

New EdD Program Debuts in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership at USU



Two TEAL doctoral students, EdD candidate Frank Schofield (left) and PhD graduate Sandra Miles (center), with family and friends following the 2024 graduation ceremony in Logan.

Beginning Fall semester 2024, the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services reinstated the Doctor of Education (EdD) program in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership (TEAL) after significant structural improvements. The College of Education and Human Services is the top ranked Graduate School of Education in Utah and the second highest ranked in the Intermountain West. The new program in TEAL is oriented toward professionals and practitioners who are seeking to enhance their leadership skills in education and implement change directly within their professional environments.

“Our EdD has been updated to focus on the needs of professional educators and the needs of schools and industry,” says CEHS Endowed Dean Al Smith. “We are excited to see growth in enrollment and impact of this critical professional degree.”

“The EdD is a doctoral degree in education that focuses on using academic research and scholarship to directly inform policy and practice for educators,” summarizes Ryan Knowles, associate professor in TEAL and the program director for the new EdD program. “These are the people who are on the ground in the schools working with students, working for the state, and working in private industry to develop curriculum.”

For perspective, the difference between the two doctoral degrees offered in TEAL—the PhD in Education and the

Doctor of Education (EdD)—could be compared to a PhD in biology versus an MD, or medical doctor. “Medical doctors will likely never publish journal articles, but they will use the research that academics are publishing to help people in a very direct way. That’s the comparison,” explains Knowles. “The PhD is the researcher and the EdD will go into schools and institutions and work directly to affect change. Essentially, how does all the research translate to the person who needs it?”



Professor Ryan Knowles, EdD program director

Knowles believes that the greatest difference between the two doctoral programs is the EdD’s prioritization of practical application. “When you graduate with a PhD in, say, math education, there is an assumption that you are now an expert who could teach doctoral-level classes at any university in the country. You go a mile deep and an inch wide to learn everything you need to know,” explains Knowles. “The EdD will be much more flexible. The students can take broader courses across subject areas, which would allow the student to look at problems from differing viewpoints—such as science education or math education or cultural studies. This flexibility will be a good opportunity to explore unique approaches to solving problems.”

Another important feature of the new EdD program is the capstone project, which is incorporated directly into the coursework. “It won’t be like a PhD where doctoral candidates get to the third year and then have to begin their dissertation,” Knowles explains. “After the second year of the EdD, students should have 70 percent of their capstone projects completed.” Because of this, students

can reasonably expect to finish the program within three years, although they can take more time, if needed.

For its inaugural year, the program started out strong with 10 students accepted into the program.

"I expect the EdD will grow in popularity," says Knowles. "A lot of prospective students—teachers, administrators, principals, curriculum directors—want to know how to use existing research to be more effective in their jobs. Their goal is to apply research and develop materials in ways that best benefit student outcomes."

The application process is similar to the PhD in Education, which consists of standard letters of recommendation, transcripts, and a current CV. The greatest difference for the EdD applicant is the statement of purpose. This document is focused on practitioners rather than researchers and encourages applicants to articulate specific ways they could drive direct improvement in practice. Knowles views this statement as the crucial first step in creating what may become the student's capstone project.

Steven Camicia, department head of TEAL, has been an integral part of the redesigned program. He is encouraged by the response to the newly designed program and its implementation. "I appreciate the faculty's incredible work. The program is going well, and we are responding to our students' needs and to the communities they serve. We are looking forward to reflecting on ways to continue our program improvements."

To learn more about the new EdD program at USU, visit the [website](#). The application deadline for the Fall 2025 EdD program is February 1.