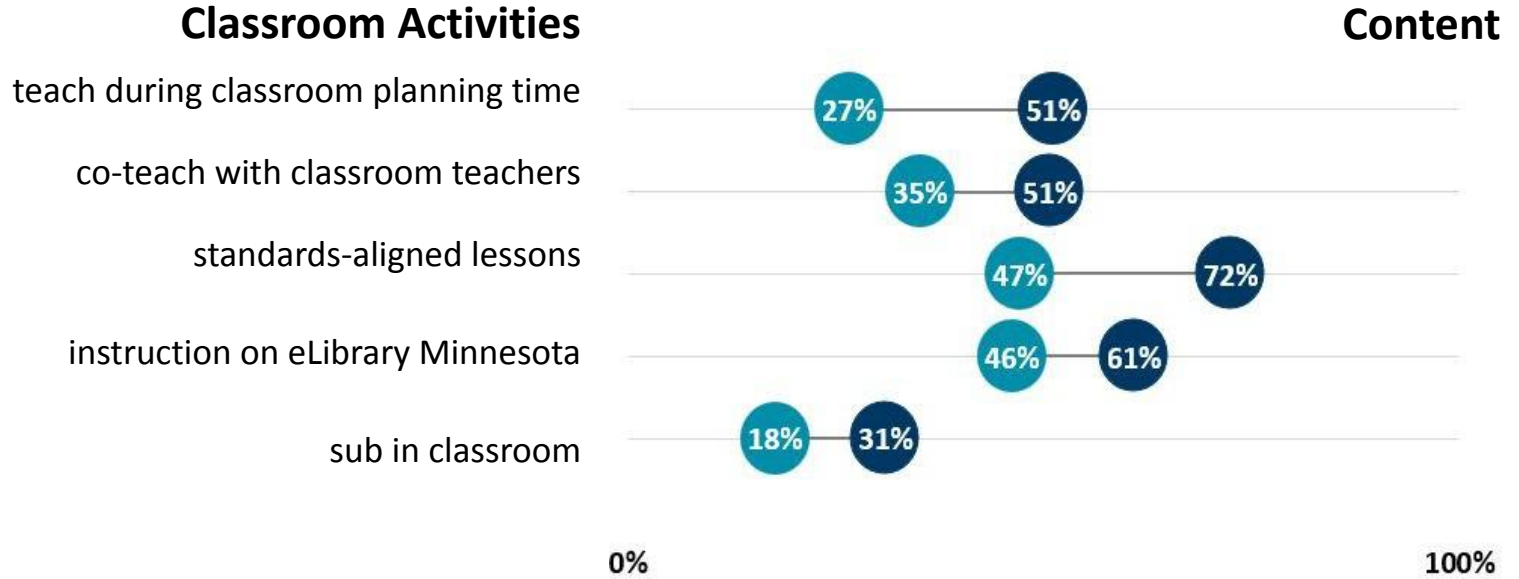
## Instruction Content Areas

## Percent of Licensed Staff Who Teach This Content



How does LMS FTE affect school library instruction?

Part-time (<35 hrs) n=316 ● Full-time (>=35 hrs) n=258



How does LMS FTE affect licensed staff instruction?

ARLD  
+  
School Library  
Media  
Specialists

Fun fact

~80% of college students  
across MN schools come  
from MN

[2024 student enrollment data from the MN Office of  
Higher Education](#)

# Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

Association of College and  
Research Libraries

*...the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning (ACRL, 2016).*

# ACRL's Frames

- ★ Scholarship as Conversation
- ★ Research as Inquiry
- ★ Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- ★ Information Creation as a Process
- ★ Information Has Value
- ★ Searching as Strategic Exploration

[Access the Framework](#)



# Wilder Study Background and Results

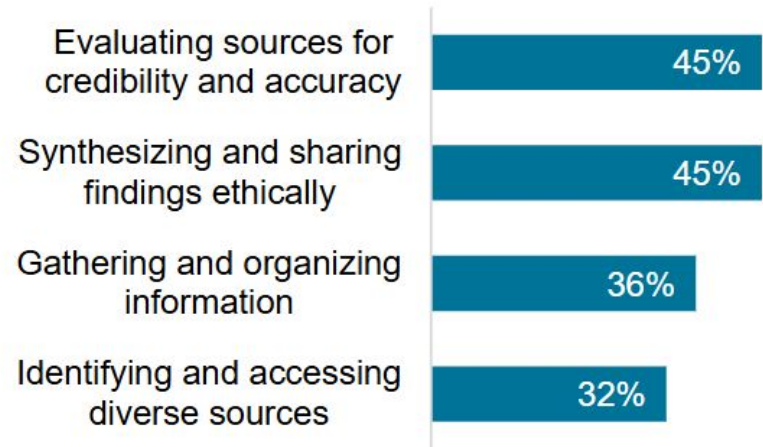
- In fall 2025, Minnesota librarians partnered with Wilder Research to interview 21 faculty who teach first-year students at colleges and universities across the state.
- Faculty evaluated the importance of information and technology literacy, along with student readiness, in four ITEM-aligned domains.
- The four domains were information literacy, digital citizenship, technology and innovation, and literacy engagement.
- The findings showed major student preparedness gaps with possible effects on learning, workforce readiness, and civic health.

# Wilder Study Background and Results

## Major Findings:

- Significant gaps in first-year students' information literacy and research skills, particularly in evaluating sources, critical engagement, and independent research application.
- Faculty have concerns about student under preparedness for college-level inquiry.
- Information literacy gaps were most abundant and concerning compared to other learning domains in the ITEM standards.

## Percentage of faculty who indicated skill gap as "significant" (N=22)



This chart shows the skills for which the highest number of respondents saw "significant gaps" in skill. In each skill area, respondents were asked to choose from one of the following categories: no noticeable gaps, minor gaps, moderate gaps, or significant gaps.

# FACULTY QUOTES

"It feels pretty evident to me that information literacy is a content area that students should be taking classes in. There should be specific information literacy instruction."

"If we don't adopt K-12 information literacy standards as a state, we need to have skilled professionals that can guide the work of teachers in their classrooms, provide research instruction, and institute curriculum on the use of technology and digital citizenship."

"When these standards are integrated into curriculum without the expertise of a library or information professional, there's no responsibility or accountability for bringing these skills into the classroom... Having information professional librarians on staff, paid effectively, and supporting all subject areas from K-12 onward seems essential."

# Policy Recommendations (shared Feb 25 to MN Education Finance Committee at Library Leg Day)

- Ensure adequate staffing of licensed school library media specialists
- Ensure Districts have a plan for how they will teach Information and Media Literacy
- Provide funding for an educational campaign about the statutory definition of a school library media center

## Next Steps for Study: Phase 2, Fall 2026 completion

**Student  
Assessment**

**Final Report**

# Discussion

# Discussion

How does this research shape the way you think about your approach with students?

How could this impact your communication with faculty?

What would you like to see as far as collaboration between academic and school librarians?

If you could speak with school librarians and high school teachers about information and media literacy, what would you say they should know? What questions would you have for them?

How could this research data be used to advocate for academic and school library programs?

# Resources

[MLA Presentation on SLMS Staffing](#) (October 2025)

[ITEM Standards](#) (Adopted October 2024)

[ACRL Information Literacy Framework](#) (January 11, 2016)

[Wilder Full Study](#) (March 2026)

[Wilder Policy Brief](#) (February 2026)

# Special Thanks to Our Advisory Team

## Advisory Team

- **Ashley Dress**, SELS Librarian for School Media Centers
- **Casey Duevel**, Department Chairperson and Reference Coordinator / Reference Librarian at Minnesota State University, Mankato
- **Mariya Gyendina**, Assessment Librarian University of Minnesota Twin Cities
- **Johnna Horton**, Executive Director at PALS
- **Ann Kaste**, Outreach and Instruction Librarian, Minitex
- **Jenna Pomraning**, State School Librarian, Minnesota Department of Education
- **Lacey Rotier**, Assistant Professor and School Library Media Specialist Program Coordinator Master's of Library and Information Science Program ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY
- **Stephanie Sparrow**, Assistant Librarian, Sciences, Agriculture, and Engineering, University of Minnesota Duluth
- **Jenny Turner**, Teaching & Learning Coordinator, Graduate Faculty Librarian

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Thank you!