2024 ALETHEIA SOCIETY UNCONFERENCE

Pacific Coast Research Conference

January 31, 2024

Agenda

- Special Education Research: Accomplishments and Limitations

- Rationale and Plans for a New Professional Society
  - The Aletheia Society
  - Publishing and *Research in Special Education* (*RiSE*)
  - Crowdsourcing and the Special Education Research Accelerator
  - Professional Development and the Aletheia Society
  - Professional Meetings and Aletheia Unconferences

- Today's Hackathons

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Introductions

- Christina Taylor, Aletheia Executive Director
- Bill Therrien (President), Bryan Cook (Treasurer), Betsy Talbott (Secretary)

We've Come A Long Way

- Thousands of highly skilled researchers in the **special education research community**, with more graduating each year

- Thousands of **peer-reviewed articles** published in scores of journals that span areas within special education each year

- Research used to inform and improve **policy and practice**

- An array of **conferences** at which researchers can disseminate their findings

- **Professional organizations** that include researchers

- Many millions of **dollars** is awarded annually to researchers to conduct high-quality research in special education

- Heightened emphasis on **experimental research** has greatly expanded knowledge of what works

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

But There Is Still A Long Way To Go

- Most journals owned by publishers that make huge **profits** based on the (largely) unpaid work of scholars as authors, editors, and reviewers

- Most published research is behind **paywalls**, inaccessible to practitioners, families, and many scholars

- Materials needed to implement research-based practices and replicate studies **seldom shared**

- Publication bias and **questionable research practices** such as p-hacking, HARKing, and outcome-reporting bias appear to be not uncommon

- **Open reforms** seem appealing, but sharing data and code, preregistration and registered reports, and open reviews remain **rare** (Cook et al., 2023)

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

But There Is Still A Long Way To Go

- **Research-to-practice gap** still pervades
- We know a lot about what works, but have made **little progress on what works for whom, in what settings, for what outcomes**
- Conferences presentations primarily **didactic**, with few opportunities to explore issues specifically related to special education research
- Lack of **professional organization** by, of, and for special education researchers specifically
- **Researchers** work in relative **isolation** to answer specific questions, with funding awarded to a relatively small group of researchers

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

The Aletheia Society

- Aletheia=Literally translated, 'un-concealment' or 'disclosure'. It refers to the process by which things reveal themselves, become known, or are brought into the light.

- A 503c non-profit organization **of, by, and for special education researchers**

- "**Democratizing special education research**, The Aletheia Society fosters inclusivity, amplifies diverse voices, and engages in critical inquiries for meaningful improvements in services for children with disabilities."

- We're just getting started, but want to share the directions we're heading

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Aletheia Society's goal is to promote rigor and openness in special education research and, in turn, improve services for children with or at an increased likelihood for disabilities.

Become a Member

Aletheia's Initial Focus Areas

- Academic publishing

- Large-scale and systematic research collaborations

- Vetted, research-based professional development

- Productive, collaborative, research-focused conferences

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

For-Profit Publishers
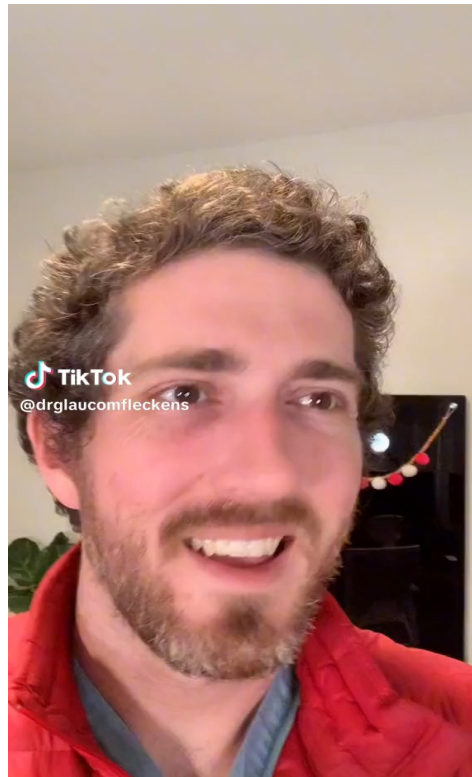
MENU ∨ **nature**

Commentary | Published: 30 April 1992

The growing inaccessibility of science

Donald P. Hayes

Access options

Rent or Buy article	Subscribe to Journal
Get time limited or full article access on ReadCube.	Get full journal access for 1 year
from $8.99	$199.00
	only $3.83 per issue
Rent or Buy	Subscribe
All prices are NET prices.	All prices are NET prices.
	VAT will be added later in the checkout.

Exceptional Children

Impact Factor: **2.8** / 5-Year Impa

🔒 Restricted access | Research article | First published online January 5, 2024

Waived English Learners: The Understudied Intersection of English Learner and

Min Hyun Oh [iD] ✉ and Jeannette Mancilla-Martinez   View all authors and affiliations

OnlineFirst | https://doi.org/10.1177/00144029231220302

≔ Contents | 🔒 Get access | 💬 Cite article | ⤙ Share options | ⓘ Information, rights and per

👥 Society

Alternatively, view purchase options

🛒 Purchase access

Purchase 24 hour online access t

◯ Article - **$37.50**

ADD

Paywalls

- **Only 23%** of a random sample of publications in special education journals freely accessible at Open Access Button ([Cook et al., 2023](#))
  - Paper is, sadly, behind a paywall, see [here](#) for a post-print
- Limiting access to research is antithetical to Merton's norm of communism and **slows scientific progress**
- Inaccessibility of peer-reviewed, published research, syntheses, and "how-to" papers **contributes to the research-to-practice** (and-policy) gap
  - Practitioners can't base practice on research if they can't access the research!
- Non-trivial costs associated with publishing papers open access (**~$3,000/paper**)

For-Profit Publishers

- **Reliance on free labor**
  - Conducting the research and producing the papers
  - Editorial process
    - Peer review
    - Editing
    - Copy-editing

- **Big profits**
  - Larger profit margins than Google and Apple, ~40%!
  - Elsevier made over $3.35 billion a year; Sage $1.5 billion annually (Academic Publishing Statistics, 2023)

# Big Money Can Lead To Big Corruption
(Joelving, F., 2024)

- **Bribery attempts**
  - Publish or perish results in intense pressure
  - Paper mills (likely to accelerate with AI) generate $millions
  - Documented cases of bribes up to $20,000 or more to editors for accepting papers
  - Special issues published open access in for-profit journals highly vulnerable to paper mills
- **Conflict between profit motives and ethical responsibility**
  - Industry slow to respond to fraud
  - Limited follow up on reported fraudulent practices

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

But for-profit journals ensure quality, right?
Impact Factors (**Kirkegaard, 2022**)

- **Weak Link to Quality**: Limited correlation between impact factors and research quality
- **Bias in High-Impact Journals**: Higher impact factors often linked to overestimated study effects
- **Methodological Flaws**: Top journals don't always equate to better methodology or reliability
- **Replicability Issues**: High impact factors don't guarantee replicability in studies
- **Negative Correlations Found**: Some studies show a negative relationship between impact factors and scientific quality
- Retractions: > 10,000 published articles retracted in 2023, ~2/3 for misconduct (Oransky et al., 2024)

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

What about the importance of Impact Factors?
([Kirkegaard, 2022](#))
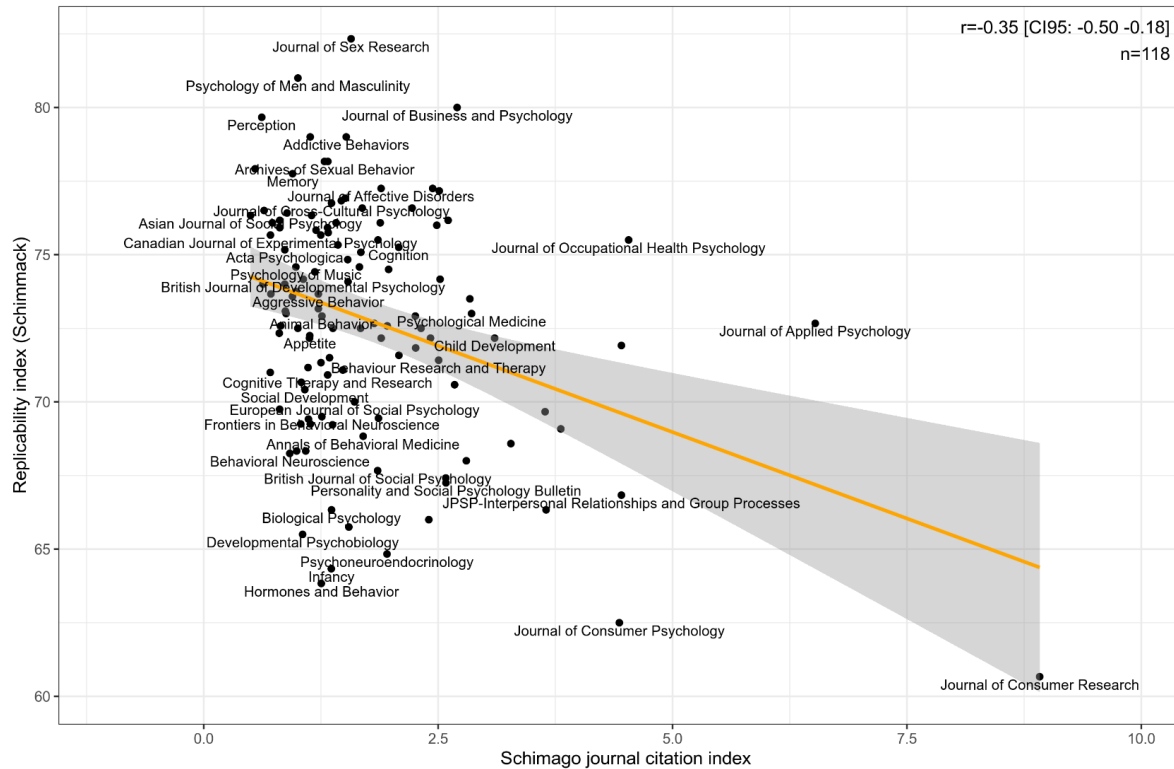
Paradigm Shift: Costs

- **Who should bear the cost of publishing and maintaining archives?**
  - Traditional library subscription
  - Publish and read agreements
  - Article Processing Charges (APCs)
    - Many publishers are exploring this option
    - May be cost prohibitive, especially for fields like special education
    - Researchers from smaller institutions and lower-income countries may be priced out of publishing in top-tier journals

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

APCs: A Cautionary Tale
(**Pettit, 2023**)

- Wiley removed the Editor from the *Journal of Political Philosophy* without explanation

- Coincided with a call to publish more articles in the journal

- As APCs become prevalent, editors may face undue pressure to prioritize quantity to ensure journals' financial viability

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Diamond Open-Access Journals

- We are huge fans of **self-archiving/green OA** (posting pre- and post-prints)

- Another option is to replace for-profit journals with journals run by and for scholars, often with support from university libraries

- **Diamond (or platinum) OA journals** make **all publications freely accessible on the internet at no charge to authors**

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Journal of Special Education Preparation

Journal of Special Education Preparation

CURRENT ISSUE   ONLINE FIRST   ARCHIVES   ANNOUNCEMENTS   SUBMIT   AUTHOR GUIDELINES   ABOUT ▾   🔍 SEARCH

Faculty
University faculty design and deliver coursework and practicum experiences to meet diverse needs of the special education teacher workforce.

Preservice Teachers
Well-prepared preservice teachers are profession ready to enhance academic and social/emotional outcomes of all students.

Research
Evidence-based and high-leverage practices in teacher preparation drive decision-making.

Practice
Effective and abundant practice opportunities ensure mastery and generalization of evidence-based practices.

The Journal of Special Education Preparation (*JOSEP*) is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal that features research-to-practice information and materials for special education faculty in higher education settings. Published bi-annually, *JOSEP* brings its readers the latest on evidence-based instructional strategies, technologies, procedures, and techniques to prepare special education teachers and leaders. The focus of its practical content is on immediate application.

f share   🐦 tweet
in share   ✉ mail

[Single Case in the Social Sciences](#)

About the Journal

The open access, peer-reviewed journal *Single Case in the Social Sciences (SCSS)* publishes original experimental single-case studies, systematic reviews, and methods articles biannually to expand knowledge across applied behavior analysis, counseling, education, psychology, social work, and related fields **with no associated publishing fees**. Operating under a Creative Commons license and aligned with open science guidelines, the journal provides a specialized outlet for rigorous single-case research with transparent reporting. As an educational resource and forum for open science practices, *SCSS* is independently published through the [University of Oklahoma Libraries](#) and supported by reviewers, sponsors, and an editorial team dedicated to disseminating quality work for the advancement of single case research.

Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship

The Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship

Follow

Article Submission Manuscripts submitted to JOSEA must be original, scientifically accurate, and adhere to APA stylistic guidelines. Manuscripts are accepted electronically to Dr. Anna Osipova and Dr. Jemma Kim at TheJOSEAsubmission@gmail.com.

The mission of the Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship (JOSEA) is to publish quality graduate student and early career faculty research and foster research-based practices for children and youth with exceptionalities. The practitioner column aims to present a diverse and practical range of interventions, strategies, and practices in a format that is accessible for practitioners working with children with exceptionalities.

Journal Home

About This Journal

Editorial Board

Policies

Special Issue Call for Papers

Most Popular Papers

Receive Email Notices or RSS

Select an issue:

All Issues | Browse

Research in Special Education (*RiSE*)

- A soon-to-launch diamond open-access of, by, and for special education researchers
  - o **Everything will be open at no cost to authors**
  - o With support from UVA library
- Will recognize and support **open practices**
- Can engage in **innovative practices**
  - o Anonymously publishing peer reviews
  - o "Pay" reviewers
  - o Mentor early career researchers in review process
- One special series on open practice underway, another on addressing unique issues in special education research in development
- Will be forming an editorial board and accepting submissions very soon

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

2024 Aletheia Society Unconference

Crowdsourcing and the
Special Education Research Accelerator

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Traditional Research

- "**Small science**" (Uhlmann et al., 2019) conceptualized and conducted in relative isolation

- Tends to be **broad but shallow** (Makel et al., 2019)

- Explores lots of different questions

- Researchers rewarded for novel findings

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Traditional Research

- Funding awarded to relatively **small group of researchers**
  - Between 2013 and 2018, NCSER has awarded 38 RCT grants to only 22 institutions and organizations, with 61% of those awards (*n*=23) going to just 8 institutions
  - Inefficient use of skills in our research community

- **Inefficient**: Answers questions one at a time and difficult to synthesize findings meaningfully across studies
  - Differences in samples, outcome, intervention elements

- **Limited replications, transparency, and sharing** (Cook et al., 2023a, b)
  - Replication rate remains ~0.5%, data seldom shared and most authors who indicate data available on request did not share

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Traditional Research

- **Limited diversity and generalizability**
  - Lack of diversity in study samples that determine evidence-based practices (Sinclair et al., 2018)
  - Scarce evidence of what works for who
  - IES funded Goal-3 and Goal-4 RCTs are disproportionately conducted in large schools and school districts in urban and suburban areas in coastal regions (Tipton et al., 2021)

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Crowdsourcing

- "Crowdsourcing flips research planning from 'what is the best we can do with the resources we have to investigate our question?' to 'what is the best way to investigate our question, so that we can decide what resources to recruit?'" (Uhlmann et al., 2019, p. 713)
  - o **Big-team science**
- Can crowdsource research questions, study plans, data collection, **data analysis**

Crowdsourcing

- Horizontal distribution of research ownership, resources, and expertise

- Emphasis on conducting **fewer, larger studies**
  - Facilitates systematic replication, transparency, and sharing
  - Including conceptual replications to examine effect heterogeneity

- **Democratizing research**
  - Involving many and diverse researchers and participants

- Facilitates **investigation of effect heterogeneity** and identifying boundaries of effectiveness rather than main effects

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Special Education Research Accelerator
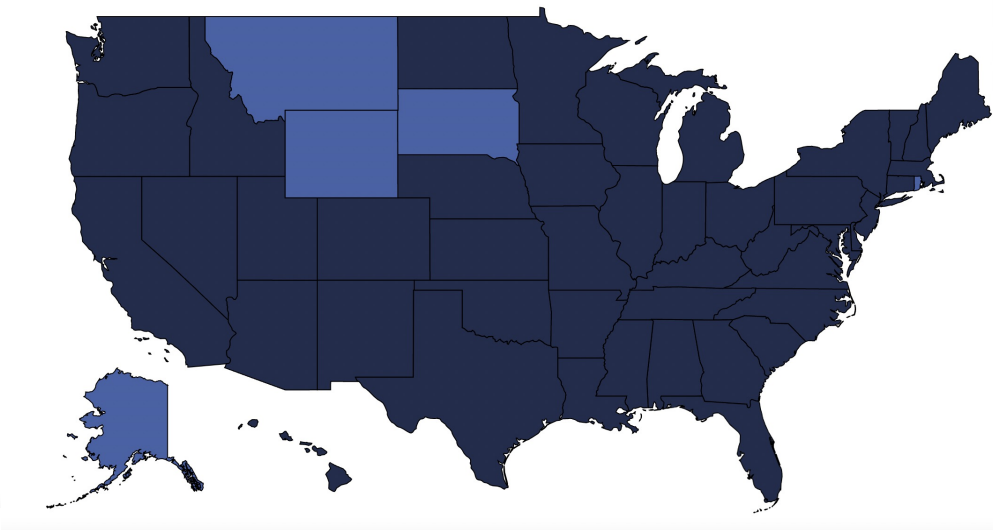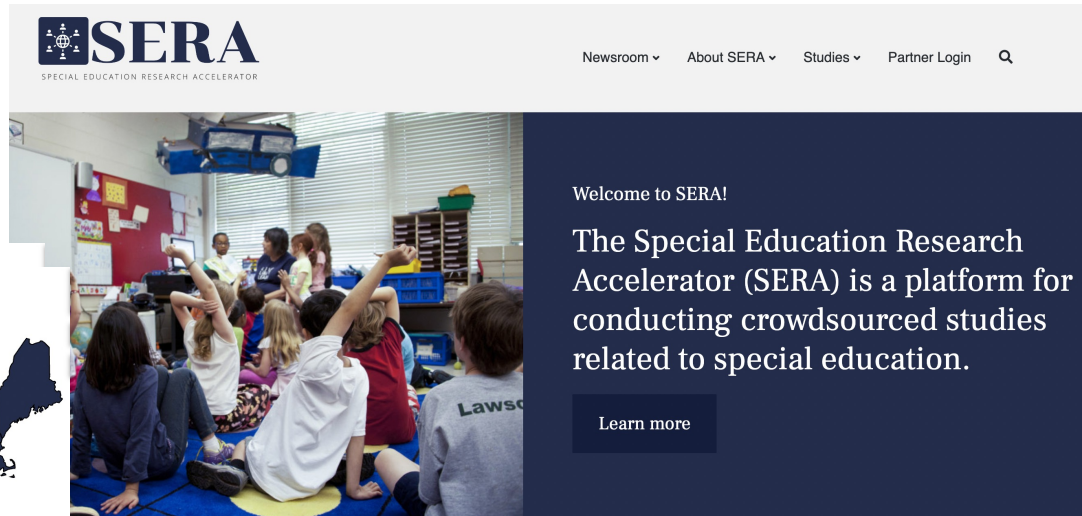
Special Education Research Accelerator

- Modeled after the Psychological Science Accelerator
  - 2468 researchers from 73 countries
- SERA has **~370 research partners** across 46 US states and districts
  - Become a research partner!
- Development and piloting supported by 2 unsolicited awards from IES
  - Pilot RCT involving 8 research partners
  - Ongoing piloting of development of integrated research plan to systematically examine generalization boundaries of interventions
- Currently conducting an NSF-funded project to examine science instruction for elementary students with LD with 21 (and growing) research partners

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Special Education Research Accelerator

- Exciting possibilities
  - Design and conduct accelerate systematically designed series of conceptual replications to deeply examine effects of an intervention in **years rather than decades**
  - Conduct **different types of research** (e.g., group experiments, single-case designs, observational studies, assessment evaluations, qualitative?; funded and unfunded)
  - **Diversify and democratize involvement in large-scale research** to inform practice
  - Address **critical questions** in the field **as determined by special education community**

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Teacher Perspectives on PD (Schwartz, 2023)

- Viewed as crucial for teaching and learning

- Effectiveness and accessibility varies

- Commonly **lacks relevance** to specific teaching areas and local school contexts; goals often vague

- Prefer practical, directly applicable PD, tailored to their needs

- Indicate a need for more PD **focused on supporting students with disabilities**

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Who Provides PD?

- School district staff/ teacher unions

- Subject specific professional associations

- Education companies and publishers

- Government agencies (e.g., certification or required PD for licensure)

- Non-profits

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

PD Quality

- Most (80%) PD does not fully meet ESSA criteria for high quality
  - Sustained
  - Intensive
  - Collaborative
  - Job embedded
  - **Data-driven**
  - Classroom focused

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Harnessing Researchers to Improve PD

- **Expertise in evidence-based practices**
  - o Deep understanding of the latest research and best practices in special education
  - o Equipped to provide education that is rooted in proven methods and strategies

- o **Understand state and local contexts**
  - o Awareness of specific challenges and needs within local school systems
  - o Ability to tailor PD to address these unique local educational environments

- o **Underutilized in PD**
  - o Despite their expertise, special education researchers often have limited roles in mainstream PD

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Aletheia's Approach to PD in Special Education

- **Crowdsource the PD Model**
  - Engaging a wide range of experts to ensure the PD model is evidence-based and comprehensive
- **Develop specific PD modules as a group and/ or individually**
  - Ensure content up-to-date, relevant and address research to practice gap
- Implement a robust quality assurance process to maintain high quality
- **Outreach to education community**
  - Actively advertise and promote PD to schools, districts and educational organizations
  - Manage the business side of PD

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Next Steps

- Major focus starting summer 2024
- Chaired by Drs. Miriam Ortiz and Tammy Ellis- Robinson
- Develop PD model and infrastructure
  o Hold PD specific Unconference, working groups
  o Will be actively recruiting interested members soon

Unconferences

Traditional Conferences

- What is your favorite, most exciting part of conferences?

- **Didactic**, with presenter talking at audiences

- Few opportunities for collaboration, despite being a rare time when researchers gather

- **Expensive**

- Themes typically determined by organization, **limited research content**

Unconferences (Budd et al., 2015)

- "Unconventional conferences"
- Unconferences are **participant-oriented** meetings with i**nformal and flexible programs** that emphasize collaborative work
- Can involve different formats, but minimize lecture-style presentations and emphasize en**gagement and collaboration**
  - We're partial to **hackathons**
- Help break down traditional barriers, expand professional networks, and foster ongoing collaborations
- Can be conducted **online** (maximize efficiency)

y in 🔴 f ✉

The Future of Conferences Is Unconferences: Exploring a Decentralized Network of Regional Meetups

Authors: 👤 Soya Park, 👤 Eun-Jeong Kang, 👤 Karen Joy, 👤 Rosanna Bellini, 👤 Jérémie Lumbroso, 👤 Danaë Metaxa,

👤 Andrés Monroy-Hernández   Authors Info & Claims

Unconference as a pedagogical tool for 'decolonising' teaching and curricula

+ Tools

Figueira, Carla and Persaud, Roxanne. 2023. 'Unconference as a pedagogical tool for 'decolonising' teaching and curricula'. In: *ENCATC C* Finland 11 - 13 October 2023. [Conference or Workshop Item] (Forthcoming)

THE Times Higher Education | **IHE** Inside Higher Ed

Making an inclusive 'unconference'

Many people in minority communities within our universities do not have enough opportunities to be platformed or validated, or to share their lived expertise within our institutions. An 'unconference' could cultivate these voices for positive impact

Aletheia Unconferences

- This is our first one!

- But we envision
  - Unconferences specific to **different areas of special education** to foster collaborative work **identifying and addressing key issues in that field**
  - An annual **Aletheia Unconference** specifically related to issues related to **special education research** and managing/engaging the Aletheia Society
  - Online, in person, or hybrid

Today

Aletheia Society: Unconferences

Schedule

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Aletheia Society: Unconferences
Today's Unconference: Hackathons

- What are hackathons?
  - **Participant driven**
    - Harness collective creativity and expertise
  - Emphasizes **interactive, spontaneous discussion** over formal presentations
  - Centers on **actions**
    - Writing articles, grants, white papers, formulating research agendas, etc...
  - **Tangible results**
    - Projects designed for real world impact

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Aletheia Society: Unconferences

Six Hackathons

- Data-Based Decision Making with Discrepant Results
  o Betsy Talbott

- Moving from Awareness to Action: Advancing the Evidence Base for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Special Education
  o Endia Lindo

- Planning Unfunded Crowdsourced Studies Using SERA
  o Bryan Cook

- *Research in Special Education* (*RiSE*): The Journal
  o Allison Lombardi

Aletheia Society: Unconferences
Six Hackathons

- Research-to-Practice Hackathon
  - o Liz Stevens

- Empowering Early Career Scholars: A Hackathon on Open Science Involvement within the Aletheia Society
  - o Lindsey Mirielli

Aletheia Society: Unconferences

Hackathons: Values and Expectations

- **Collaboration**
  o Work together to share knowledge, ideas and experiences for the collective benefit

- **Respect**
  o Treat other with kindness, consideration, and professionalism. Respect diverse viewpoints and experiences.

- **Inclusivity**
  o Ensure everyone has a voice. Be mindful not to dominate conversations and encourage participation from all attendees

- **Engagement**
  o Be present and involved. If you are in the room, your contributions are valuable and expected.

- **Positive Impact**
  o Strive to have a positive impact on others and the event as a whole.

ALETHEIA
SOCIETY

Aletheia Society: Unconferences
Hackathons: Timeline

- Morning: Identify the area(s) of focus and product(s)
  o Reconvene to share and problem solve

- Afternoon: Start working together

- End of afternoon: Plan for finishing work after Unconference
  o Reconvene to share progress

- After Unconference: Finish and disseminate/use product
  o Group may expand or contract

Aletheia Society: Unconferences

Conclusion

- Thanks for coming!
- We need your expertise and energy in Aletheia
  - Governing committees for Aletheia, *RiSE*, SERA, PD, and Unconferences
  - Additional workgroups and committees
  - *RiSE* editorial board and authors
- [Google sheet](#) to express interest (no commitment)
- Membership
  - Coming soon, we don't want to start taking any money
  - Goals of affordable dues, reduced rates for doc students, active involvement of members