

# Sarah K. Whitaker, Ph.D.

158 Westover Dr. • Athens, Georgia 30606 • 859.797.5917 • sarahKwhitaker@gmail.com • www.sarahKwhitaker.com

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## EDUCATION

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**Ph.D. Educational Psychology;** The University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 2013

Concentration: Applied Cognition and Development

Dissertation: *The Self-Regulatory Effects of Mindfulness Training*

- Certificate in Nonprofit Management
- Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching

**M.A. Educational Psychology;** The University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 2009

**B.A. Psychology;** University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 2003

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE / portfolio of sample work at [www.sarahKwhitaker.com](http://www.sarahKwhitaker.com)**

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**Founder & Executive Director, 2018-2023**

*[Athens Forest Kindergarten](#); Athens, Georgia*

- Pioneered the first program of its kind in the Southeast, developing an innovative early childhood education curriculum based on an action research model.
- Hired, trained, and supervised a team of approximately 10-15 people annually including educators, interns, and volunteers.
- Established a partnership with UGA College of Education to train 4 future teachers per year as part of their practicum placement program.
- Orchestrated a comprehensive digital presence, including a website, social media, marketing, and a digital content repository for clients.
- Integrated a cooperative aspect into the organization, coordinating both parent education and parent training.
- Designed an outreach program to bring theory to action, educating caregivers and education professionals throughout the community, serving more than 160 families with our outreach and flagship programs combined.

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## **Circle of Security Classroom Coach and Facilitator, 2020-2023**

*Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health of Georgia; Athens, Georgia*

- Delivered personalized coaching to educators, fostering reflection and refining instructional and behavioral strategies, grounded in trauma-informed practice and attachment theory.
- Conducted qualitative data collection through multiple classroom visits, tailoring recommendations to each coaching client's unique needs.
- Managed and organized personalized digital repositories for 20 coaching clients annually.
- Led introductory training sessions for groups of 8-12 educators as a COSC Co-Facilitator, following a structured 8-week curriculum.
- Created a secure and supportive environment, facilitated discussions, managed time, planned activities within curriculum guidelines, and addressed group dynamics.
- Supported individual growth by providing constructive feedback and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
- Evaluated program effectiveness, ensuring alignment with objectives and making necessary adjustments.

## **Parenting Educator, 2019-2023**

*Athens Parent Wellbeing; Athens, Georgia*

- Conducted multiple contract-based training sessions for clients and peer mentors at APW, strategically aligning instructional content with organizational objectives.
- Collaborated with APW's Executive Director to conduct a needs assessment and propose a multifaceted educational initiative.
- Devised a multi-tiered educational experience focused on integrating attachment theory principles with a series of workshops and a book club, to foster community understanding of the intersection between reflective practice and healthy parental attachment.

## **Educational Consultant, 2020**

*Paul J. Blackwell Learning Center, Elberton, Georgia*

- Worked on the Elbert County Early Learning Center Trauma Response Project as part of a contracted team, facilitated by a GA DECAL grant.

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- Collaborated with stakeholders, including participants and funders, to conceptualize a tailored curriculum aligned with project goals.
- Designed a custom training for 10 educators to learn about the significance of mindfulness and metacognition in the learning process, highlighting its efficacy in enhancing self-regulation and alleviating the negative effects of trauma.
- Collected data at multiple classroom observational assessments to inform the design of the training as it progressed gave personalized feedback and recommendations to each educator, optimizing program impact.

## **Educational Consultant, 2018-2019**

*Barrow Elementary School, Athens, Georgia*

Curriculum Designer and Facilitator of Barrow Community of Mindful Educators (B-COME)

- Developed a comprehensive year-long faculty development curriculum centered on mindfulness and tailored to meet the needs of the school.
- Applied the ADDIE model to the design process to align modules with the prevailing theory of social emotional competencies.
- Established a user friendly digital repository to organize and manage client materials.
- Designed formative assessments to continually inform and refine the iterative curriculum process.

## **Online Instructor / Facilitator, 2013, 2014, 2017**

*Eastern Kentucky University; Richmond, Kentucky (remote)*

- Instructor PSY 300: Social Psychology Eastern Kentucky University, 2017
  - Designed and managed a fully remote, asynchronous class of 60 students using Blackboard, while emphasizing connection, reflection, and deep learning.
- Facilitator, PSY 312: Infant and Child Development, 2013 & 2014
  - Facilitated discussions for an online class with a focus on bringing a lens of reflection and authenticity to this remote class.

## **Educational Consultant, 2015-2016**

*Oconee County High School; Watkinsville, Georgia*

Curriculum Designer and Co-Facilitator of Resilience and Emotional Strength Tools (REST)

- Contracted to work with the school nurse and co-facilitated sessions with her.
- Involved the school community in determining the details of the program.

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- Designed the curriculum around a reflective cohort with rigorous readings between sessions, modeled on a flipped classroom approach.
- Partnered with someone from UGA to conduct qualitative assessment on the program's impact.

## **Part-Time Assistant Professor / Instructor, 2007-2015**

*The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia*

- *Part-Time Assistant Professor*, EPSY 2130: Exploring Teaching and Learning, 2015
- *Part-Time Assistant Professor*, EPSY 7160e: Nurturing Independent Learners, 2014
- *Part-Time Assistant Professor*, EPSY 6800: Foundations of Cognition for Education, 2013
- *Instructor of Record*, GRSC 7770: Pedagogy for Graduate TAs, 2013
- *Graduate Assistant to TA Programs*, Center for Teaching & Learning, 2012-2013
- *Co-Instructor*, GRSC 7770: Pedagogy for Graduate Teaching Assistants, 2012
- *Guest Lecturer*, First Year Odyssey Seminar: Mindfulness Meditation, 2011 & 2012
- *Instructor of Record*, EPSY 2130: Exploring Teaching and Learning, 2009- 2012
- *Instructor of Record*, EPSY 3010: Child & Adolescent Development, 2010-2011
- *Graduate Research Assistant*, Advisors: Shawn Glynn & Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett, 2008-2009
- *Graduate Research Assistant*, Advisor: Paula Schwanenflugel, 2007

## **SKILLS AND SPECIAL TRAINING**

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- Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis
- Conducting Needs Assessments
- Survey Design and Validation
- Trauma-Informed Teaching
- School-Based Restorative Practices Certificate from the Georgia Conflict Center
- Registered Circle of Security Parenting Facilitator & Circle of Security Classroom Coach
- Proficiency with Blackboard, Canva, Squarespace, and Google Workspace

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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Jones, S., Lush, L., & Whitaker, S. (2023). Making Kin with Trees: Three Educators and Children Entangled with Treescapes in One Small U.S. City. *Bank Street Occasional Paper Series*. In press.

Joseph, J.E., Gathers, A.D., Liu, X., Corbly, C.R., Whitaker, S.K., & Bhatt, R.S. (2006). Neural developmental changes in processing inverted faces. *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience*, 6(3), 223-235.

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Liu, X., Corbly, C.R., Whitaker, S.K., & Joseph, J.E. (2005). Involvement of the ventral temporal cortex in object matching depends on structural descriptions but not on visual similarity. *NeuroImage*, 26 (Supplement 1): 24.

## **OTHER WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS, LECTURES**

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Guest Lecturer for University of Wisconsin's College of Education, (2023, March) Current Trends and Issues in Education class; Nature-Based Education. Virtual attendance.

Invited Speaker in UGA's Family and Consumer Science program. (2023, February). Educational nonprofit representative. Athens, GA.

Guest Lecturer for UGA's EDEL 7110E (2020, May). The Educational Role of Play in Elementary Education.

Whitaker, S. & Zvonar, A. (2019, March). *Experiential Learning and Emergent Curriculum*. Workshop presented at the Environmental Education Conference, GA.

Whitaker, S.K. (2013, April) *How can classroom mindfulness practices promote critical thinking?* USG Teaching and Learning Conference, Athens, GA.

Whitaker, S.K. (2013, January). *Developing a university teaching portfolio*. Series presented at the UGA Center for Teaching and Learning, Athens, GA.

Whitaker, S.K. (2012, October). *Developing a university teaching portfolio*. Series presented at the UGA Center for Teaching and Learning, Athens, GA.

Whitaker, S.K. (2012, August-December). *Teaching development resources at UGA*. Presented at UGA Graduate Pedagogy Classes, Athens, GA.

Whitaker, S.K. (2012, August). *Balancing Roles: Graduate Students as Instructors of Record*. Presented at UGA Teaching Assistant Orientation, Athens, GA

Whitaker, S.K. (2009, November). *In the Flow: What Comprises Engaged Reading?* Presented at the Community Literacy Conference, Carnegie Center for Literacy & Learning, Lexington, KY.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES**

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**Revolution Therapy & Yoga**, *Volunteer Yoga Teacher*, Athens, GA, 2023

**Elbert County Middle School 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center**, *External Evaluator*, 2013-2014

**Psychology Educators Development Association**, *Co-Founder; Educational Psychology Delegate*, 2010-2013

**Chase Street Elementary**, *Mindfulness Consultant*, Athens, GA, 2013

**Timothy Road Elementary**, *Mindfulness Consultant*, Athens, GA, 2013

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**Georgia Conference on College and University Teaching**, *Attendee*, Kennesaw, GA, 2013

**Timothy Road Elementary School**, *Yoga Enrichment Cluster Co-Leader*, Athens, GA, 2013, 2012

**Statham Elementary School**, *Mindfulness Consultant*, Statham, GA, 2012

**Waseca Montessori School**, *Mindfulness Consultant*, Athens, GA, 2012

**Academic Affairs Faculty Symposium: The Teaching/Research Nexus**, *Invited Attendee*, Helen, GA, 2012

**Mind and Life Summer Research Institute**, *Invited Attendee*, Garrison Institute, 2011

**Whatever It Takes Initiative**, *Invited Committee Member*, Athens-Clarke County Schools, Athens, GA, 2011

**Journal of Research in Childhood Education**, *Ad Hoc Reviewer*, 2009-2011

**Mindfulness and Education Conference**, *Scholarship Attendee*, Omega Institute, 2010

**Barrow Elementary Enrichment Cluster Co-Leader**, Athens, GA, 2010

**Graduate Researchers in Educational Psychology & Instructional Technology**, *Secretary*, UGA, 2008-2009

**France Education International**, *English Teacher*, Bougainville & Eluard I Elementary, Paris, France, 2005-2006

**University of Kentucky fMRI Behavioral Research Laboratory**, *Lab Technician*, Lexington, KY, 2004-2005

**Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning**, *Tutoring Program Coordinator*, Lexington, KY, 2003-2004

**Fayette County Public Schools**; *Substitute Teacher grades K-12*, Lexington, KY, 2003

## ACADEMIC HONORS AND AWARDS

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*eLC-New Early Adopters Program*, Selected Participant, University of Georgia, 2012-2013.

*Teaching Portfolio Program*, University of Georgia 2012.

*Future Faculty Program*, Selected Participant, University of Georgia, 2011-2012.

*Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award*, University of Georgia, 2011.

*College of Education Travel Funding Award*, to attend Mind & Life Summer Research Institute, 2011.

*Teaching Assistantship Award*, EPSY 2130, University of Georgia, 2009-2010, 2010-2011.

*Conference of Southern Graduate Schools Master's Thesis Award*, Departmental Nominee, UGA, 2009.

*Graduate School Assistantship Award*, UGA, 2007-2008, 2008-2009.

*Emerging Leader Institute*, University of Kentucky, 2002-2003.

*Honor's Program*, University of Kentucky, 2000-2003.