



Summary of Professional Experience

Dinah Sparks, M.B.A., Ph.D., is the founder and president of Activate Research. Dr. Sparks has training and professional experience in quantitative and qualitative research, as well as a financial management background in the private and public sectors. She has extensive experience managing Activate researchers' activities for several federal contracts, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Education Statistics Support Institute Network (ESSIN) Task Order 10, Task Order 11, Task Order 33, and NCES Publications, Education Analysis, and Reporting for Sample Surveys (PEARSS) Task Order 0002. Dr. Sparks also has extensive research and analytic experience as well as experience with facilitating meetings with researchers and other stakeholders. Dr. Sparks has recently co-authored several Statistics in Brief publications released by NCES, including one on arts education instructors in elementary and secondary schools. Her research interests include teacher policy, remediation at the postsecondary level, and language minority student populations. Dr. Sparks received a M.B.A. from Boston University and a Ph.D. in education policy and leadership from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Work History

Activate Research, Inc., <i>President</i>	2014 – present
American Institutes for Research, <i>Researcher</i>	2010 – 2013
R.H. Smith School of Business Undergraduate Program, <i>Assistant Director</i>	2008 – 2010
Santa Barbara County Education Office, <i>Financial Services Manager</i>	2000 – 2003

Education

Ph.D., Education Policy and Leadership, University of Maryland, College Park, 2012
M.B.A., Public and Nonprofit Management, Boston University School of Management, 2000
B.S., Business Administration, California State University at Northridge, 1995
La Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain, 1992

Selected Project Experience

Title: ESSIN Task Order 11

Client: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Role: Project Manager

Period of Performance: January 2017 – present

Manage the annual proposed publications process; manage the publication process for ongoing work; engage in data analysis; and create Statistics in Brief and Data Point publications using data from across NCES.



Title: ESSIN Task Order 33

Client: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Role: Project Manager

Period of Performance: March 2016 – present

Collaborate with colleagues to assist the NCES National Household Education Surveys program plan for future data collection efforts around early childhood, homeschooling, and virtual schooling. Efforts involve literature reviews, coordination of expert panelists with NCES staff, and qualitative data collection.

Title: ESSIN Task Order 10

Client: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Role: Project Manager

Period of Performance: January 2017 – present

Work with NCES to convene an expert teacher panel and develop a centerwide survey framework for NCES surveys containing teacher questionnaires. Assemble and facilitate a working group of educators from various states to review NCES recruitment and communication strategies for international assessments and identify areas for improvement to address low participation rates.

Title: PEARSS

Client: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

Role: Project Manager

Period of Performance: April 2017 – present

Collaborate with NCES counterparts to develop a slate of proposed research topics; conduct literature reviews; engage in data analysis; and create Statistics in Brief and Data Point publications using NCES's international survey data.

Selected Publications and Presentations

Hoyer, K. M., & Sparks, D. (2017). *Instructional time for third- and eighth-graders in public and private schools: School year 2011-12* (NCES 2017-076). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Molefe, A., Burke, M. R., Collins, N., Sparks, D., & Hoyer, K. (2017). *Postsecondary educational expectations and attainment for rural and nonrural students* (REL 2017–forthcoming). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest.

Sparks, D., & Malkus, N. (2016). *Teacher job satisfaction* (NCES 2016-131). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Bahr, S., & Sparks, D. (2016). *Changes in America's public school facilities: From School Year 1998–99 to School Year 2012–13* (NCES 2016-074). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.



Sparks, D., & Malkus, N. (2015). *Public school teacher autonomy in the classroom across School Years 2003–04, 2007–08, and 2011–12* (NCES 2015-089). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Malkus, N., Hoyer, K. M., & Sparks, D. (2015). *Teaching vacancies and difficult-to-staff teaching positions in public schools* (NCES 2015-065). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Cunningham, B., Hoyer, K. M., & Sparks, D. (2015). *Gender differences in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) interest, credits earned, and NAEP performance in the 12th grade* (NCES 2015-075). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Sparks, D., Zhang, J., & Bahr, S. (2015). *Public elementary and secondary school arts education instructors* (NCES 2015-085). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Sparks, D., & Malkus, N. (2013). *First-year undergraduate remedial coursetaking: 1999, 2000, 2003–04, 2007–08* (NCES 2013-013). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Rice, J. K., Roellke, C. F., Sparks, D., Kolbe, T. (2009). Piecing together the teacher policy landscape: A policy-problem typology. *Teachers College Record*, 111(2), 51–546.

Rice, J. K., Roellke, C. F., Sparks, D. (2006). *Hitting the target? Multi-level case study findings from three states*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
