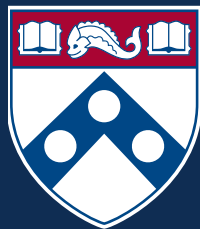


TOGETHER *for*GOOD

A Vision for Transformational Impact



Penn GSE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY *of* PENNSYLVANIA

TOGETHERforGOOD

A Vision for Transformational Impact



For 110 years, Penn GSE has defined success by our positive impact on society.

Today, Penn GSE is known worldwide for rigorous scholarship, high-quality instruction, and impactful, innovative practice. Our academic programs span the educational landscape, producing some of the most highly sought-after educators, leaders, researchers, counselors, and entrepreneurs. Our faculty are widely regarded as leading experts in their fields, our students bring a deep commitment to impact, and our dedicated staff drive our mission forward every day. Penn GSE alumni, numbering nearly 20,000, lead transformative educational change in over 90 countries. Our work is rooted in the understanding that education is the foundation of a just and thriving society. It is a driver of economic opportunity and civic participation, a pathway for personal growth, and a force for social cohesion and community empowerment, advancing both personal fulfillment and the public good.



Education faces an unprecedented moment of promise and peril.

Our expanding understanding of how students learn is fueling research-informed innovations across the educational spectrum, but significant gaps in opportunity persist. Technological advancements are opening exciting pathways for personalized learning, but worsening teacher shortages in pre-K–12 schools are restricting students' exposure to high-quality instruction. Higher education institutions are exploring new models that aim to democratize access; however, questions remain about the long-term value of degrees. Demand for lifelong learning continues to grow, but the boundary between work and education is blurring, creating new challenges and opportunities. At the same time, democracy itself is being tested, placing pressure on education's role in fostering civic engagement and critical thinking even as the escalating climate crisis threatens the stability of educational systems worldwide. These converging forces require bold action—not only to address immediate needs but to build a better future for education.



We must reimagine education together.

Together for Good frames the vital work that Penn GSE will undertake in the years ahead. This vision is aligned with the goals articulated in the University of Pennsylvania's strategic framework, *In Principle and Practice*. Because no single institution or sector can meet and make this moment alone, our vision is built on deep collaboration—not only with educators but also with policymakers, industry leaders, philanthropists, and communities around the world. And it draws on the distinctive research and programmatic strengths that have long distinguished Penn GSE as a premier school of education. Together with our partners, Penn GSE is shaping a future for education that uplifts every learner and transforms society for good.

OUR VISION



Penn GSE will lead the world in producing consequential research and preparing learners to be impactful educational practitioners, scholars, and changemakers who work with communities worldwide to define profound possibilities, address complex challenges, and secure education as the bedrock of democracy.



Elisabeth Hauser for Penn GSE

A Mid-Career Program in Educational Leadership class session.



BUILD



COLLABORATE



TRANSFORM



ELEVATE



Imagining Education's Future

Together for Good reflects extensive and collaborative deliberation from the Penn GSE community, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, board members, university leaders, and community partners. It was shaped through hundreds of conversations with community members, centered upon a fundamental belief that education is essential to transforming society for the better. We asked one key question: What do we want to be true of education in ten years? While we recognize that Penn GSE alone cannot bring about all the change we seek, we are dedicated to leveraging our full strength—through influential research, transformative programs, and strategic partnerships—to achieve this future.

Our vision is aspirational; our commitment to realizing it is unwavering.



WE ENVISION A FUTURE IN WHICH:

EDUCATORS are empowered and respected facilitators of learning and shapers of pedagogical innovation, supported by highly skilled educational leaders and career-spanning professional learning.

LEARNING happens across the lifespan in many contexts, domains, and modalities, extending beyond traditional classrooms. Learners are active co-creators of their educational journeys.

SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES are joyful, adaptive, and accessible places of learning and work that advance academic and life outcomes and nurture well-being, resilience, empathy, and self-awareness.

THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH flourishes by producing innovative, interdisciplinary work that is conducted in partnership with communities. This research critically examines and offers bold recommendations to resolve the persistent gap between research and practice in education.

HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL, with barriers to learning—economic, social, and geographic—dismantled to create learning environments that uplift the cultural richness of communities and eliminate correlations between demography and educational outcomes.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES enhance student learning and educator practice. Grounded in the science of learning and ethically applied, technology expands access and personalizes learning.

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS are the norm, creating an ecosystem where knowledge flows freely across pre-K–12, higher education, industry, government, and communities to address mutually identified needs.

DEMOCRACY IS REINFORCED and strengthened by educational systems that prepare students to be informed, engaged, and compassionate citizens ready to confront the world's most challenging problems.

Four Strategic Priorities

Our vision embraces four strategic priorities that build on Penn GSE's strengths spanning rigorous scholarship, high-quality instruction, innovative practice, and enduring community partnerships. These priorities are deeply interconnected, reinforcing one another to create a unified and comprehensive approach to transforming education.

PRIORITY ONE



BUILD




PREPARE AND SUSTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED EDUCATION WORKFORCE FROM PRESCHOOL THROUGH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

For decades, Penn GSE has prepared exceptional teachers, managers, counselors, and leaders, many of whom have gone on to shape transformative educational practices worldwide. The need for high-quality teachers and leaders is more urgent today than ever. Research shows that fewer people today are choosing the education profession even as burnout rates have reached an all-time high. Across the nation and here in Philadelphia, teacher and leadership shortages are severely impacting students' ability to thrive. We will expand our efforts to create a resilient educator workforce that reflects the communities it serves and has access to affordable, career-spanning professional learning.



A second-grade class at Penn Alexander School raise their hands to respond during a literacy lesson.

WE WILL

-  **Offer high-quality programs that evolve to address the real-time needs of educators, leaders, and counselors** at multiple stages across their careers. We will enhance existing and develop new research-informed degree and nondegree programs to become a “one-stop-shop” for lifelong career development and support. We will foster humane learning environments, center socioemotional learning, and provide ample mental health resources to learners and educators alike. We will create networked learning communities in collaboration with schools, districts, governments, and industry partners to address pressing problems of practice. Our programs will equip students with skills applicable to learning settings in the U.S. and around the world.
-  **Make Penn GSE’s degree and nondegree programs more accessible to more people.** We will dramatically reduce the cost of our teacher and leader preparation programs and enhance our contribution to developing an engaged educator pipeline. We will increase timely, career-spanning support by making our nondegree professional learning more affordable to our own graduates and other educators, especially those working in our home city of Philadelphia. Because accessibility is about more than cost, we also will continue to innovate on program structures and models to make a Penn GSE education more feasible for working professionals.
-  **Advocate for necessary policy changes here in Philadelphia, statewide, across the region, nationally, and around the globe.** We will develop an evidence-based advocacy agenda to support programs and policies that have been shown to strengthen the vibrancy of, and representation within, the educational workforce. Through engagement with local, state, federal, and international governments, Penn GSE will elevate our research, increasing evidence-based decision-making in policy and legislation that affects educational labor markets and the success of educational practitioners.

PRIORITY TWO




COLLABORATE

COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL COMMUNITIES ON PROGRAMS AND SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.

Penn GSE’s faculty, staff, and students partner extensively with local communities, across the region, throughout the nation, and in 60 countries worldwide. These deep and longstanding partnerships, whether with schools in nearby West Philadelphia or educational leaders in Kazakhstan, reflect our duty to support Penn’s mission of being “anchored” in the community, committed to local neighborliness and global citizenship. We must work in open and trusting partnership with communities and draw on the expertise of our partners to address pressing, real-world problems. This approach moves beyond the traditional, top-down view of “we’re from the University, and we’re here to help” and instead embraces a collaborative “with” mindset to meet the needs of communities, as expressed by these communities.

WE WILL

-  **Deepen our longstanding relationship with Philadelphia’s public schools.** We commit to establishing a plan to address the needs identified by our local public school partners in both research and programs. This planning requires that we begin by listening to and understanding the specific needs of the School District of Philadelphia and other local partners. We will then map those needs to Penn GSE and external resources to realize progress. Crucially, we must identify approaches to institutionalize key efforts and ensure their long-term sustainability. We can then apply the lessons of practice to our partnerships with other school districts regionally and beyond. Together, we will create a national model for collaboration between school districts and higher education.

Change the national conversation on community-engaged scholarship.

Community-engaged scholarship comprises research and creative work that is conducted in collaboration with community members, addressing real-world issues and generating knowledge that is mutually beneficial. Higher education institutions often undervalue such scholarship when evaluating faculty. Penn GSE will establish clear, supportive structures for faculty who engage in community-engaged scholarship, ensuring that their work is viewed as essential and evaluated fairly. We will also promote and encourage research initiatives that engage community members as active collaborators. Doing so is not only ethically right but also the pathway to the most rigorous and relevant research findings. Penn GSE will become a national model for embedding CES into the heart of scholarly work.



Students participating in a pilot program designed by Penn GSE at the Franklin Institute that uses biology as a medium for designing pigments, sensors, and vitamins.

Expand our global engagement. We will craft and implement a new plan to coordinate our international engagement, identify regional outreach priorities, and extend the school's reach in ways aligned to global goals for sustainable development. We will enhance global partnerships, both existing and emerging, through dynamic collaboration with governments, international universities, nongovernmental organizations, and private-sector companies. We will deepen institutional support for faculty-led community-engaged work abroad.

Broaden the reach, impact, and accessibility of Penn GSE scholarship. Much academic scholarship ends up behind paywalls in peer-reviewed journals. This makes the research inaccessible to the public, to decision-makers who can apply it to policy and practice, and to the communities that helped create it. We will translate our research findings into formats that our community partners, practitioners, and policymakers deem most helpful. We will develop policy briefs, research-based toolkits, and open-access digital platforms that can drive policy decisions, shape public discourse, and empower educational practitioners to act. Partnerships with governments and organizations in the United States and across the globe will ensure that our scholarship can serve the needs of those in positions to create systemic change and shape education policy frameworks everywhere.

PRIORITY THREE



TRANSFORM

INNOVATE BY BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH WITH CONSEQUENCE.

Penn GSE is an inventive place. We prize innovation in our scholarship, our practice, our programs, and our pedagogy. However, at Penn GSE, innovation means not only doing what is new but also doing what is needed. Our faculty, staff, students, and alumni have long been recognized as global leaders in bridging the gap between theory and practice to drive real-world change. With that foundation, we will expand the boundaries of knowledge and practice in ways that meet the ever-evolving needs of learners, educators, and their communities.

WE WILL

Conduct groundbreaking, practitioner-informed educational research that addresses the great challenges of our time, including education's role in confronting barriers to equal access, threats to democratic values worldwide, and the promises and perils of rapid technological advances. Addressing these challenges requires us to engage researchers of diverse backgrounds, methodologies, and disciplines and collaborate with the practitioners and communities most affected by those challenges. Through new funding opportunities and enhanced research infrastructure, we will empower faculty and students to produce research that not only identifies problems but also offers scalable solutions. In doing so, we will conduct work that provides the foundation for transforming educational systems and social structures toward a better future for all.

Cultivate an intellectual community where interdisciplinarity is the norm, not the exception. Education research is an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise, evidenced by our faculty's contributions to fields like psychology, statistics, social work, and healthcare. We will uplift the methodological breadth of our quantitative and qualitative scholarship, and we will foster, fund, and sustain interdisciplinary research centers and cross-pollinating projects that bring together scholars, practitioners, and graduate and doctoral students across the University. These initiatives break down silos, encourage knowledge exchange, and promote a comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena. Our commitment to interdisciplinarity extends to cross-sector collaborations, engaging with fields such as healthcare, economics, and technology. These partnerships will broaden the scope and impact of our research, addressing complex, multifaceted challenges.

Prepare educators, leaders, scholars, and other stakeholders to shape, embrace, and use novel technologies and practices. We will deploy emerging technologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences, creating personalized learning pathways and increasing access to high-quality educational resources. We will embrace artificial intelligence as a tool that—when carefully managed and thoughtfully deployed—can support educators' practice and improve student learning. We do so while acknowledging the need to ensure technology does not deepen existing barriers to access but instead bridges gaps, providing solutions that reach all learners.



A Penn GSE student uses the School's new VR lab.



Lori and Michael Milken President's Distinguished Professor Yasmin Kafai with Penn GSE students.



ELEVATE

ELEVATE EDUCATION'S ROLE WITHIN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Education is the foundation of any robust and thriving society, and it assumes a particularly powerful role within democracies. A healthy democratic society relies on its members' ability to openly express ideas, critically analyze arguments, and find shared humanity with those who are different from themselves. Educational institutions have a profound ethical duty to prepare students to engage productively in a democratic society, especially within civic participation and democratic discourse. The need for such discourse, and the acrimony, distrust, and disengagement that result from its absence, are defining challenges of our time.

WE WILL

Enhance our own approaches to challenging, productive conversations within Penn GSE.

Penn GSE will model the kind of productive discourse we seek to promote throughout the world. We will implement professional development programs for Penn GSE faculty and staff on engaging in and facilitating hard conversations, managing conflicts, and promoting practices that incorporate a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. We will embed these practices into program curricula and host programs and events that engage our whole community in this work.

Build capacity for discourse that promotes democratic values University-wide. As citizens of the University of Pennsylvania, we will also expand partnerships across the University with peer schools and centers such as the SNF Paideia Program to develop and facilitate programming for Penn students and faculty beyond Penn GSE. In doing so, we will work to position Penn as a leader in fostering productive dialogue across difference, setting a national standard for how institutions of higher learning can serve as sites for democratic discourse and develop students' capabilities for the productive exchange of ideas.

Equip our own students as well as partners, community leaders, and the wider public with tools to encourage critical thinking, open dialogue, and civic engagement. We will refine, facilitate, and share models for engaging in difficult conversations and honing other key skills of democratic participation in learning settings. We will promote our faculty's research that explores the intersections of education, democracy, and truth. We will create programs to empower educators, leaders, and other stakeholders to have—and to embolden others to have—hard conversations, influencing decisions at institutional, system, state, and federal levels.



Associate Professor Abby Reisman teaching a class.



Students in Penn GSE's Medical Education program having a class discussion.



Building Blocks for Success

To pursue our priorities, Penn GSE will continue to hone our strength in eight foundational areas: the building blocks for our success.



OUTSTANDING, IMPACT-ORIENTED ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Penn GSE provides outstanding learning experiences. We will continue to enhance our offerings through rigorous internal and external reviews. Our commitment to excellence ensures that our programs remain relevant, effective, and adaptive.



ROBUST FACULTY AND STAFF RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND SUPPORT

Our faculty and staff are the lifeblood of our school. We will recruit individuals with a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds and foster a collaborative community. Robust support systems, including mentorship and professional development, will help faculty and staff thrive and contribute meaningfully to Penn GSE's mission.



TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH AND GRANT-SEEKING

Penn GSE produces field-defining scholarship of consequence across all parts of the educational ecosystem. To continue to lead in educational research, we will accelerate efforts to secure major grants that support groundbreaking, interdisciplinary work. By promoting and incentivizing rigorous research, we will continue advancing evidence-based solutions to the most persistent challenges in education.



ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE PROGRAMS

Penn GSE offers a wide array of exceptional programs, but access to these programs remains a challenge. We are committed to increasing need-based financial aid and reducing costs to attract more students locally and globally. Through new partnerships and expanded pathways, we will ensure that students of all backgrounds have access to high-quality education and the resources needed for success.



BARRIER-BREAKING PRACTICES AND PEDAGOGIES

We recognize that learning experiences are enriched and the quality of educational outcomes are enhanced when incorporating a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. We will develop, evaluate, and refine our practices, policies, and pedagogies with a focus on uplifting the cultural wealth and inherent assets of students and communities.



SUPPORTIVE AND EMPOWERING STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Students in every Penn GSE program deserve a supportive, intellectually engaging, impact-oriented experience that empowers their academic and professional growth. To provide such an experience, we will offer exceptional teaching and research guidance, robust advising and mentorship models, mental health and wellness resources, cocurricular engagement opportunities, and tools and support for career planning, placement, and success. We will also streamline administrative processes that can unintentionally create barriers to student success.



A COMMITMENT TO REALIZING “ONE PENN GSE” IN ALL WE DO

Penn GSE draws strength from our community and the breadth of our endeavors. Yet, we are more than the sum of our parts. We must embrace a common identity as well as shared aims and aspirations. A foundational step toward realizing One Penn GSE is developing a schoolwide capability to map our progress toward shared goals and enhance our culture of data fluency. We will model the kind of evidence-based decision-making we wish to see throughout education, and we will strengthen our collaborations across the school to steward resources effectively and support our people and programs in realizing our goals.



ACTIVATION OF THE GREATER GSE COMMUNITY

The Penn GSE community reaches far beyond our physical campus. Our expansive global network of alumni, board members, partners, supporters, and collaborators extends Penn GSE's impact into new educational, policy, and industry spaces. We will work with this community to secure opportunities for collaborative action, co-investment in global education, and support for transformational research and programs.

FROM VISION TO ACTION



This moment in education—here in West Philadelphia, across Pennsylvania, throughout the United States, and around the globe—demands bold action and deep collaboration. Penn GSE stands ready to partner with communities nearby and worldwide not only to address today’s challenges but also to shape the future of education. Together for Good marks the beginning of this journey. The full realization of this vision will be driven by the how: the ways in which Penn GSE and our partners sustain and enhance our ongoing initiatives while setting ambitious new goals together.

To guide our efforts and ensure accountability for progress, we will form Priority Working Groups. These groups will steer goalsetting tied to each strategic priority and shepherd new initiatives. We will develop metrics for evaluating our efforts and provide regular updates on our progress to our own community, our partners, and the public. As a living document, our vision will evolve, ensuring that Penn GSE continues to meet and make the moment for education. In addition, we will create formal feedback loops with external partners to assess the impact of our initiatives, ensuring that they remain aligned with both community and global needs.

Our vision is a call to action—an invitation not only to Penn GSE’s staff, faculty, students, and alumni but also to policymakers, industry leaders, funders, and global partners to co-create a better education ecosystem. Through concerted collaboration, we can elevate education and transform society *together for good*.



TOGETHER *for* GOOD

A Vision for Transformational Impact



CONNECT WITH US

[GSE.UPENN.EDU/TOGETHER](https://gse.upenn.edu/together)
TOGETHER@GSE.UPENN.EDU