

Brandon J. Watkins, Ph.D.

Business Address

University of South Carolina Upstate
Instructor & Program Coordinator of Education Foundations
College of Education, Human Performance, & Health
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Education

2026	University of North Carolina at Charlotte Charlotte, NC	Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction - Urban Literacy Education
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*Dissertation Topic: Digital Video Games as Literacy Playgrounds: A Youth Participatory
Action Research Study with Black Boys in a Passionate Affinity Space*

Chair: Dr. Erin T. Miller

2025	University of North Carolina at Charlotte Charlotte, NC	Post Master's Certificate in Qualitative Research
2022	University of South Carolina Columbia, SC	M. Ed in Education Administration
2014	University of South Carolina Upstate Spartanburg, SC	B.A in English

University & Community College Teaching Experience

2024 - Present	University of South Carolina Upstate College of Education, Human Performance, & Health	Instructor of Education Foundations
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- Undergraduate Courses Taught: Development of the Lifelong Learner (EDFO U333), Introduction to Exceptional Learners/Special Education (EDFO U341), Field Experience in Middle/Secondary Education (EDSC U440), Middle Level Curriculum & Methodology (EDSC U441), and Middle/Secondary Classroom Assessment (EDSC U443).

2022 - 2024	Limestone University - Department of Teacher Education	Call Me MiSTER Coordinator
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- Course Taught: Call Me Mister Seminar (CMM 201).

2021 Spartanburg Community College Adjunct English Instructor

- Courses Taught: Developmental Reading (RDG 032), Critical Reading (RDG 100), Intro to Composition (ENG 100)

K-12 Teaching & Professional Experience

Cherokee County School District - 2013 - 2024

2022 - 2024 Gaffney Middle School Instructional Coach

- Leadership & Service: Student-Centered Coaching, Data Analysis, Professional Learning Community (PLC) Leader, School Leadership Team Member, Literacy Council Liaison, and Community Partnership Coordinator.

2019 - 2022 John E. Ewing Middle School English/Language Arts Teacher

- Courses Taught: 7th Grade English/Language Arts, 8th Grade English/Language Arts, English 1 Honors, and Yearbook Production.
- Leadership & Service: 7th Grade Team Lead, 8th Grade Team Lead, School Leadership Team Member, English Department Chair, Literacy Team Lead, and Reading Council Liaison.

2017 - 2019 Cherokee County School District - Office Curriculum Associate
of Curriculum & Instruction

- Leadership & Service: Served as assistant to Coordinator of Testing & Accountability, Analyze state & district testing data for instructional planning, Coordinated training and workshops for school test coordinators, organized test data and district benchmark assessments.

2015 - 2017 B.D. Lee Elementary School Title 1 Parent Liaison

- Leadership & Service: Served as liaison between student, home, school, and community resources, identified programming needs and implemented programs for parents and students based on the identifications, established Bee University (parent resource center).

2014 - 2015 Gaffney Middle School English/Language Arts Teacher

- Courses Taught: 7th Grade English/Language Arts and Yearbook Production
- Leadership & Service: Reading Council Liaison

2013 - 2014 B.D. Lee Elementary School

4K Teacher Assistant

- Leadership & Service: Assisted in instructing and supervising students during classroom activities, facilitated reading and math small groups for third, fourth, and fifth grade students, extended day math tutor, and assisted in the development of classroom management procedures.

Licensure, Certifications, & Endorsement

SC 1E – Middle School Language Arts (Teaching - Professional Certificate)

SC 7C – School Principal: Secondary - Tier 1 (Leadership - Professional Certificate)

SC Gifted & Talented Endorsement

SC Read to Succeed Endorsement

SC Mentor Teacher

SC Mentor Teacher Trainer

SC 4.0 ADEPT Evaluator

Publications

Technical Reports & Conference Proceedings

Hollis, T, Watkins, B., & Hancock, S. (Eds.) (2024). Proceedings of the 5th Biennial International Conference on Urban Education (ICUE). Urban Education Collaborative. https://www.theicue.org/files/ugd/a4a250_a8d5f724af524faaa468fccdc0379e62.pdf

Book Review (Peer-Reviewed)

Watkins, B.J. (2025). *Review of They Came for the Schools* by Mike Hixenbaugh. The Growing Scholars Chronicle.

Conference Presentations (Peer-Reviewed)

Watkins, B. (2026). *Stitching Stories, Shaping Selves: The Fabric of Middle Level Pre-Service Teacher Identity*. [Conference Presentation]. South Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education Best Practices Institute.

Watkins, B. & Lee, W., Ellis, D., Graham, S., Koffin, C., & Jones, S. (2026). *Let's Talk: AI as a Personalized Support Tool (Not a Replacement)*. [Conference Session]. South Carolina Association of Middle Level Education. Myrtle Beach, SC.

Watkins, B. (2025). *Pixelated Pedagogies*. [Roundtable Presentation]. NCTE Annual Convention. Denver, CO.

Watkins, B. (2025). *Pixelated Pedagogies: Black Boys Literacies While Gaming in an Affinity Space*. [Poster Presentation]. Literacy Association of Ireland. Dublin, Ireland.

Gonzales, R. Hunter, D. & Watkins, B. (2025). *Graduate Student Association Peer Mentoring*. [Presentation]. ELATE Summer Conference 2025. Charleston, SC.

- Watkins, B. (2025). *Pixelated Pedagogies: Integrating Black Boys' Gaming Culture to Innovate Future English Classroom Practices*. [Paper Presentation]. NCTE ELATE Summer Conference 2025. Charleston, SC.
- Watkins, B. (2025). *Literacy in Unlikely Places: Rethinking Black Boy Literacies through Gaming Practices*. [Poster Presentation]. German-American Doctoral Student Research Symposium. Virtual.
- Watkins, B. (2025). *Literacy in Unlikely Places: Rethinking Black Boy Literacies through Gaming Practices*. [Poster Presentation]. Cato College of Education 2025 Research Symposium. Charlotte, NC.
- Watkins, B. (2024). *Black Resistance Rising: A Historical & Contemporary Examination of Resistance in Children's & Youth Adult Literature*. [Accepted Conference Proposal]. Charlotte Writing Project Fall 2024 Conference. Charlotte, NC.
- Camp, K., Watkins, B, Fox E. (2022) *Trail Connectors - Adding a Blaze at a Marker of Intersectionality* [Presentation]. Teacher-to-Teacher Conference. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC.
- Camp, K., Watkins, B., Fox, E. (2021). *Trail Connectors – Adding a Blaze with a Marker of Intersectionality* [Presentation]. National Council of Teachers of English, Online.
- Watkins, B., (2017). *Include Me: Inclusive Literature in the Middle School ELA Classroom* [Paper Presentation]. Life of the Scholar Conference, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC.

Grants

Career Total Funded: \$14,358.85

SC Middle Grades Initiatives Micro Grant (2025)	\$800 Funded
USC Upstate Teaching & Productive Scholarship Grant (2025)	\$2, 246.04 Funded
ELATE Graduate Student Research Grant (2025)	\$2,500.00 Funded
Dollar General Youth Literacy Grant (2025)	\$4,720.00 Funded
UNC Charlotte Doctoral Fellows Grant (2025)	\$1,000.00 Funded
NCTE Research Foundation Grant (2025)	\$3,300.00 Not Funded
USC Upstate Teaching & Productive Scholarship Grant (2025)	\$1,500.00 Funded
Bright Ideas Educator Grant (2021)	\$825.00 Funded
Donors Choose Classroom Grant (2020)	\$767.81 Funded

Key Notes

Key Note Speaker. *EdVenture Day*. April 27, 2026. Institute of Innovation, Gaffney, SC.

Key Note Speaker. *First-Gen Lunch & Learn*. November 5, 2025. Spartanburg Community College, Spartanburg, SC

Key Note Speaker. *Leadership Cherokee Graduation*. April 18, 2024. Leadership Cherokee, Gaffney, SC

Key Note Speaker. *Adult Education Graduation*. May 11, 2023. Cherokee County Adult Education, Gaffney, SC.

Workshops & Invited Talks

Invited Guest Speaker, *Beta Club Installation*. December 18, 2025. Gaffney Middle School, Gaffney, SC.

Invited Guest Speaker, *Etiquette Luncheon*. March 27, 2024. Talent Search/TRiO, Spartanburg Community College.

Workshop Facilitator, *Literacy*. June 12, 2024. Talent Search/TRiO Summer Workshop, Spartanburg Community College, Cherokee Campus.

Invited Guest Speaker, *Student Leadership*. April 18, 2024. Junior Leadership Cherokee Graduation. Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce & Cherokee County School District, Gaffney, SC.

Workshop Facilitator, *Matters of the Heart: Love & Trust as Core Principles for Early Career Teachers*. February 12, 2024. Limestone University, Gaffney, SC.

Workshop Facilitator, *Teaching Beyond the Classroom: Becoming an Advocate for Education*. January 18, 2024. Teacher Forum, Cherokee County School District, Gaffney, SC

Invited Guest Speaker, *There's More Than One Way*. November 14, 2023. Student Government Installation, Gaffney High School, Gaffney, SC.

Invited Guest Speaker, *The Power of a Teacher*. October 24, 2022. Cherokee County School District Induction Teacher Class, Gaffney, SC.

Awards & Fellowships

Award, Outstanding TRiO Achiever Alumni Award – Working Professional, South Carolina TRiO. (2026).

Fellowship, *Curriculum & Instruction Doctoral Fellow*, Cato College of Education, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. (2025).

Award, *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Builder*, Center of Africana & African American Studies, University of South Carolina Upstate. (2024).

Award, *District Teacher of the Year*, Cherokee County School District. (2022).

Award, *Teacher of the Year*, Ewing Middle School. (2022).

Award, *Best Supporting Actor*, Know2 of Cherokee County. (2020).

Award, *Distinguished Teacher of Literacy*, Ewing Middle School. (2019).

Award, *Support Staff Member of the Year*, Cherokee County School District. (20119).

Award, *Support Staff Member of the Year*, Cherokee County School District Office. (2019).

Award, *Support Staff Member of the Year*, B.D. Lee Elementary School. (2013).

Middle Level Education Curriculum Development

Watkins, B. (2024). *8th Grade English/Language Arts Curriculum Guide*. Cherokee County School District. Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2023). *8th Grade English/Language Arts Curriculum Guide*. Cherokee County School District. Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2021). *7th Grade English/Language Arts Online Learning Curriculum*. Cherokee County School District. Gaffney, SC.

Professional Development Sessions (Facilitated)

Davis, C., Byers, H., Watkins, B. (2024). *30 Minute Meals: A Twist on Rachel Ray's Conceptual Framework for Middle Level Math & ELA Engagement*. Cherokee County School District, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2024). *Principles of Instructional Core*. Gaffney Middle School, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2024). *Bullseye Learning: Crafting & Implementing Effective Learning Targets*. Gaffney Middle School, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2023). *Creating the Foundation for High Quality & Effective Instruction*. Gaffney Middle School, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2023). *SC English Language Arts 2023 Academic Standards Roundtable*. Cherokee County School District, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2023). *Effective Learning Design*. Gaffney Middle School, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2022). *Student Data Conferences & Student Ownership*. Gaffney Middle School, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B. (2022). *First Steps in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support*. Gaffney Middle School, Gaffney, SC.

Watkins, B., Spencer, J. (2020). *Try Tech! Teacher's Technology Toolkit*. South Carolina Association of Middle School Educators, Myrtle Beach, SC.

Dawkins, L., Watkins, B. (2018). *Learning is Lit! Using Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies to Reach Underperforming African American Students*. Keeping It Real Conference, Gaffney, SC.

Service

Service to the University

General Education Committee	Member	2024 - Present
	Secretary	2025 - 2026

Service to the Department of Education (DoE) & College of Education, Human Performance, & Health (CoEHPH)

Teaching Fellows Advisory Board	Board Member	Fall 2025 - Present
Education Foundations	Program Coordinator	Spring 2025 - Present
Doctorate in Education Ad Hoc Committee	Member	Fall 2024 - Spring 2025
CoEHPH Scholastic Committee	Member	2024 - 2025
Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education Search Committee	Member	2024 - 2025
Assistant Professor of Sport Management Search Committee	Member	2025 - 2026

Service to the Profession

President-Elect, *South Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education*. 2026 - 2028.

Member, *NCTE's English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE) Executive Committee*. 2025 - 2026.

Co-Chair, *NCTE's ELATE Graduate Strand*. 2025 - 2026.

Planning Committee Member, *NCTE's 2025 ELATE Summer Conference*. Charleston, SC. Spring & Summer 2025.

SC Public Colleges & Universities Representative, *South Carolina Professors of Middle Level Education*. 2025 - 2026.

Production Editor & Reviewer, *Journal of Literacy & Language Education*. Fall 2024

Reviewer, *Journal of Literacy and Urban Schools*. Fall 2024

Reviewer, *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*. Spring 2024

Service to the Community

Board member (Education Representative), Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce. Gaffney, SC. 2022 - Present.

Judge, Senior Mock Interviews. Chesnee High School, Chesnee, SC. Fall, 2024, Spring 2025

Judge, School Spelling Bee. B.D. Lee Elementary School, Gaffney, SC. Fall 2024, Fall 2025.

Judge, Mr. Chesnee High School (CHS). Fall 2024. Chesnee High School, Chesnee, SC.

Panelist, First Generation Student Success Stories. Fall 024. Spartanburg Community College, Giles Campus, Spartanburg, SC.

Volunteer, Spartanburg Soup Kitchen. Fall 2024, Spring 2026. Spartanburg, SC

Co-Director, Cherokee County Youth Leadership Summit. Fall 2024. Spartanburg Community College, Cherokee Campus, Gaffney, SC.

Co-Organizer, Community State of Young People: “Ask Us: Youth Summit. Spring 2021. ThriveU, Gaffney, SC.

Panelist, Teen Talk Tuesday: The Importance of Setting Goals and Smart Choices. February 23, 2021. Academic Technology & Wellness Academy, Gaffney, SC.

Professional Affiliations

English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE) Graduate Strand	2024 - Present
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National Council of Teachers of English	2018 - Present
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South Carolina Council of Teachers of English	2024 - Present
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South Carolina Association of Middle Level Educators	2019 - Present
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South Carolina Association of Teacher Educators

2025 - Present

Professional Development

South Carolina Association of Middle Level Education
Conference

Winter 2026

English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE) Summer
Conference

Summer 2025

Teaching Online at Upstate

Fall 2024

SC 4.0 ADEPT Evaluator Training

Fall 2004

National Council of Teachers of English - Annual Convention

Fall 2024, Fall 2025

RISE Workshop: Grant Writing
(USC Upstate Office of Sponsored Awards & Research Support)

Fall 2024