The goal of my research is to improve teaching quality through the study of teachers’ practices, knowledge, and their impact on student achievement. A central focus of this work surrounds the measurement of effective teaching for students with disabilities.

I have pursued three lines of research in the area of teacher quality. The first examines how district policy and school-level social context influences beginning teachers’ instruction, commitment, and retention, as well as student learning. In the second, I study teacher labor market trends (i.e. hiring, attrition), through the analysis of nationally representative surveys and state administrative datasets. The final and most recent strand of this research has been the measurement of teaching effectiveness in the evaluation of teachers. This work is both timely and necessary, as states and districts are rapidly adopting effectiveness measures (e.g., value-added models, teacher observations, measures of teachers' knowledge, student surveys) with little guidance from the research community as to how best to implement them in fair and valid ways. To this end, I am currently examining how district administrators learn to conduct high-inference teacher observations in a consequential teacher evaluation system, as Co-PI on a 3-year W.T. Grant study. I am also a Co-PI on a 3-year NSF study developing empirical estimates of design parameters of teacher knowledge, the goal of which is to provide guidance in the design of future studies of the effectiveness of PD interventions.

Specific to special education, I have been collaborating with colleagues from ETS and the University of Florida to assess the validity of the most commonly used teacher observation system, Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, for use in the evaluation of special educators. The underlying argument is that general educators and special educators define effectiveness in very different ways, and there are concerns that the FFT may not provide valid assessments of special educator quality. We are also developing a framework for assessing teamwork when teachers share responsibility for students with disabilities. A second project investigates strategies for including test scores of students with disabilities and English Learners in value-added models of general education teachers. This research is summarized in a forthcoming Educational Researcher article titled, “Including Students With Disabilities and English Learners in Measures of Educator Effectiveness.”

Biographical Sketch
Nathan D. Jones, PhD an assistant professor of special education. Dr. Jones previously worked as a research scientist in the Understanding Teaching Quality Center at ETS. His work has appeared in such publications as Educational Researcher, Exceptional Children, Teachers College Record, Educational Policy, and the AERA Handbook on Educational Policy Research, and he is currently on the editorial board at the Elementary School Journal. Dr. Jones holds a B.A. in political science from Northwestern University and a joint doctorate in special education and education policy from Michigan State University. Upon completing his doctorate, he was an IES postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern University’s Institute for Policy Research, under the mentorship of Larry Hedges.