

Institute of Education Sciences  
National Center for Education Statistics

PROJECTIONS OF EDUCATION STATISTICS:  
PRESENTATION AND METHODOLOGY

NISS White Paper • October 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This white paper is an extended review of NCES' annually issued report containing projections, exemplified by Hussar and Bailey (2008), from methodological (§3) as well as presentation (§2) perspectives.

While the paper contains criticisms, they are meant to be constructive, and are in no sense criticisms of the authors. Especially in the discussion of presentation, every criticism is accompanied by at least one suggested alternative. None of these alternatives would be difficult to implement, except to the extent that some of them may conflict with the NCES statistical standards (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

The discussion of projection methodology, by contrast, is critical without detailed consideration of alternatives. This reflects the magnitude of the effort that would be needed to develop new methodology, as outlined in the paper.

One very broadly applicable comment is important for both current and future editions. Although Hussar and Bailey (2008) is explicit about omissions, the collective effect of these omissions is large and increasing. Examples noted in Hussar and Bailey (2008) include home schooling and high school completers by means other than diplomas granted by school authorities, postsecondary enrollment in non-degree-granting institutions and possibly others. Additional examples that may not be addressed include distance learning and US citizens enrolled in institutions outside the US.<sup>1</sup> It would be very valuable to list these omissions in one prominent place. More importantly, in the longer run NCES should devote effort to addressing them, since otherwise the information in successors to Hussar and Bailey (2008) will be increasingly incomplete.

[Read the Full Report](#)

---

<sup>1</sup>It is not clear, for instance, whether data in Hussar and Bailey (2008) include schools operated by the US Department of Defense.