Doctoral Programs
Dear Prospective Applicant:

These pages offer a snapshot of the exceptional minds, unmatched opportunities, and passionate community of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. It is a brief glimpse into what is truly a remarkable place.

Our doctoral students are diverse in background, in philosophy, in work experience, and in focus. They are educators, entrepreneurs, charter school founders, and researchers. They come to us from the Bronx, New Orleans, Oakland, and Cambodia. And they use HGSE as a launch pad into impactful careers as policymakers, professors, superintendents, and state-level leaders, just to name a few.

What unites them is the shared belief that every child deserves a high-quality education and that educational opportunity is no less than a basic human right. This goal is what motivates everyone at HGSE — students, faculty, and staff alike. It inspires our teaching and our research, and it fuels our work with teachers, principals, and leaders in education both here and across the globe.

People come to HGSE because they want to change the world, and we provide them with the inspiration, training, and support to do just that. There is no more important calling.

JAMES E. RYAN
Dean of the Faculty
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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CHANGE THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION?

At the Harvard Graduate School of Education, it means cultivating the leaders and innovators who are best equipped to make a significant impact in the field. It means using evidence to show what works in education and new ways of thinking to fix what doesn’t. It means connecting research, practice, and policy to find real solutions to urgent challenges.

Coming here means joining a nearly century-long tradition of innovation. HGSE was the first professional school at Harvard to admit women. We were the first school to offer a doctorate in education and the first to pioneer a doctorate in education leadership. This is where the theory of multiple intelligences was developed, where *Sesame Street* was born, where Universal Design for Learning originated.

Coming here means being part of the broader Harvard community: learning from the top minds in every field, seizing extraordinary research and leadership opportunities, and attaining visibility for your path-breaking work.

HOW WILL YOU CHANGE THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION?

We offer two distinct programs: the practice-based Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) and the research-based Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Ph.D.). Whichever program you choose, you will be an integral part of a welcoming community of colleagues and mentors. You will find exciting opportunities to work across the university, across disciplines, and across the sector. And you will challenge yourself in new and unexpected ways.

LEARN TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Our doctoral students are people with that extra spark, those who think big. They tend to prefer not to work within ivory towers but to engage with the educational community to actually create change out in the field.”

Bridget Terry Long, Academic Dean and Professor of Education and Economics
OUR FACULTY

Leaders in research, policy, and practice

The strength of our doctoral programs rests on an outstanding faculty. You will not only have access to some of the foremost scholars and thought leaders in the world — you will work with mentors who have been on the front lines of policy and practice, and learn from researchers deeply connected to the field. Our faculty have turned around struggling urban school districts, advised the White House on policy, and created opportunities in Pakistan, Colombia, and Botswana, among other developing countries. Their research has influenced legislation, expanded access to college, and revolutionized our understanding of how children learn and develop.

As a doctoral student, you will also learn from faculty beyond HGSE. The first and second years of the Ed.L.D. Program tap into the unmatched expertise of the Harvard Business School, the Harvard Kennedy School, and other Harvard schools, while the interdisciplinary Ph.D. draws on more than 100 faculty members from across the university.

A FEW OF OUR FACULTY

Andrés Alonso, the former CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools and considered one of the most effective superintendents in the nation, teaches about systemic reform in urban schools.

Monica Higgins, an expert in leadership and organizational change, has been a consultant to former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Nancy Hill studies the ways in which race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status influence parenting beliefs and practices and child outcomes.

Andrew Ho is a psychometrician interested in the intersection between educational statistics and educational policies.

Meira Levinson, a former teacher in the Atlanta and Boston public schools, writes about civic education, multiculturalism, youth empowerment, and educational ethics and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Paul Reville, former secretary of education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, teaches about educational equity, policy, and reform.

WHO WILL BE YOUR MENTOR?

Meet all of our extraordinary faculty at hgse.me/HGSE-edldfaculty and hgse.me/HGSE-phdfaculty.
OUR COMMUNITY
Close connections, a world of opportunities

HGSE is a tight-knit community with access to everything a top university has to offer — the best of both worlds. Driven yet supportive, the people you will meet here bring diverse perspectives to a shared passion for education. Whether it’s through the bonding of the cohort experience, the accessibility of the faculty, or the friendly faces you see while dining at Gutman Commons, you’ll build lasting relationships that sustain you personally and professionally. Community begins here, but it doesn’t end here.

At Home on Appian Way
Life as a doctoral student is undeniably busy, but HGSE students make time for fun, too, with Red Sox game outings, ski trips, pub nights, and more. Family-friendly events, affinity groups, and support services aim to make every member of the community feel at home. And if you are moving across the country, internationally, or with family, our Office of Student Affairs provides resources to ease your transition.

The Harvard Advantage
Our home within Harvard offers access to a breadth of resources and opportunities — intellectual, cultural, and social — that few other campuses can provide. As a doctoral student, you will register for courses at other Harvard schools. Virtually every night of the week, you’ll have an opportunity to take in a lecture by a world leader, influential author, or acclaimed artist. You might even collaborate on a startup at the Harvard Innovation Lab or conduct research at the university’s Center on the Developing Child.

Boston and Cambridge
Rich with history while also serving as centers of innovation, Boston and Cambridge provide a unique landscape to students and their partners or families. Home to more than 60 colleges and universities, world-class cultural institutions, beloved sports teams, enticing restaurants, and unique neighborhoods, this is one of the most livable cities in the country.
Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)

- Creating transformative, system-level leaders
- Three-year, practice-based degree
- Bringing together the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Harvard Business School, and the Harvard Kennedy School

Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Ph.D.)

- Training cutting-edge researchers who generate knowledge to drive policy and practice
- Five-year, research-based degree
- Offered jointly with the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, providing full access to the extraordinary resources of Harvard University
What does it take to create systemic change in the field of education? It takes a keen understanding of learning and teaching, the capacity to lead complex organizations, and the skills to navigate political environments.

The Doctor of Education Leadership equips you with all three by harnessing the vast resources of HGSE, the Harvard Business School, the Harvard Kennedy School, and other Harvard graduate schools. The only program of its kind, the Ed.L.D. prepares you to work across the sector to improve outcomes in American preK–12 education.

In a close-knit cohort of experienced educators, you will learn — and practice — the skills to assume a system-level leadership role in school systems, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and beyond.

YEAR ONE
Engage in a highly integrated core curriculum that focuses on four areas:

• Learning and Teaching
• Leadership and Organizational Change
• Politics and Policy
• Personal Mastery

Receive individualized executive coaching and work with learning teams designed to support your personal leadership development.
YEAR TWO
Deepen your understanding of the core curriculum through a second-year seminar. In addition, you’ll work closely with advisers to develop a tailored learning experience with elective courses.

Sample Elective Courses:

Harvard Graduate School of Education
• Introduction to Education Finance and Budgeting
• Understanding Today’s Educational Testing
• Systemic Reform in Urban School Districts and Schools
• Transforming Education Through Emerging Technologies

Harvard Business School
• Building and Sustaining a Successful Enterprise
• Design Thinking and Innovation
• The Moral Leader
• Power and Influence

Harvard Kennedy School
• Leadership on the Line
• Exercising Leadership: The Politics of Change
• Science of Behavior Change: Judgment and Decision Making
• Women and Leadership

YEAR THREE
You will undertake a 10-month residency at one of our partner organizations, which range from large public school systems to some of the nation’s most influential nonprofit organizations. Through this customized experience — unique among doctoral programs — you’ll strengthen your leadership muscles by working on a high-priority strategic project. The residency culminates with the capstone, a reflective, analytic account of your leadership and contributions to the project.

FUNDING
All Ed.L.D. students receive:
• A full-tuition package for three years, including student health fee funding
• A combination of stipend and/or campus-based work opportunities for years one and two
• A paid residency with a partner organization in the third year
AFTER HARVARD

The practice-based Ed.L.D. is designed to catapult graduates up the career ladder. Sample positions of Ed.L.D. alumni include:

- Chief Executive Officer, The Learning Accelerator (TLA)
- Executive Director, Big Picture Learning, Providence, Rhode Island
- Assistant Superintendent, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Director of Alternative Education, Oakland Unified School District
- Chief Community Officer, Tennessee Achievement School District
- Director of National Education Strategy, Raikes Foundation
- Senior Managing Director of Organizational Culture Initiatives, Teach for America
- Director, Iowa State Department of Education
- Superintendent, Monterey Peninsula Unified School District, Monterey, California
- Associate Director, Public Education Partners, Greenville County, Greenville, South Carolina

“...This program is about more than expanding your knowledge and skill sets. It’s about applied experiences, intense, community-based collaboration, and developing strong partnerships across the sector that enable you to transform public education.”

Liliana Polo-McKenna, Ed.L.D.’14

RECENT RESIDENCY SITES

- Big Picture Learning
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Boston Public Schools
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District
- Delaware Department of Education
- Harlem Children’s Zone
- New York City Department of Education
- Panorama Education
- San Francisco Unified School District
- New Schools Venture Fund
- Teach For America
- United States Department of Education

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Learn more about the Ed.L.D. curriculum, faculty, and partner organizations and read our FAQs at hgse.me/HGSE.edld.
Ph.D.

Solving the most complex challenges in education requires a unique individual and scholar — one who can work across disciplines, conduct rigorous research, and translate discoveries into transformative policy and practice.

Offered jointly with the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS), the Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Ph.D.) combines the university’s strengths in the social sciences, arts, humanities, and sciences with our deep expertise in educational research, policy, and practice. Building on the tradition of HGSE’s Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), the Ph.D. prepares students for high-impact careers as academics, researchers, policymakers, and leaders who will improve educational outcomes in the United States and around the world.

CONCENTRATIONS

Ph.D. students affiliate with one of three primary concentrations, a lens through which they examine their own research topics:

- **Culture, Institutions, and Society**: Study how these structures and contexts shape educational processes and outcomes across the lifespan.

- **Education Policy and Program Evaluation**: Research the design, implementation, and evaluation of education policy in the United States and internationally with a focus on public policy and large-scale reforms.

- **Human Development, Learning and Teaching**: Examine how biological, cognitive, and social processes influence learning and development.

Concentrations are designed to equip students with knowledge in relevant disciplines and training in a range of research methods as well as promote strong, interdisciplinary intellectual communities.

CURRICULUM

The Ph.D. requires five years of full-time study to complete. Students will choose their coursework and design original research in close consultation with their HGSE faculty adviser and dissertation committee.

The curriculum is as follows:

- Two years of coursework, including:
  - The Ph.D. proseminar
  - One concentration core course
  - At least four research methods courses: two foundational quantitative methods courses, one foundational qualitative methods course, and an additional qualitative methods course
  - Concentration-based electives
  - Doctoral colloquia (required in years one and two)
  - General electives
- One reading time course in preparation for the written comprehensive exam
- Research apprenticeship
- Teaching fellowships
- Comprehensive exams (oral and written) that test both general and concentration-specific knowledge
- Dissertation proposal
- Dissertation based on original research
- Oral defense
SAMPLE ELECTIVE COURSES

Context and Developmental Ecologies
- Educational Outcomes in Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Perspectives
- Ecological Approaches to Studying Human Development: Classrooms and Other Micro-Contexts in Schools

Culture, Identity, and Inequality
- Social Stratification: Seminar (GSAS)
- Cultural Influences on Racial and Ethnic Inequality in Education

Institutions and Organizations
- Macro Topics in Organizational Behavior (HBS)
- School Systems
- Institutional Change in School Organizations, Systems, and Sectors

Political Analysis and Education Policy
- American Government and Politics: Field Seminar (GSAS)
- Institutional Change in School Organizations, Systems, and Sectors
- Politics and Education Policy in the United States

Science of Learning and Teaching
- Topics in Educational Psychology
- Applying Cognitive Science to Learning and Teaching
- Teacher and Teaching Quality
- Transforming Education through Emerging Technologies

FUNDING
All Ph.D. students receive a multiyear funding package that includes:
- Tuition, fees, and a living stipend for the first two years
- Tuition, fees, and a combination of teaching fellowships and research assistantships in the third and fourth years
- Tuition and fees for the fifth year
- A fellowship covering tuition, fees, and a living stipend during the dissertation completion year

“What I most appreciate about HGSE is the faculty and students’ commitment to implementing change beyond pure academic research. Having been engaged in both research and practice myself, I have found HGSE to be a place where I can connect these two aspects of the educational field, where rigorous research is implemented and where practice informs research.”

Jaein Lee, Ph.D. candidate

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK
Learn more about the Ph.D. curriculum, faculty, concentrations, and student life at hgse.me/HGSE_phd.
Applying to HGSE

ADMISSIONS

Our admissions process is highly selective, personalized, and comprehensive. We’re looking for individuals with:

• A passion for education
• A demonstrated potential for exceptional leadership
• Diverse life and work experiences
• Strong academic credentials
• A keen desire to make a difference in our world.

STEP 1: Introduce Yourself
Fill out our online form at hgse.me/HGSE_intro to tell us more about yourself.

STEP 2: Explore and Connect
We strongly encourage you to visit our campus as part of your information-gathering process. We also host off-campus events throughout the United States and internationally and offer virtual information sessions.

STEP 3: Apply Online
Ed.L.D.: Begin your application at hgse.me/HGSE_apply.
Ph.D.: Candidates will submit their application through the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Admissions Office at gsas.harvard.edu/apply.
International students: Find additional admissions information at hgse.me/HGSE_intl.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Your complete online application includes:

• Application form
• Application fee (paid via credit card)
• Statement of purpose
• Three letters of recommendation
• Resume
• Transcripts from all postsecondary institutions attended
• GRE scores (Ed.L.D. applicants may submit GMAT scores)
• TOEFL scores (for applicants whose native language is not English and whose baccalaureate is not from a college or university where English is the sole language of instruction; Ed.L.D. applicants may submit IELTS scores)
• Short essay question (Ed.L.D. only)
• Supplemental form (Ph.D. only)

WHICH DEGREE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Not sure if the Ed.L.D. or the Ph.D. should be the next step in your career?

Visit our Find the Right Program page at hgse.me/HGSE_find.
As you consider the degree that will best serve you personally and professionally, you also may want to explore our 13 master’s (Ed.M.) programs. These intensive yearlong programs span the entire spectrum of education, from international education policy to cognitive development to education technology.

- Arts in Education
- Education Policy and Management
- Higher Education
- Human Development and Psychology
- International Education Policy
- Language and Literacy
- Learning and Teaching
- Mind, Brain, and Education
- Prevention Science and Practice/C.A.S. in Counseling
- School Leadership
- Specialized Studies
- Teacher Education
- Technology, Innovation, and Education

Learn more at hgse.me/HGSE_masters.
ED.L.D. PROGRAM
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