

IED

Labs

**The Education
Innovation Laboratory**
at Harvard University



Condoleezza Rice, *Professor of Political Science, Stanford University, former Secretary of State of the United States*

“EdLabs at Harvard is at the vanguard of education research, utilizing a fact-based, analytic approach. I am delighted to be working with such a talented group of reformers who continually develop innovative solutions to the largest challenges in public education.”

Eli Broad, *Co-Chair of the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation*

“In our ten years of working with school districts we have identified the need for robust research and development to fuel the work of reform-minded education leaders and to advance innovative practices. We believe that EdLabs is the institute that will fulfill that need.”

Geoffrey Canada, *Founder and CEO, The Harlem Children’s Zone*

“For years, researchers and consultants told us that it was nearly impossible to effectively evaluate the different components of Harlem Children’s Zone. The EdLabs team looked at our data, developed new statistical models, and generated preliminary findings in a matter of weeks. There is no other research organization of its kind in the field of education, and for that, EdLabs is our exclusive research partner.”

Joel Klein, *Chancellor, New York City Department of Education*

“The reason we partnered with EdLabs is that they provide innovative and cutting-edge proposals for changing the outcomes of students in our school districts and are prepared to do the rigorous evaluations necessary to determine what works and what doesn’t.”

Michelle Rhee, *Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools*

“I joined forces with EdLabs at Harvard because of their unique focus on working in the trenches with me on our school district’s most vexing and intractable problems. It’s all too easy for colleges and universities to sit on the sidelines and make recommendations from an ivory tower. EdLabs is breaking that mold by bringing rigorous and high quality evaluation, strategy, and analysis to our everyday challenges in schools. We couldn’t ask for a better partner.”

EdLabs is an education research and development laboratory devoted to closing the achievement gap.

We know that eliminating racial and socioeconomic differences in educational achievement will also improve important life outcomes such as income, health, and incarceration rates.

We are an eclectic collection of scientists, educators, and implementers with diverse backgrounds and vast experience, generating ideas and implementing experiments that have the potential to transform education.

EdLabs has no political affiliation or agenda to promote. We squeeze truths from data. People may not always like what we discover, but we will disseminate our results no matter what we find.

EdLabs is not a traditional academic center or think-tank, and we strive to be bolder, more effective, and more connected to the everyday challenges of school districts.

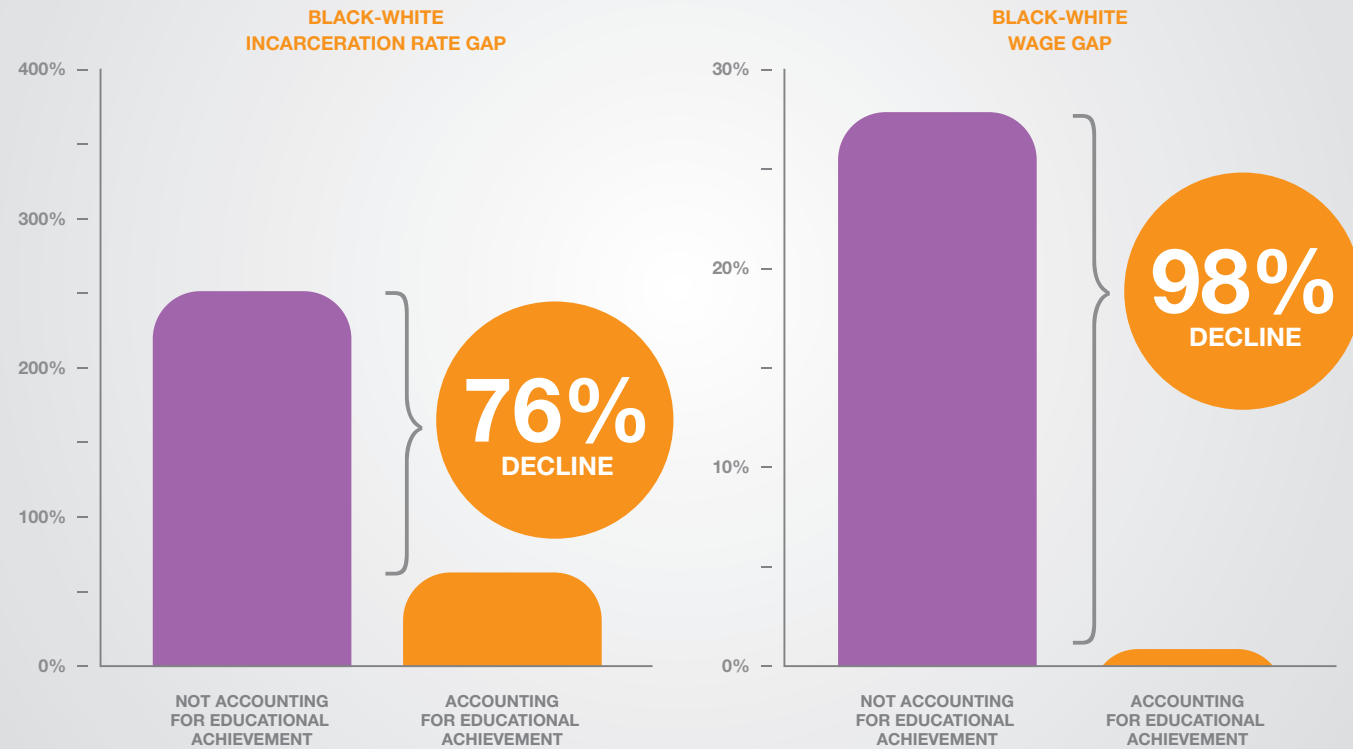
We do our best work with ambitious, reform-minded leaders who always place what is best for children over adult issues.

We aim to solve the problems that many others believe are intractable. Our ultimate goal is to close the achievement gap and put ourselves out of business.

Why EdLabs Was Founded

It's simple: Educational achievement drives life outcomes.

Minorities are incarcerated at a much higher rate per capita than whites and earn less money per hour for equivalent work. However, when we account for educational achievement, it drastically reduces racial and socioeconomic gaps across a wide range of life outcomes.



The problem:

No one has yet discovered scientifically-tested, scalable solutions to close the achievement gap.

Conventional Wisdom Has Failed

It's no secret. The solutions everyone thought would work to close the education gap have failed. Despite well-intentioned and intuitive reforms, the performance of urban youth has been flat since the 1970s.



In the current education model, too many decisions are made based on instincts, emotion and anecdotes. Sound familiar?

Science Provides a Road Map

Centuries ago, medicine and astronomy were largely based on conventional wisdom. In both fields, the Scientific Method has proven to be revolutionary in its approach and has led to new and surprising solutions.

Without the Scientific Method

- ✗ We treated fevers from bacterial infections with ice baths
- ✗ Smallpox outbreaks killed an estimated 500 million people
- ✗ Many believed the Earth was flat and the center of the universe



With the Scientific Method

- ✓ We treat fevers from bacterial infections with antibiotics
- ✓ With the use of vaccines, smallpox was eradicated in 1979
- ✓ We know that the Earth revolves around one of 400 billion stars in one of billions of galaxies

EdLabs believes it's time to apply the Scientific Method to education. Actually, it's long overdue. We need new ideas and systematic change. To do this, we have to question all of our assumptions and transform our practices. We need to expose education's ice baths and replace them with evidence-based solutions.



Closing the Achievement Gap by 2025

Armed with a scientific, fact-based approach as our comparative advantage, EdLabs will have an unprecedented impact on the way our children learn. Here's how:

Innovation

EdLabs brings together brilliant minds from many fields and asks questions that have the potential to transform the field of education. We look for answers from untested, innovative or even "heretical" ideas.

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Implementation

EdLabs partners with reform-minded districts and organizations to test our ideas. We execute multi-year, national experiments that serve thousands of students.

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Evaluation

EdLabs develops and uses cutting-edge techniques in statistics and econometrics to produce rigorous, tough-minded evaluations. We only evaluate interventions that have the potential to be transformative in their impact. We're interested in testing big ideas, not in providing stamps of approval.

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Dissemination

In an age when "research shows..." is heard every few seconds, EdLabs wants to make sure our messages rise above the noise. In addition to publishing our findings in traditional academic journals, we strategically use our relationships in government, media and the education community to communicate our results.

Breakthrough Findings from Our First Year...

Our evaluation of Harlem Children's Zone showed that **SCHOOLS ALONE** can close the achievement gap.

Paying students for grades sounds heretical to many, but we found that **cash incentives** are a **cost-effective way to increase achievement**. Well-designed financial incentive programs are just as effective as other successful education reforms of the past three decades at a fraction of the cost.

One explanation for the achievement gap was that black children are born developmentally behind whites. However, after analyzing a sample of more than 10,000 infants, we have found that **there are no cognitive differences between black and white infants**. Actually, differences don't emerge until age two and get larger as children age.

...and the Innovations They Inspired

In our first year, we've made some important breakthroughs. Here's how we're expanding on what we've learned to move forward.

SCHOOLS ALONE can close the achievement gap

Building on our evaluation of Harlem Children's Zone, EdLabs is launching a multi-year initiative to identify the key components of successful charter schools and implement them in traditional public schools.

Cash incentives are a cost-effective way to increase achievement

Now that we know incentives can produce academic gains, we are exploring how to design programs that work best for different kinds of students. We want to know just how effective incentives can be.

There are no cognitive differences between black and white infants

Knowing that there are no detectable differences between black and white infants, we are studying the effects of a comprehensive preschool program and improved parental involvement on both academic and non-academic outcomes.

The Answers Are Out There

We ask big questions and look for answers wherever they may hide.



Human Capital

Stakeholders' Committee

Condoleezza Rice, *Chair of the Stakeholders' Committee and Professor of Political Science, Stanford University*

Eli and Edythe Broad, *Co-Founders, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation*

Joel Klein, *Chancellor, New York City Department of Education*

Michelle Rhee, *Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools*

Creative Energy

David Droga, *Creative Chairman, Droga5*

Roland Fryer, *Robert M. Beren Professor of Economics, Harvard University*

Claudia Goldin, *Henry Lee Professor of Economics, Harvard University*

Michael Greenstone, *3M Professor of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Lawrence Katz, *Elisabeth Allison Professor of Economics, Harvard University*

Stephen Kosslyn, *John Lindsley Professor of Psychology, Harvard University*

Steven Levitt, *Alvin Baum Professor of Economics, University of Chicago*

John List, *Professor of Economics, University of Chicago*

Kathleen McCartney, *Gerald S. Lesser Professor in Early Childhood Development and Dean of the Faculty of Education, Harvard University*

Eldar Shafir, *William Stewart Tod Professor of Psychology and Public Affairs, Princeton University*

Andrei Shleifer, *Professor of Economics, Harvard University*

Our Funders

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The John and Laura Arnold Family Fund

The Joyce Foundation

The Kenneth and Anne Griffin Foundation

Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City

The Pritzker Foundation

The Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation

The Rauner Family Foundation

Smith Richardson Foundation, Inc.

Steans Family Foundation

EdLabs Leadership



“The same-old strategies have failed generations of students. There have been pockets of progress and beacons of hope, but not systematic changes in how we educate urban youth. Transformative thinking, along with a tough-minded, rigorous approach to designing and evaluating education reforms, is essential if we want to truly improve.”

Dr. Roland G. Fryer, Jr.

Robert M. Beren Professor of Economics, Harvard University, Founder and Faculty Director of EdLabs

Dr. Roland Fryer, Jr. is the Robert M. Beren Professor of Economics at Harvard University, a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research, and a former junior fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows — one of academia’s most prestigious research posts. In January 2008, at the age of 30, he became the youngest African-American to receive tenure from Harvard. He has been awarded a Sloan

Research Fellowship, a Faculty Early Career Development Award from the National Science Foundation, and the inaugural Alphonse Fletcher Award (“Guggenheims for race issues”).

In addition to his teaching and research responsibilities, Fryer served as the Chief Equality Officer at the New York City Department of Education during the 2007–2008 school year. In this role, he developed and implemented several innovative ideas on student motivation and teacher pay-for-performance concepts.

Fryer is a 2009 recipient of a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, the highest award bestowed by the government on scientists beginning their independent careers. He is also part of the “2009 Time 100,” *Time Magazine’s* annual list of the world’s most influential people, and NBC’s 100 History Makers in the Making.

Getting Involved

With your help we will close the achievement gap by 2025.

EdLabs is looking to expand its partnerships with school districts and organizations.

We do our best work with ambitious, reform-minded leaders who always place what is best for children over adult issues.

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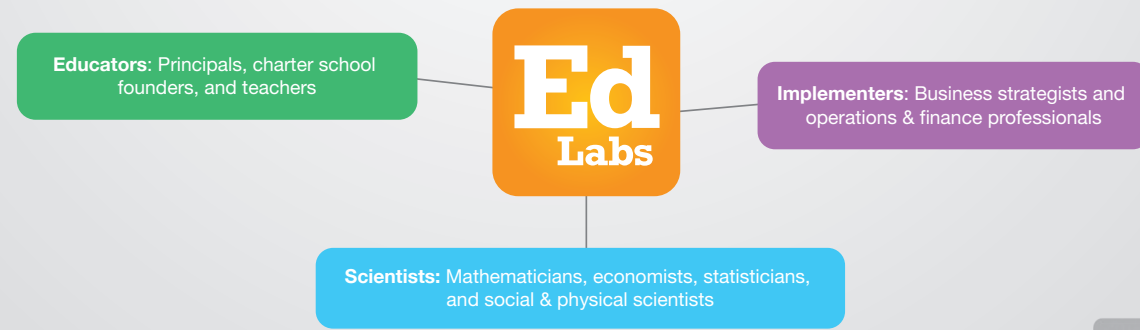
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The EdLabs Team





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