



Forging Inclusive Partnerships

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We've Come A Long Way

'Traditional' special education teacher programs prepare close to **20,000 candidates** yearly (USDOE, 2023)

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

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

Strong advocacy efforts from organizations like CEC, TED, HECSE

But There Is Still A Long Way To Go

- **Shortage** of special education teachers, significant (~15%) **turnover**, and **lack of diversity** in our workforce (Bettini & Gilmour, 2024)
- Research agenda setting and grant allocation are **not democratic**
- **Researchers** work in relative **isolation** with little to no collaboration field wide
- We know some about what works, but have made **little progress on what works for whom, in what settings, for what outcomes**
- 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

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Potential Changing Landscape

- **Restructuring Federal Oversight**
 - Shifts in responsibilities for education programs, such as IDEA, to agencies outside the Department of Education
- **Changes to Federal Funding**
 - Title One funding directed to families through alternative mechanisms (e.g., savings accounts)
 - Elimination of competitive grant funding programs
- **Accountability and Oversight Concerns**
 - Potential for fragmented oversight with diminished ability to enforce IDEA requirements effectively

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The Field Has Been Here Before

- **Deinstitutionalization**

- Willowbrook: Robert F. Kennedy's 1965 visit and report exposed the inhumane conditions, galvanizing public support for reform and community-based care.

- **Securing Access to Education**

- Burton Blatt and Elizabeth Boggs worked to shape policies and legislation that laid the foundation for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- **Advancing Employment Protections**

- ADA Advocacy: Ed Roberts led efforts to secure workplace protections and accessibility for people with disabilities

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The challenges we face today are not new. Those before us acted with courage and determination—**Now it's our turn**



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Meeting the Moment: A Call For Change



- **Defend Core Values**

- **Public education and disability rights** thrive when institutions are **strong, equitable, and inclusive**
- It's our collective responsibility to support and protect these values

- **Act with Courage and Vision**

- **Advocate** for **innovative, collaborative** approaches to advance special education research and practice
- *Small, actions—when taken collectively and in a coordinated way—can create powerful, transformative change*

- **Collaborate for Impact**

- **Build partnerships** across disciplines and organizations to tackle pressing challenges together
- Foster networks that **emphasize shared ownership, transparency, and inclusivity** in research and practice

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Can We Do Things Differently To Meet The Moment?

A case for working together

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Meeting the Moment: Forging a Partnership with TED

. Aletheia Society Mission

- Democratizing special education research to foster inclusivity, amplify diverse voices, and drive meaningful improvements for children with disabilities

. Why Partner with TED?

- Shared commitment to preparing and supporting high-quality special educators
- Opportunity to bridge the gap between research and practice, directly benefiting teacher educators and future teachers
- Collaborative potential to tackle key challenges in special education through evidence-based, inclusive research and professional development



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The Aletheia Society

- Aletheia = ‘un-concealment’ or ‘disclosure’. It refers to the process by which things reveal themselves, become known, or are brought into the light.
- A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization **dedicated to advancing special education** through the **collaborative efforts** of researchers, educators, and other stakeholders
- "**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, and we are looking for partners!



Democratizing research to
improve teaching and learning

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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.

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Aletheia's Initial Focus Areas



Academic publishing



Large-scale and
systematic research
collaborations



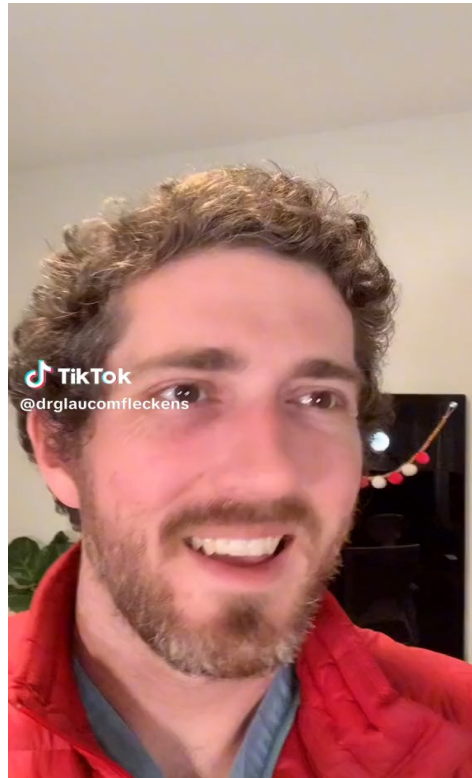
Vetted, research-based
professional
development



Productive, collaborative,
unconferences

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For-Profit Publishers





- A soon-to-launch diamond open-access of, by, and for special education researchers
 - **Everything will be open at no cost to authors**
 - With support from UVA library
- Will recognize and support **open practices**
- Can engage in **innovative practices**
 - Anonymously publishing peer reviews
 - "Pay" reviewers
 - Mentor early career researchers in review process

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TED and Aletheia Publication Partnership

- Let's lead a **transformative shift** in publishing research and practitioner papers for broader access and impact
 - Build on the success of the *Journal of Special Education Preparation*
 - Establish a dedicated teacher preparation section in *RiSE*
 - Support existing open-access journals and encourage pre and post printing
 - Encourage the development of new open-access journals for special education research
 - Prioritize publishing your work so its accessible to all



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Making Way on the Two-Way Street

- Open Access and Practitioner Friendly Journals can facilitate...
 - "Equal and Critical Partners"
 - Translation of research to practice
 - "Effective Core of Interventions" (Heward, 2023)
 - Must move from the core to "consistent delivery & adaptation of interventions that are EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, SUSTAINABLE" (Belfiore & Lee, 2024)
 - Practitioners access (physically) AND are they accessible (social validity)

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Crowdsourcing and the Special Education Research Accelerator



Crowdsourcing

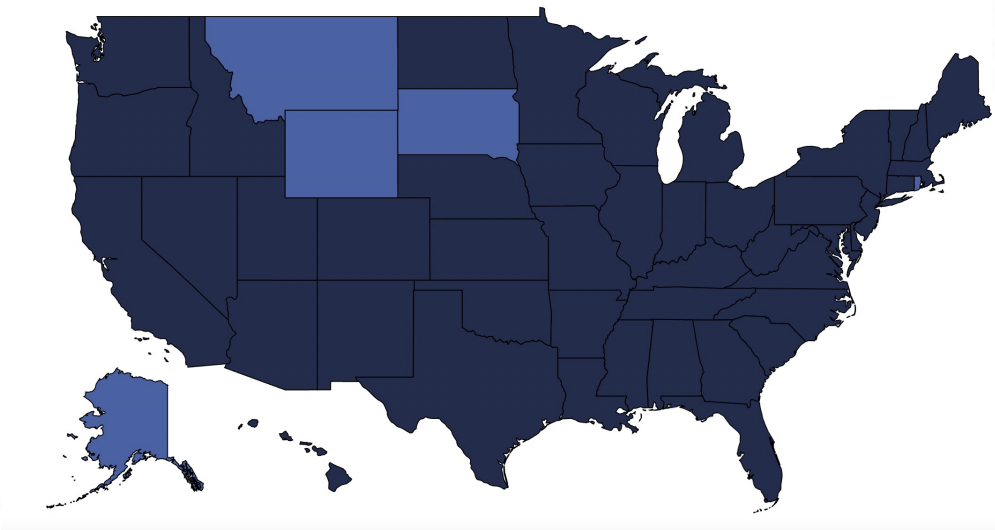
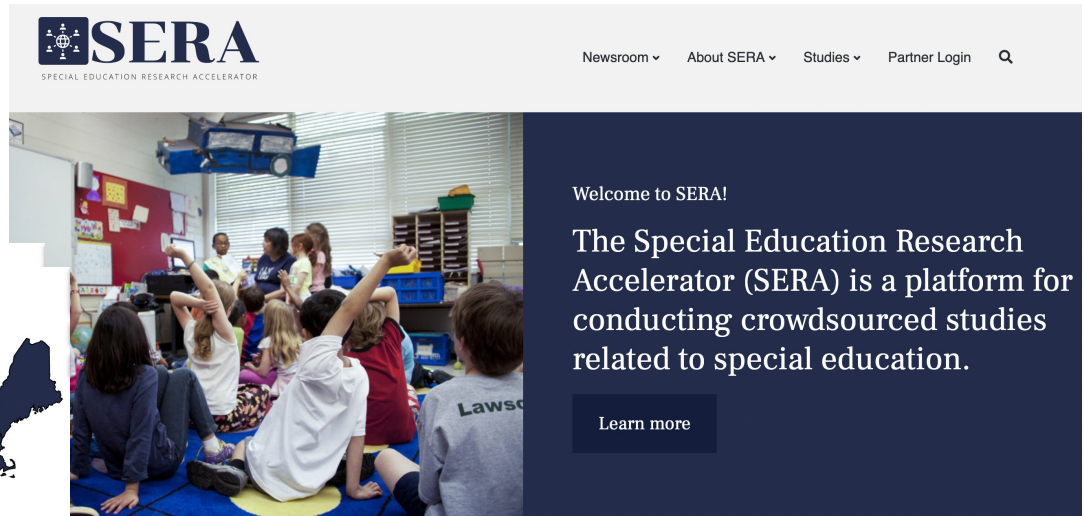
- "Crowdsourcing flips research planning from 'what is the best we can do with the resources we have to investigate our question?' to 'what is the best way to investigate our question, so that we can decide what resources to recruit?'" (Uhlmann et al., 2019, p. 713)
 - **Big-team science**
- Can crowdsource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

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Special Education Research Accelerator

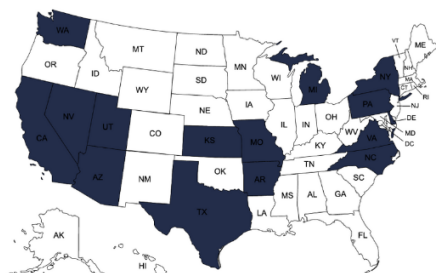


Example: Crowdsource Science (Grant No. 2201464)

The 2023-2024 Crowdsource Science study included:

14

STATES



19

STUDY SITES



29

TEACHERS



Anticipated #s:
348 Audio recordings
87 Direct observations

Consequences

Intended

- Value in participating in large scale, meaningful research.
- Publication opportunities.
- Collaboration across IHEs.
- Exposure to "model" training & data collection procedures
- Access to data now and long-term

Unintended

- Impact on my OWN teaching & candidate experience-
examples.
- Collaboration (*general ed colleagues & science program developers*)

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Collaborating with TED on Crowdsourced Research in Teacher Education

- Promote an **inclusive and democratic approach** to **setting the agenda** and **conducting research** on special education teacher preparation
 - Crowdsource teacher education research agenda
 - **Collect longitudinal data** with **shared measures** across sites to build a secondary data source for research and enhancing our practices
 - **Use SERA to conduct large-scale, representative studies** on teacher education practices
 - Unlike most SERA projects, **WE** are often the research sites
- Ultimately
 - Help improve our practices and provide us with comprehensive data to **stand up** and **advocate** for our field

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Crowdsourcing for Teacher Educators

- With all the competing "pulls" for our time & attention, what are some *easy pickings* that have meaningful outcomes?

e.g.,

- measuring "Impact on Student Learning"
- *Teacher Performance Assessments* & other "data driven interventions" completed by candidates
- studying influence of common "practice-based learning opportunities"

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Professional Development: Addressing the Research-to-Practice Gap

Harnessing Researchers to Improve PD

- **Expertise in evidence-based practices**
 - Deep understanding of the latest research and best practices in special education
 - Equipped to provide education that is rooted in proven methods and strategies
- **Understand state and local contexts**
 - Awareness of specific challenges and needs within local school systems
 - Ability to tailor PD to address these unique local educational environments
- **Underutilized in PD**
 - Despite their expertise, special education researchers often have limited roles in mainstream PD

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

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Collaborating with TED on PD

- Work with us to develop and implement a model
- Chaired by Drs. Tammy Ellis- Robinson and Miriam Ortiz
- Currently a call for frameworks

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Unconferences

Unconferences (Budd et al., 2015)

- "Unconventional conferences"
- Unconferences are **participant-oriented** meetings with **informal and flexible programs** that emphasize collaborative work
- Can involve different formats, but minimize lecture-style presentations and emphasize **engagement and collaboration**
 - We're partial to **hackathons**
 - Help break down traditional barriers, expand professional networks, and foster ongoing collaborations
 - **Can help us structure our advocacy and work together**

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TED and Aletheia Unconference Collaboration

- Tomorrow, 9:00 - 10:50 Conference Center A



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Potential Topics

- Special educators' dispositions, beliefs, and attitudes (Nelson Brunsting)
- Best practices for preparing teacher candidates to use evidence-based practices (Melinda Leko)
- How preservice teachers develop knowledge and expertise (Peggy Weiss)
- How teacher preparation can advance racial equity (Ambra Green)
- Teachers' working conditions (Liz Bettini)
- Teacher career pathways/ Retention (Bonnie Billingsley)
- Other areas (Joe Morgan)
 - Paraeducators' roles and training
 - Grow Your Own Apprenticeship programs

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Our Ask:

Let's Work Together to Meet Our Moment

The power of working together lies in the multiplier effect—when we align our efforts, even small actions combine to create far-reaching, transformative change. By democratizing our field and uniting around shared goals, we can achieve more together than any of us could alone.