

## **Comments after being sworn in as IES Director**

**Ceremony: October 5, 2009, LBJ Auditorium**

Thanks, Arne. First, I want to say how completely thrilled and honored I am to be here today and to have this wonderful opportunity to make a difference in how research, evaluation, assessment and other data are used to improve schools and the lives of students, teachers, and families across the country.

Before I came to Washington four months ago I spent my entire career in Chicago, analyzing data, researching reform and school improvement efforts, and working with members of Chicago's education community to make those findings useful. For the last 18 years I was affiliated with the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, where we saw ourselves as partners of the Chicago Public Schools. We wanted our research to matter. To make that happen we worked closely with the district in developing our research agenda, planning our studies, and interpreting the findings so that the work was useful and relevant – not just to the senior leadership but also to teachers, students, parents and principals.

I had the great fortune to work with wonderful colleagues in Chicago – staff at the Consortium, leaders in schools and in the central office, community activists, and other members of Chicago's school reform community. Some of those very people are here in this room today.

Now that I am at IES, I am getting to know another group of talented and enthusiastic professionals, many of whom are also here today. We at IES are very excited at the potential of

evaluating the impacts of the education federal stimulus funds and making IES a key player in learning more about school improvement and communicating our findings in a compelling fashion to those who need to hear us the most. We won't let this enormous opportunity to go by without our learning from these reform strategies, informing the field, and spurring further improvements and reforms. What looks especially promising and should be expanded? What looks problematic and should be watched carefully and curtailed if needed? We want to produce findings in a timely manner, promote continuous improvement, and help the broader field – states, local districts and researchers, too – learn from these experiences.

Our goals at IES are ambitious. We will continue to build on our rigorous standards for research, statistics, assessment, and evaluation and maintain our independence. But we will also bring a new focus to our agency as we strive for usability and relevance. We want to speak more directly to—and with – practitioners and policy makers.

Finally, let me say a personal word or two. I just love living in this beautiful city. I'm not quite a full-time resident yet, since my partner Sem is still living and working in Chicago. But he comes often to Washington for weekends and we have the most wonderful time together, exploring the city, walking everywhere we go. I can't wait until we're both located here permanently and that we can fully enjoy and become deeply involved in this community.