MR.PLANB FIELD GUIDE · MONITORING

Zabbix vs LibreNMS: K-12 Network Monitoring Decision Sheet

Which tool fits a school network of about 3,500 devices, and how the 2026 Monitoring Ledger scores them.

Updated **2026-10-29** · Full guide: www.mrplanb.com/blog/zabbix-vs-librenms-k12-network-monitoring

> There is no clean winner. Admins who value speed, simplicity and network-first visibility lean toward LibreNMS. Admins who value flexibility, extensibility and unified monitoring lean toward Zabbix. The happiest long-term picked the tool that fit their staffing reality, not the one that sounded more powerful on paper.

79.4
Zabbix overall score out of 100 in the 2026 Monitoring Ledger

59.1
LibreNMS overall score out of 100

4 vs 3.5
network monitoring score out of 5, LibreNMS ahead of Zabbix

~3,500
devices in the K-12 environment discussed

Zabbix vs LibreNMS at a glance

	Zabbix	LibreNMS
Scope	Full stack: network, servers, services, apps, custom scripts	Network focused, built around SNMP
Setup	Needs templates, triggers and tuning	Autodiscovers gear, useful alerts quickly
Mindset	For builders	For operators
Ledger overall	79.4 / 100	59.1 / 100
Network score	3.5 / 5	4 / 5
Lock-in (lower is better)	4.0 / 25	4.5 / 25
Main risk	Poor config drowns you in alerts	Neglect misses edge-case failures

The environment in question

Real infrastructure, nowhere near a home lab.

900+ Cisco APs
Wireless access points across the district.

1,500 devices
Speakers, cameras and phones.

40 MDFs
With stacked Cisco switches.

~3,500 total
At this scale alert noise, discovery accuracy and database tuning start to matter.

Questions to answer before you choose

- [ ] Is the only requirement to monitor network gear and send alerts?
- [ ] Do you plan to add deep service monitoring, synthetic checks, custom scripts or distributed proxies?
- [ ] Are you a solo network admin, or a small team with time to build?
- [ ] Do you want one tool for networking, servers, virtualization and apps?
- [ ] Can your team handle the platform, not just the scale?
- [ ] Are you tempted to stack Grafana, NetBox and InfluxDB on top? That is an ecosystem, not a simple tool.

The case for each

- Zabbix: flexible, one pane of glass, template-driven monitoring that reaches well beyond switches. The cost is time: it needs engineering to give clean alerts instead of a 3AM SMS storm.
- LibreNMS: autodiscovery, bandwidth graphs and alerts with minimal drama, and resource efficient in CPU cycles and human effort.
- Zabbix is probably overkill if you only need to monitor network gear. Power you do not use is just complexity.
- LibreNMS can be outgrown if you expand into deep service monitoring and complex alert logic.
- Both scale to thousands of devices, but differently: LibreNMS for network-only, Zabbix in scope.

Wildcards that come up

Tool	Why it gets mentioned
Checkmk	Praised for topology visualization and flexibility; some call it smoother than Zabbix
Icinga	Mentioned by admins with a personal stake
Prometheus and Grafana	Often layered on, with Loki and Promtail
ntopng	Flow monitoring
NetBox and InfluxDB	Source of truth and custom logs in stacked setups

Sources and notes: Infrastructure Monitoring Ledger 2026 (20 platforms) · Zabbix and LibreNMS official documentation · r/k12sysadmin community discussion