Chapter 3

Student Background Characteristics and Afterschool Activities

This chapter examines the influences and activities that affect students' performance in school but that lie beyond the school's control. Although the chapter primarily focuses on family-related background characteristics, such as parental employment, it also addresses students' extracurricular activities and part-time work. Clearly, the choices students make about how they spend their time outside of school may affect their performance in school as well as their future employment.

The background characteristics of students that are discussed in this chapter were selected on the basis of previous research documenting their relationship to students' educational outcomes. Since Coleman's landmark study, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Coleman et al. 1966), numerous studies have found that family and socioeconomic characteristics are closely tied to a student's chances for academic success. For example, in a study of young adult literacy, parents' education was found to be significantly related to literacy behavior and type and amount of education young adults eventually achieve (Kirsch and Jungeblut 1986). Many believe that students in urban schools are less likely than students in other schools to have the family and economic resources that have been shown to predict academic success.

Further, it has been hypothesized that students who participate in school extracurricular activities are more likely to become engaged in school (Braddock 1991; Newmann 1992; Finn 1993). Research findings seem to show that students who participate in extracurricular activities have better grades, spend more time on homework, and have higher school aspirations.

While students' participation in extracurricular activities seems to positively affect their school performance, their working at a job during the school year may have mixed effects. On the positive side, working may increase the student's sense of responsibility, and early exposure to work experiences may promote future labor market success (Mangum 1988). On the negative side, however, student labor force participation has also been hypothesized to adversely affect student school engagement and outcomes (Newmann 1992).

Although this chapter examines each student background characteristic separately, the family characteristics that are discussed tend to be interrelated and linked to a student's likelihood of living in poverty. For example, a child from a one-parent family is more likely to be living in poverty, as is a child whose parent has lower educational attainment (Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives 1985). Similarly, because households with lower income levels are more mobile, the children in those households would be more likely to change schools. While this chapter discusses these and other selected family background characteristics, chapter 1 provides more descriptive information about the socioeconomic status of students according to the type of school they attend and its location.

The data in this chapter are drawn from the base year and first follow-up of a longitudinal survey that began with a cohort of 8th-grade students, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88). In addition to information on students, NELS:88 includes information gathered directly from students' parents. Parents tend to be a more reliable source than the students themselves for information about parental and other family background characteristics.

Like the analysis in chapter 2, in this chapter students are grouped according to the urbanicity and the level of poverty concentration in the school they attended. The data for each measure are subjected to a series of statis-

tical tests (using analysis of variance techniques) to determine:

1) If urban students, in general, have fewer family and economic resources and lower participation rates (in extracurricular activities or in the labor force) than suburban or rural students;

2) If students from schools with higher poverty concentrations have fewer background resources and different participation rates than students from schools with lower poverty concentrations;

3) If the background resources and participation rates of students from urban public schools would still differ from those of students from rural and suburban public schools if the level of poverty concentration poverty of their schools were held constant; and

4) If students in the urban schools with the highest poverty concentrations have fewer background resources and are less likely to participate in afterschool activities and less likely to be working part time than their suburban and rural counterparts and if so, were their family backgrounds and activities different than predicted.

Chart 3.1 lists the indicators that were used in this chapter and summarizes the findings for those indicators. The chart may be used as a reference, because the four basic questions addressed in this report are answered briefly for each characteristic discussed in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into two sections: student background characteristics and afterschool activities. The first section addresses whether a student lives with two parents, parental employment, whether a parent completed college, school mobility, parental expectations for the child to complete college, and parent and child conversations about school. The second section, on afterschool activities, focuses on sports-related activities offered by the schools attended by 8th graders, students' participation rates in these activities, and student employment.

Summary of This Chapter's Findings

Urban students and students who attend public schools with high poverty concentrations are, in general, more likely to have fewer economic and human resources—they are less likely to have two parents in the household and their parents have lower educational attainment. They are also likely to participate in extracurricular activities at lower rates. Even after accounting for school poverty concentration, the following patterns emerged for urban students:

- They were less likely to live in two-parent families;
- Those who lived in a two-parent family were less likely than suburban students to have a parent employed full time;
- They were more likely to have changed schools more than once; and
- They were less likely to participate in school-sponsored extracurricular sports activities.

For two of the indicators of student background and afterschool activities that were examined, students from an urban school with the highest poverty concentration experienced a higher level of risk than those in high poverty schools elsewhere.[9] These indicators for which urban high poverty students were at higher risk than high poverty students from other locations were:

- They were less likely to live in a two-parent family; and
- They were more likely to change schools more than once.

Of the remaining eight indicators, a similar level of risk was found among students in high poverty schools in suburban and rural locations.

For all of the indicators that were examined in this section, students attending urban high poverty public

schools fared just as well as would be predicted from the combination of urban and high poverty school characteristics. That is, the students' background characteristics and afterschool activities could be predicted from the combined effects of an urban and a high poverty setting. There was no evidence that they were associated with an interaction, or compounding effect, of an urban setting and high poverty.

[9]The term *risk* is used because research findings indicate that these particular characteristics seem to be related to a greater likelihood of poor educational outcomes. For example, children living with only one parent and those whose parents are not employed do not perform as well in school as those living in two-parent households or those having at least one parent who is employed.

CHART 3.1—SUMMARY OF RESULTS: STUDENT BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS AND AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

INDICATOR	Are Urban Schools Different?	Are High Poverty Schools Different?	Are Urban Schools Different after Accounting for Poverty Concentration?	Are Urban High Poverty Schools Different from Other High Poverty Schools? Are Urban High Poverty Schools Different than Predicted?
I. STUDENT BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS				
Living in Two-Parent Family	Yes, urban lower than suburban and rural	Yes, high poverty lower than all others	Yes, urban lower than others	Yes, lower than other high poverty No different than predicted
Single-Parent Family, Parent Works	Yes, urban lower than suburban, but same as rural	Yes, high poverty lower than all others	No, urban same as others	No, same as other high poverty No different than predicted
Two-Parent Family, at Least One Parent Works	Yes, urban lower than suburban, but same as rural	Yes, high poverty lower than all others	Yes, urban lower than suburban, same as rural	No, same as other high poverty No different than predicted
Parent Completed College	Yes, urban lower than suburban, same as rural	Yes, high poverty lower than all others	Yes, urban same as suburban, higher than rural	No, same as other high poverty No different than predicted

INDICATOR	Are Urban Schools Different?	Are High Poverty Schools Different?	Are Urban Schools Different after Accounting for Poverty Concentration?	Are Urban High Poverty Schools Different from Other High Poverty Schools? Are Urban High Poverty Schools Different than Predicted?
Student Changed Schools More Than Once	Yes, urban higher than suburban and rural	Yes, high poverty higher than most others	Yes, urban higher than others	Yes, higher than other high poverty No different than predicted
Parent Expects Student to Complete College	Yes, urban lower than suburban, higher than rural	Yes, high poverty lower than most others	Yes, urban same as suburban, higher than rural	No, same as other high poverty No different than predicted
Parent Talks with Student about School	Yes, urban lower than suburban and rural	Yes, high poverty lower than all others	No, urban same as others	No, same as other high poverty No different than predicted
II. AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES				
School Sports Offerings	Yes, urban lower than suburban, higher than rural	Yes, high poverty lower than most others	Yes, urban higher than rural, same as suburban	Yes, higher than rural high poverty, same as suburban high poverty No different than predicted
Student Sports Participation	Yes, urban lower than suburban and rural	Yes, high poverty lower than all others	Yes, urban lower than others	No, same as other high poverty No different than predicted
Student Labor Force Participation	No, urban same as suburban and rural	Yes, high poverty lower than most others others	No, urban same as others	No, same as other high poverty No different than predicted

Student Background Characteristics

Family support and resources have been shown to significantly affect student's school progress. Thus, it is important to determine whether urban students have similar levels of family and socioeconomic resources as do students in suburban and rural schools.

Findings

- On all but one of the background indicators, student labor force participation, urban public school students fared less well than students who attended suburban public schools. However, on more than half of the indicators examined in this chapter, urban students fared as well as or better than rural students. Those indicators on which urban students fared less well than rural students were school mobility, talks with parents about school, sports participation, and family living arrangements.

- There appears to be a strong relationship between background characteristics that have been shown to put students at greater risk and the level of poverty concentration of the school that they attend. Among all the indicators reviewed, students attending high poverty schools generally fared less well than students attending schools with lower poverty concentrations.

- Even after accounting for the level of poverty in the schools, students who attended urban schools had a greater level of risk than those who attended suburban and rural schools in the areas of family structure and school mobility.[10] Among the remaining indicators, their level of risk was less than or equal to that of students attending other schools.

- Compared with students in high poverty schools in other locations, students who attended urban high poverty schools were less likely to live in a two-parent family and were more likely to have changed schools more than once.

[10]Chapter 1 contains a broad descriptive discussion of student characteristics by urbanicity.

Two-Parent Families

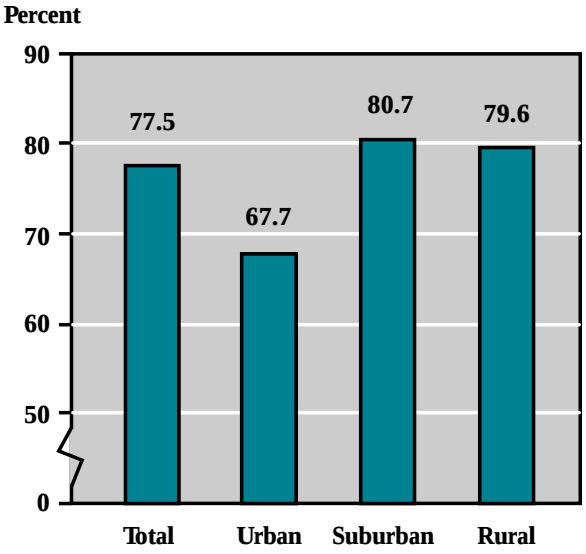
Whether a child lives with one parent or two has been found to be related to a child's success in school (Mulkey et al. 1992). All other things being equal, with only one parent in the household, that parent is likely to have less time to spend with the child than parents in two-parent households. Also, in one-parent households, household income is generally lower than it is in two-parent households, which may produce more economic stress in the household and, in turn, affect a student's school performance.

Are urban schools different? In 1988, about three-quarters of all 8th graders lived in households in which two parents were present (figure 3.1).[11] However, 8th-grade students in suburban or rural schools were more likely than urban students to be living with two parents. Approximately 80 percent of suburban and rural students lived with two parents, compared with only 68 percent of urban students.

Are high poverty schools different? Students in schools with higher concentrations of poverty were less likely to be living with two parents than students in schools with lower levels of poverty (figure 3.2). Eighty-five percent of 8th graders in schools with the lowest concentration of poverty lived with two parents, while 71 percent of students in schools with high poverty concentrations did so.

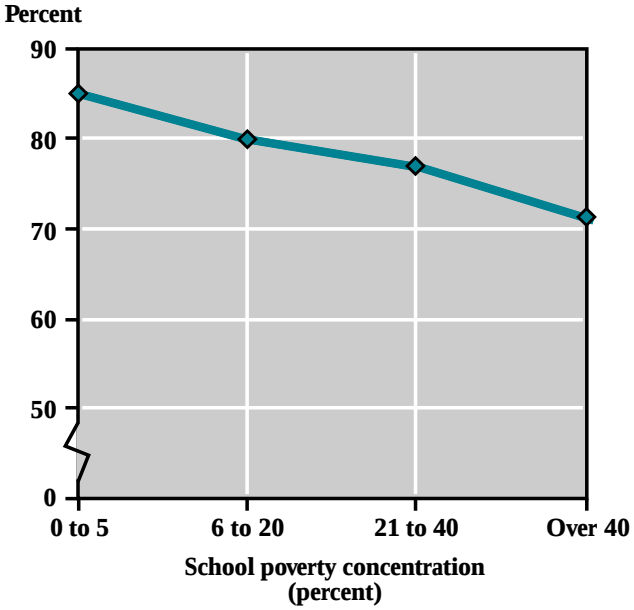
Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? While chapter 1 has shown that urbanicity and poverty concentration are highly related, students in urban schools were less likely than other students to be living in two-parent households

Figure 3.1
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a two-parent family, by urbanicity: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Figure 3.2
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a two-parent family, by school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

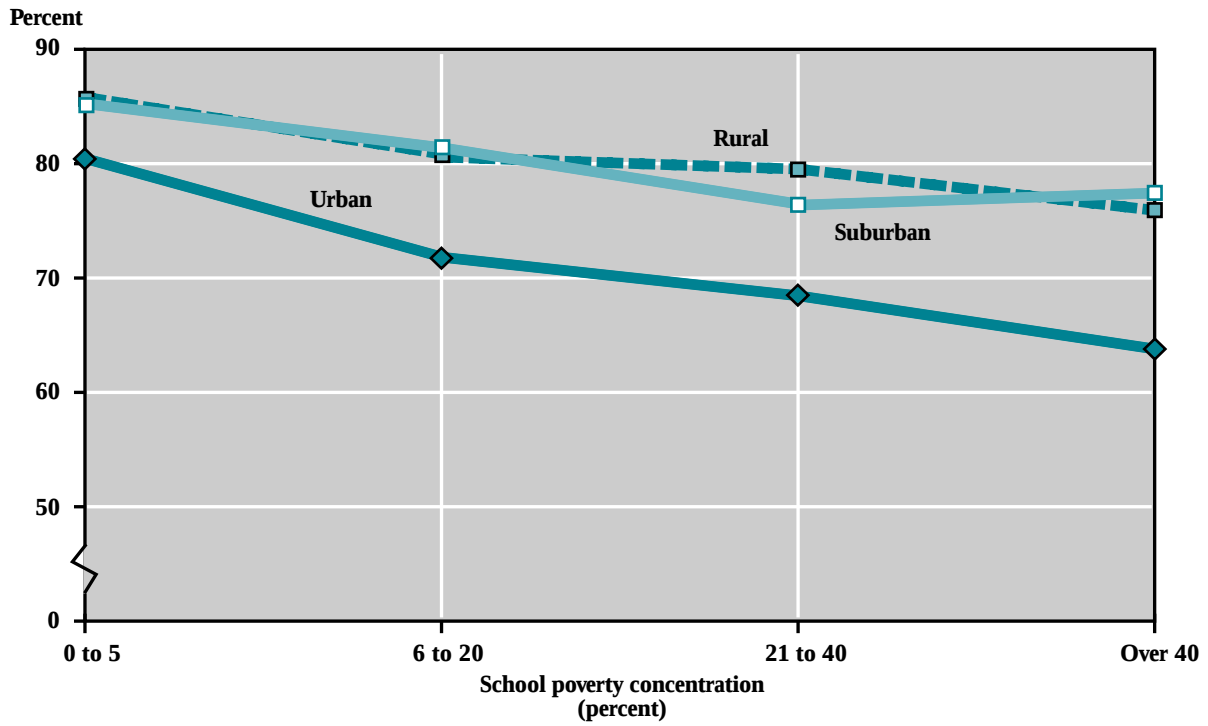
even after considering the effect of school poverty concentration (figure 3.3).

Is the percentage of students living in two-parent households lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? Sixty-four percent of students in urban high poverty schools lived in two-parent families. This percentage is lower than that among students attending similar schools in suburban and rural locations. The percentage of students in urban high poverty schools who lived in two-parent families is no lower than would be predicted given the separate patterns for urban schools and high poverty schools overall. Moreover, it appears that the relationship between a school's level of poverty concentration and family composition was weaker for rural students than for urban students (figure 3.3).

[11]Students were considered to be living in a two-parent family if they lived with their mother and father, their mother and a male guardian, or their father and a female guardian. Otherwise, if they lived with their mother or father only, they were considered to be living with one parent. Students living in any other type of family were excluded from this analysis. According to the report, *A Profile of Parents of Eighth Graders* (Horn and West 1992):

65 percent of students were living with both their mother and father;
12 percent were living with their mother and a male guardian;
3 percent were living with their father and a female guardian;
17 percent were living with their mother or female guardian (no other parent or guardian);
3 percent were living with their father or male guardian (no other parent or guardian); and
1 percent were living in other two-adult families.

Figure 3.3
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a two-parent family, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1988



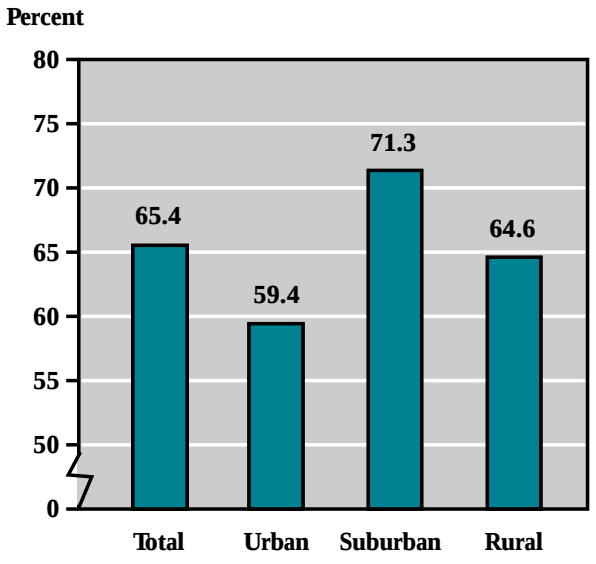
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Parental Employment

There is evidence that parental employment influences family social and economic well-being in both negative and positive ways. This is true for several reasons. The number of earners in a family is related to the level of family income (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). In addition, if the male parent is not employed it can place great stress upon the family and may lead to a greater risk of family marital disruption (Bianchi and McArthur 1991). Thus parental employment can be seen as a positive attribute for a student in that the student is more likely to be living in a stable, more economically secure situation. Also, parents who are in the labor force may serve as positive role models for their children. However, parental employment can have a negative impact when their working hours leave little time to spend with children, which may be especially true in families where there is a single parent.

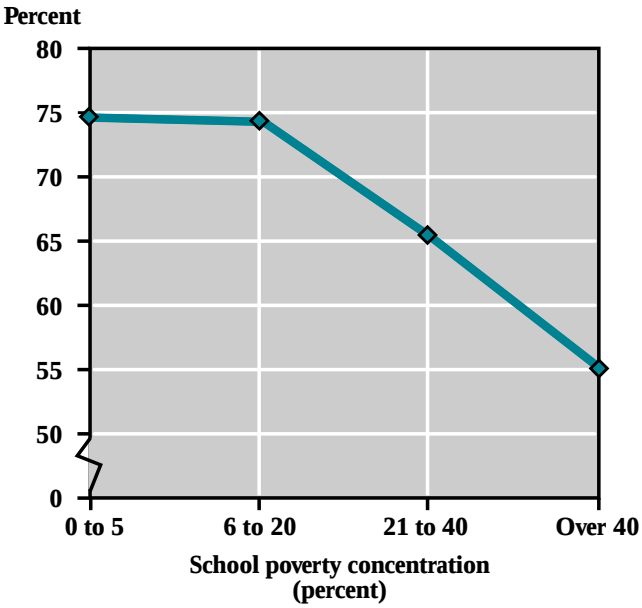
Using information from NELS:88, this analysis breaks out employment status separately for parents of 8th graders when there is one parent in the household and when there are two.[12] For students living with one parent, the category of interest is whether that parent is working full time (contrasted to parents who are working part time, who are unemployed, or who are not in the labor force), because the primary interest in this

Figure 3.4
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a one-parent family with parent working full time, by urbanicity: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Figure 3.5
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a one-parent family with parent working full time, by school poverty concentration: 1988

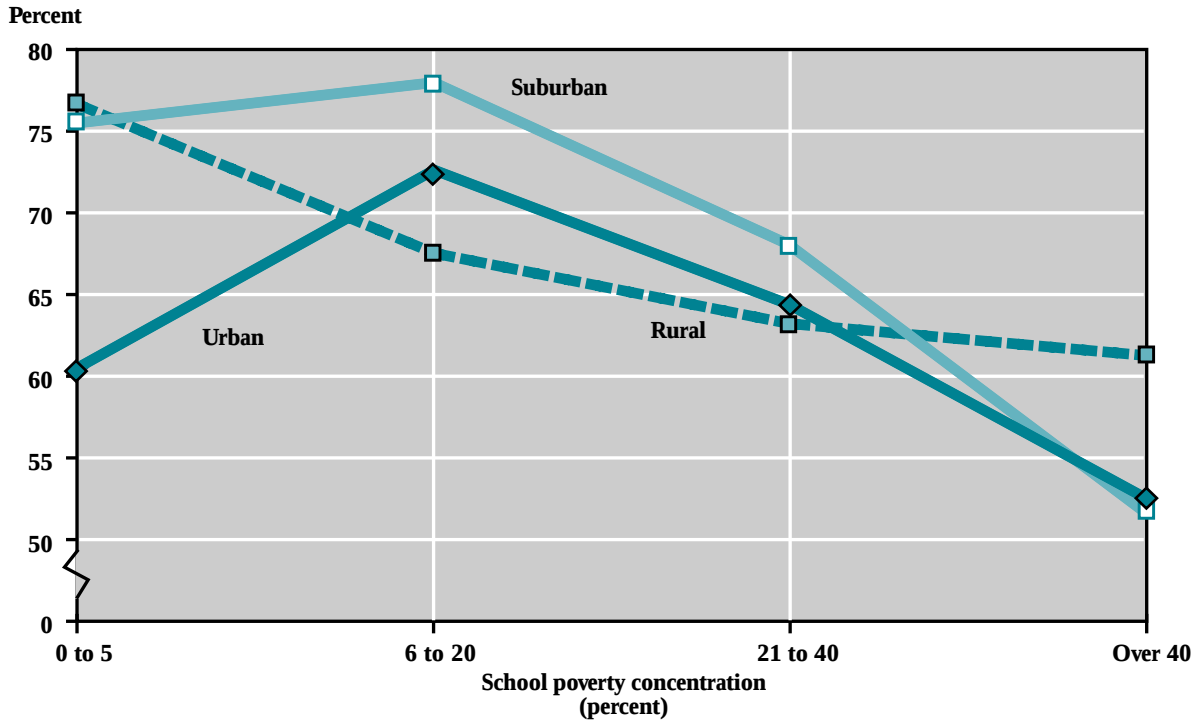


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

section is economic well-being. For students with two parents in the household, the indicator is whether at least one parent works full time.

Are urban schools different? In 1988, about 65 percent of *single* parents of 8th graders were working full time (figure 3.4). Children living in *two-parent* families were more likely to have at least one parent working than were children living with only one parent; about 94 percent of 8th graders in two-parent households had at least one parent working full time (figure 3.7). While urban 8th graders in *one-parent* families were less likely to have that parent working full time than were the single parents of 8th graders in suburban locations (figure 3.4), they were no different on this measure than rural 8th graders. In 1988, 59 percent of urban students in single-parent families had their parent working full time, compared with about 71 percent of suburban and 65 percent of rural 8th-grade students in such families. Similarly, the proportion of students in *two-parent* families in urban and rural public schools with at least one parent working full time was less than that of their peers in suburban schools. Approximately 92 percent of these

Figure 3.6
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a one-parent family with parent working full time, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

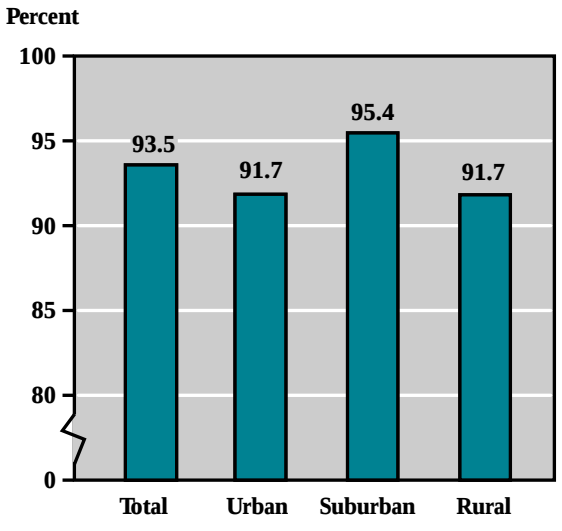
urban and rural students had at least one parent working, while 95 percent of suburban students did so (figure 3.7).

Are high poverty schools different? Students living in *single-parent* and *two-parent* families who attended schools serving large proportions of disadvantaged students were less likely than other students to have their parent working (figures 3.5 and 3.8). In the schools with the highest poverty concentrations, 55 percent of students in *one-parent* families had a working parent compared with over 74 percent of 8th graders in one-parent families from schools with the lowest poverty concentration. Similarly, of students in *two-parent* families in schools with the highest poverty concentrations, 88 percent had at least one parent working full time, compared with 97 percent of students in schools with the lowest poverty concentrations.

Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? Urban students who lived with *two* parents were less likely to have a parent employed full time even after accounting for differences in poverty concentration in each location (figure 3.9). After accounting for poverty concentration, differences in parental employment status between urban students who lived with one parent and their suburban and rural counterparts were not significant (figure 3.6).

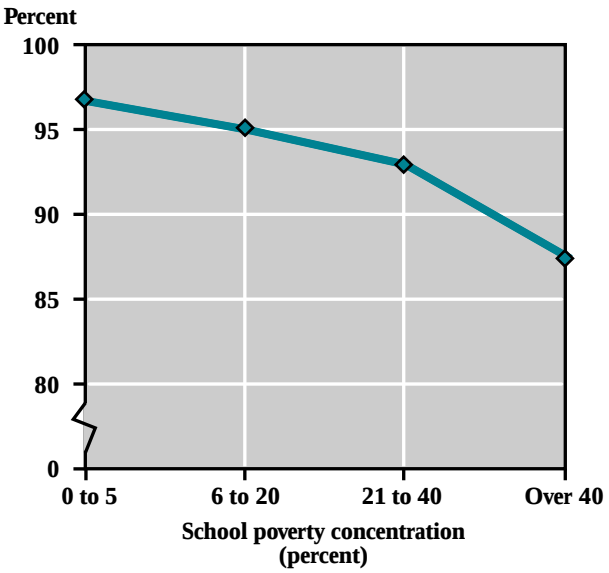
Is the percentage of students with parents working full time lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? Among students in urban high poverty schools, 53 percent of those living with *one* parent and 88 percent of those living with *two* parents had a parent working full time. These students were just as likely as comparable students attending high poverty

Figure 3.7
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a two-parent family with at least one parent working full time, by urbanicity: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Figure 3.8
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a two-parent family with at least one parent working full time, by school poverty concentration: 1988

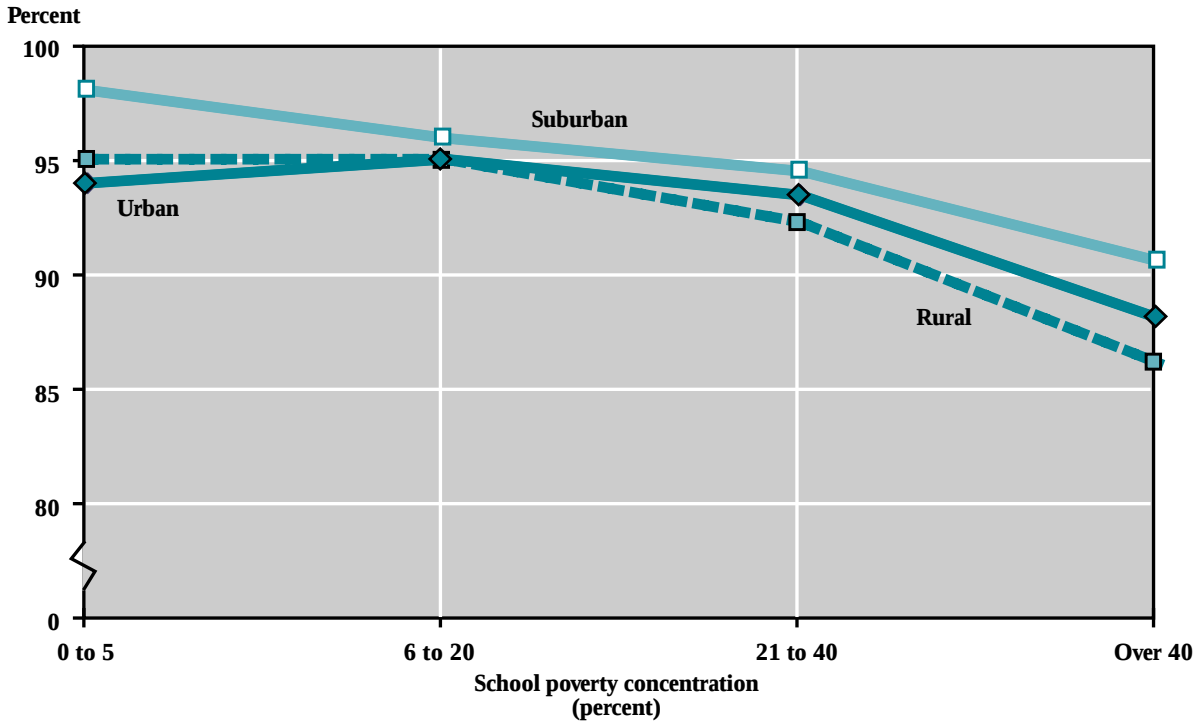


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

schools in suburban and rural locations to have a parent working full time. (The difference in figure 3.6 is not statistically significant.) The percentage of students, whether living in *one-* or *two-parent* families, with a parent working full time was no lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty.

[12]Information about "parental" labor force status was reported by the parent or guardian who responded to the parent questionnaire. That person reported his/her labor force status as well as that of a spouse/partner if one was present in the household. Refer to footnote 11 for more information about family composition.

Figure 3.9
Percentage of 8th-grade students living in a two-parent family with at least one parent working full time, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

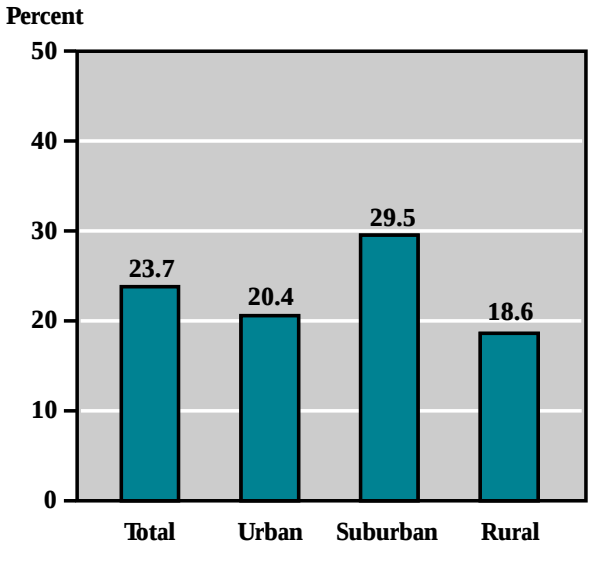
Parents' Educational Attainment

The association between parents' educational level and their children's potential academic success has been well documented. Children with more highly educated parents have higher educational achievement and attainment (Barro and Kolstad 1987; Kirsch and Jungeblut 1986; Kaufman and Bradby 1991; Horn and West 1992; McArthur 1993; Natriello et al. 1990). Further, parents with higher education also tend to have higher expectations for their children's educational outcomes (Horn and West 1992). If at least one parent has completed 4 or more years of college, household income tends to be higher, with parents having greater access to economic resources to support a child (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

The NELS:88 parent survey asked the parent or guardian who responded to report his or her own highest level of education. If that person had a partner or spouse in the household, that person's educational level was also ascertained. In the analysis presented here, if there are two parent/guardians in the household, the highest level of education reported for either parent is used. For the sake of economy, the "parent or guardian" will be referred to as the "parent." (See footnote 11 for a description of family composition in the NELS:88 base year survey.)

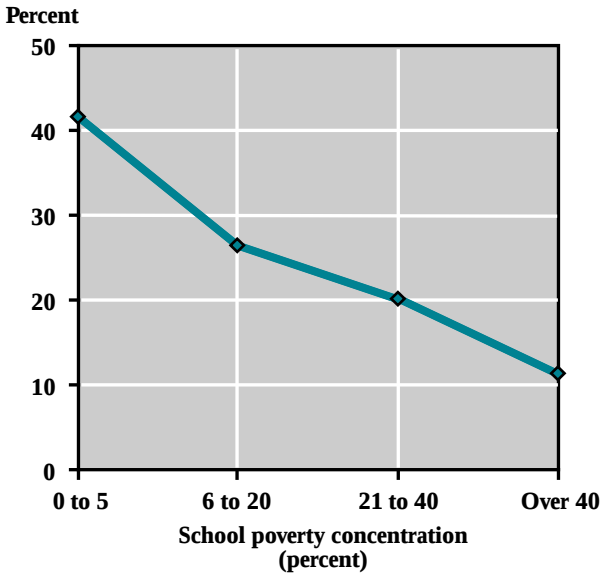
Are urban schools different? In 1988, about 24 percent of all 8th graders had at least one parent in the household who had completed 4 years of college (figure 3.10). Children in urban schools were less likely to have a college-educated parent than were children in suburban schools. Twenty percent of urban children had at least one parent who had completed 4 years of

Figure 3.10
Percentage of 8th-grade students with a parent in the household who had completed 4 years of college, by urbanicity: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Figure 3.11
Percentage of 8th-grade students with a parent in the household who had completed 4 years of college, by school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

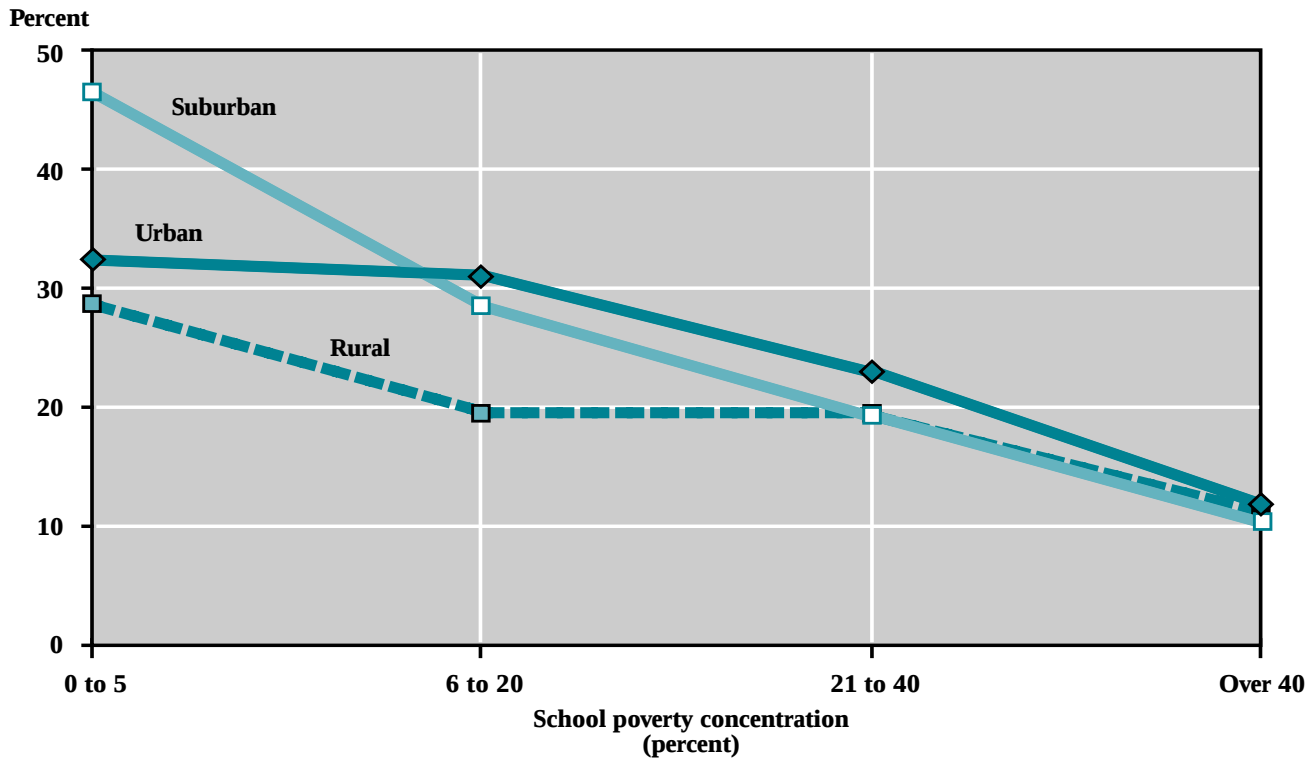
college or more, compared with almost 30 percent of suburban 8th graders. However, urban students were equally as likely to have a college-educated parent as were rural students.

Are high poverty schools different? Children from schools with the highest concentrations of poverty were much less likely to have at least one college-educated parent than students in schools with lower levels of school poverty (figure 3.11). Eleven percent of children in high poverty schools had a parent who had completed 4 years of college or more, compared with over 41 percent of children from low poverty schools.

Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? After the poverty concentration of the schools in each location was considered, urban and suburban students were equally likely to have at least one parent who had completed 4 years or more of college (figure 3.12). However, rural students were less likely than urban students to have at least one college-educated parent.

Is the percentage of students with a college-educated parent lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? While 12 percent of students in urban high poverty schools had a college-educated parent, these students were equally as likely as students in similar schools in suburban and rural locations to have such parents. The percentage of students with a college-educated parent was no lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty.

Figure 3.12
Percentage of 8th-grade students with a parent in the household who had completed 4 years of college, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

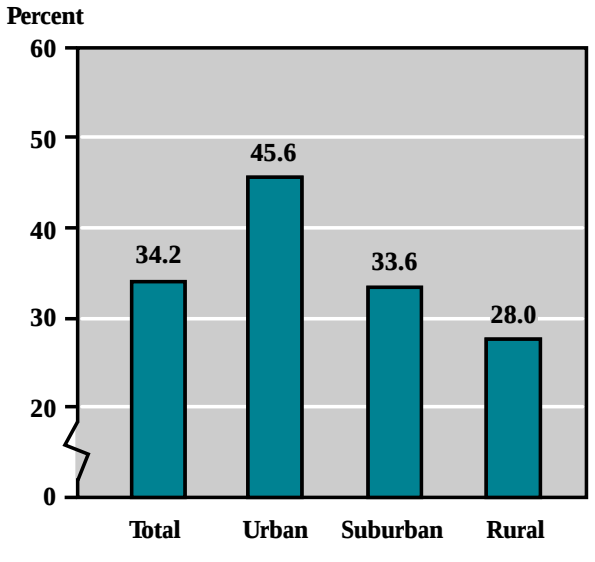
School Mobility

Previous research has linked student mobility (that is, changing schools) with students having increased academic and disciplinary problems in school (Bianchi 1993; Haveman, Wolfe, and Spaulding 1991; Straits 1987; Long 1975).[13] The negative impact of mobility upon schooling can be explained by a number of factors, for example, differences across schools or districts in academic requirements. Another explanation could be that students who frequently change schools may have difficulty becoming attached to a new school, which might decrease their motivation to learn. A student's likelihood of changing schools is also linked to the likelihood of being victimized at school (Bastian and Taylor 1991). This section focuses on school mobility by identifying 8th-grade students who changed schools two or more times since first grade for reasons *other than* a promotion to one grade or level or a move from an elementary school building to a middle school building in the same district.

Are urban schools different? Eighth graders attending urban public schools in 1988 were more likely than other 8th-grade students to have changed schools two or more times since the first grade (figure 3.13). Almost 46 percent of urban students had changed school this often, compared with only 34 percent of suburban and 28 percent of rural students.

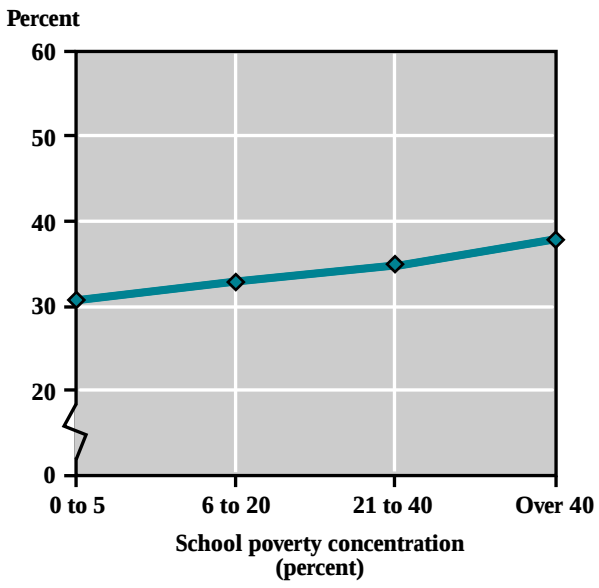
Are high poverty schools different? Students in schools with the highest concentrations of poverty had changed schools more often than students in schools with the lowest concentrations of poverty (figure 3.14). About 38 percent of students in schools with the highest level of school poverty concentration had changed schools

Figure 3.13
Percentage of 8th-grade students who have changed schools more than once since first grade, by urbanicity: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Figure 3.14
Percentage of 8th-grade students who have changed schools more than once since first grade, by school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

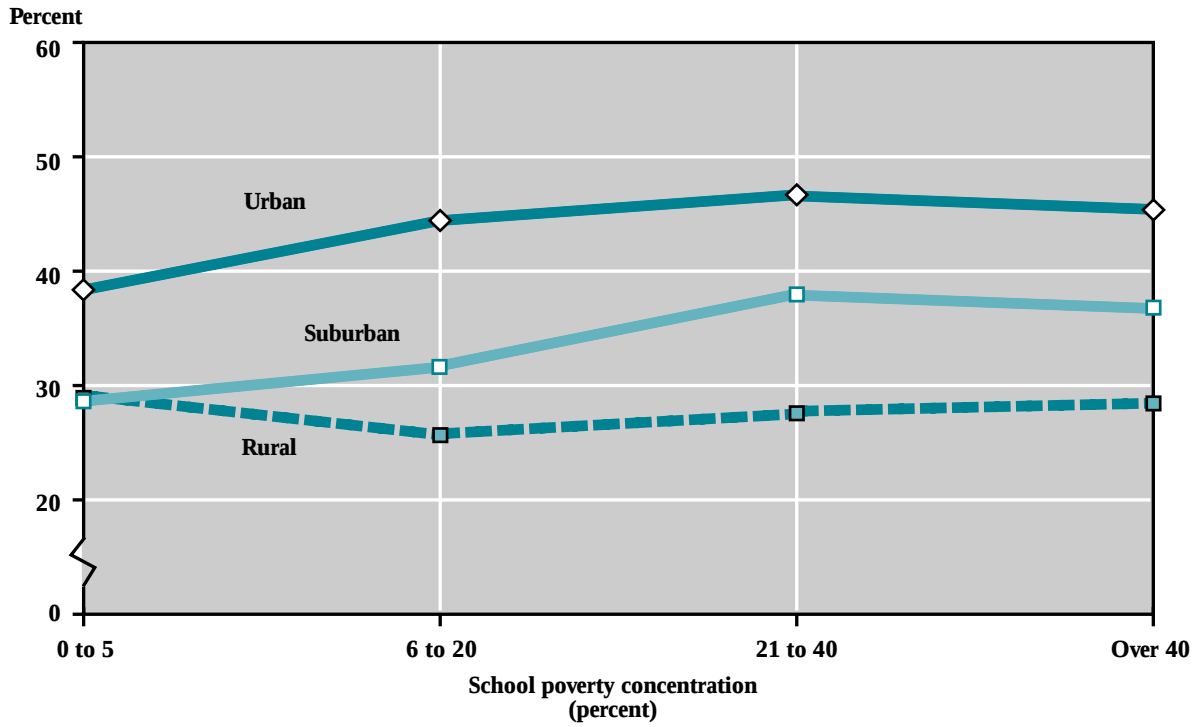
two or more times, compared with 31 percent of students in schools with the lowest concentration of poverty. There was no real difference between the mobility rates of students in schools with highest poverty and next to highest poverty concentrations.

Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? Even after the school poverty concentration in each location was considered, urban students were still more likely than suburban or rural students to have moved two or more times (figure 3.15).

Is student mobility higher than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? Students in urban high poverty schools were more likely to have changed schools two or more times than were students in similar suburban and rural schools. Forty-six percent of these students changed schools this often, compared with 37 percent of suburban and 29 percent of rural students in similar schools. The difference in student mobility between urban high poverty schools and other schools was no greater than would be predicted given the rates of student mobility for urban and high poverty schools taken separately. This suggests that the combination of high poverty concentration and an urban setting does not add to the already higher risk for these students to change schools.

[13]It should be noted that the negative impact of school mobility also could be due in part to underlying problems such as family instability.

Figure 3.15
Percentage of 8th-grade students who have changed schools more than once since first grade, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1988



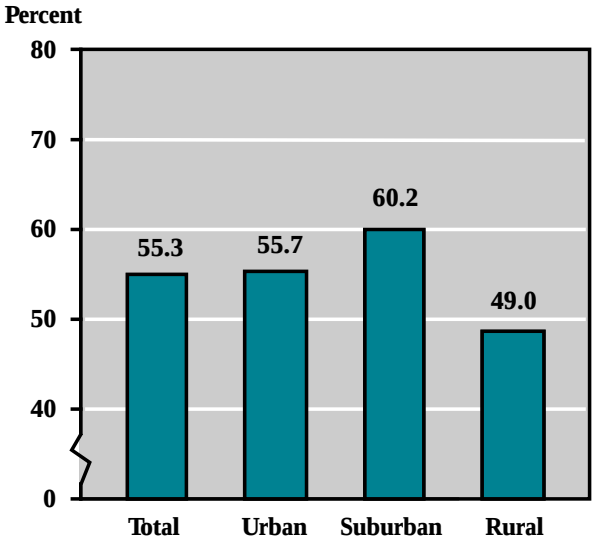
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Parents' Expectations for Their Child's Education

A student's success in school is tied to parental expectations for their child's education. In many instances, parental expectations translate into prescriptions for their child's behavior, which include rules about homework and rules about maintaining a certain grade point average, as well as expectations about how well their child will do in school and how much education the child will eventually complete. Thus, at the same time that parental expectations may influence the student's immediate behavior, they may also affect the student's self-concept and motivation to learn (Horn and West 1992). For this analysis, the measure of parental expectations used is whether parents expect their 8th grader to complete 4 or more years of college, since college completion directly affects labor market success. As with previous sections on parental labor force participation and their education, both parents and guardians are included here and referred to simply as "parents." (See footnote 11 for a discussion of family composition in NELS:88.)

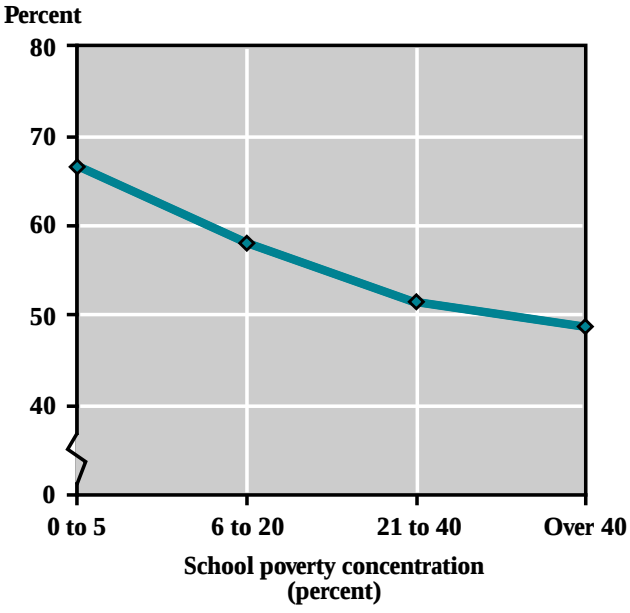
Are urban schools different? In 1988, the parents of most 8th graders held high expectations for their children's education (figure 3.16). The parents of over half the children expected them to graduate from college with a 4-year degree.[14] Parental expectations on average were higher for students in urban schools than for rural students, but were lower than those for suburban students. Almost 56 percent of urban students had parents who expected them to eventually receive a 4-year degree, compared with 49 percent of rural students and 60 percent of suburban students.

Figure 3.16
Percentage of 8th-grade students whose parents expect them to complete 4 years of college, by urbanicity: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Figure 3.17
Percentage of 8th-grade students whose parents expect them to complete 4 years of college, by school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

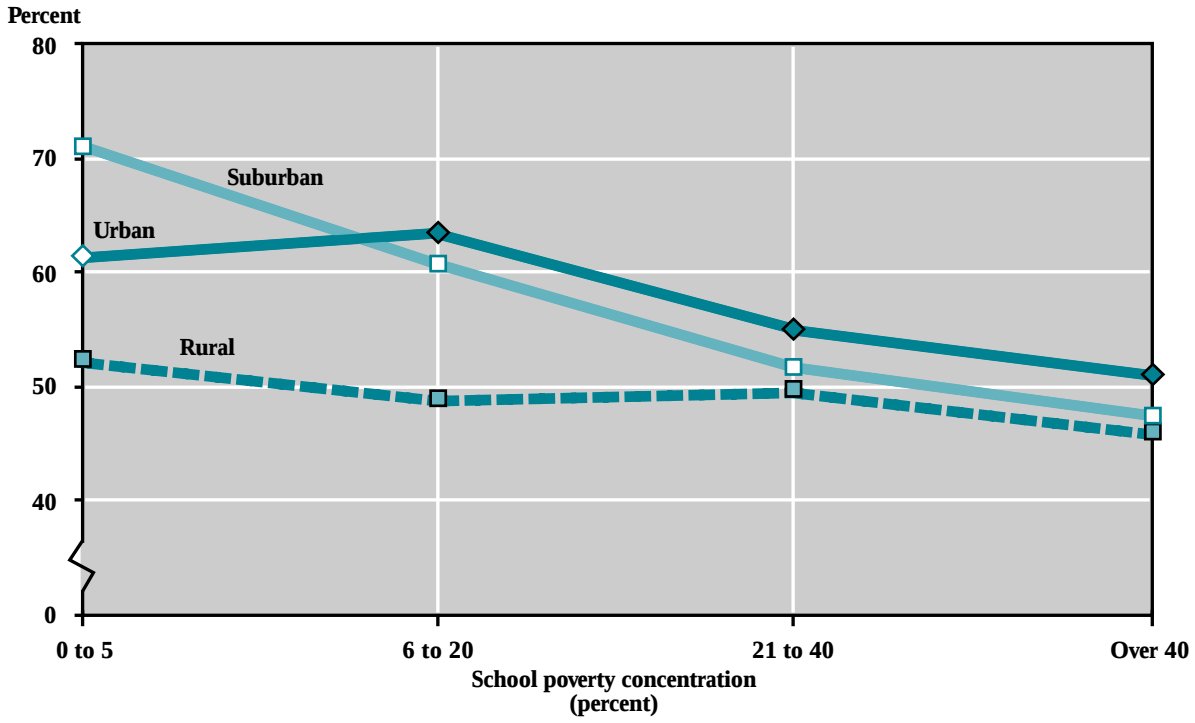
Are high poverty schools different? Parents of children in schools with relatively large concentrations of poor children were far less likely to expect their children to finish college than parents of children in other schools (figure 3.17). The parents of almost two-thirds of the 8th graders in low poverty schools expected them to finish a 4-year college program, compared with 49 percent of the parents of 8th graders in high poverty schools.

Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? Only the difference between urban and rural schools remained significant after accounting for poverty concentration. However, there were no significant differences between urban and suburban schools after accounting for poverty concentration. The educational expectations of the parents of urban and suburban students declined similarly with increasing school poverty (figure 3.18). But for rural students, the parents' expectations varied little across the categories of concentrations of poverty: about 50 percent of all rural students had parents who thought their child would complete a 4-year college program, regardless of poverty concentration level.

Are parental expectations lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? The parental expectations of students in urban high poverty concentration schools were no lower than would be predicted. In fact, regardless of urbanicity, the parents of about half of students in high poverty schools expected them to complete 4 years of college.

[14]Given the fact that in 1990 less than a third of all 25- to 32-year-olds held a bachelor's degree or higher, these expectations may be unrealistically high. See figure 2.11 in chapter 2 of this report.

Figure 3.18
Percentage of 8th-grade students whose parents expect them to complete 4 years of college, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Parent and Child Conversations About School

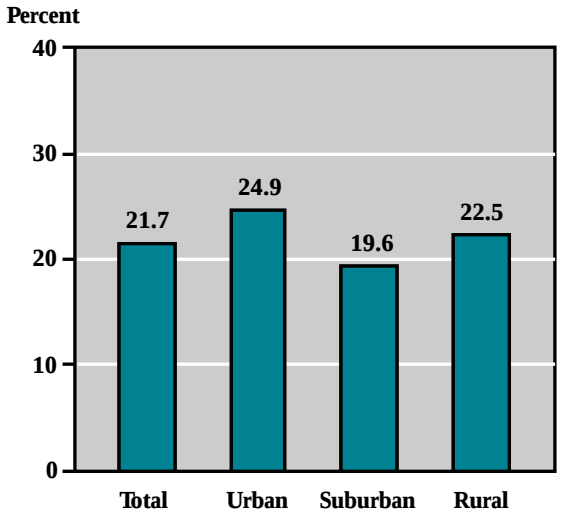
Parent involvement in their child's education may take many forms. These include participation in parent/teacher organizations, volunteering at the school, contacting the school about the child's progress, monitoring homework, talking with their child about what they do in school, and talking about future education plans.

This section addresses one such aspect of parent involvement, the frequency with which the parents talk with their 8th-grade students about school. The assumption made is that talking with the child about school on a regular basis shows the student that the parent cares about school issues and keeps the parent informed about school activities.

Are urban schools different? In 1988, the parents of more than three out of four 8th graders talked with their child about school (figure 3.19), but the parents of 22 percent of public school students rarely did so.[15] Parents of urban students were less likely to regularly talk to their child than were parents of rural or suburban students. The differences by urbanicity, while small, were significant: the parents of about one-fourth of urban students rarely talked to their child about school, compared with the parents of about 23 percent of rural students and one-fifth of suburban students.

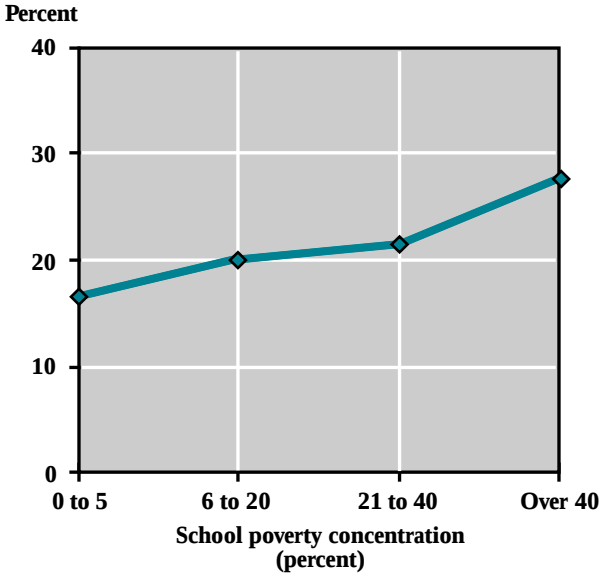
Are high poverty schools different? Parents of students in schools with high concentrations of poverty were less likely than parents of students in other schools to have

Figure 3.19
Percentage of 8th-grade students whose parents rarely talk to them about school, by urbanicity: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Figure 3.20
Percentage of 8th-grade students whose parents rarely talk to them about school, by school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

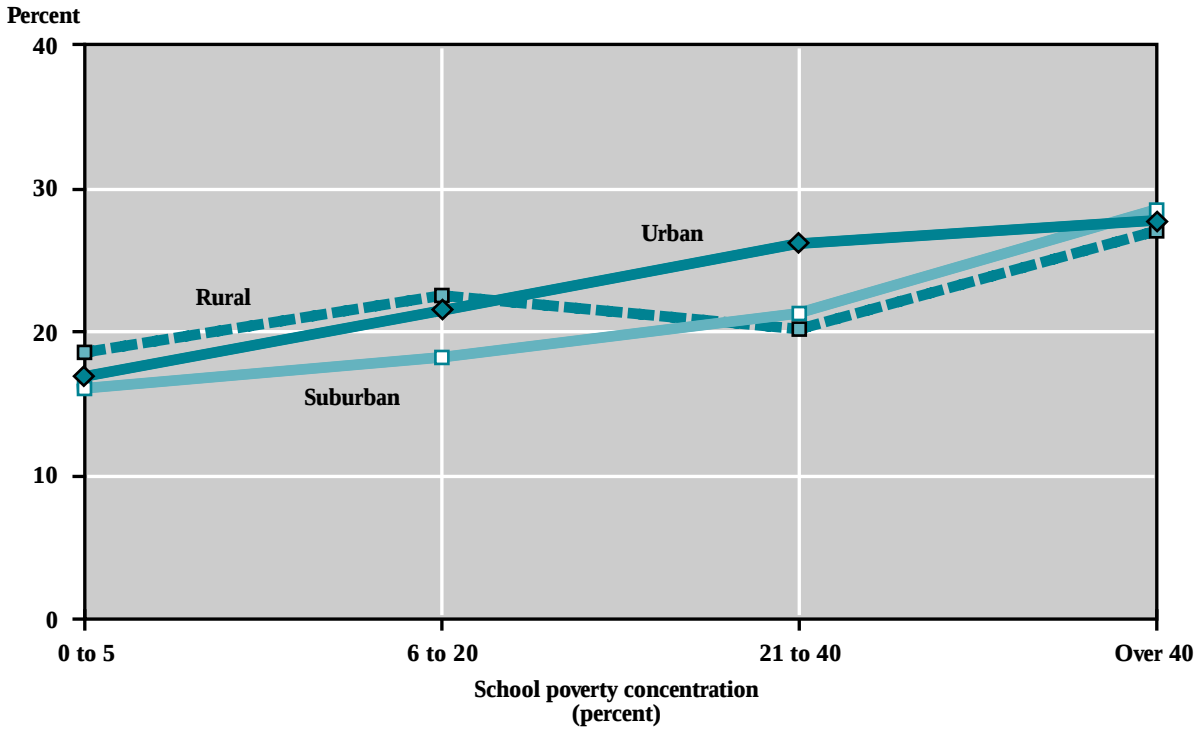
regular conversations with their child about school (figure 3.20). The parents of almost 28 percent of students in schools with high concentrations of poverty rarely talked to their child about school, compared with the parents of 17 percent of students in low poverty schools.

Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? After taking into account differences in the poverty concentration of schools in each location, differences between urban, suburban, and rural schools in the frequency of parent/child conversations about school were no longer statistically significant. The differences between parents of students in urban, suburban, and rural schools shown in figure 3.19 were probably due to the fact that urban schools were more likely to have high concentrations of poverty, and that parents of students in such schools talked less frequently to their child about school (figure 3.20).

Is the percentage of students whose parents rarely talk with them about school higher than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? In urban high poverty schools, the percentage of students whose parents rarely talk with them about school (28 percent) is no higher than it is for suburban or rural high poverty schools, and is no higher than predicted (figure 3.21).

[15]These data are based on a questionnaire item asking parents (or guardians) how often they talk with their children about school. There may be some amount of upward bias in these items due to the social desirability of the positive responses.

Figure 3.21
Percentage of 8th-grade students whose parents rarely talk to them about school, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1988



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Base Year Survey.

Afterschool Activities

In this section the relationship between urbanicity, school poverty concentration, and afterschool activities is discussed. For the purposes of this report, it is assumed that participation in school-sponsored, afterschool sports activities benefits students overall. However, as mentioned earlier, there is lively debate about whether working while in school—and, if so, how many hours of work per week—is in the student's best interests.

Findings

- While urban public schools were in between suburban and rural schools in the number of sports-related activities offered, urban students' participation in those activities was lower than that of either suburban or rural students, even after accounting for poverty concentration.

- Students in urban high poverty schools participated in sports-related activities at similar rates as did students in high poverty schools in suburban or rural locations.

- In rural schools, while there were generally fewer types of activities offered than in similar urban or suburban schools, a higher proportion of students participated. This higher participation rate may be due to rural schools generally being smaller and, hence, students being more likely to be drawn into school activities than they might be in larger schools with less individualized attention. Another explanation may be that there is less competition for a limited number of slots in rural schools, so the ratio of students to opportunities is higher.

- As the concentration of poverty in the school increases, both the number of sports-related activities offered and the proportion of students who participate decline.

- There was no difference between urban, suburban, and rural students in the proportion working 11 or more hours per week, even when accounting for poverty and even in schools with the highest poverty concentrations.

Student Participation in Extracurricular Sports

Participation in school extracurricular activities may increase students' interest in school. Students who participate in school-sponsored sports activities (and academic clubs) seem to have better grades, spend more time on homework, and have higher school aspirations (Newmann 1992). Moreover, afterschool activities may enable students to use their time more constructively, thus decreasing their likelihood of getting into trouble in school or elsewhere.

In the next section, the discussion focuses on school sports as an example of the many activities available, because research indicates that sports activities influence students' engagement in schools as much as other afterschool activities (Newmann 1992). The data that were used in the following analysis are drawn from the first follow-up of the NELS:88 collected in 1990 on 10th graders and their schools. The first part of the discussion examines differences in the number of sports activities offered by schools according to urbanicity and level of poverty concentration. This is necessary to understand whether opportunities to participate in sports differ by school type, which might influence whether students in different types of schools vary in the degree to which they participate in sports. The discussion then turns to students' rates of participation in school-sponsored sports.

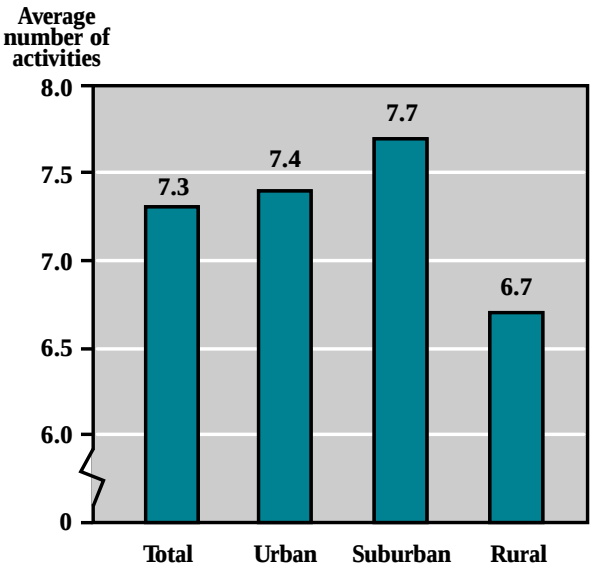
School Sports Offerings

Are urban schools different? In 1990, 10th graders were offered an average of 7.3 sports-related activities in schools nationwide (figure 3.22).[16] Urban schools offered 7.4 sports-related activities, while students in suburban public schools were offered similar numbers of activities (7.7). On average, students in rural schools had fewer such activities (6.7) available to them. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the student membership of rural schools tends to be smaller than those of schools in other locations.[17] Another factor may be that rural schools tend to have a more geographically dispersed student membership, which might make supporting a larger number of sports-related offerings infeasible. Though the differences in numbers of activities offered are small, they are statistically significant.

Are high poverty schools different? Students in schools with high concentrations of poverty had fewer sports activities available to them than students in low poverty schools (figure 3.23). However, these differences were not large. In the schools with the highest concentrations of poverty about seven sports activities were offered, compared with about eight activities offered in schools with low poverty concentrations.

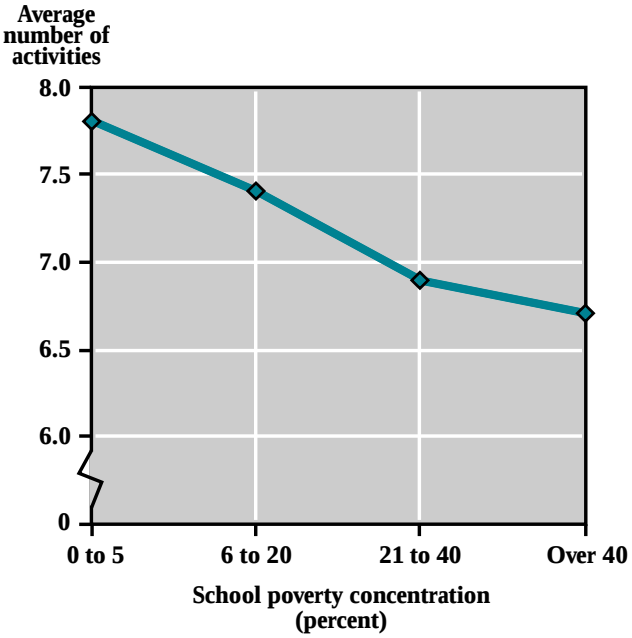
Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? After the school's level of poverty concentration was considered, the numbers of sports-related activities offered by urban and suburban schools were no longer different; however, the difference in the numbers of sports-related activities offered

Figure 3.22
Average number of sports-related activities offered by the schools attended by 10th-grade students, by urbanicity: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

Figure 3.23
Average number of sports-related activities offered by the schools attended by 10th-grade students, by school poverty concentration: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

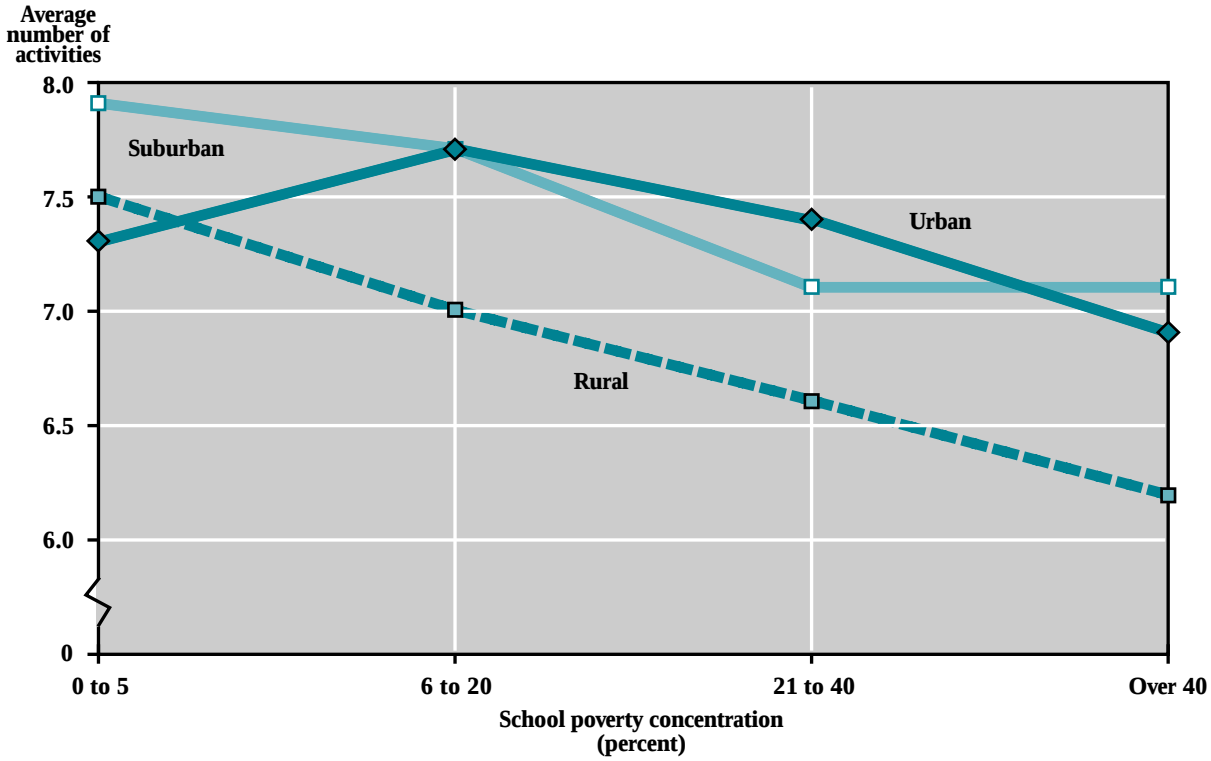
by urban and rural schools remained. Fewer activities were offered to 10th-grade students in rural schools than in urban schools at every level of poverty concentration except the lowest (figure 3.24).

Is the number of sports-related activities lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? Students in urban high poverty schools had access to a similar number of activities as those in suburban high poverty schools (about seven), and slightly more than rural high poverty schools (about six). The number of activities in urban high poverty schools could be predicted given the patterns for urban schools and high poverty schools considered separately. That is, being in a poor urban school did not present any disadvantage in the number of sports-related activities offered beyond that observed for high poverty schools in general.

[16]Sports-related activities included baseball/softball, basketball, football, soccer, swim team, other team sports, other individual sports, cheerleading, and drill team.

[17]See chapter 1 above.

Figure 3.24
Average number of sports-related activities offered by the schools attended by 10th-grade students, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

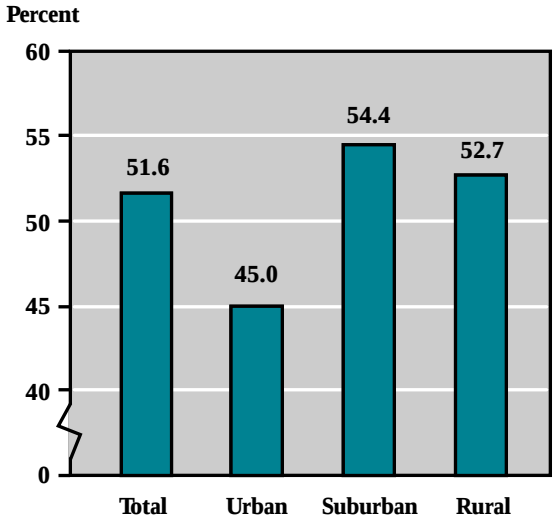
Sports Participation

Are urban schools different? In 1990, a little more than half of all 10th-grade students participated to some extent in sports-related school activities (figure 3.25).[18] However, urban students were less likely than either suburban or rural students to have participated—45 percent compared with 54 percent and 53 percent, respectively.

Are high poverty schools different? Students in high poverty schools were less likely to participate in school sports-related activities than other students (figure 3.26). Approximately 56 percent of students in schools with low poverty concentrations were involved in sports-related activities, compared with 44 percent of students in high poverty schools.

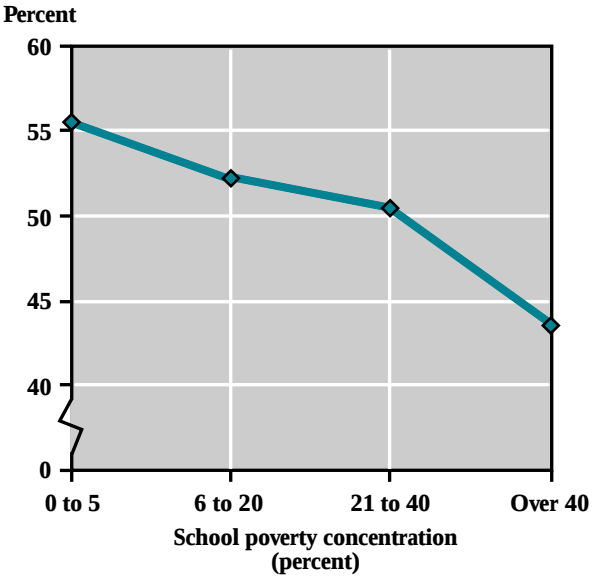
Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? When the school's level of poverty concentration was taken into account, urban students' participation rates in sports-related activities generally remained lower than those of other students (figure 3.27). Among students enrolled in schools with lower poverty concentrations (20 percent or less), urban students tended to be less likely to participate in sports-related activities than students in similar suburban and rural schools.

Figure 3.25
Percentage of 10th-grade students who participated in sports-related activities, by urbanicity: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

Figure 3.26
Percentage of 10th-grade students who participated in sports-related activities, by school poverty concentration: 1990

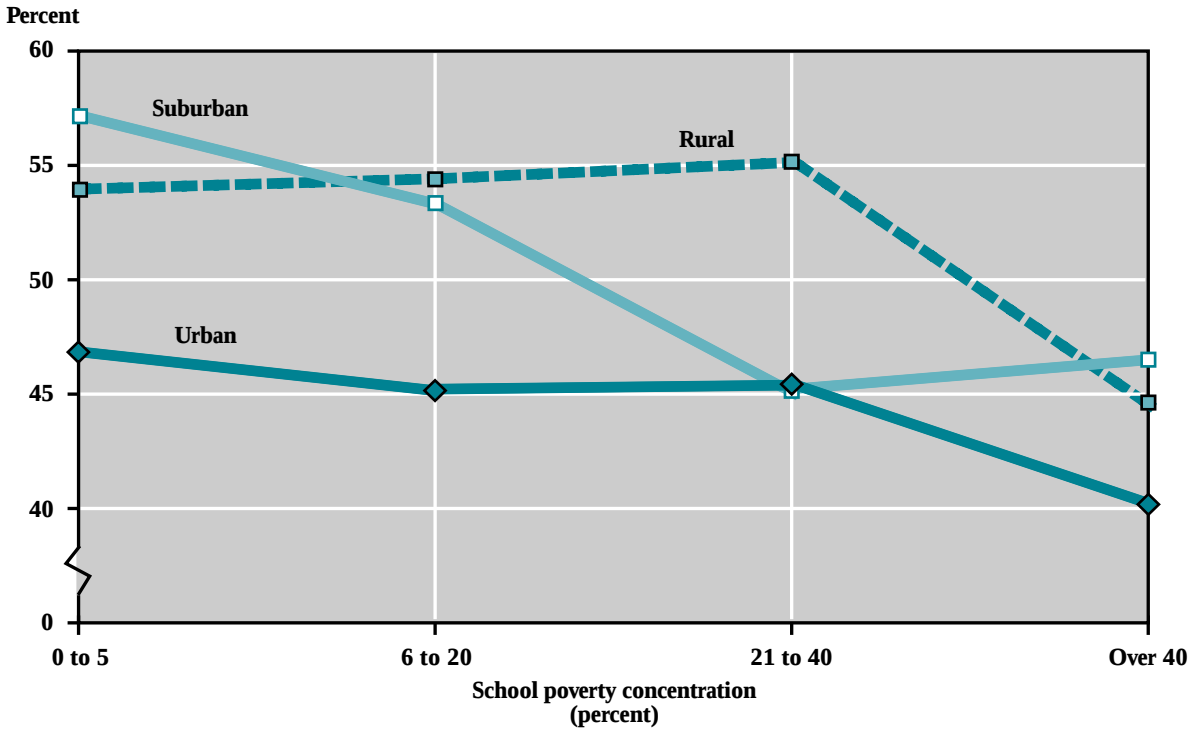


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

Is the percentage of students participating in sports-related activities lower than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? At the highest level of poverty concentration, the participation rates of urban, suburban, and rural students did not differ significantly. The combination of being in an urban school with a high poverty concentration was not related to any additional disadvantage for these students. That is, students in these schools participated in sports-related activities at rates that would be predicted for students in schools that were both urban and high poverty.

[18]Participation was defined as being involved in one or more intramural sports, junior varsity, freshman or varsity team sports, or cheerleading or drill teams for such sports.

Figure 3.27
Percentage of 10th-grade students who participated in sports-related activities, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

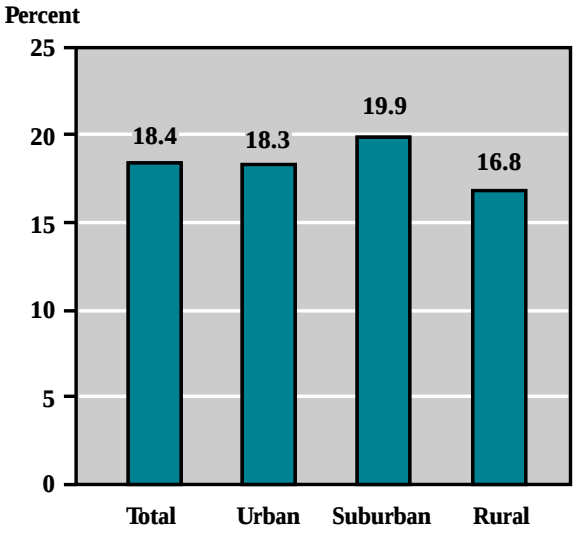
Employment of 10th-Grade Students

Employment while attending high school appears to have both short-term effects upon students' degree of engagement in school and long-term effects upon students' future labor market activities. While previously many researchers had argued that overall students benefited from their early labor market experiences (Mangum 1988; Lewin-Epstein 1981), the picture is not nearly so clear based on recent research (Greenberger and Steinberg 1986).

Many researchers now argue that part-time employment has a deleterious effect on educational outcomes and on future labor market experience. Students who work during the school year have less time for homework and may be too tired to accomplish their school work successfully. In addition, as students become more involved in the labor force, they may become less interested in school. In terms of future labor market experiences, the downside to part-time employment was unforeseen during the 1970s. The reality is that most part-time jobs currently available to students are high stress, dead-end jobs (store clerk, food service worker), which actually promote delinquent behaviors and encourage students to develop negative attitudes toward work itself (Greenberger and Steinberg 1986).

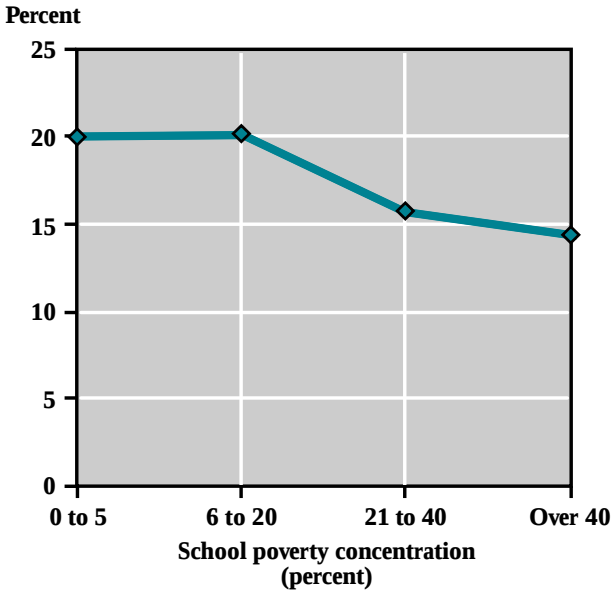
Some research (Newmann 1992) has found that students who work 20 or more hours per week are more likely to experience negative effects from working. In this section, the measure examined is whether or not

Figure 3.28
Percentage of 10th-grade students who worked 11 or more hours per week, by urbanicity: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

Figure 3.29
Percentage of 10th-grade students who worked 11 or more hours per week, by school poverty concentration: 1990



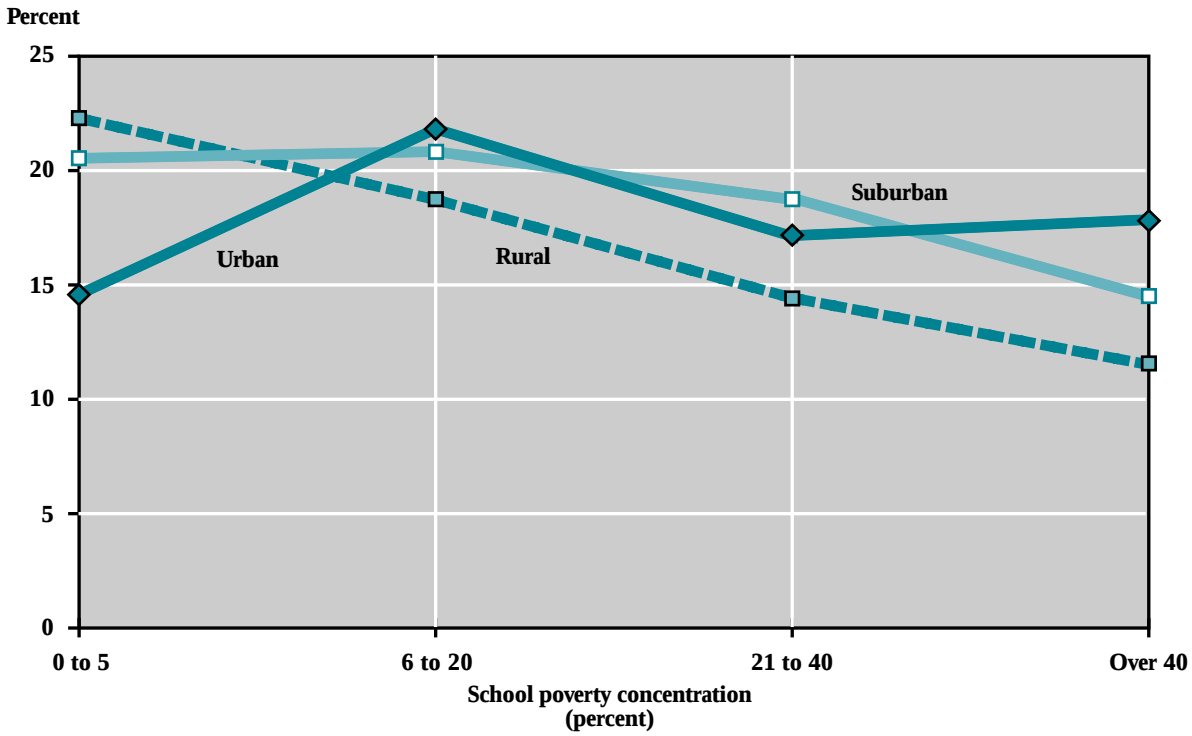
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

10th-grade students work 11 or more hours per week during the school year, because few students in the 10th grade work 20 hours or more per week.

Are urban schools different? In 1990, about 18 percent of 10th graders were employed 11 or more hours per week (figure 3.28). However, urban 10th graders were just as likely as other students to be working this many hours. While it appears that rural students were less likely than urban students to work 11 or more hours, this difference is not statistically significant.

Are high poverty schools different? While the proportions of urban, suburban, and rural students who worked 11 or more hours varied little, the proportions of such students did vary according to the level of poverty concentration in the school (figure 3.29). A lower proportion of students in schools with the highest concentration of poverty worked 11 or more hours than students in schools with lower poverty concentrations (20 percent or less). For example, about 14 percent of students in schools with the highest poverty concentration worked 11 or more hours, compared with about 20 percent of 10th graders attending schools with less than 20 percent poverty concentration. For students in schools with the highest and next to highest poverty concentrations, however, there was no statistically significant difference in their likelihood of working.

Figure 3.30
Percentage of 10th-grade students who worked 11 or more hours per week, by urbanicity and school poverty concentration: 1990



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, First Follow-up Survey.

Are urban schools different after accounting for poverty concentration? There were no significant differences by urbanicity after taking into account poverty concentration.

Is the percentage of students who work part time higher than predicted in urban schools with high concentrations of poverty? Students in urban high poverty schools were as likely to be employed as those in other high poverty schools, and their employment levels could be predicted from the combination of location and level of poverty concentration (figure 3.30).