

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course Name/Code

Date

Graduate School Essay Example for Harvard: Education

When I was nineteen, I watched my younger sister fail a third-grade reading assessment for the second consecutive year in a school where more than 80 percent of students were reading below grade level. The school was not indifferent to the problem. The teachers were not underprepared. The district lacked the funding to implement the structured literacy program that the research, which existed, clearly supported. I understood that day that educational inequity is not primarily a question of effort or intention. It is a question of resources and policy.

I spent my college years studying this mismatch at the undergraduate level: first through coursework in educational psychology at Spelman College, then through a summer fellowship at the Southern Education Foundation examining the funding structures that perpetuate achievement gaps across Georgia's school districts. My senior thesis, advised by Dr. Patricia Okonkwo, analyzed the differential impact of school finance litigation in three Southern states over a 20-year period.

Harvard's graduate program in Education draws me for two specific reasons. First, Professor Angela Diaz's ongoing work on literacy policy implementation in high-poverty districts extends exactly the question my thesis raised but could not answer at the undergraduate level: what structural conditions allow research-backed interventions to actually reach classrooms? Second, the program's emphasis on mixed-methods research will allow me to integrate the quantitative policy analysis I developed in my thesis with the

qualitative fieldwork that my fellowship showed me is necessary to understand how policy translates, or fails to, in practice.

I plan to use this training to work at the state policy level, specifically on the design and evaluation of funding formulas that account for the concentration of educational disadvantage.

