
Foreword

In the past, analytic reports prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) have used the data available from one of our survey programs to address a variety of issues. In this report, we have attempted to do something different. We have chosen some specific policy-relevant questions and have tried to answer them using data from several of our surveys as well as other federal surveys.

The questions we chose illuminate the condition of education in urban schools compared to schools in other locations. Much attention has been given recently to America's urban schools, which are perceived to be in a state of some deterioration. Critics like Jonathan Kozol (*Savage Inequalities*) have vividly pointed out the problems with run-down facilities, unmotivated teachers, crime, and low expectations in inner city schools based on firsthand observations. Many believe that urban youth are more at risk today than youth living elsewhere. Information on these youths is important to the Department of Education because our mission is to ensure equal access to a high quality education for all.

We thought we could add to the existing information by exploring differences between students from urban

schools and students in other locations on a broad spectrum of student and school characteristics. In particular, we explored how the concentration of student poverty in schools is related to these differences. To do this, we used sophisticated analytical methodologies, but we hope the results are still easy to understand. Our goal was to provide useful information for people interested in the relationship of poverty and urbanicity to student outcomes and background characteristics, as well as school and teacher characteristics.

To help us in planning for future analyses, we would welcome your reaction to this report. Did it answer some important questions about urban schools for you? Were the results easy to understand? Did it provide a "big picture" of urban schools? Did it suggest other issues or topics that could be addressed in a similar manner? The answers to these questions will help us to gauge the success of our effort to produce a new type of report, analyzing a particular topic with relevant data from various sources. We are continually striving to improve our reports to make them more relevant, accessible, and thought provoking.

Jeanne E. Griffith
Acting Commissioner