

## Founder Bio

Wesley J. Watkins, IV, Ph.D., D.Litt., is the Founder of The Jazz & Democracy Project® (J&D), a music integrated curriculum that utilizes jazz as a metaphor to bring democratic ideals to life. For nearly 20 years “Dr. Wes,” as his students call him, has been teaching learners of all ages, from elementary and secondary level schools to colleges and universities. In addition, he now trains other educators in the use of J&D proprietary materials and pedagogy, and he is available to conduct workshops in the corporate sector, helping project teams and entire organizations alike achieve the crucial balance displayed by the best jazz ensembles: individual freedom of creative expression in service to the greater good.



Dr. Wes first proposed what would become J&D in his undergraduate honors thesis at the Stanford University School of Education Undergraduate Honors Program. He conducted initial research at Oxford University where he engaged and learned from music educators at both local elementary schools and world-renowned secondary institutions like The Bedales School, Eton College, and The Yehudi Menuhin School. After earning his Ph.D. in Education from the University of Reading, England, Dr. Wes immediately applied his knowledge as an independent arts education consultant in the San Francisco Bay Area, working at the district, school, and classroom levels. He then spent three years working for education reform non-profits where he facilitated professional development for teachers, instructional coaches and administrators. Since starting J&D, Dr. Wes has presented to corporations, community organizations, and both public and private schools in rural and urban America, Chile, The Gambia, Liberia, Haiti, Guatemala, Brazil and Australia. In 2024 The University of Reading awarded Dr. Wes an Honorary Doctor of Letters for his years of service through J&D. Whether presenting to an auditorium of young people, to a room filled with teachers, or to employees of top companies, Dr. Wes draws audiences inside the jazz process and inspires them to achieve excellence both as individuals and as a team.

Links:

[Dr. Wes on the USSC Briefing Room Podcast](#)

[Dr. Wes on ABC Radio \*Nightlife\*](#)

[Dr. Wes on ABC Radio \*Sydney\*](#)

[Dr. Wes TED Talk](#)

[J&D on NPR](#)

[J&D CTT Promo](#)

[J&D Promo](#)