Ronald F. Ferguson, PhD

Ron Ferguson is an MIT-trained economist who focuses on economic, social, and educational challenges. He has been on the faculty at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government since 1983, after teaching at Brandeis and Brown Universities. In 2014, he co-founded Tripod Education Partners and shifted into an adjunct role at the Kennedy School, where he remains a fellow at the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy and faculty director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University.

During the 1980s and ‘90s Ron focused much his attention on economic and community development. That work culminated in the social science synthesis volume Urban Problems and Community Development, published by Brookings Press (1999), which remains an important text in graduate policy courses.

By the late 1980s he had begun to study education and youth development because academic skill disparities were contributing to growing wage disparity. During the 1990s and early 2000s, his writings on the topic appeared in publications of the National Research Council, the Brookings Institution, the U.S. Department of Education, and various books and journals, including his book, Toward Excellence with Equity: An emerging vision for closing the achievement gap, published by Harvard Education Press (2007). A February 2011 profile in the New York Times wrote, “There is no one in America who knows more about the gap that Ronald Ferguson.”

Ron’s current focus is an initiative that began in Boston as the Boston Basics and is expanding to other cities in a multi-city Basics Learning Network. The work takes a social-ecological saturation approach, collaborating with many partners to surround families with information and supports for parenting infants and toddlers using five clusters of parenting practices called The Basics. In addition, Ron’s new book co-authored with journalist Tatsha Robertson, published in February, 2019, is entitled The Formula: Unlocking the Secrets to Raising Highly Successful Children. Additional material related to the book can be found at <mastersoftheformula.com>.

Ron holds an undergraduate degree from Cornell University and a PhD from MIT, both in economics. He is happily married and the father of two adult sons.