

The Artist She Wrote: “Entr’actes and Erasers”
An Autoethnographic Examination of Intertwining Artist and Teacher Identities

by

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Abstract

Artist-teachers must constantly negotiate their creative selves and their professional roles: two worlds that often misunderstand each other—a tension I’ve come to know intimately. In this research I investigate the complex interplay between these identities through an autoethnographic lens. By drawing on personal narrative, performance, and poetry, the study explores tensions and potential harmonies between my artistic identity and professional role as an educator—particularly as one who does not teach their art. Anchored in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (Shabani et al., 2010) and positioning theory (Ahmad et al., 2019), the research explores how external expectations, institutional structures, and internalized narratives shape the dual identities of artist-teachers.

In this study I employ performative inquiry and arts-based approaches to examine personal artifacts, video diaries, and creative works. From these, I explore moments of rupture, clarity, and transformation, unpacking how my identity has been negotiated over time. The result is an autoethnodramatic script that functions both as analytic tool and performative representation of identity work in practice that not only explores the spaces of identity within my own life but also serves as a model that others may use with their own stories.

This inquiry contributes to broader conversations about teacher preparation, identity development, and the marginalization of the arts and artists in educational systems. By centering lived experience, the work opens space for dialogue about how artist-teachers might sustain or reclaim their creative selves within the constraints of their teaching roles and gestures to how institutions might better support the multifaceted identities of educators. Ultimately, this thesis challenges binary constructions of teacher and artist, proposing that these roles coexist through intentional reflection, resistance, and imaginative reconstruction.

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CHAPTER ONE

A Short History of Raised Eyebrows and Hemorrhaging Questions

Look what I've found...

It feels like waking up from a

terribly

long

illusion...

Not a dream, or a nightmare, but a haze of

partial awareness.

Following a hooded figure through a forest to a place where I thought I could be “home.”

Being rescued by fireflies, hashtags, and the laughter of shared misery...

I've found *clarity*.

I've found a voice that was somehow lost in

tunnels,

“assimil-sessments,”

and expectations constructed by “shoulds” and “shouldn'ts.”

I've asked questions of false Gods

And made light of losing myself,

But now it's time, it's time to ask

Why.

Why did I say goodbye?

For as long as I can remember I have seen myself as an artist.

I remember it as if it were yesterday.

I was in the second grade when my teacher asked,

“Christina, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

I remember looking at her and saying with the utmost confidence, “I want to be a singer!” More specifically, I wanted to be a travelling singer where I perform every day. To pay for said travels I would sell my paintings, drawings, and other works of art to my adoring fans; that was the plan. I did not necessarily know what being a ‘travelling-singer-who-sold-her-art-along-the-way-to-pay-for-gas’ entailed, but I did not care. All I knew was that I wanted to create things and see them come to life. It just so happened to be the arts that fueled the fire and allowed me to best communicate what I wanted to see in the world.

In middle school, my sense of career path started to change despite being even more involved with performing arts such as musical theatre, drama, and choir. I also fell in love with the patterns of math; I loved problem-solving! With these new experiences and making observations of those around me I began thinking, “Huh... well maybe being a travelling singer is not the most practical, but I still love this idea of creating something and projecting it into the world.”

I could use my love and developing skills with art integrated with my newfound confidence in math to maybe become a graphic artist or even an architect! I thought it would be incredible to see a building I dreamed of come to life; something that could connect people in a place, in a way I wanted them to see the world and make a pretty good income!

It was not until the 11th grade when I realized the *math* I knew was not really the math I initially fell in love with; we were growing apart. My relationship with the course I once aspired to make a career out of became the root of countless sleepless nights and a minor caffeine addiction. At the same time, I was even more involved with performing. I was attending arts camps for musical theatre, I was working on playwriting, directing, stage managing, performing in musicals, plays, short films, and I was in three choirs. I loved every second of it. But then at age 16 it was that question all over again... the same question that was asked of me when I was seven:

“Christina, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

This question now had a different weight; it was heavy and made my palms sweat. This question was not a fun activity in imagination and self-exploration. This question was coated with a lacquer of seriousness, and impression that the answer was going to determine my future.

A sea of courses filled the octagon of high school; doors beaming with opportunity

Precal, Science, French, Social Studies, Choir, Physical Ed, English, Drama

Seeing oneself in the percents; the doors begin to lock shut.

Essentials, French, Choir, Psychology, Drama

History, Physical Ed, English

A hallway

Done.

As the years passed in high school, what we were permitted or knowledgeable enough to take in grade 12 began to shape our path. Provincial assessments lead to graduation and potentially the courses or programs that we were permitted to take in postsecondary if one continued their education at all,

but I was determined to have it all.

Throughout my time as a public-school student, I had the roles of swimming teacher, coach, and musical theatre instructor. I loved sharing the joys of my life where I felt at my best with others. The longest running experience was my time in aquatics; something I continue to be involved in to this day.

I was well into my time as a swimming instructor and student one-on-one who was perpetually stuck, not making expected progress. For almost two years she rotated through instructors and not for lack of trying. She just could not find the rhythm of the front-crawl. This was a battle I saw she had not only in the water, but with herself. It was made clear so quickly through weighted gazes that she saw her role as that of always being a successful, high achieving student. She was tired, her parents were tired, and I could see she was struggling with wanting to keep going; something she was clearly unfamiliar with feeling. Even in the pool, I knew it was important that we became knowledgeable of our students beyond their ability to float. As I did with all my swimming students, I sought out to learn about her as a person. In doing so, I learned that her heart lived in playing her violin. Her shoulders would drop with ease as she would tell me all about her rehearsals and how she was learning to read music, as if it were an extension of her existence. It was in this moment when it hit me.

I said to her, “Hey, could we try something different today? We’ll give it a go and if it doesn’t work, we don’t have to do it again. I just want to try something new...ish. Do you trust me?” She nodded.

I looked at her and I said, “If I say to you three quarter notes and a rest in 4/4 time, does that make sense?” She responded with an enthusiastic, “Well of course! That’s easy!”

“Perfect, and before we start playing music, what should we normally do?” She looked at me kind of knowing where I was going, and she said, “Well, we tap it out first. We feel it on our body.”

I looked at her and I said, “Exactly, so let’s feel the rhythm, and not just feel it, swim it too!” She looked puzzled, and I continued with, “Think of it as you have your body in 4/4 time, each arm circle as a quarter note with the last as a rest, which is where I need you to breathe. Then let’s have your legs kicking with 16th notes!”

I saw the gears turning in her eyes and a determination building within her. Within moments, she did it; the very first time she was able to swim front-crawl. I saw the pride, excitement, disbelief, and radiating confidence, and then relief set in.

I knew in that moment I wanted to keep helping others conquer their battles and, in a way, I was seeing my ideas come into the world, into fruition, through those around me. It was at that moment that I first considered teaching as a profession.

Maybe as a teacher

I could have these moments.

Maybe as a teacher

I could help hundreds of

Students

Maybe as a teacher

I'll be happy.

I held onto this experience when I was asked again by my guidance counselor:

“Christina, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

I'm going to be

a teacher.

When I told my drama teacher, she looked at me and said, “Oh, that’s exciting, but why not continue with theatre or performance? If not acting, then directing, writing, but theatre in some way.”

I remember looking at her and saying, “Well here’s the best part! I can do the ‘teaching-thing’ where I can have health insurance and make a pretty good wage, then I can do my theatre stuff in the summer or on the side!” And if I was lucky, I could even work as a drama teacher, just like her.

I would be lying if I said it did not hurt every time someone asked me why I was not pursuing theatre. Every time there was a little voice in my head that said, “*Yeah, why aren’t you?*” And then there was a louder voice that said, “*Well Christina, you need stability. You want to move out, you want to buy a house, get married, start a family, do all these things and if you don’t have a stable job, then how are you going to live a happy life? They don’t call it a “starving artist” for nothing!*”

I convinced myself that I was going to do it all. Given that I was a French Immersion student, I could use my background in French to get me in the door because that is what my teachers all said would help, but then once I was in a school, I would be able to create as a drama teacher! I would perform in my summers off and still be connected within my community. I was

going to be an artist, the thing that I loved doing, the person that I loved being, and I was going to be a teacher; I was going to have it all.

I was going to be

a drama teacher.

Blue and Orange

I was accepted into the Faculty of Education. Before the start of our program, each new education student was requested to be at the university for introductions and to declare their teachable major and minor.

When my day arrived,

I had a time and a room number.

Fifteen minutes behind

glass windows looking into the hallway of people passing by.

Three walls of white,

whiteboards layered upon them.

Words of, *Welcome to the Education class of 2018!*

Faculty eyes watching with guiding gestures.

We sat on our own.

In front of us were two pieces of paper:

One for your Bachelor of Arts or Science

One for your Education degree.

A contract bright *orange*

and

A contract bright *blue*

A pen

And a realization that in front of me

was my next five years *to life*.

The white walls in my ears

Sitting there in silence.

The room at my throat,

Weighting my hand to the cold desk.

Major: English, Math, Science, Social Studies, French, Theatre & Film

Minor: English, Math, Science, Social Studies, French, Theatre & Film

*“Christina, you need stability, and you know that they need French teachers. You need to pick French as your major because that’s how you’re going to get a job, that’s how you’re going to get insurance, job security, and that’s how you’re going to get money to have a happy life. You can do the theater stuff on the side, but you need to prioritize being an **employed teacher**.”*

You’re wrong.

“Are you willing to take that chance?”

Major: French

Minor: Theatre & Film.

blue, orange,

White in the face.

10 years later

I don’t work as

A drama teacher.

My professors were not wrong when they said having French would make you employable (Veilleux, 2003). As I write this, I have been working as a French immersion teacher for over seven years, and it has finally come to the point where it has been made clear I will likely not ever become a drama teacher because I am “far too valuable” in French immersion. I have tried over the years to bring dramatic arts into my classroom by integrating it into different

courses, but teaching a subject through the lens of drama is *not the same as teaching drama itself*. It has left me feeling that the practices of drama that live in my heart are treated like an afterthought. I would like to think it would be different if I taught drama and theatre¹ as an artform, but it is not my current reality.

I promised myself when I obtained a permanent teaching contract, I would apply for my Master of Education degree. I applied in 2020, and to my surprise I was accepted. I have had the most enlightening experience learning not just about the education system, but about myself; I have learned more about myself as a person than ever before. I have had the opportunity to look back and analyze my experiences and battles, leaving me with a sense of *chaotic clarity*. I say *chaotic* because while the clarity is beautiful, having that clarity and knowing that I am stuck in the state in which I am, **is infuriating**. I could see the potential of happiness through other educators around me using their voices in their art and I wanted to be in that same state of personal confidence as a teacher and artist.

Over the course of my graduate program, I have been encouraged by my professors and classmates to incorporate arts-based methods. This has filled my heart again. I have been not only able to research concerns I have had with the education system through art, but incorporation of the arts has been highly encouraged and supported. I feel like I spent most of my program saying to my professors, “Really? I can make art for this project?!”

I have been able to create original picture books, stand-up comedy routines, poetry, visual art through the medium of pastels and watercolour, and original scripts to share my voice and find my place in the education research world. All of these projects helped me gain not only confidence in myself as an artist but also brought clarity to the person I did not consciously

¹ For the purpose of this research, theatre is defined as performative art where drama is defined as strategies or devices adapted from those used in theatre. (Ewing & Saunders, 2016)

realize I had lost. As that clarity became more prominent, I started to question my identity as a teacher and how much it has consumed me. As educators, we like to throw that word around a lot, *identity*, and all throughout my undergraduate studies we developed teaching philosophies (Pillen et al., 2013).

What did we know then?

In that white-walled room, staring at the orange and blue pages, naive Christina was set and knew exactly the type of person and teacher she wanted to be, but she did not realize how much, at least at the time, her teacher identity would consume her. Even more naively, she did not think about the potential of that “teachers’ identity” smothering who she was as an **Artist**.

I have seen within myself and through conversations with other professionals that how we develop our identities and how we accept who we are supposed to be as teachers can be an all-consuming experience. This I saw to be concerning; the assumptions by undergraduate professors and professionals I encountered in my practicum around who I had to be were not confined by the hours of a school day. I was expected to be a teacher 24/7 (Day et al., 2005). In a way, I felt I had to develop two personalities. I am not naive to the fact that we have certain traits in professional settings, but I think in many cases, I may have gone too far (Kenny & Morrissey, 2020). The choices I have made about how I represent myself have gone beyond a job or title. The expectations put upon me to develop a particular understanding of teacher identity have fractured not only how I see myself, but how I connect with Artist Christina, the traveling singer who wanted nothing more than to cultivate and share what she hoped to see in the world.

Why do I feel my artist identity is being smothered by my teacher identity?

How does not being an educator of my art influence this identity schism?

Is this schism just part of (not) being a dramatic arts teacher?

Is it because drama can be controversial to the public and systems like education?

Are they afraid of what we might say?

Am I afraid of what I might say as an artist?

Is it an extension of the negative narrative towards arts education?

How does my identity struggle root beyond the scope of my personal experiences?

These questions have haunted me with every presentation and lecture of my graduate program. I have chipped away at them, but in order to move forward an autopsy must be done.

Lynn Fels (2019) was one of the first practitioners I was introduced to at the start of my graduate program. She introduced our class to the idea of stop moments.

Performative inquiry is an invitation to us, as researchers and educators, to be wide-awake to stop moments or what I now call “moments that tug on your sleeve” that come into being as we perform and/or are performed—on stage, in the classroom, in relationship with each other and the environments within which we find ourselves, individually and collectively. Performative inquiry embodies a pedagogical sensibility. (§ 3)

While at the time I did not realize the significance of moments that tug on my sleeve to my story, I feel now that they have become my points of examination. Some types of these moments and experiences include:

1. Hearing comments made by fellow coworkers, administrators, and employers about my contribution to performative arts possibly putting my career as a teacher at risk.
2. Learning how those within the education community prioritize how parents and other stakeholders saw me outside of the school possibly putting a negative light on the school or division I worked for.

3. Feeling like an imposter for not teaching my art that made me feel disconnected, like I was getting further away from being an artist.
4. Being in a social career where the identity of my job is highly based on a social construct has affected me as an individual.
5. Experiencing scare tactics being used from university professors in my undergrad saying that “you may be off the clock, but you were never off the clock as a teacher when you were in public.”
6. Representing my career and identity as a teacher regardless of whether I am in front of a group of students or not. Being told that my desire to develop a drama program within my school was not a possibility because “Drama has no place here.”

These are only some of the types of moments that have come to mind over the course of my professional career, but I know based on my short history, these moments start so much earlier in my life. These moments are simply fragments of the massive mosaic that is how I have come to develop as an artist in education.

It's Got to Have Purpose! – *Exhibit 93189*:

In this study, I was able to take deeper dive into understanding of how and why I have struggled to have my artist identity coexist with that of a teacher. I have found that while the tools I have gained through my many arts backgrounds have helped me become a more dynamic teacher, I continue to struggle with allowing myself space to be an artist without necessarily being a teacher. I cannot see myself being the only one experiencing this, but before inquiring in the stories of others, I need to ensure that I have a strong hold of my own. Over the course of my graduate program, I have had encounters with parts of the problem without realizing it. I was blinded by my own lived experience as I dutifully performed the role of a graduate student

answering questions, writing papers, researching, and learning with my peers. Only as I began deciding on a thesis topic did I realize my thesis was there all along making its way between the lines of my papers and projects.

To begin exploring the complex world of teacher and artist identity, like many of my most recent works, I felt it was important to start within. Learning through the lens of my own experience and why two of my identities struggle to harmonize, can be the resources that build bridges between connected themes of the larger picture/issues around teacher/artist identity. My journey is a starting point to potentially unveil systematic issues around artists and teachers such as effective teacher training (Lojdová et al., 2021), the treatment of teachers from the public sector and internally, or even teacher retention.

What is a Thesis Anyways?

The issues that have surfaced seem to come from the experiences I have had due to my profession which is heavily dictated by a social structure, societal norms, and expectations that are ever changing (Mutluer & Yüksel, 2019). For example, one day, early in my career I was doing my weekly shop on a Sunday in a local grocery store. Am I dressed for work? No. I'm in my post-gym messy bun, leggings with a dusting of protein powder, and a muscle shirt while trying to pick the most affordable vegetables for the week. At first the sound of "Mme!" from a little voice in the produce section brings joy, but the judging eyes following right behind make me question if I should have worn my sweater that is baking on my passenger seat. This experience, while small, had a lasting impression on me as a young professional. Over the next months I changed when I shopped, even changed stores. I made sure to bring a change of clothes after the gym or avoided public places all together. Eventually it even impacted my deciding to live a minimum 30 minutes away from my place of work.

Not only that, but I have observed the notion of “what a teacher is” has evolved beyond a job and teachers are experiencing more scrutiny than ever before (Keele, 2023). I also believe that my view of what a teacher is has set barriers and unrealistic expectations in my life (see Figure 1).

Being a teacher is a role that has bled into my life beyond the walls of my workplace. Taking on that role has changed the way I carry myself in public spaces such as sporting events, shopping, restaurants, or even walks with my friends. I don’t believe that I am completely a victim to circumstances. My choices and thoughts still have a great influence on the decisions that I have made regarding what I have allowed myself to do as an artist and teacher. While research has been conducted on artist-teachers (e.g., Stenberg, 2016; Thornton, 2005; Travis, 2021; Uptis, 2005; Vincent, 2021) it has largely focussed on artist-teachers who teach their art. However, I am a teacher who does not teach their art, adding another layer to the question of what an artist-teacher is; exposing a seemingly binary experience. While I can connect with these identities in a sense, I feel that my experience is on a spectrum and who I am is sliding up and down on a constant basis.

I am aware that there are many people in my life who appear to live authentically in their artist and as teacher identities, so why is it that I am experiencing such difficulty? I feel like I am drowning in my own jealousy towards their existence.

What am I doing wrong?

What is holding me back?

Who is holding me back?

And why?

Theoretical Framework of a Semi-Prone Experience

Two theories guide not only the way I have seen myself in the past but have helped navigate the journey forward in this study. Firstly, the idea of cognitive development and Vygotsky's social-cultural development (Shabani et al., 2010). Vygotsky discusses that humans do not develop skills through predetermined, internalized stages such as those later proposed by Piaget (Shabani et al., 2010). Instead, Vygotsky emphasizes that humans are driven by experiences that engage four concepts, each shaped by social context (Lourenço, 2012).

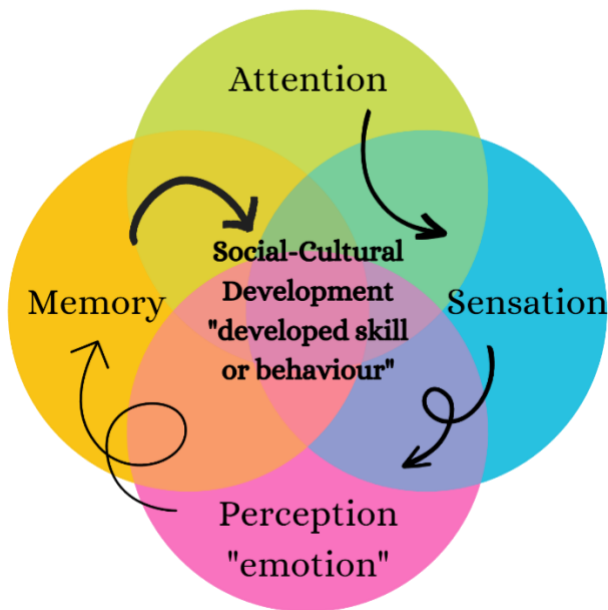
- **Attention** – what holds an individual's attention about an experience. We get better at focusing by learning from others.
- **Sensation** – what an individual feels with their senses (such as seeing or hearing) about an experience. These senses are influenced by the people around the individual.
- **Perception** – how an individual understands and makes meaning of what is sensed. Our understanding comes from talking and learning from others.
- **Memory** – how an individual remembers things. We remember better when others help us, like teachers or parents. (Sprouts, 2020)

These four concepts are the basis of how Vygotsky suggests humans navigate the zone of proximal development (ZPD) – the space of learning and development that exists between a student and more knowledgeable people within a domain of knowledge (Shabani et al., 2010). This space is characterized by a difference in knowledge and experience rather than something as fixed as their age. It is these knowledgeable influences such as the adults in children's lives, or a

student helping a teacher learn new slang, who use language, advice, and interactions that develop the subject (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Developing One's Skills



Vygotsky suggests it is our mentors who inspire and help us develop our abilities in reference to how we see ourselves and what we are capable of, and who influence the external action we contribute to the world (Lourenço, 2012). The relationship between the mentor and learner can be highly influential especially if the mentor has instilled a sense of confidence in the subject towards their own skills and abilities. For example, a father who has been a role model regarding meeting new people, especially in professional settings. This father may have demonstrated the importance of carrying oneself with confidence without arrogance; greeting others with smiles and handshakes; and portraying a light, welcoming, yet firm demeanor all to help give people a sense of ease. Witnessing such a parent may help a child develop an expectation of themselves which is then translated into outer interactions throughout their life. The father in this case would be considered the ‘more knowledgeable other’ when referencing

Vygotsky's cognitive development theory and since the student saw the father's behavior produce a positive reaction, the student was able to learn that in emulating and applying the behavior, they could then too be successful.

Connecting the example of the father to Figure 1, this scenario might play as the following:

Attention: Child observes father, a person the child respects and feel safe with, in a new place outside of their everyday life. In this new place the child notes the behaviour and beginning observation of their actions.

Sensation: The act of the child trying to mirror the behaviour in the similar setting. For example, being the well-behaved, attentive, welcoming child and a positive reflection of their father.

Perception: The child internally processing the experience and engaging with the results of the behaviour. In this case being a positive one by people complimenting my actions not only to the child but to the father. These positive remarks give the child a sense of pride and desire to keep presenting in a particular way so that the child could experience the praise and pride again as connected to the element of sensation.

Memory: Creating and registering the experience to memory to then be applied in future situations such as job interviews, engaging with teachers, public outings with their parents, working near or with employers/those in positions of authority.

New Skill/Learned Behaviour: How to act when fostering a professional identity.

I have seen this process repeat over time within my own life through new interactions and mentors I have encountered based on the new learned behaviour. Over the course of my life, my mentors have become influential characters based on the roles and positions I have been

throughout my life. From a Vygotskian perspective, these mentors have shaped my personal perception including the development of my identity as a teacher, artist, and overall person (Sprouts, 2020).

Those in the positions of mentor (whether they knew it or not) have and continue play critical roles in the imparting what was expected of me in various contexts. As discussed by Vygotsky, often the first mentors are those closest to us at a young age such as our parents (Lourenço, 2012; Sprouts, 2020). The bigger question is how does each person's influence on me interact with each other? Do they conflict? Are they each creating a new evolution?

These questions may be supported by positioning theory (Ahmad et al., 2019) as the writers discuss how the identities of people move and interact depending on where and with whom they are situated. Positioning theory suggests that people move within 3 positions:

1. How one positions oneself in terms of how one acts based on the role he/she/they is/are playing.
2. How others position the person within that role.
3. The convergence of the first and second positions and how one reacts or reflects how others see her/him/them.

There are many stereotypes that can dominate within the second position: some we choose to accept and some that just do not accurately represent the reality of our roles. The inner conflict of identity arises in the third position where there may be a disconnect or a conflict between role and locations discussed in positions 1 & 2.

We are always shifting within these positions, socially influenced by the expectations and elements of the roles we choose to play. My concerns were (and sometimes continue to be) all-consuming about being seen as a teacher outside of the context of my job by students, parents,

and faculty. Will them seeing “Mme. Peabody” on stage acting in a role they may believe conflicts with social-expectations of “teacher” be the end of my career? Will saying a curse word on stage be the difference between professional advancement or being in a rut? This concern about reporting has only been exasperated by the new Bill 35, which was intended to assist in the protection of children but has become a channel for the public to file anonymous complaints about teachers no matter if they are in the classroom or not (Keele, 2023).

But Is it Important?

This study has required the most self-reflection I have ever undertaken, and I have always felt that there have been limitations around me in the sense that I have the ability, but not the capability to pursue what my heart aches to do with my life. This research in particular is important as it engages in difficult but necessary conversations around the influential powers in teacher/artist development as represented through art. From my own experience, it has been key for my role as a researcher, and more particularly for my role as an arts-based researcher to analyze my own experiences before expecting others to open theirs to the world. Leavy (2020) discusses in the chapter *Theatre, Drama, and Film* from her book *Method Meets Art*, that arts-based research (AbR) especially in theatre, drama, and film can create a fullness of what was learned beyond the inquiry process and add a level of realness for those experiencing the research. I found this in many of my projects during my graduate program through other media such as visual art and poetry, but I keep coming back to the power of linking my work to a performative and script format.

These experiences have also bloomed in ways that are non-linear, tying themes and sub-narratives together to better understand complex conversations. Henderson (2018) discusses how performative texts in ABR call upon the reader or audience member to be an active participant in

the events of the narrative. This process can develop a sense of empathy with the author and topic, where they are reading *with* the author, and not simply about the topic. The empathetic connectivity is particularly important for this research because it humanizes the stories of the research; the challenges, triumphs, and everything in between. As Henderson (2018) notes, this human connection can help the person receiving the research not only to understand, but on some level experience the research, which in turn can shape perspectives and potentially trigger change in their situation through a change in perception.

Through creating this thesis and the discussions that I have had with my advisor, I have unveiled parts of myself that I never knew existed. While I have gained clarity about how I best express myself and how I understand the kind of teacher I am in terms of my values about teaching and learning and my pedagogic relationship with the world, I am left with a desire to explore what it is I can do with this said clarity. Targeting my experience may evolve a conversation among artists, teachers, and artist-teachers. Arts educators I have spoken with have not expressed the same difficulty of integrating their artist and teacher identities that I have been bearing. They have expressed they do not feel the same divide or need to differentiate their artist and teacher identities because they practice within them daily through their teacher role. Research on artist-teacher identity largely focuses on artists who teach their art and their battle of self-deception with the education system (Carter, 2014; Daichendt, 2009; Hall, 2010; Hausman, 1967; Szekely, 1978; Thornton, 2005; 2011). Researchers discuss struggles of artist integrity when examining content taught within their subjects, advocating for the existence of their position, and their identity as an artist within the arts teacher role (Hall, 2010).

When exploring the topic of teacher identity there is much discussion and definition around an “artist teacher” and their struggles with their many roles such as teacher, artist, leader

of arts, and all of those as mentioned in Figure 1 (e.g., Carter, 2014; Silverman, 2006; Szekely, 1978). Since I began teaching, I have found that I have lost who I am as an artist and a person as I have become increasingly defined by my teacher identity. However, there is limited research available about artist teachers such as myself who teach, but do not teach their art. In this research I seek to address the gap and begin new conversations around preparing upcoming educators within their own education regarding their identity as teachers. How are we preparing and supporting them in developing a healthy relationship with their many identities? Furthermore, are we being honest with new teachers about the system and expectations they are entering regarding identity?

The hemorrhaging of questions has created an overflowing number of queries not just in reference to this research project, but since I started this degree. Narrowing down to even a couple of questions felt like a disservice to my entire experience. This aligns with contemporary traditions in much arts-based research that position inquiry not as an opportunity “to answer introductory research questions but rather to posit questions of inquiry that evolve over time” (Irwin, 2008, p. 77). Positioning questions not as things to be answered but as jumping off points can create an opening to more deeply understand complex experiences such as those of the intermingling of artist teacher identities that I seek to explore as part of this research.

To do so, I will jump off with questions:

1. How do teachers who are not teaching their art continue to develop their artist identity?
2. How can an individual find harmony between their identity as an artist and a teacher?

CHAPTER TWO

A Preliminary Literature Review

“They Said it so it Must be... True?”

Teacher Who?

What makes a teacher? This is a question that my undergraduate professors loved to use as an activation tool. If anything, this question created an inflated perception of what a teacher is with nothing but our own experiences for us to examine about our own teachers and our understanding of how educators are portrayed in the media. Professors ask with the intent to create in our mind’s eye an ideal of what we want it to be as teachers and the characteristics that follow. We were creating an identity based on what we thought our jobs were going to look like. Idealisms of proclaimed voices and pioneers of education who had not stepped into an actual classroom for several decades or even better yet... were dead. These characters were painting a fantasy of “Teacher”; we “ate it up.”

This does not mean that some of the ideas and philosophies we developed about ourselves through that questioning were not helpful. They added a layer of reflexive questioning and thinking; but to what end? We were creating visions of characters for a foreign landscape, with no map to guide us at this vulnerable time.

Liar, Liar, Pedagogy on Fire...

*Brushing through the thicket
Piaget, Skinner, and Bloom
“Becoming a teacher”
Knows nothing of
One’s professional integrity.
In doom during a global pandemic.
No articles for being
A “bitch”
No lesson plan for
Lightheaded
Weeks without lunch
Snaps for being.
A “Team Player”
Drowning*

So, What Is a Teacher?

If you asked me back when I was an education student, a teacher was:

1. Someone who was organized all the time,
2. A person who knew their subjects inside and out.
3. Someone who was 100% a teacher whilst at work
4. An individual who held the highest standards and accountability for all their students.

A teacher in my eyes, the teacher I wanted to be, was someone who helped their students navigate the development of their confidence, and this is something with which I personally continue to struggle. A teacher was someone that students could go to when they made mistakes and needed a helping hand.

I was going to be that person.

Literature Review

Teacher Identity

My professors never asked us what we thought a teacher should be, but continued to ask us what kind of teacher we wanted to be. They would often paint a fantastical image of education where the world of our school was what we made it to be; big dreams with little emphasis on the layered outside expectations. There is a lot of power behind the similarities yet vast differences between what we should be and who we wanted to be as teachers. Teachers are expected to create collective professional and personal identities that have complimentary attributes, so that they develop values directly tied to a “teacher’s identity” (Ahmad et al., 2019; Spicksley et al., 2021).

Pishghadam et al. (2022) discuss a level of investment that teachers must commit to when creating who they are as teachers – that much of who we become as teachers stems from how,

where, and to what extent we invest ourselves into what we think being a teacher looks like. This investment is made by the members of the teaching community in the context of the high expectations imposed on them regarding how they present themselves, what they say, and where they involve themselves outside of the school. Much of the development, as teachers continue, comes from the expectations of teachers' communities and how those communities reinvest into their roles as teachers and major contributors to the development of our society. For example, in Manitoba, the Manitoba Teachers' Society (2024) Code of Practice states that "A Member's conduct is characterised by consideration and good faith. The Member speaks and acts with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with others, always mindful of their rights" (p. 89). While this may not be immediately concerning, with the recent adoption of Bill 35 (Keele, 2023), what someone deems "respectful" can vary and cause conflict between teachers and their communities, particularly with regard to how they are defined. For example, if a teacher were to attend a local brewery with friends to enjoy a few drinks on a Friday evening and run into a parent or an educational representative, beer in hand, might some parents, community members, or educational representatives find the public consumption of alcohol inappropriate for a teacher. Or a teacher may be enjoying a karaoke night, where the songs include innuendos; is that acting with dignity in the eyes of everyone? There is also always the chance of conflict with others in public places. Imagine a teacher gets into a car accident and yells at the other parties because they panicked with their children in the vehicle that was just hit. Will they be treated with grace by disciplinary bodies if the other party recognizes the teacher from the local high school? While some of these concerns may feel exaggerated, Bill 35 does raise questions for how such situations may be resolved.

Along with trying to understand the level of personal investment into the identity of our role as “teacher” is an idea of mirroring power (Pishghadam et al., 2022). Reflecting Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive development (Sprouts, 2020) discussed in chapter 1, teachers at one point had to attend school as students and would have been influenced by those teachers. However, it may be that teachers emulate or mirror how they saw their own teachers, not necessarily how their teachers saw themselves. Pishghadam et al. (2022) breaks down the development of identity into four components: (1) mirroring of power, (2) discourse where the elements of that particular identity are debated and discussed based on social bias and different levels of influential power of that identity, (3) imagination of reality where one envisions themselves in that identity based on personal interpretations and sensory experiences, and finally (4) personal investment:

When a teacher decides to do something, it means the teacher has decided to act. Thus, the action and experience of the teacher affect the way the teacher understands and views the world. This decision to invest and take action is related to the concept of emotioncy since various emotioncy levels (i.e., avolvement, exvolvement, and involvement) can be engaged when having exposure to different items. (Pishghadam et al., 2022, p. 5)

For myself, I wished to emulate the behaviour of my favourite former teachers with my own students; how some of my favorite teachers made me feel and how they made me see myself. This means that even before I had the thought of being a teacher, this identity of a teacher was already taking form (Pines, 1987).

Palmer (1997) proposes that “we teach who we are” (p. 15) to our students every day whether by giving advice, a look across the room, or how we respond to the situations of our daily routines. Palmer positions identity as not static but is something that evolves over time, informed by personal experience, reflection, and a willingness to embrace change. Central to

discovering and living into one's identity is a combination of self-awareness, introspection, and courage to act in accordance with one's true self. As educators, we learn and grow with our students as we interact with the world. "In the midst of that complex field, identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human" (p. 17).

The issue of teacher -artist identity in relation to integrity is complex: Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not, and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me; do I welcome them or fear them, embrace them or reject them, move with them or against them? By choosing integrity, I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am. (Palmer, 1997, p. 17).

Definitions of teacher identity are constantly evolving (Pillen et al., 2013), but there may be friction among teacher identities created by teachers and the teacher identities created by the perceptions of others. Like Palmer (1997), Beijaard (1995) describes teacher identity as dynamic, something that changes and is deeply rooted in the relevancy of education and its role in the events of our ever-changing world.

Teachers as Social Entities

Being a teacher is a very public role, even for those not working in public schools. Park (2015) emphasized teacher identity as a sociocultural role that shapes the development of society. The elements of what makes a teacher have lived on display and under criticism of the public, and the expectations put upon teachers have drastically increased and changed (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Vygotsky argued that all people and roles are constructed from the social worlds in which they exist (Kuhn et al., 2020). But what does this mean when teachers are living within

constraints of a professional identity that is continuously criticized by those who do not live within the profession and have not made personal contact with it since they were themselves students? Given the dynamic nature of teacher identity, teachers can be left in vulnerable places with parents, students, administration, and even government (Pillen et al., 2013) as these non-teaching members of society influence ideas of teacher identity. This can leave educators vulnerable to the influence of a destructive view of who they are as people and professionals (Kurniawan et al., 2022).

Teachers as Artists

Now what does this mean when looking at myself as an artist?

Artist who?

Webster and I

Artist (noun)

art·ist 'är-tist

1. **a): a person who creates art (such as painting, sculpture, music, or writing) using conscious skill and creative imagination**
 2. ~~the great artists of the Renaissance~~
 3. ~~an artist specializing in watercolors~~
 - b) : a person skilled in any of the arts**
 4. ~~“I can’t draw” at all, but both of my children are very talented artists.~~
 5. ~~: a skilled performer~~
 6. especially a musical or theatrical entertainer:
- ARTISTE**
7. ~~a jazz artist~~
 8. ~~: a person who is very good at something~~
 9. ~~a seam artist~~
 10. ~~a strikeout artist~~

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.)

It is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint a singular definition of an artist, as there are many differing understandings of art and what makes one a member of this profession:

*“Artists try to do or make something exceptional
in life in order to produce reactions,
in themselves and
in other people,
out of the ordinary.”*
– Mauresmo (2006).

*“The aim of art
is to represent
not the outward appearance of things,
but their inward significance.”*
– Aristotle (2026)

*“We don’t make mistakes,
just happy little accidents.”*
– Bob Ross (n.d.)

*“Every child
is an artist.
The problem is
how to remain an artist
once we grow up.”*
– Pablo Picasso (2009)

Dewey (1958) suggests that being an artist is a living experience, an extension of the internal, external, and physical, and commonplace. From this perspective, being an artist is not just about creating isolated works but about engaging with life as a continuous, dynamic process. He posits that artistic expression is deeply interconnected with both the inner world of emotions and thoughts, and the external world of social and physical experience. For Dewey, art arises from everyday life, making it a reflection of shared human experiences where the boundaries between the artist's personal perspective and the collective world blur.

Schein (2001) like Dewey positioned artists as critical elements of society who can connect experiences through the lens of their art. He extends his view to six factors of “what is the role of an artist?” Artists:

1. Stimulate us to see more, hear more, and experience more of what is going on within us and around us. ...
2. [Do] and should disturb, provoke, shock, and inspire. ...
3. Stimulate us to broaden our skills, our behavioral repertory, and our flexibility of response. ...
4. Stimulate and legitimize our own aesthetic sense. ...
5. Produce important insights into what is needed to perform and what it means to lead and manage.
6. Put us in touch with our creative self. (pp. 1-3)

These six factors may be combined into two larger categories: a) the skills and practice of the artist and b) the role of the artist. Firstly, *the skills and practice of the artist*. This category considers the technical knowledge and skills of the artist. For example, if a vocal artist claims to be so, can they sing? Can a musician read music? Can they understand and implement the

language of music? Does being able to perform the technical elements of an artform make someone an artist? While the practical skills of an artist are all helpful elements to an artist's practice (Schein, 2001), if those skills are not constantly refined, how does that effect the identity of that artist. That all being said, there is an importance to learning and practicing the skills of one's art not only to grow in skill, but to expand one's landscape of their art (Tursunbaevna, 2021).

The Role of the Artist

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines artists as people who create, use imagination, and use different media such as painting, music, and other performative forms. However, this understanding does not express the impacts artists have on others. As noted by Schein (2001), roles are not one dimensional. The role of an artist in the world depends on the depth of understanding of how artists impact the world. There is no possible way to sum up the role of an artist in a small section of this thesis; however, Schein's (2001) six factors (as previously outlined on page 31) provide a framework for conceptualizing the idea of artist through the impacts artists may have on the world.

Artists have the power to communicate the need for change by examining and making sense of social issues through their art. Such artistic forms of communication extend art from being created for aesthetic gratification to creating opportunities for others to connect with important social issues (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008; Travis, 2021).

How Do We Become Artists?

"No great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist."

– Oscar Wilde (1894, p. 45)

We want to see ourselves as “good at something” and are more inclined to take chances when we connect skillfully and intrinsically with what it is we are doing (Pishghadam et al., 2022). Art and seeing oneself as an artist is no exception. When Rostan (1998), for example, examined the development of young artists, many of the youth made self-excluding comments likely due to lack of belief in themselves and their identity as “artist.”

Developing a sense of creative identity can begin to develop at a young age with exposure to artistic practice (Irwin, 2013). This can continue through any age, but ultimately, the individual must see themselves as a creative person, someone capable of artistry at any level, before they can see themselves as an artist. As per Vygotsky (Kuhn et al., 2020), this view of what an artist is, may be connected to the ‘more knowledgeable person’ in their life. The idea of artist often starts when we are inspired, provoked, and sometimes disrupted by art experienced (Rostan, 1998).

Just as no one can determine the exact moment a person becomes an artist, each person’s journey as an artist is their own (Saltz, 2019). Does becoming an artist mean selling work? Does it signify performing for an audience? Rather, does it denote changing the way people see the world? Or is it simply a personal experience? Saltz (2019) writes that becoming and being an artist is not about understanding or mastery, but it is about the experience one has with their art; it is an ongoing process that involves taking chances, being intimate with what is being shared through one’s art and developing a practice.

The Space Between the Identity of Teacher and Artist: Is it That Big?

The idea of an artist-teacher may be thought of as a spectrum. How much or to what degree we see ourselves attached to those identities affects not only our practices, but how we present ourselves to the world. “Artist teachers come from a range of backgrounds and

experiences; not all are teachers returning to art practice, some are artists who do some teaching, but do not have a teaching qualification” (Hall, 2010, p. 107).

The spaces of artist-teacher identity may be seen as the following:

Artist

Artist teaching their art

Teaching through one’s art

Teacher educating about art

Teacher²

Each one of these spaces along the spectrum comes with its own hurdles such as resources, support, and stereotypes, but when looking at educators who live between the spaces, recurring concerns can arise such as the impact of curriculum expectations, watering down of programs, limitations of space and resources, as well as the constant need to justify the relevance and benefit of the arts (Upitis, 2005).

The differences, similarities, and connections across identities inherent in being an artist-teacher highlight the importance of tying elements from both artist and teacher identities together to create a single artist-teacher entity (Daichendt, 2009). Some of these elements are discussed by Hausman (1967), who states that artist-teachers should have a focus on fundamentals of the art, dynamic relationships between the medium and the ideas formed through them, and teaching students that being creative does not imply creating something out of nothing.

What happens when the role of an artist and the role of a teacher do not coexist professionally, and when the teacher is not teaching their art? Silverman (2006) shares their own

² This scale is inspired by the following texts and their discussions of teacher and artist identity: (Carter, 2014; Daichendt, 2009; Hall, 2010; Szekely, 1978; Thornton, 2005; 2011; Upitis, 2005).

journey and that of other educators who struggle to affirm their artist identity while teaching.

Silverman breaks their work with educators into interweaving five elements:

1. Unblocking creativity: *missing [the] artistic self* (p. 27)

This is the process of challenging the distance between the artist and teacher selves and walls placed around us in terms of connecting with who we were as artists. It is acknowledging the hurt of missing our artistic selves and understanding why the disconnect or distance exists.

2. Reinventing work habits: *harnessing time* (p. 27)

When looking at expanding any part of our lives, we must acknowledge that it takes time to invest into developing skills and ourselves. This involves making time for the process and new habits around how we treat ourselves as artists.

3. Being absorbed in the creative process: *lured towards unknown destinations* (p. 27)

When an artist-teacher has made time, it is key to be present in that time and space of the art. There may be a caution towards how expansive the process becomes or where it may lead the artist, but it is when the artist-teacher is falling in love with that unknown that can scare some to limit themselves within the process.

4. Communicating about work: *wondering at what point a piece is complete* (p. 27)

Engaging within a community of artists is important, but creating a dialogue with oneself and giving the piece time to breathe can help guide the direction and development of the artist-teacher's art. There is the question of when to "stop," but ultimately that depends on the artist and their trajectory as an artist. There may be to others more obvious completions, but it varies depending on the artist.

"Art is never finished, only abandoned." – Leonardo da Vinci (2021)

5. Expanding perception: *juggling up the aesthetic soul* (p. 27)

This element concerns the ability to evolve what was once thought to be true about the art, the skills as artists, and the place of themselves as artists in the world. These revelations can push an artist-teacher in all different directions even if they thought they would never go “there.”

When Identities Overlap, Do They Collide?

Negotiating among one’s various identities in a classroom setting can be a concern, particularly for teachers who come from artist backgrounds hoping to integrate their identities other than ‘teacher’ within their classroom. While in some settings artistic background is praised and seen as an asset to student learning (Uria-Iriarte & Prendergast, 2020), artist identity is often tied to the product they produce and less about what they help students learn from the entire process of creating, responding, presenting, and how we are connecting to greater ideas of society and building community (Fusaro, 2016).

The two identities inherent in artist-teacher can bring a powerful tool to developing dialogue within classrooms not only between the teacher and student (Carrillo & Baguley, 2011), but with the students and their greater community (Schein, 2001). As discussed earlier, having an artist identity can provoke and disturb ways of seeing the world. Thus, having someone like an artist-teacher can empower and embrace a learner’s role in speaking to matters of social or personal justice (Silverman, 2006). While some artist-teachers may wish to continue empowering students, the realities of working within a school system may make this challenging. Depending on the school community, such student empowerment may reflect poorly on the teacher, particularly if stakeholders such as investors, government, or other educational officials are resistant to the views expressed by the students (Silverman, 2006). If a teacher feels their

personal artist identity or their empowerment of their students puts their role/employment as a teacher in danger, then this may create inner conflict. These ideas are seen across teachers in various forms of art such as literature, drama, and music (Thornton, 2011).

Artist-Teacher Identity in the Age of Social Media

Being an educator during the age of social media and technology has added a layer of perceived expectations in which educators are often at odds with their image in the public eye due to constant scrutiny from parents, students, and those trying to negatively influence the general public's perception of the teacher as a professional and a person (Greenhow et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic made this conflict even more present, with still yet little support for those experiencing teaching in the classroom (Griffin & Zinskie, 2020). Even while being called 'heroes,' educators continued to be scrutinized for standing up and speaking out through TikTok and similar platforms (Fox & Bird, 2017; Hartung et al., 2022). Community discussions around how teachers are portrayed and how they should contribute/participate online if at all, continues to impact current and future educators (Griffin & Zinskie, 2020).

As seen through the literature, both teacher identity and artist identity are dynamic, socially constructed, and deeply influenced by community expectations, personal investment, and evolving professional landscapes. Scholars emphasize the fluidity of identity (Beijaard, 1995; Pillen et al., 2013), the sociocultural positioning of teachers (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Park, 2015), and the transformative role of artists in society (Dewey, 1958; Schein, 2001). The literature also points to tensions experienced by artist-teachers as they navigate institutional constraints, public scrutiny, and competing professional roles (Silverman, 2006; Thornton, 2011). However, there remains a gap in understanding how artist-teachers internally negotiate integrity when their artistic identity is not professionally centered, particularly within contemporary

climates shaped by policy shifts and social media surveillance (Giordano et al., 2016). While identity is often examined as dynamic, less attention has been given to the lived, emotional, and narrative experience of existing between these identities. As outlined in the next chapter, the present study seeks to explore that liminal space through autoethnographic inquiry, examining how the artist-teacher identity is constructed, disrupted, and reimagined over time especially for those who do not have the privilege to teach the art that serves their heart.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Procedures

“A Map Written in Pencil.”

The notion that I am a person who teaches and not necessarily wanting to exist as a teacher in my many other identities is a contradiction to what has most inspired me from Palmer’s (1997) emphasis on identity in teacher education. However, I have had to lean into this contradiction to protect myself from the constant outer and inner criticism that comes with being a teacher. I have had to allow myself to listen to and reconnect with ‘Christina the person’ due to the social narrative of teachers being heavily under scrutiny (Lasky, 2005; McAlevey, 2016).

The need to reconnect to ‘Christina the person’ combined with my personal passion for storytelling has led me to root this research in autoethnography where the story I have created intends to expand the lens of identity around educators, artists, and self-narrative that may facilitate discourse (Spry, 2001). Ellis et al. (2011) state that autoethnography is both a process and product when used as research. I more specifically examined my past through the use of autoethnodrama (Saldaña, 2008; Spry, 2011), script writing (Leavy, 2020), and poetry (Prendergast, 2006; Vincent, 2021). Over the course of my graduate program, I have found that my thoughts and ideas have felt the strongest and clearest while using these modes of communication. I have been greatly inspired by the work of Johnny Saldaña (2008) and his paper *Second Chair: An Autoethnodrama*. Reading Saldaña’s work, written in a script-like structure, was one of the first times I felt part of the research and the story he was telling. It was also one of the few articles that did not feel like a chore to read; I hope the same when others read my own research.

Arts-based research can be a useful approach to explore in-depth, complicated, and sometimes uncomfortable questions (Leavy, 2020). Methodologies such as ethnodrama, being under the umbrella of arts-based research, have opened a space for my personal aesthetic writing power when communicating the journey and findings of myself as a teacher, artist, and researcher (Leavy, 2020). Integrating poetry into my script development has allowed me to focus on my voice when referencing difficult experiences of the past, transitioning to different positions, by allowing me to focus in on key moments and elements of my experiences (Faulkner, 2009; Fels, 2012).

Studies by researchers such as Sparkes (2021), Goodyear (2016), and Uria-Iriarte & Prendergast (2020) emphasize that autoethnography is a continual cycle of reflection and further research. This process creates opportunities to explore complex ideas such as teacher and artist identity on a larger scale, and to use the process and journey of the researcher to emphasize:

1. *Issues*: moments where the subject of the research challenged or was challenged by outside influences such as the education system;
2. *Vulnerabilities*: how those challenges changed the subject, exposed weakness, or moments of failure, personally and professionally, and even
3. *Contradictions*: dilemmas either within the systems of education or preconceived notions now challenged by new findings. (Uria-Iriarte & Prendergast, 2020)

While the findings of this study have not been limited to these three elements (issues, vulnerability, and contradictions), they have been used as points for my own research when organizing findings into categories or themes.

Who is This About Anyways?

As mentioned above, I was first inspired by the work of Saldaña (2008) as I began conceptualizing this research project. In *Second Chair*, he tells his story of being a musician and his experiences in the “second chair” of his high school band. Through the script, he explores ideas of jealousy, self-esteem, his relationship with music, family, relationships with peers, his teacher, but more importantly, the relationship he has with himself as a musician and artist.

This piece was the first time I read research in a way that not only connected with me as an artist, given its script-like format, but being brought into the story allowed me to better resonate with the conversation and vulnerabilities experienced. When reading *Second Chair*, I was in a joyous disbelief with not only how the story kept me wanting more, but that I finished with a deeper understanding of the issues presented by Saldaña. I knew immediately after reading it that I wanted to create something like this with my work.

Where Did it All Come From?

To gather and generate data for my research, I have examined:

1. Objects as artifacts:
 - a. Objects from undergraduate studies
 - Papers
 - Projects
 - Presentations
 - b. Objects from childhood (Conrad, 2003)
 - Videos
 - Photos
 - Schoolwork

2. A series of video diaries in first-person monologue form that I created during the research.
3. Memories of those times, both connected to particular artifacts and those arising from the research experience.

I chose these wells of my past and present as they represent my life in varying ways. They allowed me to explore my many voices and unearth the voices that have spoken through me. For my data generation, I connected with the past through video diaries and other artistic forms such as the poetry already found within this thesis to concretize what has already existed as memories. These forms of data generation also reflect the ebbs and flows of how I communicated myself and my identity over the years. There is also risk with relying on memories, because of the space between past moments and how these can lead to shifts in perspective given my changes in circumstances and identity (Antypa et al., 2021). I do not believe that it is possible to completely avoid or ignore these shifts in perspective, but rather it is important to acknowledge that they exist, and how I believe they have affected my views on my identity. To mitigate some of the ephemerality of memory, I will triangulate my memories with data such as videos from my childhood and former university assignments that have personal reflections detailing the emotions I was experiencing at the time.

Connecting the Data – Codes and Themes

The data have been coded based on a mixture of deductive and inductive codes (Saldaña, 2013) including:

1. Teacher Identity
2. Artist-Teacher Identity
3. Artist Identity, and

4. Mentors

As I explored my artifacts and the creation/reflection process of video diaries, I made connections with the codes of Teacher Identity, Artist Identity, Artist-Teacher Identity, while I remained open to identifying new ones through my shifting lens. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, there were some unexpected, but critical shifts in how these codes and themes were represented in the final script.

Using the themes identified through the research process, I drew on research-based theatre to develop a script exploring the shifting identities in a voice I have learned to be my strongest, drama and performance (Belliveau et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2008; Uria-Iriarte & Prendergast, 2020).

Why Not Artography?

For this thesis, I intended to create an arts-based representation of the research results. My art is a result of my research and not necessarily part of the process of developing research by relieving my lived experiences (Springgay et al., 2005). Many scholars including Barone and Eisner (2012), Leavy (2020), and McNiff (2013) articulate approaches to engaging in arts-based research. One methodology, a/r/tography, explicitly considers the intersections of artist, research, and teacher identities (Springgay et al, 2005). One could make the argument that I am diving into the Living Inquiry (Meyer, 2010) rendering of a/r/tography. However, what I created does not align with the notion of renderings discussed by Springgay et al. (2005) as what is created is primarily a method of disseminating my research rather than the act of creation being a part of the research analysis process.

Limitations in the Research

The scope of my data generation is limited to my own experiences and their relationship to existing literature. However, I was aware of the possibility that through script development, reflections may be affected by experiences that had not happened at the time of their creation. This is something to be particularly aware of when examining episodic memory (Antypa et al., 2021) as it was up to me to make sense of the space between each snapshot of memory and past experiences in reference to my current state. This is where the artistic elements of script writing and fictionizations (Leavy, 2013) of the story play a key part in the final creation.

This research is limited to my experiences and thus it is not possible to generalize research findings. However, I hope that by sharing my story, exploring my experiences, and reflecting throughout the entire process I can create a platform of possible connections with my reader. In a sense I observed my own experiences while creating new ones at the same time. Eisner (2017) discusses what makes qualitative research, and he touches on the notion of what is empirical. He explains that empirical evidence is not based on simply existing as experience, but how we portray that experience will evolve its meaning or evoke meaning in others that is out of our control. “The consequence of this observation is not only that knowledge of the empirical world is qualitative, but also that we confront the formidable task of trying to represent what we have come to know through some medium” (Eisner, 2017, p. 27). Rather than neutral vessels through which information is conveyed, the form of research dissemination shapes the potential of meanings created - we “inform in form” (Lea, 2013, p. 28). Choosing playwriting and poetry as genres for sharing this research gave me the opportunity to bring my audience in in curated ways (Leavy, 2020), but there is no guarantee that they will process it with the same intent that it was written. Drawing on Barnes et al.’s (2005) discussion of transferability, through my script

writing, I seek not to generalize my experiences but to engage an audience so that they may create connections with elements of my story to those of their own. Thus, the interpretative power shifts toward the receiver of the research. They can look at my experience, and if they establish enough of a connection with their own experiences, then the results of my research may create spaces for people to reflect upon their own experiences (Barnes et al., 2005).

I had to consider though when I created my script and performative narrative, do I emphasize broader trends in my research findings to cast a wider net or do I continue to use specific points that detail my specific situation? If I had used broader strokes, then I run the risk of it being boring and overgeneralizing key topics of discussion. But if I narrowed it too much to my own detailed experience, I could have left my audience without room to see themselves if their situation is significantly different from my own (Belliveau, et al., 2020). I sought to find a place between those two worlds where I could thoroughly tell my story while simultaneously creating space where others could place themselves within the story. I found that refraining from using names and specific locations leaves some space to breath and imagine as the audience while also protecting the identities of others (see more in the ethics section).

Alsawayfa (2018) shares her experience of learning and teaching drama through an autoethnographic lens but expresses difficulty grounding her research in relevant theoretical frameworks while still maintaining the essence of her poetry. Rather than provide clear answers to how to do so, Alsawayfa describes a dialogue between artistic and academic voices. In my own work, I seek a similar positioning in the theoretical frameworks of the research around the aesthetic explorations in existing educational theory.

But Is it Ethical?

As is the nature of autoethnographic work, this research has explored my own experiences so there was no need to engage active outside participants for this study (Bird, 2017; Conrad, 2003; Goodyear, 2016; Morrissey, 2013; Sparkes, 2021). However, I did engage in an ethics review to ensure safety and transparency both for myself and for non-active participants in my study that would be seen/described through the home videos and the past assignments from my undergraduate program. For the purpose of this research, non-active participants were family members who appeared in the home videos. As the videos were created before this research project, they did not participate with the intent of them being a part of a research project. However, as my research advisor needed to have permission to view the videos, their consent was required.

Non-active participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix A for General Informed Consent form and Appendix B for Other Informed Consent form) which allowed my advisor to engage with the videos and my work in supporting the research. None of the videos were going to be directly used in the final research, nor would names or major identifiable aspects be used in the research findings. While the non-active participants were not the focus of the home videos, it was essential that we protect and have consent from them as these are personal home videos being used in a professional manner. The non-active participants were given the opportunity to review the research to ensure that they felt the data was used appropriately regarding their potential contributions from the home videos

In terms of the past assignments, to protect any non-active participants, I was able to remove names from assignment headings as well as any major identifiable elements of those

potentially mentioned in the assignments from my undergraduate program prior to sharing them with my advisor.

Storytelling through Vulnerability

This research is ultimately telling a story:

The real purpose of telling our stories is to tell them in ways that open up new possibilities for understanding and wisdom and transformation. So, our stories need to be told in creative ways that hold our attention, that call out to us, that startle us. (Leggo & Sameshima, 2013, p. 540)

As this research has been developed on data gathered and generated from my own experiences, I am putting myself in somewhat of a complicated and potentially conflicted situation especially when exploring and expressing criticisms of Manitoba Education. This is particularly significant in the context of Bill 35 in Manitoba (Keele, 2023). This legislation, enacted in January 2025, grants the Manitoba government the power to regulate teacher certification, hiring, professional development, and discipline, while establishing an Education Standards and Accountability Office to oversee these processes, and includes provisions for anonymous reporting of teacher misconduct.

Because it is my work, I had control over the extent of personal details shared. As teacher identity and identity development are social constructions, there were necessary points in my research where my story intersects with those of others. To not identify others, I have drawn on dramatic tools such as composite characters (Wilkinson, 2010) and fictionalization (Leavy, 2013). Fictionalizing moments and stories as part of my thesis protects those involved but still come with the risk of not being interesting or having the ability to draw in an audience. Many stories around the world will have similarities as discussed by Leggo and Sameshima (2013), but

it has been my responsibility as the author to ensure that the message is still clear, and that I am following a narrative which still contains levels of transferability and human quality.

Patricia Leavy (2013) has created a list of ten tips to fictionalize research, which I will use to guide my writing process:

1. Clarify goals: define the themes and messages you want to explore.
2. Identify target audience: choose genre, style, and tone accordingly.
3. Conduct research: gather diverse perspectives and expert insights.
4. Distill themes: reduce research to key ideas and concepts.
5. Let go: don't let research overwhelm your creative process.
6. Write a good story: engage readers with authenticity and craft.
7. Use literary tools: represent characters' inner lives through dialogue.
8. Be specific: add authentic details to build believability.
9. Consider a foreword: acknowledge research and its influence.
10. Stay committed: see your vision through despite challenges.

As Leavy (2013) suggests, to create a compelling story, I had to start by clarifying my goals for the research and identifying my target audience, as this helps guide my choice of genre, style, and tone. I continued to come back to the big question of, "What did I have to say?" and "Why was it important?" Setting goals with these questions in mind helped me choose who I needed to speak to and not just what I needed to say, but how.

Key themes around my development as a teacher and artist were clearly necessary while, remembering that not all of my research would make it into the story. Ultimately, I focused on crafting an engaging narrative that was most authentic to my experience yet sought out to resonate with readers. However, acknowledging that just as not all research understandings can

be shared in academic prose, not all research understandings could be expressed through the script, I accompanied the script with a critical commentary (Lea, & Belliveau, 2020). Rather than repeating what was expressed in the script, this commentary highlights my research process and shares understandings that may not be easily expressed in theatrical form (Lea, 2013).

Looking critically at moments that have shaped me as a professional and as a person often had me in a tight grip, disbelief, and sadness towards the girl who you could see was changing in ways that she did not particularly want to. Because of that intensity I had to ensure I was protecting my own mental health. During this process, I left space for myself to breathe and regroup when I came to further points of clarity and reflection. While yes, my experiences were the jumping points of this research, this research was not meant to make me regret my choices, but to better understand my own choices and how they may help me and others move forward as artists, as teachers and researchers.

Checkpoints with my research advisor and routines around giving myself space after working on my research (such as walks outside, time with family, and meditation) were essential when collecting, analyzing, and moving through my data so that I could see this data as constructive and not destructive to my own psyche. I learned quickly during this process that there were moments when I needed to stop and reconnect with the purpose which was gravely difficult when you are both the researcher and the subject (Emerald & Carpenter, 2015).

While they were not required, I was aware of the resources provided by the University of Manitoba in relation to mental health. I did though value and appreciate connecting with my advisor throughout the process to adjust timelines when necessary to maintain a healthy mindset since this process of creating a thesis at times had become stressful. I had also found recording my videos diaries were some of the strongest moments of reflection because they allowed me to

to open and question without forced direction. I was able to come to different valleys of thought through wandering around freely. Even though I was looking at my own experiences, it was the video diaries that gave me a space to make sense of my heart, which was the most important element of protecting my mental health.

A Tentative Wrap Up While I Ask Myself: Am I Ready to Take the Leap?

As I entered into this research, I expressed my feelings about the process through the following poem.

I am Terrified.

Looking and

being looked at

Seeing but...not seen

on Deaf ears

I have fallen.

Who could I hurt?

How could be *Change*

Annoyance

Alive in the dark of reference pages?

Will this make me a Victim? Am I making myself a Victim?

I've asked questions of false gods

And made light of losing myself,

But I must trust

it's time,

it's time to **learn**

Why?

Because now that she is awake,

She will no longer comply.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Script

“Research Enter Upstage Left”

A Toolbox Hidden in Plain Sight

She carried a toolbox hidden in plain sight.
Brushes for blending,
Sponges for blotting,
And mixing what sort of made sense.
They made her feel ... powerful.
They helped her feel ... *scene*.
They carved out a place to say what she really means.

She carried a toolbox hidden in plain sight.
Hammers for punchlines,
Screws to feel strong,
And often forgot to bring it along.
But did she forget? Or did she just say,
“I’m sure they’re not useful, for here anyway.”

She carried a toolbox hidden in plain sight.
She tried other methods that just didn’t feel right.
With nudges for confidence,
And articles to lean on,
Could it be the tools, the passion, wasn’t actually gone?

She carried a toolbox, with something to say,
“Wouldn’t it be funny if I... wrote a play?”

The script that follows is a (re)presentation of the understandings generated as part of this autoethnographic research project. As you explore the script, this performance on the page, I encourage you to keep in mind that this script is intended to engage with the following research questions:

1. How do teachers who are not teaching their art continue to develop their artist identity?
2. How can an individual find harmony between their identity as an artist and a teacher?

Scripts are a blueprint for performance, not the performance itself. A common practice for actors as they prepare to embody a role is to annotate their scripts, flesh out details and provide insights. While for practical reasons I have not yet performed the full script, the version shared here includes annotations as I would have written, should I perform this script live. I discuss this process of creating annotations in chapter 5. These annotations also encourage you as a reader to slow down, reread sections with the annotations and stage directions in mind, walk it within your space, or simply step in my shoes on stage with your imagination.

A full version of the script without annotations can be found in Appendix C.

Enjoy.

This script is dedicated to the girl who dreamed of traveling the world sharing her love of the arts and performing.

It's been a gift finding my way back to her.

New dreams, same heart.



ACT 1

A stage set with a teacher desk, a coat rack with an abundance of hats, a bookshelf filled with binders, teacher books, a slightly hidden camcorder and small trinkets. At the front of the desk is a triangular prism name plate with 'Teacher', '_____', and 'Artist' on the respective sides. There is also a desk lamp, an office chair, a stool, and an open laptop. On the floor next to the desk is a large tote bag filled with objects to be pulled out throughout the story. Behind the desk is a whiteboard and written at the top corner is the date, school day, and "12 days since last curse word." There is a picture of a young girl on the desk (the Storyteller dressed as Sailor Moon for Halloween). Wicked, Phantom of the Opera, and Seussical the Musical posters are hung on the wall.

The stage is lit with the name plate in focus on the 'Teacher' side with a soft spot and the rest of the set in a blue/orange wash. School background noise is heard. School bell rings and heard from off stage:

(As if students are down the hallway)

As Mentor (Off stage): Hey! Don't forget! Parent teacher starts at 5pm sharp! Make sure to remind your parents to come at their scheduled time! [Yes – you have to be there too! Ha. Ha. Ha. Very funny! Bye!]

↳ warm and light.
She adores her students.

Sound of door shuts

Stage lights up as **Mentor** enters from stage right dressed in a blazer, a simple black dress, heels, and a lanyard around her neck. She takes a moment at the door facing her classroom (space and sighs). She walks to the whiteboard and fills out the schedule for the next day: Period 1 – ELA, Period 2 & 3 – French, Period 4 & 5 – Social Studies, Period 6 – Art/Band. She updates the date and school day.

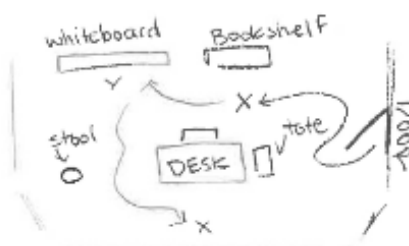
As Mentor: I find it best to get the next day prepped the day before. One less thing to think about before coffee and chaos, am I right?

Mentor adjusts the lanyard around her neck. - Trying to loosen up.

As Mentor: Do I look professional yet?

Jokingly gesturing at her blazer. (joke model pose)

Prop note: make sure to have a large black marker on the desk from the start.



Reflective of Positioning Theory

envious of her

CHARACTERS

As Mentor: Our Storyteller in present day as a teaching mentor to her teacher candidate. She is calm, a little sassy, and sarcastic. She wears a lanyard with keychains, buttons, and keys.

Constant need to be wise.

Trying to hold down "the fort".

As Artist: Our Storyteller who carries herself with a young bright ~~energy~~, enthusiasm, and eccentricity. She carries a musical song book.
 call it what it is; Identity
 You are an Artist.

Fear that she is gone / will mess things up.

As Education Student: Our Storyteller in a balancing act in constant flux between her Artist energy and her developing Teacher identity. She wears a scarf, a side bag, and carries a notebook and pen.

As Swimming Teacher: Our Storyteller in her teens when she taught swimming lessons. She wears a whistle.

As Education Professor, Theatre Professor, and Swimming Student: These are additional characters that our Storyteller voices/embodies as she relives memories from her years in school and moments which shaped her developing identity.

Artist questions her worth within this crowd.

As Self: Still trying to figure that out... (Lost - Angry - Sad)

The Audience
~~~~~

They play a role

- My teacher candidate
- My undergraduate cohort
- Myself?
- The void of my subconscious...?

\* Make sure that the way you interact with the "audience" shows who they are to the character in the particular scene.

\* More knowledgeable others? Those I've learned from or put me in positions of growth as a person/educator/Artist.

Trying to keep it light w/ jokes.

**As Mentor:** It's ok, you don't have to wear one to be a teacher, no matter what your practicum advisor says. Just thought I'd throw it on with heels given that we're meeting parents tonight.

**As Mentor:** For some reason it makes me feel a little more "grown up." → You know why, it's your costume. (walk behind the desk)

**Mentor** looks to the audience to try and shift the mood.

(From behind the desk)

**As Mentor** (dramatically and theatrical): As your cooperating teacher, my role is to help guide you, immerse you in the realities of the classroom, and be a sounding board when everything you learned in your theory classes goes tits up!

**As Mentor:** Oh shit/Fuck/Sorry. One sec. <sup>Joking / not comforting</sup>  
<sub>Realize / ashamed / apologize</sub>

**Mentor** goes to the whiteboard and erases the "12" and writes a "0" on the whiteboard where it says, "days since last curse word." (take a moment at the whiteboard and reorient)

Attempting to comfort calm, while still embarrassed

**As Mentor:** Tonight is going to be great/Just follow my lead and if you don't know how to answer something, gesture to me, or say something like, "That's a really great question, I'll look into it and get back to you as soon as I can." You'll be great, really, just pace yourself.

very "in character" customer service

Walk to side of desk

**As Mentor:** <sup>slow down.</sup> I personally find this evening to be the most exhausting of the whole year. Frankly, it's the most performative I ever have to be, and that's saying a lot coming from me.

**As Mentor:** (Oh, right, <sup>They don't know</sup>) well I used to do a lot of theatre and performance, for like... over a decade. Performed in musicals, directed, stage managed, hair and makeup, wrote short plays, you know... Just the usual...

(fiddling with the desk/ "cleaning up")

**As Mentor:** Ya, the posters aren't just for show (jazz hands) + arm (hook) -uncomfortable for everyone involved.

**Mentor** awkwardly laughs it off.

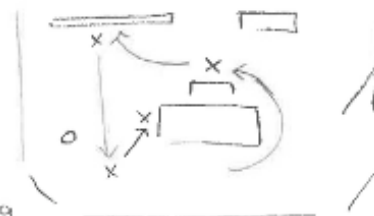
(sit on stool)

**As Mentor:** I feel like these evenings I have to play "Super Teacher" ... and that's after a full day of teaching...so pace yourself...did I already say that? (Points to audience)

**As Mentor:** Anyway... (and we're back)

4th wall break  
→ this should feel uncomfortable/uneasy

**As Mentor:** What do you they have you reading in Ed these days? -chill girl.



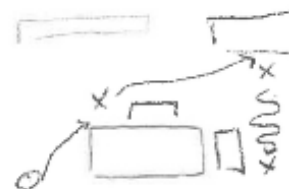
**As Mentor:** (with one eyebrow up) Really?

*you're joking, right?*

**As Mentor:** "The Teachers Guide to Teaching from the Inside"; sounds familiar.

*- not that hokey book ...*

**As Mentor:** (making her way to the bookshelf and searching for her copy of the book) If I remember correctly, it's a 'spunky how-to' about being your most *authentic* self in the classroom, right?



**Mentor** finds the book on her bookshelf.

**As Mentor:** Ah yes, I remember it well, not fondly, but well. — be professional ...

**Mentor** laughs.

**As Mentor:** (It's ok, really,) it's been a minute, but I'm sure there's something relevant.

*Try not to embarrass your teacher candidate. They still have the spark.*

**Mentor** opens the book and flips to the first chapter, reads the title and a small paragraph, this is done for each chapter.

**Mentor** (Reading from book): — chapter read in professional tone while having a touch of skepticism in a joking way.

### Chapter 1

#### Find Your Voice – Sharing Your Passions with Purpose

Every teacher enters the profession carrying stories, skills, and passions that make them unique. Maybe you have sung on stage or won tournaments, or shared your work with the world. These experiences are not just memories; they are bridges you can build with your students. The classroom thrives when your genuine interests shine through your teaching.

Start by reflecting: What lights you up? What moments outside of teaching have shaped the person standing in front of your class today?

*Read slowly*

Then, consider how to share these moments in ways that invites curiosity and connection. Your students do not need a polished performance, they need authenticity. Sometimes, that means sharing a song from your past to open a lesson. Other times may mean letting them see that creativity is not separate from real life. Your creativity is life.

*stupid, but they'd love it.*

Your voice matters. Use it, not to impress, but to inspire. (Place book on the desk open but face down)

Walking/talking/flipping to page

Artist speaks in large and frequent arm gestures.

Mentor turns the name plate to 'Artist' and pulls out a Musical song book from her large tote bag next to the desk.

→ I always carried one of these in middle school.

As Artist: I recently found an old recording of my first musical performance. — it's a cute secret.

As Artist: It was the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and the first time I ever performed/ as part of a cast.

As Artist: [To say performing on that stage made me feel — large sweeping movements.] would be a massive understatement.

As Artist: I always knew I loved music and singing, but this performance made me feel... seen you know, I mean outside of the collection of home videos of course. — giggle (show in fingers)

As Artist: I originally had 3 solo lines throughout the cabaret style show, but a week before curtain, everything changed. A fellow student couldn't be in the show anymore and my drama teacher needed someone to step in for an entire character! They said, "You're an understudy!" I responded with, "What's an understudy?" I didn't even know what it all meant at the time, but what I did know was that I had just 5 days to learn a whole song, choreography, lines, and be show-ready for tech week.

As Artist: To some/ it may have been an overwhelming task/ and in ways it was [but I was known to memorize an entire Spice Girls album or two at the age of 4 and perform them in their entirety WITH original choreography.] Pretend to be humble + pose

As Artist: I knew I could do this despite just two years prior crying in embarrassment after my first solo performance of "Breakaway" by Kelly Clarkson at a community talent show.

As Artist: Then, I didn't think I belonged, but this time, maybe (sing it) this time, it could be different. — IMPORTANT → hopeful.

As Artist: I sang Don't Rain on my Parade from the musical Funny Girl; It felt like redemption. I was no longer embarrassed. I charged onto that stage with my top hat, massive silver hoop earrings, and frosted pink eyeshadow, sang my heart out, and never looked back.

As Artist: I was hooked.

Artist is comfortable being front and center... for now.



Speed up in excitement. Bigger + exaggerated movements.

Flip to calm.

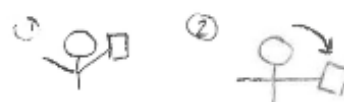
Bang on song book

— (point up/ raise eyebrow)



feel the memory, but focus the feeling.

\* songbook as top hat



**As Artist:** I performed every year after that, even multiple times a year! (Musicals, choirs, plays, anything I could get my voice on.) (count on fingers) → to audience

**As Artist:** Over that time, I created my Top 5. These are dream roles or shows one would love to perform. (They all felt like a long shot, but were fun to imagine. giggle to self.) -cas

**As Artist:** What was special about a Top 5 was that it was not me choosing to perform those roles, but that someone else might choose me to be that character or sing that song because they believed in me. } wanting to feel worthy

**As Artist:** There's something magical about that feeling, that sense of belonging and purpose in something you love and connect to.

**As Artist:** Chicago was MY show. It tied together my love of theatre, camp, and jazz. } arguably my #1

**As Artist:** Early in my career I was working as a French Immersion teacher, much like I am now. A local theatre group was holding auditions for Chicago; it was fate. I walked into that audition with my head held high and when it was all done, I looked at the panel and said, "I am your Velma Kelly." This was quite bold, stupid even, but I wanted this more than I even understood at the time. } tone shifts from hopeful to sadness behind the eyes  
} not big, but pointed.  
} 4th wall break  
} raise eyebrows

**As Artist:** A few weeks later, I was on lunch break at the school when the cast list was posted online. I was in shock and awe, tearing up in front of my new coworkers because there it was, my name cast as Velma Kelly, my number 1, for all to see. When sharing the good news, some were excited, some said, "Oh, that's nice," (but some also looked concerned.) } A feeling of being on trial.  
} to seek comfort.

*As the following lines are given, lights on stage darken and a single spotlight narrows more and more onto Artist's face.*

**As Artist:** When in conversation with my admin, the response was, "Christina, do you really think that show a good representation of a teacher? Are you prepared if a parent sees you? Maybe you should look at using a different name, just in case. (You're gonna want to protect yourself, you know, professionally.)" } - each question a fraction in her identity.  
} planting the seed of worry.

↓ not a suggestion

Artist making herself/gestures smaller and smaller.

defending  
on the  
stand.

**As Artist:** I didn't know at the time if they were just trying to look out for me in the way in which they knew how, [or were protecting themselves and the school from my potential — shame embarrassment or 'wrong doing'] but it didn't stop the feeling of impending doom. → Disappointment

breaking  
+  
overwhelm

**As Artist:** The tsunami of questions were barrelling in, but one stood out, "Did I now have to give up a dream that once felt impossible?" A dream that I had finally clenched between my fingers!

avoid  
eye  
contact

**As Artist:** There were so many unknowns. — to self, internalizing

**As Artist:** I did go through with the production in the end, but I was guarded, hurt, and scared. I refused to be in any publicity, worried at every performance, didn't talk about it at work, and used a different name for the production.

**As Artist:** [I haven't performed in a musical since.] ✗ SNAP TO BLACK.  
look up to  
audience

**END OF ACT 1**

\*move to behind  
the desk in the  
black

## ACT 2

The lights return to the classroom. **Mentor** returns to the desk, turning the name plate back to 'Teacher' then places the song book on the bookshelf.

**Mentor** is speaking to her teacher candidate.

- ① **As Mentor:** Classroom teacher wasn't an obvious calling at first. I don't remember ever playing "teacher" as a kid or folks telling me, "You should be a teacher!" — in a folksy voice

**As Mentor:** I always knew I wanted help people, connect with people, and <sup>Pause</sup> create. What that looked like? As a kid? I didn't <sup>I laugh</sup> know yet, but that didn't stop everyone and their cow asking us what we wanted to be when we grew up. ↳ How were we expected to know?

*the thought was silly and out.* **As Mentor:** When I was forced to make up an answer in the first grade, I said that I wanted to tour the world singing. Oh! And remembering sell paintings I made along the way to pay for food and gas — I had a plan. Respectfully skeptical.

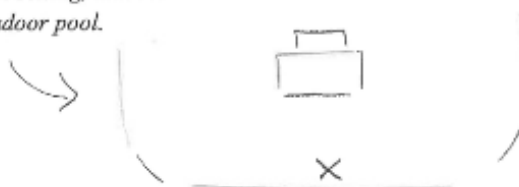
**As Mentor:** As I got older, I became a swimming teacher in my early teens. That's where I learned how much I enjoyed being around kiddos. They're fucking hilarious! — Rejoice

Looks back at "days since last curse word" and shrugs.

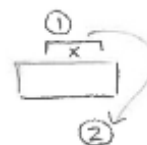
*(mime the story) invite the audience into the story.* **As Mentor:** I had a young student during my training who was so determined to swim across the shallow end of the pool in one breath. Each week he would practice before and after classes and one day when he was so close; he popped up, looked at me square in the face with his dinosaur goggles and said, "Man this — Building to this point and release of joy would be easier if I had a damn blowhole!"

**As Mentor:** Despite my eternal 'Eau de Chlorine,' I loved — You still do. helping students succeed, especially when it was with something they were previously struggling to accomplish.

**Mentor**, now *Swimming Teacher* stands at the edge of the stage as if she is talking to her swimming student in the pool below her. The lights shift to indicate a pool setting, and the background sounds of being at an indoor pool. (take towel out of tote bag)



Teaching  
was not a  
fall back



\* when voicing S.T. = look down  
 \* when voicing S.S. = look up

**As Swimming Teacher:** You've been working so hard for so long. I can see how much you want this. But maybe, just maybe, we've been trying to swim the wrong way.

↳ to self / problem solving / thinking

**As Swimming Student:** The wrong way? - exhausted / exaggerated

Talk - thinking

**As Swimming Teacher:** What if we stopped thinking about swimming... and started thinking about music? (You told me you play the violin... let's turn your swim into a song.)

↳ to student

**As Swimming Student:** I think my mom paid for swimming lessons. - serious / confused / concerned

clarify

**As Swimming Teacher:** Yes, I know; what I mean is the rhythm of music and apply it to your swimming.

**As Swimming Student:** [Like...]<sup>thinking</sup> playing the water? surprise / relief

**As Swimming Teacher:** [Exactly!] Picture 4/4 time. [Each arm stroke is a beat—one, two, three—and your breath, that's the rest. Feel it. Don't fight the rhythm; swim it.]

↳ Talk - thinking again

**As Swimming Student** (taking a deep breath, softly counting and performing arm circles for front crawl): One... two... three... rest... - hesitant

Disbelief excited

**As Swimming Teacher:** Yes! Now add the legs like... like... sixteenth notes, fast and light, like your bow skimming the strings.

(acting out the description)

**As Swimming Teacher:** (laughing, clapping as the swimming student reaches the other side) You did it! You swam the rhythm! [You turned your music into movement!] - Pride + relief

**As Swimming Teacher:** [That's exactly what it should feel like...] - breaking the 4<sup>th</sup> wall. (toss towel back into the tote.)

**Mentor** leans back on the desk. Lights return to general wash.

to inspire teacher candidate

**As Mentor:** I wanted to help my students feel their most confident and show them that their passions aren't only what make them amazing, but that those same passions can fuel so much more success in their lives as a whole.

**As Mentor:** [That's when I knew I wanted to teach.] - look directly at audience

*Mentor picks up the guide again and begins to read the next chapter.*

(approaching the book with reluctant curiosity)

**As Mentor** (reading the book):

## Chapter 2 Beyond the Cover

Teachers are often asked to define themselves by lesson plans, evaluations, or test results. But you are more than a checklist or a portfolio. Who you are outside the classroom influences who you are inside. Your interests, values, and experiences all shape your approach. Students connect most deeply when they sense authenticity, when the person in front of them feels real. Do not shrink yourself into a polished cover page. Bring your full self into the school, because those personal layers build trust and connection.

x Unlike the first chapter, words from this reading evoke emotions like anger and resentment as the underlined words each trigger a memory.

Do not be afraid to stand out with new ideas brought forward by your passions! Just because something has been done one way before, does not mean it was effective or that it is the only way it can be done. Invite students to ask questions, make connections, explore their passions, and that it is okay to make mistakes as long as we learn and grow from them. Teaching is not just about curriculum; it is about the human beings who carry it.

Never felt like it was okay.

Pencil notebook in bag

*Mentor slowly pulls out a scarf, a pair of glasses, and a book bag from the large bag next to the desk; she hesitantly and almost with fear puts them on becoming Education Student. As she dresses to become Education Student, the lights shift to an orange and blue combination. She picks up the name plate and plays with it in her hands over the next stories.*

ES. IS HIGH STRUNG }  
• speaking at a quick pace.  
• tense, nervous, feeling watched  
• sharp movement.  
• between desk + stool.

**As Education Student:** Before even starting classes, all of us first year education students were corralled into a room at assigned times to fill out two pieces of paper.

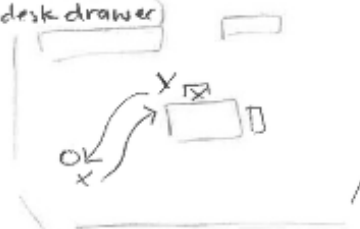
(gesture w one hand then the other)

**As Education Student:** One orange, and one blue.

(pull out of desk drawer)

**As Education Student:** These papers were our first significant choice in claiming our teachable Major and Minor.

Theatrical



*think - talking*

**As Education Student:** [Well, I'd like to be a facilitator of learning and... leadership!] I want my students to learn through asking questions and building confidence not just in a subject, but in learning how they learn best!

*genuine*

**As Education Professor:** Very good!

*(slowly sit on the stool)*

**As Education Student:** I understood in many ways the kind of teacher I best connected with in my own education. [It was just so odd that we were expected to just know without ever stepping into the shoes of a teacher.] Most of us had to rely on our own experiences with the teachers we had rather than any experience actually teaching.

*worried/confused*

*thoughts + prayers folks!*

**As Education Student:** My high school math teacher is still to this day one of my favourite teachers because the best way to describe her was firm, funny, fair, and no matter what we did, we knew she cared even when she made us exchange our shoes and cellphones for an extra calculator. *laugh*

*• First time lighting up.  
• This "mentor" is still someone I talk up to.  
• E.S. relaxes at the memory*

**As Education Student:** Over the years I got really good at playing the role of student teacher. I wanted everyone to see that:

1. I knew what I was talking about even if I still had no idea what a "pedagogy" was,
2. That I was in this program because it was a calling, but most importantly,
3. I didn't want people to see my trickling decent into madness that once this program was done that, I realistically may never become a drama teacher.

*goofy*

*confident/joyfully-serious*

*Dramatic those are much? inside thoughts girl.*

*Pause (awkward smile to audience, you over shared)*

*heavy voice*

**As Education Student:** A massive part of the program was reflection based on the articles we read, and presentations done by folks who clearly hadn't stepped foot in a school in years or were... dead.

**As Education Student:** The running joke was that our classes were about ideas and theory, but it was our practicum placements, that's where most theory went to die and you just needed to figure it out.

*The theatrical elements of "Artist" crackle through the delivery of these lines.*

(sit at desk)

audience

**As Education Student:** This choice would dictate the next 5 years of our lives and, if we did well enough, the rest of our careers. (boom???)

**As Education Student:** I knew I wanted to work in high school so that choice was easy, but when it came to the teachable, I froze. I felt sucked into the white walls that surrounded us (being watched through the glass by the next group waiting to funnel in.)

Slow down

**As Education Student:** I knew from countless conversations with my own teachers and those I knew in the program that choosing French as my major was going to get me a job. That my dream of becoming a drama teacher, while not impossible, was not 'marketable' [when teaching jobs of all kinds were so few and far between.] → reality sets in.

The room closing in.

(tapping desk w pencil)

**Education Student** sighs deeply

**As Education Student:** "French major, theatre and film minor." (filling in the papers)

**As Education Student:** I handed the paperwork to the advisors (hand papers forward) and as they scanned the pages. They looked up at me and said, "Huh, French and theatre, a rare breed indeed."

(take papers back)

**As Education Student:** It didn't take long to understand what that meant, especially once I saw what my cohort members had as their teachables, or the fact that I was often the only education student in my theatre classes. (stand up) ①

visible uncomfortable

startled

right. right. you're right.

Voice over: Snap out of it. You are not a victim.

Calmer

**As Education Student:** Very early on and every subsequent year, we were asked the same question:

- ② **As Education Professor:** Alrighty class, today we will be exploring what you think makes a 'good teacher' and a 'strong education' by answering the all-important question of: What is your 'teaching philosophy'? This philosophy will be the driving force behind everything you do as a teacher!

**As Education Student** (whispering to another student): They know we haven't started in the classroom yet, right?

(point)

**As Education Professor:** You! There in the front! Go ahead!

**As Education Student:** Me? (pointing to self) Oh, um ok... (slowly standing up)



Prof on stool - very enthusiastic + drawing out the sentences.

(still on the stool)

**As Education Student:** Now I'm not saying that most of the theory to practical application was wrong, misguided, or useless, no... There was just some... disconnect. *good save...*

*Backpeddling.*

**As Education Student:** Our practicum was where we learned the most. The more time I spent in classes with students, learning shoulder to shoulder with educators, the more my Pause abilities and confidence as a teacher were being molded. *internal* But at the same time, the worry about what I'd be teaching deepened.

- To convince
- to justify my earlier critique.
- to build empathy.

**As Education Student:** One year, I was placed in two grade 4 French immersion classes. One teacher loved her job; you could tell that grade 4 was her element.

**Education Student** takes a notebook out of her book bag and writes/reads aloud:

*Projected on the screen*

Practicum Reflection Week 2: "I have never idolized and respected a grade four teacher as much as I respect her. She is a very warm and welcoming person, but as well she never lets anyone push her around. She has built such a connection of respect with her students that if one does something wrong or unacceptable she simply has to give them a "look" and they know to stop. She has built this connection of respect through being clear of what she expects from her students and as well if there is an issue she knows not to embarrass that student/students in front of everyone else. She never yells at her students, only used her firm tone and a serious expression."

*Pause in place to mimic thinking while writing.*

- respect/adoration for this teacher.
- BIG FAN!
- My mom has the same "look."

**As Education Student:** It was a treat to be able to watch her teach. The other grade 4 teacher... well... she was different and certainly straight forward! Her directly telling me that she hated her job, never wanted to be an early years teacher, and that she wanted to teach high school, would not be an overexaggeration.

*Be aware of professional boundaries.*

**As Education Student:** Did I mention that she also said it in front of the kids? — eek. (scratch head)

- Each time is said with a layer of caution.

**As Education Student:** That experience pushed me to the deeper realization that I was probably never going to be a drama teacher because it was being hammered into us that if you can

*panic setting in.*

*— higher voice*

teach French then you'll be teaching French. [You go where the system wants you and were expected to be grateful no matter what because at least you had a job.] - Bitter + conflicted

**As Education Student:** I'm still not sure why wanting to teach what your passionate about was mutually exclusive to being ungrateful [but here we are.] - (giving up arms + cross them) - annoyed under breath

**As Education Student:** [And for the record, I was grateful] For every experience, failed lesson, and opportunity to teach. [So... So... and another thing.] - getting overwhelmed - full voice, point on each element listed

Voice over of a throat clearing. - subconscious?

**As Education Student:** Sorry. - (making self smaller - sit down on stool like a child in trouble)

**As Education Student:** I had to find a way to keep connected with it... Her... because every course I took, I could see that what I once thought made me stand out, may also be making it more difficult to place in the existing world of education. Indeed, I was "a rare breed."

BEAT -

**As Theatre Professor:** Welcome everyone to Taking the Stage! This term we will be exploring who you are as an artist. What story do you want to tell and what impact would you like to leave on your audience? Let's start by going around and telling each other why we are in this course.

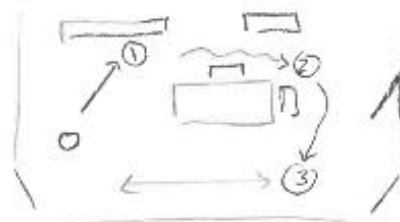
**As Education Student:** Well, I hope to teach drama and I want to learn some stronger ways in which I can be a director if I'm put in charge of a school production!

**As Theatre Professor:** That's really interesting, but remember, while you're an education student, don't try to let that consume you while you're here. Take this time to explore your voice as an artist... who is she and what does she have to say?

**As Education Student** (to audience): What I had to say? There's no script for that or textbook or article or or or... [what did I have to say?] - 4th wall break

**As Education Student** (to Theatre Professor): For my first assignment, can you tell me what it is you're looking for? - serious, no, really.

**As Theatre Professor:** What I'm looking for? - surprised + curious.



very clearly rehearsed...

• conversation looking left vs right

(L) **As Education Student:** Yes. - very serious.

(R) **As Theatre Professor:** [You are the most "Right-Brained-Left-Brained" person I've ever met. I need you to stop trying to squeeze your art into a teacher shaped hole] [Once you just let yourself "be" then I think you'll feel a lot better and won't need anyone to tell you what needs to be done. Okay?] - light and joking

(L) **As Education Student:** Absolutely. - Broken, angry eyes. (watch prot walk away)  
... (to self) RIGHT BRAINED, LEFT BRAINED? First "pedagogy," now this! - exasperated.

*Education Student* trying to calm herself down, slowly sits down on the floor with an intense stare of rage and panic.

**As Education Student:** Just "be." Right. Just... "be." Easy. [Just "BE"?] *pop!* *ok. fuck breathe crack*

*Education Student* taps her nails on the ground, unsettled she starts to hum a song that gives her comfort. *One sura sura* ~~~~~

**As Education Student:** Fuck it. (4<sup>th</sup> wall break!)

*Education Student* gets up from the ground and dusts herself off.

**As Education Student** gradually turning into **Artist:** Ok so...

*Education Student/Artist* pacing and building with energy, embodying every word in a chaotic dance as if she is on an elastic string.

No words...

Just feels... No. Feels... and music!

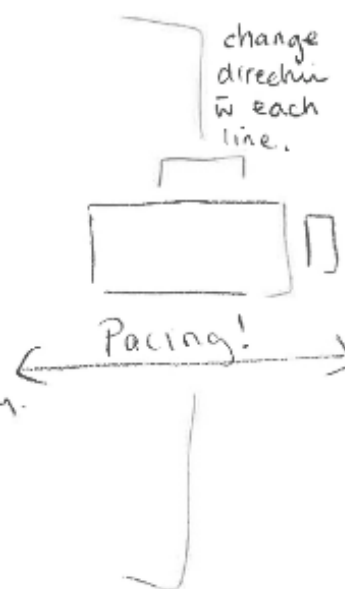
What is the missing piece? Don't/Be/Literal.

(Be moving, processing, processing... grief... loss.) *loosen up.*

[Microwaves and highways to Vegas!] *laughter of a memory.*

[Pull back, forward, stuck... stuck, tired, tied... Tethered. Fractured. *Stops. BIGGER, BIGGER!*]

*Education Student/Artist* takes a deep breath, and you see her entire body relax. (close eyes and float)



on trial  
again.  
exhausted  
• begging

**As Education Student:** I bawled after the last performance, not just because of how free, proud, and seen I had felt having my theatrical visions come to life, but because that may have been the last time. The first and last time I was able to extend myself not only as a performer, but a director. Someone with vision. The process while stressful was simultaneously effortless. It was as if all the pieces of my skills were clicking together as they were supposed to the whole time. I let go and let myself into a process and world where I was in power, where I was respected, heard.

**As Education Student (to self):** What do I have to say? There must be a way to make it all come together.

**As Education Student:** "A rare breed, indeed"

— BEAT —

*Education Student returns to the desk. Education Student is now conducting a presentation for her education cohort on the use of Improv as a learning tool in the classroom.*

*Education Student stands downstage right and a Power point slideshow called "Improv in the Classroom" is displayed behind her. Images from the slideshow are added in the script at points where the slides change*

*Education Student clears her throat a couple of times trying to get the attention of her classmates.*

**As Education Student:** Good morning fellow Teacher Candidates! I am here to share with you the power of improv and how it can support learning in the classroom.

(Pause to see that there is no reaction)

**As Education Student:** As many of you are already aware, I have a theatre background. I know, shocker (*Awkwardly laughs to self and notices that no one else is laughing*). And I was inspired by the drama teachers I had the chance to work with last year during our annual professional development day. Many of them were drama teachers who also were teaching other subjects in their schools. And as someone who hasn't had the opportunity to teach drama yet in my own practicum, I learned how these teachers were using improv and drama to support their students outside of the drama classroom.

E.S. starts bright eyed and bushy tailed, but slowly fractures as she notices so few caring to pay attention.



(Stool!)

Facing between stool + desk.



enthusiastic + awkward

- Sage
- Combining curricula and programs
- Working together



\* E.S. is vulnerable; showing a side that she often doesn't in these classes. Her insecurity is evident, constantly checking for responses from the audience / her cohort.

*to convince*  
**As Education Student:** So, what is improv anyway? Well at its core, it's an art of creation. One could arguably say that we "do improv" or improvise just about everything in our lives, everyday! Some folks just get intimidated when it's tied to the thought of performing. What I've seen and experienced over the years is that it can be used in many different ways even beyond entertainment! It can be used to roleplay problem-solving, bettering listening and communication skills, or even exploring difficult subjects in a more hands-on and interactive way.

#### WHAT IS IMPROV?

The art of creation!  
 Reflection, skill building, social justice, entertainment, and so much more.



*to deepen connection in cohort*  
**As Education Student:** But first we must review the rules! (Yes, there are rules to improv.) These rules may vary from person to person, but at their core the idea is to listen, reflect, support, and move forward together. All of these rules are there to encourage collaboration and isn't that what we want to see from our students?  
*to human*

*(point up)*

*- laughing*

#### THE FIVE BASIC RULES OF IMPROV

- 1) Always say "yes!"
- 2) Don't ask open ended questions.
- 3) You do not have to be funny.
- 4) You look good when your partner looks good.
- 5) Build a story.



*to human*  
**As Education Student:** This isn't really part of my presentation, but if you think about it, these rules can be an interesting guide for life.

*Trying to prove what this "drama" stuff "belongs" to*  
**As Education Student:** Oh! And there is a very important 'bonus rule': It's okay to fail! It's our responsibility as their teachers and learning facilitators, to create and encourage an environment where students want to take risks and expand not just their learning, but who they are as people. Spaces aren't inherently safe just because we say they are. A space is dictated by the actions, role modeling, and accountability held within that space. All things to consider when you're asking students to try something new.

#### BONUS RULE

It's okay to fail!

Creating safe and encouraging environments.



**As Education Student:** On that note! Let's do some examples with improv exercises and how they support different subjects. Ready?

*everyone is clearly disconnected.*

The slides fade away, and **Education Student** makes her way to lean on the front of the desk facing the audience.

*very matter of fact*  
**As Education Student:** This was not the first time I presented my drama side to my cohort. But I was the only student who had theatre and film as a teachable so, besides my two close friends, there were few folks who took interest in my ideas.]

*I wish I knew why.*



to  
guilt?  
is it  
worth it?

**As Education Student:** Most of my classmates scrolled on their phones and displayed zero interest in asking questions or engaging whatsoever. I really tried to not take it personally. But it was hard not to.

**As Education Student:** This was my graduating year and that presentation was the nail in the coffin of 5 years of trying to find ways in which I could keep my artist in harmony with becoming a teacher in the eyes of my peers. The worst part was that I knew what I was sharing worked. It was actively practicing the skills with students that year and they loved it!

- Angry +  
exhausted  
by her  
efforts.

**As Education Student:** So, what was I doing wrong? It was exhausting, it still is. - would they listen if someone else said it?

**As Education Student:** It felt... feels like begging. (lip quiver)

**As Education Student:** And that's not even with the fear setting in.

— BEAT —

On the screen is projected a reflection assignment. **Education Student** makes her way to the stool after frantically pacing and moving about the room.

Projected on the screen

Do I need to change who I am because I'm a teacher? I personally don't feel like I live a wild life in which I would have to change, but I can be a potty mouth with my friends. I have fixed it while I'm in my professional spaces, but when I'm at sporting events, I can become a .... passionate fan... It does scare me that I may get carried away and say something. I try to always have my teacher hat on, but I'm human.

(Moving in the blue while projection is on screen / clock ticking for 20 seconds)

Audience = a void?  
my own CT?  
my advisor?  
myself?

September 20th (Graduation Year)

(lights up - orange/red hues)

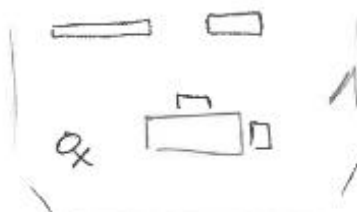
**As Education Student:** One of my profs told us the other day...

**As Education Professor:** Did you all hear about the teacher who was seen wearing a two-piece bathing suit by her students and their families over the summer? (They reported her for it)

**As Education Student:** No... -oh no.

Jokingly  
warning  
\* not  
appropriate

↳ Thinking that they're being helpful but not aware (or are they?) of how deep the words are embedding



ES. is now afraid on a deeper level. Rooted in her words.

**As Education Professor:** [Well, these are things that happen.]  
 Don't forget that we are public figures, held to a higher standard.  
 So, be careful what you do outside of the classroom, because  
 [you never know who is watching.] -- elongate

**As Education Student:** Okay... -- what did I get myself into?

**As Education Professor:** That includes all your social media and anything online. Last thing you need is a student or a parent, or an admin finding your information and seeing something they don't like.

**As Education Student (to audience):** This wasn't the first time we had... "the talk." We were raised in the world of Tumblr and the birth of Instagram, but with interviews quickly approaching. It. Felt. Different.

**As Education Student:** By this time, I had already deleted most of my accounts, but with each story, the fear expanded beyond social media. [I avoided malls near my practicum schools, drinks with friends after work, even switched to mostly work outs at home to have some false semblance of privacy.] -- counting on my fingers

**As Education Student:** Now I understand, if you chose to work somewhere, yes, there are professional standards like... don't do illegal shit! Don't post videos and photos of you to the world of getting black out drunk, or doing drugs, or being racist, or getting into arguments at football games even if the call was in fact complete garbage!

**As Education Student:** But we shouldn't have to hide, right? Right?! -- Peak pleading.

**As Education Student:** I never asked to be put on some pedestal. But it was as if we were asked to curate a permanent persona because no matter where we were, we were never going to be able to clock out of being Teacher.

**Education Student storms her way to the bookshelf and pulls** (2)  
 out a 3-ring binder that is labeled "TEACHING PORTFOLIO."

**Education Student sits at the desk and nervously plays with the binder.**

**As Education Student:** In an attempt to prepare us for interviews we were strongly encouraged to make teaching -- Broken laughter

verbal  
finger  
wag.

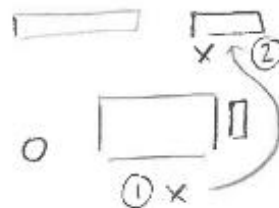
condescending

someone please listen.



Please  
build w  
each  
line.

Warning  
the  
audience  
①



portfolios. These were binders or even websites that highlighted all the things that made us special, accomplished, and most importantly...hireable.

*Education Student flips through her old teaching portfolio binder.*

**As Education Student:** This is it.

**As Education Student:** Five years of planning lessons, practicum evaluations, projects, presentations, but why does this feel so hollow? (*flipping through pages*)

**As Education Student:** (*reading a section from a student teaching assessment, she slows down*): "Mme is firm and caring with her students. She finds ways to adapt and support all learners in her class." This was from last year! Those kids were something wild, but in the best way.

**As Education Student:** Oh, here is that French lesson all about travel and food. We used Google Maps to explore Paris. I had to completely reschedule that activity because the divisional network was down for 3 days!

**As Education Student:** Oh, and our presentations about our favourite music group or artist. "No Hun, you're not the biggest 'ventilateur' of One Direction." But that did inspire a whole other conversation about the roots and history of language along with the dangers of Google Translate.

*Education Student takes a beat and sees all the assignments in her French classes that she was so proud to have created and experienced with her students, but something is leaving her unsettled.*

**As Education Student:** There's pieces missing. Fragments. I can feel it.

*The stage goes dark and the projector lights up with the following quotes from a daily reflection journal written by the Narrator in her final year of her education undergrad program.*



lights  
up.

oddly  
unsettling

Is this part of  
my "why"?

comforting/laughter

signs of a  
"missing person".

\*clock ticking  
again for 20 seconds

This script does not tell you why I should be a Drama teacher.

*Projected on the screen*

Reflection #2048 "Putting this together was a bit of a struggle because I found myself only talking about my academic self and it wasn't until I let it sit for a bit that I realized that I needed to reflect on who I was outside of the classroom that effected who I was inside the classroom."

\* Clock ticking symbolizing the time pressure, but also a metronome as she's trying to keep pace and not left behind.

... I really don't want someone judging me based off my ... well... cover.

**As Education Student** (to self): It's okay, really. It's all going to be ok. You got this.

(sit at the desk as if she's approaching a wild animal)

**Education Student** opens the laptop and starts vigorously typing.

**As Education Student:** "To whom it may concern..." Ew no. "Hello there!" ugh no. Too casual. "Howdy!" Absolutely not... "Bonjour and Good afternoon, I hope this email finds you well. I am currently an education student... with a French Major and am very interested in being part of your school family..." no... too much..." school community! Please see my resume and cover letter attached. I look forward to our conversation!"

\* Typing voice = customer service/teacher.

(click send)

**END OF ACT 2**



## ACT 3

*Mentor puts ambient jazz music on in the background from her laptop and looks to her 'Teacher Candidate.'*

Warm  
gentle—  
Mother—

**As Mentor:** I like to set the tone for the evening, and I find 'café jazz' is the perfect balance of relaxed and professional.

**As Mentor:** I have found it tends to settle the nerves, which can be helpful for us and the students when we're feeling a little 'under the microscope.'

jokingly

**As Mentor:** But you'll find what works for you - I just don't suggest Death Metal or Carmina Burana; might give the wrong impression. (lean on desk)

been  
holding  
you back  
too long.

**As Mentor:** Anyways... (checks time) We have about 45 minutes before our first meeting, so I'd take the chance to grab some pizza downstairs and get yourself settled, okay?

**As Mentor:** I'll be down in a bit/just got to get some last-minute things together. - I am these "things"

Door  
shutting

*Mentor's eyes follow the 'Teacher Candidate' leave and her shoulders drop. She notices the guide on the desk and opens it to Chapter 3. This time when she reads the chapter aloud, it's with curiosity, sincerity, and a touch of sadness. (still leaning on desk)*

**As Mentor:**

## Chapter 3

Balancing Acts – Merging the Personal and Professional You

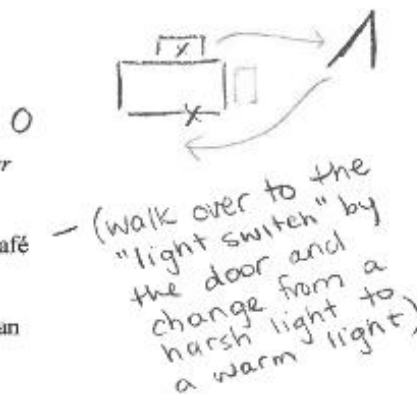
Who are you when the classroom door closes? And who are you when it opens again? Every teacher walks this line—the desire to bring your authenticity to the world, and the need to maintain the professional presence it relies on.

This balance is not about building walls; it is about creating healthy boundaries. Both people can exist. The work is in deciding when each side leads. can they?

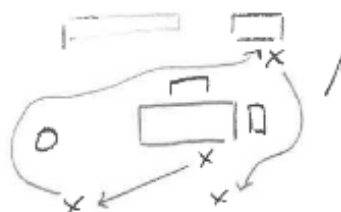
[Over time, these identities often learn to speak to each other rather than compete. The goal is not to choose one over the other, but to create a version of teaching that lets you be whole.]

—the whole point.

↳ a whole version of yourself. Is it possible?



*Mentor* frustrated, throws the book across the room and the music stops. She looks to the sky in exhaustion, takes a deep breath and goes back to pick up the book to place on the shelf. While putting the book away she notices an old camcorder that has been placed on the shelf, but sort of hidden. She dusts it off, fiddles with it, turns it on and makes her way to front center stage as she delivers her next line to (the audience.) = self / as if filming a video diary as I did during this process.



**As Self:** When did I become an artist? When did I see myself as an artist?

**As Self:** I don't think the doctor slapped me on the ass and said, "This one, she's gonna like showtunes... a lot."

**As Self:** I don't think I can capture a specific moment (*holding up the camera*) because I feel it's always been there.

**As Self:** I can say though that there have been peaks and valleys.

*Self* readjusts as the memories come in. - good + bad physical discomfort / rejection.

**As Self:** There was once a time where I felt, maybe not my most "artistic," but like "Artist-uninterrupted."

**As Self:** I attended a Music Camp for 4 summers in my teens. It was an immersive experience where not only did we practice an art that excited and challenged us, but also, we were immersed into a supportive arts community.

**As Self:** Every aspect of my day was devoted to developing my skills and identity as an artist and performer.

**As Self:** It was also a chance to step away from any thoughts of doubt about the value of what I was doing.

**As Self:** No questioning, just simply existing joyfully, and unapologetically.

**As Self:** In high school, we called it the 'Post-Show Low.' The emptiness after being part of a production. This time at Camp ... it was... that... on steroids.

**As Self:** There was nothing like that camp.

**As Self:** In a way it felt like a fever dream, and I know deep down I've been chasing that feeling for years.

Wave of warmth

Inviting "Artist" back into the room.

- political response

- I've never actually said this aloud.

- floating

- giving the "low-down"

- excited

- embarrassed to admit.

**As Self:** It wasn't even about the performance; it was the entire atmosphere continuously affecting how I saw the world and myself in it.

**As Self:** It's where I felt my most comfortable, challenged, and courageous.

**As Self:** The same feelings I've wanted my students to have when they learn in my classes; while at the time I didn't know it yet.

is this my teaching philosophy?

**Self** sits on the edge of the stage

**As Self:** What happened to her? Pushed away? Let go of? Hidden?

As if someone was asking you concerned.

**As Self:** I don't think she ever disappeared; not completely.

**As Self:** Just chipped away by threats of joblessness, rolled eyes, and questions of credibility from colleagues, peers, professors, and (sigh) myself. - Honest.

How could you?

**As Self:** Fear is a wicked bitch. - warning

**Self** goes to the bookshelf and finds an old shoebox filled with broken pieces of what seems to be a small bust. Making her way to the front of the stage she opens the box looking at the pieces as they move around making noise. She sits cross-legged at the edge of the stage with the box open in her lap. Picking up the pieces she continues.

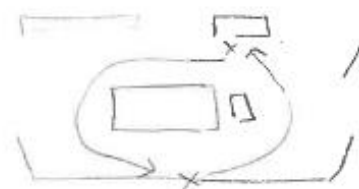
**As Self:** Now I continuously struggle to pick up the fragments and trying to blend them into the parts of teacher that I sculpted for everyone to see.

**As Self (to self):** Constantly chasing her behind the scenes, chasing the feeling of wholeness.

**As Self:** When being "Artist" isn't part of my every day, it's easy to forget about the pieces that have fallen.

**As Self:** (Then I catch a glimpse of others teaching, being artists all at the same time,) and I sink back into sadness, fear, regret, and envy while pulling the fragments out of my pockets of once was.

**Self** stands up to make her way back to the desk.



- Disappointed / excuse

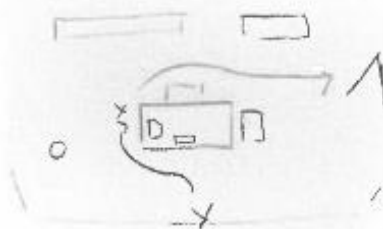
- envious / hopeful.

**As Self:** I let a person be broken apart because I thought I had to.

**So, who am I now?** <sup>Back</sup> no, really.

**Self** puts the ~~camcorder~~ <sup>Back</sup> down on the desk, picks up the name plate, plays with it in her hands, analysing each side. She pulls a marker out from the drawer and writes her name on the blank side, and places it firmly on the desk. **Self** makes her way to the door and leaves the stage/classroom out the door. The stage lights dim to just a soft spot on the name plate.

**END** for now...



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Unpacking Understandings

#### Script Writing as Methodology and Ethnodrama

My theatrical background in script writing and performance, like Belliveau (2006), was an unexpected but valuable asset to reengage with for this research. Ethnodrama, as described by Salvatore (2025), “is a script created from textual data gathered and/or analyzed by an artist-researcher with the explicit purpose of investigating a research question” (p. 3). Ethnotheatre extends ethnodrama, moving the script toward a performance for an audience who play an essential role by sharing their response of the performance with the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the performance and research Saldaña (2005; 2011). Researchers such as Saldaña describe ethnotheatre as ‘dramatizing data’ that is collected through means such as interviews, observations, diaries, and much more all to create a script that can be used to explore topics not just through writing a script, but through performance as well. What is particularly interesting about ethnotheatre and ethnodrama as described by Saldaña (2005) and Salvatore (2025) is that the learning and research does not stop with the researcher. There is a sense of learning through community. Salvatore (2025) describes his approach to creating ethodramas as typically following a series of steps:

1. Identify a topic of interest.
2. Articulate a research question.
3. Develop an interview protocol.
4. Recruit participants.
5. Conduct interviews.
6. Transcribe and code data.

7. Analyze the findings. Arrange the findings into a script.
8. Stage a performance of the script for an audience (ethnotheatre).
9. Gather the audience's response to the dissemination.
10. Assess the ethnodrama's effectiveness and impact. (p. 10)

This research largely aligned with Salvatore's (2025) steps for creating ethnodrama up until stage 8 (ethnotheatre). While I would still like to share a full production, this is a lengthy and involved process, beyond the needs of this particular project. Thus, rather than a staged performance of the script, I created the annotated version (see chapter FOUR) highlighting the conceptual work I bring to the project from an actor's perspective.

### ***Annotated Script as Research***

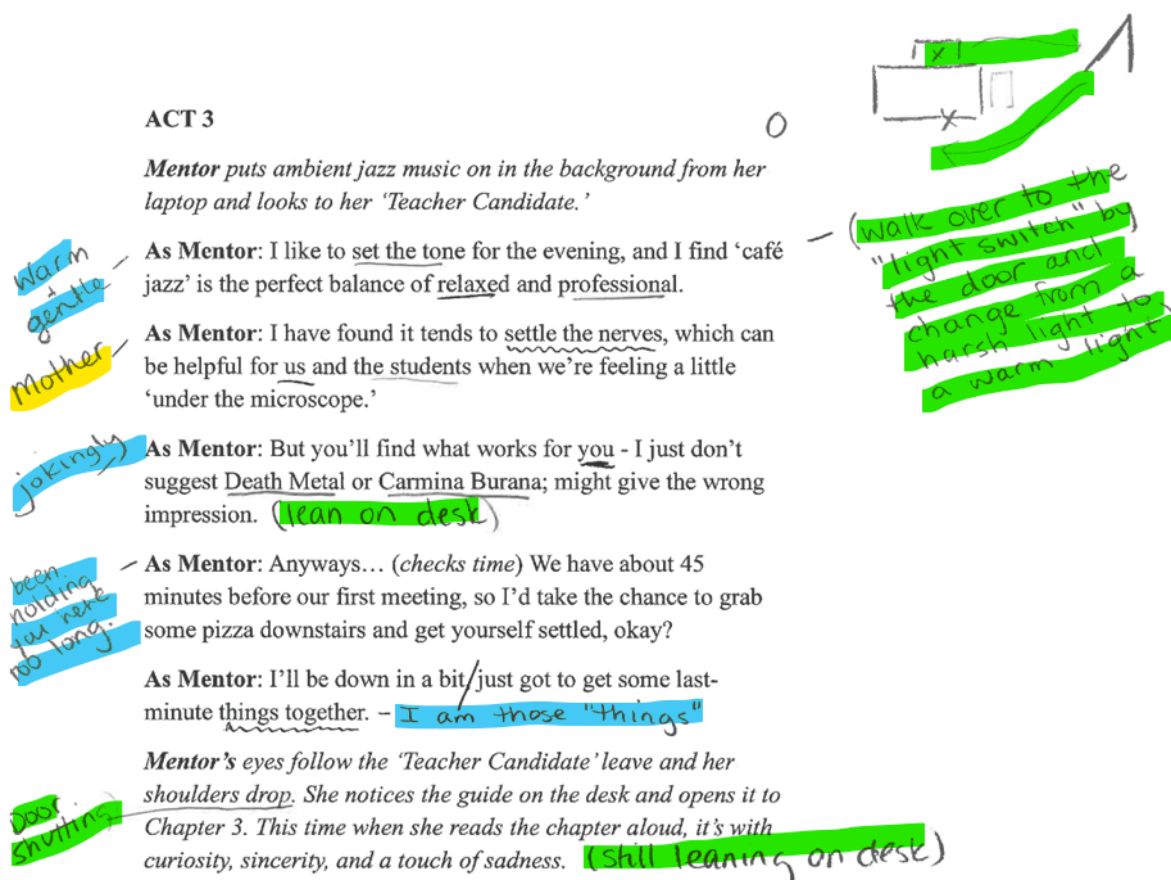
The process of creating an autoethnodramatic script created the artistic context for this research. Throughout the script writing process, I envisioned possibilities for the stage, the mannerisms of each character, their voices, tones, and the exact inflection of every word. While I wrote, the actor in me was bringing the pieces to life in my mind just as I would have if I was given the script to perform.

As a playwright, we do our best to create a story that is clear and powerful, but ultimately the story we write does not end with us. Actors, directors, and designers use the script as a blueprint for a story. In particular, actors bring skills including analyzing subtext and embodying character objectives to further realize characters through performance. While I was writing, there was no possible way for me to fully separate my playwright and actor selves. Acknowledging this, I created an annotated version of the script to highlight the role my actor-self brought to the script even in its unperformed state. At first, I created this annotated version because I wanted to ensure my understandings of the script were clear and transparent. However, as I continued to

annotate the script, I began to identify new understandings of the research that may not have emerged had I not gone through the annotation process.

## Figure 2

### Script Annotation Example



For example, in Figure 2) I illustrate how as an actor I imagined the characters moving around the teacher's desk. This annotation began as a way of mapping physically how I imagined exploring the stage space and how points of power were used. As I considered this movement, I realized that it became a metaphor for each character's relationship with teacher identity and how she either felt tied to it or was hiding behind it. There are moments when Mentor speaks to her own student teacher (the audience) and she is wedged between the desk and the whiteboard. While this may be a position of power, when I planned out the blocking, it felt like Mentor was

using the desk as a shield. I also noticed that Artist has very little if any interaction at all with the desk. Instead, Artist is positioned downstage, speaking directly to the audience, and is not grounded to the desk in any capacity. Education Student has the most complicated and dynamic relationship with the desk, where she makes contact with it by sitting, on it, leaning on the sides, standing near it, and at the end placing herself behind it as she writes emails to future employers.

The script is annotated using three general considerations:

1. **Blocking** – The physical movement of a character and how they interact with the physical space, other characters, and objects/props. (see green in Figure 2)
2. **The Subtext/Tone** – The meaning behind the text. What I am saying is important, but how and with what meaning is critical to the storytelling and portrayal of each character. Writing my subtext/tone often gives me a voice to anchor lines and even movement to when performing. (see blue Figure 2)
3. **Character Objectives** – The wants/needs of the characters that drive their actions on stage. Building on the theories of Russian acting theorist Konstantin Stanislavski (2003), establishing what your character wants out of the scene, other characters, and through the entire narrative, can help build a believable character. As I wrote the script, I had initial ideas of what each character wanted in the scenes. However, laying it out on the script helped me understand that ultimately each character wanted the same things in life but in different ways – to be heard and understood. (see yellow in Figure 2)

When I started acting, I developed a process of *walking my script*. Walking my script included moving physically through a space, envisioning myself as the character(s) and bringing the script to life in my head. This time and experience on my feet (avoiding baby toys in my

living room) was what drew me to directing as the process of visualizing the script brought excitement and anticipation to each new project. While walking my script was not part of the initial research plan, my brain automatically kicked into gear during the writing. Then I was writing as from the perspective of a director and playwright, but the script shifted into something deeper when I ‘walked’ it as an actor.

Walking my script as an actor provided an opportunity to perform the script where I was both actor and audience. In doing so, I was able to analyze the data not only through a similar diary form as used before, but in some instances, a form of verbatim theatre as described by Salvatore (2023). Verbatim theatre (Salvatore, 2023) gave me the opportunity to use my vlogs/video dairies to repeat tones and mannerisms as I experienced them, but now as the scripted characters. For example, when playing the character of Artist, I was able to use the reactions and the mannerisms I rediscovered though watching home video performances. This would manifest in the way she walked, the way her tone shifted when she was excited or nervous, and most importantly how she carried herself in front an audience. Noting that even in my live reactions of watching the home videos, I found myself reconnecting with the girl singing and dancing amongst her middle school peers.

### ***Decomposite Characters***

A common approach to creating ethnodramatic characters is to incorporate composite characters (Salvatore, 2025, p. 112). This is when the writer combines traits, experiences, or stories from multiple real people or sources into one character. This project incorporated composite characters to a) protect identities, which was necessary as per the ethics protocol; b) create more in-depth characters; and c) create a character to draw in a larger audience. Composite characters in the script include Education Professor, Theatre Professor, Swimming

Student, and even the audience who shifts from embodying characters including the Mentor's teacher candidate and her education cohort. While the audience who embody characters including the Mentor's teacher candidate and her education cohort, the characters on stage are acting and reacting with 'an audience'/character in mind. For example, the characters on stage use the audience as a character such as Mentor speaking to her Teacher Candidate or Education Student presenting to her undergraduate class. These composite characters were essential elements to the narrative structure, providing a recipient for the main characters to share her story. The element of showing the events through the lens of these characters, and not necessarily only telling the audience about the events as the characters, is what made the script a critical element of sharing the data.

While incorporating composite characters provided opportunities to help create narrative cohesion, the nature of this research also required the incorporation of a different approach (Norris, 2009; Norris, 2016; Norris, 2018; Norris, 2024). As I engaged in data analysis, I became distinctly aware of the intersections of different aspects of my identity. This analysis of those intersections began to place elements of developed identities into categories which ultimately began to take shape and life as characters.

In order to create an opportunity to theatrically explore the intersections of my identities, rather than using composite characters, I created decomposite characters including Mentor, Education Student, and Artist. Instead of combining multiple people into one character as would be the case for a composite character, these decomposite characters were created to represent different aspects of my identity. One person from the research becomes decomposed into multiple ethnodramatic characters. The creation of decomposite characters was not the original intent when thinking about the creation of the script. Rather, they were influenced by the process

of reengaging with the data and placing it in conversation with the theoretical perspectives underpinning the research.

As discussed in chapter THREE, reviewing the data started as a process of coding where I was categorizing statements, past experiences, and the tone of my writing into planned categories including teacher and artist (see Appendix D initial codes). As I created my video diaries and live reactions in vlog form, I found myself feeling other to the girl who wrote the assignments as if I were “an other to myself” (Lea, 2013, p. 214). For example, as I read some of the reflections I wrote in the middle of my undergraduate program, I felt as if I was listening to a friend who I had wronged without even noticing. I was not sure if that version of myself felt distant or a complete stranger to the person I am today. I often had to take a moment to pause when reading reflections because I could feel the intensity and forced voice I was trying to create as a student. The research process transformed from just making observations and categorizing them to become a process of sitting with this past version of myself and listening to what she had to say in the voice between the lines. There were certainly moments, especially within the reflections from education courses, where I was driven by concern of how others saw me in my developing professional/personal identity. The following excerpt from Act 2 reflects this concern.

**Narrator as ES:** There’s pieces missing, fragments, I can feel it.

*The stage goes dark and the projector lights up with the following quotes from a daily reflection journal written by the Narrator in her final year of her education undergrad program.*

PROJECTED ON THE SCREEN: Reflection #2048 “Putting this together was a bit of a struggle because I found myself only talking about my academic self and it wasn’t until I

let it sit for a bit that I realized that I needed to reflect on who I was outside of the classroom that effected who I was inside the classroom.”

“... I really don’t want someone judging me based off my ... well... cover.”

It was becoming clear that engaging in this research was about listening to the old parts of me, guided by the version of me now. I had to resist the urge to overanalyze her. Instead, I needed to do what she needed most: to be heard.

When I began the research, I anticipated that rewatching the home videos would be an opportunity to observe the behaviour and growing identity of my younger child self. While one could see her grow and come to life when she did what she loved, it did not feel as though I was watching myself. I knew it was me. I had seen these videos dozens of times before, but not with the intention of a researcher. Now, I started to see her, my younger self, almost as though I was her teacher. I asked myself how I could support her, wondered what made her tick, and in some cases, wanted to reach through the screen to give her the tightest hug. I saw so much of my own students in the way she spoke, carried herself, and performed for the camera. This process of self-observation through the research process continued to influence my creation of (de)composite characters so that I could embody this felt, and theoretic positioning.

As discussed in chapter 2, Vygotsky’s ZPD focuses on learning as a social process. Within this “zone,” growth happens through collaboration, modeling, questioning, and shared problem-solving. Support and modeling might come from a parent, teacher, peer, mentor, or others in the subject’s life. Watching the home videos, highlighted how decisions and actions were highly influenced by the more knowledgeable others in my life. I could see the gears shifting in my younger self, calculating potential effects of my choices based on who was around. Observing my younger self gave me a better understanding of how those around me

were not just important characters in the creation of my identity. Observing my actions in the videos and how I responded to more knowledgeable others gave me insights into how my undergraduate self was so deeply influenced by those in positions of power and knowledge such as my professors and future employers. This was compounded through recording my video diaries as I became my own ‘more knowledge person’ not just to my younger self, but to my current self, helping guide current and future next choices. I began to look at my life as making choices guided by my own experiences while also being influenced by those around me such as my research advisor and colleagues.

### ***Creating the Decomposite Characters***

As I found myself sitting with versions of myself, the characters began to take form. In doing so I began to shift my thinking away from “What can I get from you?” to “How can I hear you?,” “What do you want to tell me?,” and “What can I learn from you?” The video diary/vlogging process was critical to this because it gave space to ask questions, and in a way speak to those decomposite characters. In reviewing my video diaries I was noticing the artistry in my comments which led to this form of Found Poetry where poetry is created based on the researcher’s reflections (Saldaña, 2015). An example of this found poetry as represented below is a poem created based on how I felt engaging with my undergraduate education assignments and reflections. It was this time reflecting through my video diaries that Education Student (as a decomposite character) began to take form.

#### **Sitting Next to the Education Student**

I was playing the role of university student—I wanted to be seen  
as mature beyond my years.

You can feel the tension—the wanting to be accepted, but the struggle to accept self.

I was playing the part of education student—auditioning for the role of teacher.

While I thought I was being confident, I was kind of an \*\*\*.

Did I ask the right question in the wrong way?

If you ever want to know how I feel, you have to look at my hands.

Every entrance, exit, expression, prop, lighting cue, and set piece is there for a reason.

I was playing the role of university student—I wanted to be seen  
as mature beyond my years.

You can feel the tension—the wanting to be accepted, but the struggle to accept self.

Was she writing to make change, or just to be known as the person who made change?

You're not going to like your first year.

It's going to get better, and it's going to get really bad—but you're going to learn.

It felt better reading the writing where I didn't dislike her as much.

Do I want to change her to make people like her?

No—I want her to be authentically unlikable, because that's truer.

Was the pressure put on me, or did I put it on myself? Maybe both.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how the autoethnographic process creates opportunities to explore complex ideas such as teacher and artist identity, and to use the process and journey of the researcher to emphasize issues, vulnerability (Conde, 2015), and contradictions. By creating decomposite characters, I was able to create scenes in which characters representing constituent parts of my identities could talk to each other, sharing what scared them, moments that shaped them, and how the dilemmas they faced through their creation live on today. The metaphor of “wearing multiple hats” is often used to describe balancing identities such as teacher, artist, researcher, or mentor. This metaphor did not fully capture my experience during this research.

Wearing multiple hats suggests a singular, stable self simply shifting between roles depending on context. In contrast, the process of creating decomposite characters revealed these identities as relational, embodied, and at times in tension with one another more than I had initially experienced. Education Student, Artist, and Mentor were not merely interchangeable roles I performed, but constituent parts of self that carried different fears, desires, histories, and ways of understanding the world. Through the ethnodramatic process, these identities became dialogic rather than sequential, speaking to and against one another within the same narrative space. The use of decomposite characters therefore moved beyond the metaphor of “multiple hats” and instead offered a way to theatricalize the fragmentation, negotiation, and coexistence of identity.

The use of both composite and decomposite characters as complementary approaches to representing identity within my script became the heart of this research. Before the characters took form, there was a sense of unknown, but the decomposite characters gave the script life, a direction, and from my perspective – purpose. The use of composite characters was helpful ethically to protect anonymity while blending experiences and perspectives. The composite characters had their own part to play as they would create cohesive, engaging figures that support the narrative. In contrast, the decomposite characters, separate distinct facets of my identity—such as Mentor, Education Student, and Artist—allowed for a more facing the mirror exploration of the self. Together though, these approaches enabled the research to balance storytelling with critical reflection, offering layers of representation of identity that are both constructed and deeply personal.

### ***Positioning Decomposite Characters***

As the decomposite characters of Artist, Student Teacher, and Mentor came into sight, I kept returning to positioning theory (Ahmad et al., 2019) as described in Chapter 1. The three

characters evolved from the roles I saw myself engaged in as part of the research. Characters had places where they not only performed, but where they were inherently born. When I first began this research, I anticipated that each character (identity) belonged to a specific space. For example, Artist on a stage, or Mentor in her classroom. I anticipated that when a character and space did not align, a disruption between the character and others in the space would occur. It was the idea of potential disruptions between the identities that forced me into tight corners of my life and creating hard lines between which sides of myself I showed and where. There were now parameters created for what each character's particular identity should or should not do highlighting how this was also manifest in my past and current selves. As I have mentioned previously, while there are certainly professional expectations one should have, the messaging from 'more-knowledgeable-others' that Education Student describes were creating a level of intensity that created a need to reshape, remold, and as Self describes 'chipping away' elements of myself because of fear. For example, in the script, Mentor and Education Student begin to resent and feel embarrassed by Artist because of the pressures of moving past that time in her life. This is shown particularly in Act 1 when Artist is retelling her experience with her administrator after obtaining a dream role in a musical, as well in several situations in Act 2 with Education Student sharing her experiences with her education professor:

**As Education Student:** One of my profs told us the other day...

**As Education Professor:** Did you all hear about the teacher who was seen wearing a two-piece bathing suit by her students and their families over the summer? They reported her for it

**As Education Student:** No...

**As Education Professor:** Well, these are things that happen. Don't forget that we are public figures, held to a higher standard. So, be careful what you do outside of the classroom, because you never know who is watching.

**As Education Student:** Okay...

**As Education Professor:** That includes all your social media and anything online. Last thing you need is a student or a parent, or an admin finding your information and seeing something they don't like.

**As Education Student (to audience):** This wasn't the first time we had... "the talk." We were raised in the world of Tumblr and the birth of Instagram, but with interviews quickly approaching. It. Felt. Different.

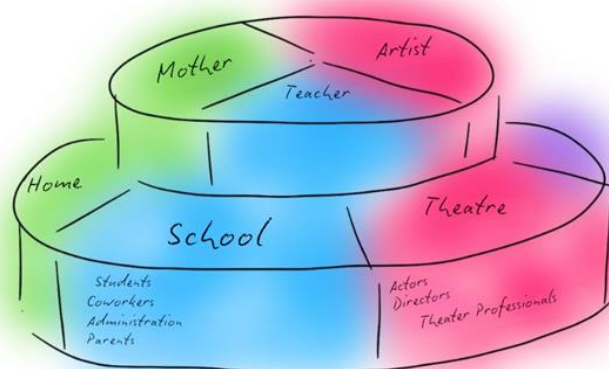
Through this script writing that my views on the positioning theory model changed.

Before, I understood it as having two fixed tiers: 1) identity and 2) location/position in which the 'supporting cast' was contained and the identity was shared (Ahmad et al., 2019) (See Figure 3).

For example: Teacher ... School/Work & Students

**Figure 3**

*Two-Tiered Identity*



The script creation encouraged me to see that this model of positioning theory was comprised of three tiers, not fixed, but constantly in motion: 1) identity, 2) location/position, and 3) the identities of those in the ‘supporting cast’ (See Figure 4).

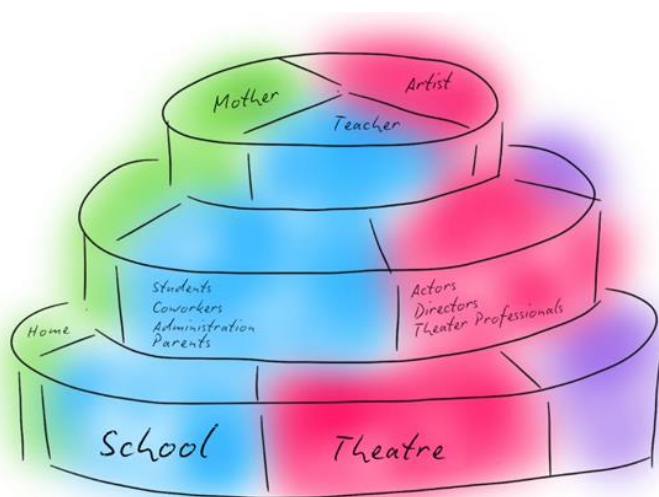
Example:

Teacher ... School/Work ... Students & their Families (No disruption)

Artist ... Theatre ... Students & their Families (Potential disruption)

**Figure 4**

*Three-Tiered Identity Shifting*



As I discovered through the research, much of this perceived disruption was internal. For example, as an education student, there was no list of explicit rules handed to us in our classes, but there were plenty of conversations warning us of mistakes of others who could not find employment. We discussed professional conduct as per our union (Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2024), but nothing there said that I could not perform, sing, or act. This messaging was an internalized overprotective overextension of the messaging we were receiving. There was feedback given by my professors that the tone of my writing was not professional enough because it was too artistic. There were reflections written, coated in uncertainty about employment because every other lesson felt like it was how to sell ourselves to get a job. My

writing shifted through the program from optimism towards coldness and demonstrating to my professors a version of teacher identity I thought they wanted:

It is assumed that due to my generation, I should naturally flow into the use of new technology. It shocks people when I tell them that I don't have Twitter (now X), Snapchat, or even Instagram. It's not that I dislike those who do, I just feel that none of those things have any substantial purpose in my personal life. But there is another factor that plays into my refrain from social media technology and new technology in general. I have a great fear of too much exposure. I like my personal life to be just that-person. I fear that by putting too much out in the world leaves me vulnerable to those who can use these new innovations for more destructive purposes. (Claeys, n.d.)

Looking back at that time as an education student highlighted the many external forces within the training of becoming a teacher and how they converged to create narratives within my head that the separation was necessary to maintain professionalism even though I was doing nothing 'wrong.'

When I entered into this research, I thought the source of my internal teacher identity conflict was related to my perception that parts of my identity did not fit within locations/positions. However, by creating decomposite characters and considering them within the context of a positioning theory that considers the identities of the 'supporting cast,' it became apparent that it was my fear of others based on my perception of what they thought I should be that was shaping my inner conflict. It was the creation of the decomposite characters that gave me the space to become an other to myself (Lea, 2013) and create spaces to better understand the motivations driving the decision making of each character. This project has highlighted that those identities represented by the supported cast, while each holding power in certain places, do not

have to exist to exclude others. Looking back on the reflections of my undergraduate education program, I noticed a shift away from my artist identity through the assignments as if Education Student was attempting to pack Artist away, because in her mind, Artist was something of the past. Education Student seemed to need to be accepted by her peers, professors, and future employers, and felt that for this to happen Artist could not be in the room anymore. This script illuminates how positioning theory operated within my lived experiences. What originally appeared to be a simple relationship between identity and location became a more complex structure involving identity, space, and the audiences who inhabit those spaces. The tension I once attributed to external expectations was often rooted in my own assumptions about how those audiences perceived me. Recognizing this shifted my understanding of identity from one of separation and containment to one of fluidity and coexistence.

When looking back at my other theoretical framework of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Shabani et al., 2010), I trusted those who acted as 'more-knowledgeable-others.' However, through creating the script, I metaphorically and literally became my own Mentor. Creating decomposite characters created a physical and metaphoric space to disintegrate myself so that I could reintegrate myself in a way that each version listens and is heard.

By revisiting these experiences and narratives through autoethnodrama, I was able to reframe the relationships and see that the identities I once tried to separate were in fact interconnected and mutually sustaining. For example, things that made me a great director and performer have also made me a great teacher: the training I received as an actor in understanding motive, subtext, and objectives have helped me develop empathy, something that has deeply helped within my career with student relationships. My ability to organize, visualize/problem solve, and think critically has helped me create unique and engaging lessons for my classes. My

resilience when confronted with uncertainty and stress has shown me how to maintain enthusiasm even on the hardest days. These transferable skills and ways of thinking once were signs my identity conflict as exemplified in Act 2 when the professor describes Education Student as “the most ‘Right-Brained-Left-Brained’ person I’ve ever met. I need you to stop trying to squeeze your art into a teacher shaped hole. Once you just let yourself ‘be’ then I think you’ll feel a lot better and won’t need anyone to tell you what needs to be done.” However, by decomposing these individual parts of my identity and placing them in conversation with each other, I now see how they stand stronger together.

### **Unpacked and Understood**

Through the creation of the autoethnodramatic script and its annotations, this research process became more than a method of organizing and analyzing data; it became a space of encounter among multiple versions of myself. What began as a structured arts-based methodology later inspired by Salvatore’s (2025) ethnodrama process, evolved into a deeply reflexive practice of listening, witnessing, and interpreting identity through creation of theatrical script. By engaging with my past artifacts, home videos, written assignments, and reflective vlogs, the process revealed that understanding identity was not simply about categorizing experiences into the roles of teacher or artist, but about acknowledging the dialogue that existed between those parts of myself across time.

The creation of decomposite characters (Artist, Education Student, and Mentor) allowed these internal dialogues to become visible. Rather than forcing a singular narrative about who I was or who I felt I was expected to be, the script and the theatrical form provided a structure through which competing perspectives, fears, and aspirations could be a stage simultaneously to tell their stories in their honest voice and to be genuinely heard by each other. These characters

were not fictional inventions, but (re)presentations of identity fragments shaped by different moments, expectations, and environments in my life (MacKenzie & Belliveau, 2011). Through their interactions, the tensions surrounding professionalism, artistic identity, and belonging within educational spaces became clearer.

Annotating the script with blocking, subtext, and the varying tones that enveloped the lines deepened my understanding of how each decomposite character stood on their own, but also how they connected to each other. By incorporating tools of an actor such as blocking, subtext, and character objectives, the research moved beyond the written word and toward an embodied analysis. Walking through the script allowed me to physically and emotionally experience the data, highlighting metaphors and insights that were not immediately visible during the initial coding process. In this sense, the annotated script functioned as both an analytical mechanism and a performative lens through which to engage with the research questions.

Through this research, the act of writing and annotating the script became a process of reintegration. My younger self singing and dancing in home videos, the education student navigating professional expectations, and the present-day mentor figure, something here to make balanced, were not competing identities but parts of a larger narrative of growth. In this way, the autoethnodramatic process did not simply present findings; it created a space where those versions of myself could be heard, understood, and ultimately brought back into conversation with one another.

### **After the Curtain Call**

While this research began as an exploration of my own identity, its implications extend beyond my personal narrative. What was uncovered through the process of autoethnodramatic

writing, decomposite character creation, and annotated script work is not solely about understanding who I am as both teacher and artist—it is about recognizing that identity itself is relational, fluid, and deeply influenced by the spaces and audiences we move within.

What this research offers to others is not a set of answers, but a method of inquiry. Through the process of “walking the script,” I engaged in a form of embodied reflection that moved beyond traditional data analysis. Rather than simply interpreting experiences, I relived, revoiced, and repositioned them. This process created a space where identity could be explored not as fixed, but as something in motion; something that can be listened to, questioned, and reshaped. For others, this approach offers a powerful invitation to consider what it might mean to sit with past versions of themselves, not as something to critique or correct, but as something to listen to and understand.

This research generates a space for engagement. It invites educators, artists, and individuals to enter into conversation - not only with this work, but with themselves. The use of autoethnodrama and decomposite characters creates an accessible and human-centered entry point into complex theoretical ideas. Rather than requiring distance from the research, it encourages proximity. It asks: What parts of yourself have you positioned? What voices have you quieted? What identities have you separated in order to belong? How can you bring them all into the conversation of yourself?

The strength of bringing my artist identity into this research lies in its ability to make these questions visible and felt. The process of script writing, annotating, and embodying the characters did not simply illustrate findings—it created them. The artistic process became a site of knowledge generation. Walking the script allowed me to experience the data physically and emotionally, revealing insights that may not have emerged through traditional qualitative

analysis alone. It is within this artistic engagement that the research moves from being descriptive to transformative.

This highlights how the methodological approaches I adopted may provide insights for others engaging in similar research. While the specific experiences and identities explored in this research are my own, the process itself is adaptable. The methodology—grounded in autoethnography, ethnodrama, and embodied analysis—can be taken up by others across disciplines and contexts. Educators may use similar approaches to explore professional identity. Artists may use it to interrogate creative practice. Researchers may use it to bridge the gap between analysis and lived experience. While my particular story may not be generalizable, the arts-based approach creates a context where it may be transferable to audiences (Barnes et al., 2005). Further, those who may be interested in engaging in similar work themselves may draw from some of the methodological approach I adopted to explore my multiple identities.

Ultimately, this research suggests that identity work does not need to be confined to reflection alone—it can be performed, dialogued, and reimaged. Nor is it static; it is ever evolving. I continue this identity work in the next chapter as I conclude with a letter to my decomposite characters highlighting new insights since the completion of the script. By creating space for multiple voices within the self, and by engaging those voices through artistic process, identity moves from something that must be resolved into a singular entity into something that coexists in the plural.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Letter

Dear Artist, Education Student, and Mentor,

I've tried to start this letter more times than I'm proud to say. Each of you – Artist, Education Student, Mentor – have been ... through it. I love and respect each of you, which is why I needed to bring you all together. Each of you needs to see the space in the fractures made between you. Together we need to make sense of how we got here, and how we can move forward without leaving anyone behind.

I entered this graduate program because of a promise I made to you, Education Student. While I am proud of being able to keep that promise, it feels like every choice and thought I've had about myself has been centered around alternating versions, that have now been conjured into characters. Even when I thought I wasn't putting you into separate boxes, the habits crept up again, completely catching me off guard in the middle of a coffee shop.

When planning out my thesis, I remember eagerly sitting and waiting for my advisor. The conversation we had went nowhere until I was asked why I was playing the role of 'graduate student'? This question took me aback, but he was completely right. I had all the notebooks, articles, and pens, preparing to play my next role, slipping into what I thought was expected of me without even realizing it.

I was trying to choose questions that I thought others would deem creditable. Looking back now, perhaps that was narrow-minded and ultimately disrespectful to all the work I had put in throughout my course work. With every project, presentation, and class discussion, I was dusting off artistic skills I had kept tucked away, unearthing questions and topics because I wasn't afraid of being loud anymore, and feeling my intentions focus into what kind of impact I

wanted to leave once I started my own research. Even with all of that underneath me, I only became face-to-face with my research questions when I allowed myself to confront the role of ‘good researcher.’ When I let go of the fear of people seeing something un-curated, raw, and often frazzled with all the articles to read. Even when deep in the research process, I became obsessed with “answering the question” because that’s what I thought a good researcher did.

Sure, I knew that doing research required certain expectations, but this couldn’t become another way to split myself. If anything, this research forced me to sit and live within each of you all over again, not passively play the parts like I’ve done over the years. While I know it may have been a bit uncomfortable, except for you Artist, I know you loved it. These conversations through reliving our history was a massive wake up call. Between the home videos and pages upon pages of undergraduate panic, I somehow let myself believe that I could wear the characters like costumes, but forget that they were *and are* real people. Sitting in my living room with my newborn in arms, I saw my child-self as this bright, funny, musical imaginary spirit. And while I had flutters of nostalgic joy, I couldn’t help but sink into my stomach with this need to warn and protect her. This Artist on my living room TV could easily be the child in my arms. So what was I doing now to show how much I cared about that Artist? Why was there so much shame put on her when all she wanted to do was to share her joy with others? I think facing these questions gave me the courage to sit with you all through this process.

Artist and Mentor, while I adore you both and have learned to appreciate you both so much during this process, the lack of respect you’ve given each other over the years has been disappointing. I let you both believe that you are on opposite ends of a spectrum and made enemies between the two of you, which is one of my biggest regrets. While I know you both

have your own space, don't think for a second that the other hasn't heard what is being said about them.

Artist, you are not embarrassing, you are not unprofessional, and you certainly have purpose. Despite what the others have said, you are the heart and the reason I have been able to find connection and community.

Mentor, you are not boring, you are not washed up, and you certainly have not sold out. You have set a foundation where your humor and experience have created spaces for students to feel like they belong and feel heard.

If you think about it, these are beautiful things you have because of each other.

While you are both strong on your own, you are even stronger together. And while I'd like to make excuses and place blame on the Education Student for creating that divide, I know Education Student you were hurting the most. And perhaps that's why you did so – to protect yourself. But Hun, that's no excuse to hurt those you love. I know you didn't mean to, and feel so much guilt about it today, but it's time to drop the shoulders and breathe. Take the exhale. Please.

You worried me. I needed Mentor's help and perspective to give me courage as we reexplored our chapter. My heart broke as I read your undergraduate assignments, I didn't even recognize you... I mean myself. I felt your pessimism, discomfort, and intensity through the journals and reflections. The way you twisted the narrative of yourself and how you outwardly began giving up hope alongside your art was heart breaking. I could taste the anger in my mouth again, bitter and tired. I could feel you pulling toward and away from the 'Teacher identity' in the way that your once creative heart-lead tone became grey and disconnected. You were often disjointed, like there were two different people trying to share an essay. I know this was

particularly difficult during the years when theatre course work coincided with the education degree. What I hope you know now is that becoming a teacher doesn't have to mean losing your colour, your spark, your passion. You are not a product to be molded and sold. But I know that's how you felt at the time.

Education Student and Mentor, while we know it's nice to have a desk to land on especially with some times of uncertainty, I saw the way you all gravitated around it, leaned on it, hid behind it, hovered next to it, over it, and sometimes even walked away from it; The exhausting dance around the developing Teacher identity.

To all of you, I'm so sorry that no one noticed how hurt you were, begging to feel seen. But I see you now. I hear you. And I'm sorry.

I hope you all know that both my artistry and teaching have been callings. Looking back at my experiences as Education Student and once I started my career, the desire to be Artist was there with a haunting shadow of discouraging feelings towards what Artist could and should do. But at the heart of it all, I had to learn to trust because Artist, you were never the problem, and I'm sorry I made you feel that way.

Keeping you all in mind, I knew this research needed to feel like it had a resolution without feeling cliché. I know we all hate when things feel cliché, right? But does there still need to be a complete resolution? Not necessarily, at least not in the traditional sense. I can feel the eyerolls now but just hear me out.

I think the whole journey was the most important part. I came into this project desperately wanting to ask questions and get nice, neat answers. What I discovered was that it was the process of exploring these questions that mattered. A process that created space in which I didn't need to *live by the questions anymore. Rather, I needed a process that let me live in them.*

All of us have battled with this being an exploration of blame, responsibility, and ultimately respect for oneself. I know this is why I often belittled myself, convincing myself that our experiences weren't significant enough to research.

Artist, I will admit, I was worried because of how long we've been apart that it would take a while to become reintroduced. Instead, writing the script and all the poems was like coming home. We could dive back into poetry and the stage on the page by reexploring the use of symbolism through not only dialogue, but through all elements of theatrical creation including characters, set, and props. Not only that but rediscovering you has encouraged me to step into you in so many other ways outside of this research and I'm so thankful you never gave up on me. I have found my way back to performing. I have even started performing again (in small doses) and I am proudly using my name in front of an audience.

In order to have you all here together I had to walk through all the excuses I was making for myself as to why I couldn't be Artist anymore, why Mentor or Teacher needed to be a certain way. I cared so much more about the impression of a persona rather than a person and in the process made an enemy of myself when I wasn't doing anything wrong.

Throughout script writing, I had the chance to connect with you, Artist, to ultimately better understand Education Student and Mentor. It was validating. I wasn't condemned to only being successful in a particular place while being a particular person unlike my theoretical framework with Positioning Theory. It was through confronting the discomfort when I thought things didn't align that I could truly understand how each one of you was far more valuable than I had once given credit.

Like being a teacher with my own students, we never know which comments, conversations, or moments cling to our students, how they burrow into who they are at that time

and meld into the person they become. I had to move through and let go of this guilt, which was something I was able to do through analysing and sitting in the words of my undergraduate self. I felt like I was sitting next to you Education Student, listening to you, holding your hand. That gift of time you gave me ... we gave each other ... has given me strength to tell myself confidently that I can be an artist, be an artistic teacher, and that I can find every desired feeling of artistic satisfaction within myself all while being a respected Mentor within my education community.

This research was not about becoming a drama teacher, although the start of this paper alluded to it. Sure, becoming a drama teacher in the classroom space is still a goal and dream of mine. I mean it makes sense that I want to have the ultimate tie between the things that I love, bringing us all in the same room every day. It also makes sense because the drama space is where I have felt most seen and appreciated. But what I've learned, what is most important, is knowing now on a practical and emotional level that I can be my full self no matter what I'm teaching and that I shouldn't allow what I teach dictate how I understand myself as Artist.

This research was about putting a person back together and giving her permission to exist without letting the judgement of others and myself question worth and value. Maybe the mistake was believing that we were ever meant to stand on separate stages.

**Artist**, you bring the colour.

**Education Student**, you bring the questions (sometimes difficult to face).

**Mentor**, you bring the wisdom that only comes from walking the path.

The fractures between you were never proof that something was broken, but rather evidence that something was growing and searching for space to breathe. What once felt like conflict was, in many ways, a conversation that had been waiting to happen.

What's even more exciting is that when brought together by the circumstances of this research, I could see how each of you have represented important conversations around how not only teachers develop, but how we must remember the person at the center of it all. This could be someone with an arts background, athletics, anything really. Your stories combined to set a tone and a reminder to not forget the person at the core. This is not just the responsibility of the Education Students, but the Mentors in their life who are there to guide them along their own journeys. Your stories combined will hopefully create noise and attention to if... no, when ... future Education Students find themselves in a similar situation.

All three of you combined are some of the best parts of Artists, Education Students, and Mentors.

Artist, Education Student, and Mentor, I think we can say now that you are not competing identities. You are threads of the same story. Each of you has shaped the way I see the world, the way I teach, the way I create, and the way I understand myself.

What this research ultimately gave me was not a final answer or a resolution perfectly tied into a bow. Instead, it gave me permission—permission to stop asking which version of myself deserves to exist.

You all do.

And from this point forward, the stage is shared.

None of you will be left behind.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Yours truly," text.

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## Appendix A

### General Informed Consent Form



University  
of Manitoba

Human Research Ethics

Human Research Ethics  
66 Chancellors Circle  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2  
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

#### Participant Informed Consent Form

**Study Title:** The Artist She Wrote: "Entr'actes and Erasers" An Autoethnographic Examination of Intertwining Artist and Teacher Identities

**Student Principal Investigator:** Christina Peabody, Master's Degree, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning. Email: claeysc@myumanitoba.ca

**Student Advisor:** Graham W. Lea, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. Email: graham.lea@umanitoba.ca

#### Conflicts of Interest and Undue Influence

Christina Peabody may have a pre-existing family relationship with you. To minimize any potential influence, participation is voluntary; consent is obtained through a formal written process, and you are a non-active participant. You may decline or withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence, and your decision will not affect your personal relationship with the researcher. Non-active participants should not feel obligated to consent, and that their relationship with the PI will not be impacted if they choose not to participate.

#### Invitation to Participate

You are invited as a non-active participant in a research study. This consent form, a copy of which you can download or print, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, feel free to ask Christina Peabody or Graham Lea whose contact information can be found above. Please take the time to read this document and any accompanying information carefully. It is very important that you understand:

- what is being asked of you,
- what the risks and benefits of participation are, and
- how the information you provide will be used and stored.

#### Purpose of the Study

This research is being undertaken as a final thesis project under the supervision of Dr. Graham Lea. The project explores what it means to live in the space between being an artist and being a teacher. These two identities are both deeply important to the principal investigator, yet they do not always sit easily together. At times, they support and strengthen one another; at other

times, they pull in different directions. This study examines moments of harmony and friction between these identities, and how the principal investigator makes sense of selfhood within that tension.

Because the work is grounded in the principal investigator's own lived experience, the study draws from personal stories, memories, classroom experiences, creative practices, and reflective writing. The project is autoethnographic in nature meaning the principal investigator is both the investigator and the subject of the study.

Ultimately, the intention of this research is to better understand how artist-teachers hold space for both creativity and care, as well as vulnerability and responsibility. By making these internal negotiations visible, the principal investigator hopes that other educators who carry similar dual identities may see themselves reflected and find connection, language, or affirmation in that shared experience.

### **Study Procedures**

For the purpose of this study, home videos will be used to examine the principal investigators' behaviour and choices as a child and developing. These home videos were created during the years 1995-2007.

Since these are home videos that may include you, you are being recruited as a non-active participant. None of the contents of these videos will be shared beyond the principal investigator and advisor Dr. Graham Lea. These videos will only be used to examine the principal investigator.

By agreeing to participate, you are agreeing to my advisor being able to view the home videos and the notes generated based on the observations of myself from said home videos.

The home videos, research notes, and other documentation based on the videos will be saved in a password protected folder where only my advisor and myself will have access.

### **Study Risks**

As a non-active participant this research is minimal risk to you, meaning that the risks are no greater than what you might encounter in your daily life. As a non-active participant, there is a risk that the videos could be accessed by others even though the PI will keep them as safe as possible. There is also a risk that you might be embarrassed by how you appear in the video which will be seen by the advisor.

### **Study Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study. This research intends to benefit the general public by deepening understandings of intersections of artistic, pedagogic, and personal identities. By exploring the principal investigator's lived experience of being both

an artist and a teacher, the project will help illuminate challenges and possibilities of maintaining creative well-being within professional settings. This insight may contribute to broader conversations about work–life balance, self-expression, and mental health; issues that affect people in many fields, not just education or the arts.

This study may also:

1. Inform educational practice and policy.
2. Foster community dialogue around the value of the arts, identity, and personal fulfillment, helping the public recognize the broader social and emotional benefits of creative expression.
3. Model reflective practice that can inspire others to examine their own professional and personal identities in ways that promote well-being and authenticity.

Overall, the research aims to promote a more compassionate and creative society—one that values educators, artists, and the transformative role of storytelling in understanding human experience.

### **Compensation**

There is no compensation for this study

### **Confidentiality**

All the information you provide as a participant in this study is confidential, which means we as the research team must keep it safe. We will do our best, however, it is not possible to guarantee absolute confidentiality. We will only share your personal information if required through court order or law.

We have professional obligations to report information to appropriate authorities. Examples of when information is required to be disclosed include expression of suicidal ideas, or the presence of an infectious disease.

### **Use and Storage of Information**

Your information will be stored on a secure platform approved by the University of Manitoba. My advisor and I will have access to the home videos.

After we collect the information, in the dissemination we will use pseudonyms for individuals and I will identify individuals by their roles but without naming them such as "a cousin", "a sibling" or "a parent". You may be identified by others who read/watch the dissemination due to your relationship with the PI. If necessary, we will also replace your name with a code. The research team keeps a file that links each participant's code with their [name, contact information, etc.]. We keep this file separate from your other research information.

### **Research Sharing**

We will share the results of the study through academic and public venues such as 1) the publication of a master's thesis with live performance; 2) journal publications and research presentations; 3) a summary report of the study results for interested participants. 4) The public sharing of the script in a performance outside of the University of Manitoba such as theatre festivals.

The focus of the research is on the experience of the PI rather than your role and interactions with the PI in the past

### **Withdrawing**

Your non-active participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw your participation from the study for any reason. You do not have to explain why. You will not be penalized in any way. If you withdraw partway through the study, we will do our best to exclude your information. Non-active participants will be given the opportunity to review the script, preferably via email or to organize a time with the PI to have it read to them. Once the script has been sent, you will be receiving 2 weeks to review and connect with the PI. Once those 2 weeks have past, if no response is made with the PI, then your consent will be implied that you are accepting of the research product.

To withdraw your consent as a non-active participant, please contact Christina Peabody or Graham Lea at the phone number or email above.

### **Questions or Concerns**

Designated University of Manitoba personnel may look at your information to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This study has been reviewed and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. However, this does not mean that participation is risk-free. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Human Research Ethics at [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca) or (204) 474-7122.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study, you may contact Christina Peabody or Graham Lea listed on the first page or the Office of Human Research Ethics.

### **Consent**

By signing this document, I agree that:

- I have read the above information or had it read to me.

- I have had the opportunity to ask and have had all of my questions answered.
- I understand what is being asked of me.
- I will be taking part in a research study.
- I may freely stop or leave the research study activities at any time.
- I understand what the researchers will do with the information I give them.
- I do not waive my legal rights by participating in the study.

#### **Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information**

Your personal information is being collected under the authority of *The University of Manitoba Act*. The University of Manitoba is committed to preserving your right to privacy. The information you provide will be used by the University to support our research. Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or *The Personal Health Information Act*. If you have any questions about the collection of personal information: Ph: 204-474-9462 or Email: [fippa@umanitoba.ca](mailto:fippa@umanitoba.ca)

I agree to participate in this study.

☐ YES ☐ NO

#### **Summary of Results**

If you would like to receive a summary of the study results which will be available by 0127, please provide an email address.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

|                     |                         |      |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------|
|                     |                         |      |
| Name of Participant | Participant's Signature | Date |

## Appendix B

### Other Informed Consent Form



University  
of Manitoba | Human Research Ethics

Human Research Ethics  
66 Chancellors Circle  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2  
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

#### Participant Informed Consent Form

**Study Title:** The Artist She Wrote: "Entr'actes and Erasers" An Autoethnographic Examination of Intertwining Artist and Teacher Identities

**Student Principal Investigator:** Christina Peabody, Master's Degree, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning. Email: claeysc@myumanitoba.ca

**Student Advisor:** Graham W. Lea, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. Email: graham.lea@umanitoba.ca

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- what the risks and benefits of participation are, and
- how the information you provide will be used and stored.

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This research is being undertaken as a final thesis project under the supervision of Dr. Graham Lea. The project explores what it means to live in the space between being an artist and being a teacher. These two identities are both deeply important to the principal investigator, yet they do not always sit easily together. At times, they support and strengthen one another; at other times, they pull in different directions. This study examines moments of harmony and friction between these identities, and how the principal investigator makes sense of selfhood within that tension.

Because the work is grounded in the principal investigator's own lived experience, the study draws from personal stories, memories, classroom experiences, creative practices, and reflective writing. The project is autoethnographic in nature meaning the principal investigator is both the investigator and the subject of the study.

Ultimately, the intention of this research is to better understand how artist-teachers hold space for both creativity and care, as well as vulnerability and responsibility. By making these internal negotiations visible, the principal investigator hopes that other educators who carry similar dual identities may see themselves reflected and find connection, language, or affirmation in that shared experience.

### **Study Procedures**

For the purpose of this study, home videos that you have created will be used to examine the principal investigators' behaviour and overall choices as a child and developing artist as a source of research. These home videos were created during the years 1995-2007.

Since these home videos were:

1. Created by you
2. That may include you,
3. Your interactions and conversations directly affect the Principal Investigator as the research subject,

You are being recruited as a non-active participant. None of the contents of these videos will be shared beyond the principal investigator and advisor Dr. Graham Lea. These videos will only be used to examine the principal investigator.

By agreeing to participate, you are agreeing to both principal investigator and student advisor having access the home videos and the notes generated based on the observations of the principal investigator.

You are also agreeing to interactions and experiences between yourself and the principal investigator being used as examples of identity development as described earlier in this document.

The home videos, research notes, and other documentation based on the videos and experiences with the principal investigator will be saved in a password protected folder where only the advisor and principal investigator will have access.

### **Study Risks**

As a non-active participant this research is minimal risk to you, meaning that the risks are no greater than what you might encounter in your daily life. As a non-active participant this research is minimal risk to you, meaning that the risks are no greater than what you might encounter in your daily life. As a non-active participant, there is a risk that the videos could be

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Overall, the research aims to promote a more compassionate and creative society—one that values educators, artists, and the transformative role of storytelling in understanding human experience.

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We have professional obligations to report information to appropriate authorities. Examples of when information is required to be disclosed include expression of suicidal ideas, or the presence of an infectious disease.

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After we collect the information, in the dissemination we will use pseudonyms for individuals and I will identify individuals by their roles but without naming them such as "a cousin", "a sibling" or "a parent". You may be identified by others who read/watch the dissemination due to your relationship with the PI. If necessary, we will also replace your name with a code. The research team keeps a file that links each participant's code with their [name, contact information, etc.]. We keep this file separate from your other research information.

### **Data Sharing**

Your research information may be shared outside of the University of Manitoba with researchers, other organizations, and/or made publicly available. The information is being shared for further analysis or testing, as part of the research study, and/or because it is required by a funder or journal. It will not include your name or any information that could directly identify you [unless you give us permission to include your name].

### **Dissemination**

We will share the results of the study through academic and public venues such as 1) the publication of a master's thesis with live performance; 2) journal publications and research presentations; 3) a summary report of the study results for interested participants. 4) The public sharing of the script in a performance outside of the University of Manitoba such as theatre festivals.

The focus of the research is on the experience of the PI rather than your role and interactions with the PI in the past

### **Withdrawing**

Your non-active participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw your participation from the study for any reason. You do not have to explain why. You will not be penalized in any way. If you withdraw partway through the study, we will do our best to exclude your information. Non-active participants will be given the opportunity to review the script, preferably via email or to organize a time with the PI to have it read to them. Once the script has been sent, you will be receiving 2 weeks to review and connect with the PI. Once those 2 weeks have past, if no response is made with the PI, then your consent will be implied that you are accepting of the research product.

To have your identity excluded from the research process, please contact Christina Peabody at the phone number or email above.

### Questions or Concerns

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To withdraw your consent as a non-active participant, please contact Christina Peabody or Graham Lea at the phone number or email above.

### Consent

By signing this document, I agree that:

- I have read the above information or had it read to me.
- I have had the opportunity to ask and have had all of my questions answered.
- I understand what is being asked of me.
- I will be taking part in a research study.
- I may freely stop or leave the research study activities at any time.
- I understand what the researchers will do with the information I give them.
- I do not waive my legal rights by participating in the study.

### Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information

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|                                       |                                                          |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| I agree to participate in this study. | <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|

**Summary of Results**

If you would like to receive a [summary of the study results and/or my individual results] which will be available by MMY, please provide [an email address, a mailing address].

[Email/Mail] address: \_\_\_\_\_

|                     |                         |      |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------|
|                     |                         |      |
| Name of Participant | Participant's Signature | Date |

**Appendix C**  
**Unannotated Script**

*This script is dedicated to the girl who dreamed of traveling the world sharing her love of the arts and performing.*

*It's been a gift finding my way back to her.*

*New dreams, same heart.*

### **Characters**

**As Mentor:** *Our Storyteller in present day as a teaching mentor to her teacher candidate. She is calm, a little sassy, and sarcastic. She wears a lanyard with keychains, buttons, and keys.*

**As Artist:** *Our Storyteller who carries herself with a young bright energy, enthusiasm, and eccentricity. She carries a musical song book.*

**As Education Student:** *Our Storyteller in a balancing act in constant flux between her Artist energy and her developing Teacher identity. She wears a scarf, a side bag, and carries a notebook and pen.*

**As Swimming Teacher:** *Our Storyteller in her teens when she taught swimming lessons. She wears a whistle.*

**As Education Professor, Theatre Professor, and Swimming Student:** *These are additional characters that our Storyteller voices/embodies as she relives memories from her years in school and moments which shaped her developing identity.*

**As Self:** *Still trying to figure that out...*

## ACT 1

*A stage set with a teacher desk, a coat rack with an abundance of hats, a bookshelf filled with binders, teacher books, a slightly hidden camcorder and small trinkets. At the front of the desk is a triangular prism name plate with 'Teacher', '\_\_\_\_\_', and 'Artist' on the respective sides. There is also a desk lamp, an office chair, a stool, and an open laptop. On the floor next to the desk is a large tote bag filled with objects to be pulled out throughout the story. Behind the desk is a whiteboard and written at the top corner is the date, school day, and "12 days since last curse word." There is a picture of a young girl on the desk (the Storyteller dressed as Sailor Moon for Halloween). Wicked, Phantom of the Opera, and Seussical the Musical posters are hung on the wall.*

*The stage is lit with the name plate in focus on the 'Teacher' side with a soft spot and the rest of the set in a blue/orange wash. School background noise is heard. School bell rings and heard from off stage:*

**As Mentor** (Off stage): Hey! Don't forget! Parent teacher starts at 5pm sharp! Make sure to remind your parents to come at their scheduled time! Yes – you have to be there too! Ha. Ha. Ha. Very funny! Bye!

*Sound of door shuts*

*Stage lights up as **Mentor** enters from stage right dressed in a blazer, a simple black dress, heels, and a lanyard around her neck. She takes a moment at the door facing her classroom space and sighs. She walks to the whiteboard and fills out the schedule for the next day: Period 1 – ELA, Period 2 & 3 – French, Period 4 & 5 – Social Studies, Period 6 – Art/Band. She updates the date and school day.*

**As Mentor:** I find it best to get the next day prepped the day before. One less thing to think about before coffee and chaos, am I right?

*Mentor adjusts the lanyard around her neck.*

**As Mentor:** Do I look professional yet?

*Jokingly gesturing at her blazer.*

**As Mentor:** It's ok, you don't have to wear one to be a teacher, no matter what your practicum advisor says. Just thought I'd throw it on with heels given that we're meeting parents tonight.

**As Mentor:** For some reason it makes me feel a little more 'grown up.'

*Mentor looks to the audience to try and shift the mood.*

**As Mentor (dramatically and theatrical):** As your cooperating teacher, my role is to help guide you, immerse you in the realities of the classroom, and be a sounding board when everything you learned in your theory classes goes tits up!

**As Mentor:** Oh shit. Fuck. Sorry. One sec.

*Mentor goes to the whiteboard and erases the "12" and writes a "0" on the whiteboard where it says, "days since last curse word."*

**As Mentor:** Tonight is going to be great. Just follow my lead and if you don't know how to answer something, gesture to me, or say something like, "That's a really great question, I'll look into it and get back to you as soon as I can." You'll be great, really, just pace yourself.

**As Mentor:** I personally find this evening to be the most exhausting of the whole year. Frankly, it's the most performative I ever have to be, and that's saying a lot coming from me.

**As Mentor:** Oh, right, well I used to do a lot of theatre and performance, for like... over a decade. Performed in musicals, directed, stage managed, hair and makeup, wrote short plays, you know... Just the usual...

**As Mentor:** Ya, the posters aren't just for show (*jazz hands*)

*Mentor awkwardly laughs it off.*

**As Mentor:** I feel like these evenings I have to play “Super Teacher” ... and that’s after a full day of teaching...so pace yourself...did I already say that?

**As Mentor:** Anyway...

**As Mentor:** What do you they have you reading in Ed these days?

**As Mentor:** (*with one eyebrow up*) Really?

**As Mentor:** “*The Teachers Guide to Teaching from the Inside*”; sounds familiar.

**As Mentor:** (*making her way to the bookshelf and searching for her copy of the book*) If I remember correctly, it’s a ‘spunky how-to’ about being your most *authentic* self in the classroom, right?

**Mentor** *finds the book on her bookshelf.*

**As Mentor:** Ah yes, I remember it well, not fondly, but well.

**Mentor** *laughs.*

**As Mentor:** It’s ok, really, it’s been a minute, but I’m sure there’s something relevant.

**Mentor** *opens the book and flips to the first chapter, reads the title and a small paragraph, this is done for each chapter.*

**Mentor** (*Reading from book*):

## Chapter 1

### Find Your Voice – Sharing Your Passions with Purpose

Every teacher enters the profession carrying stories, skills, and passions that make them unique. Maybe you have sung on stage, won tournaments, or shared your work with the world. These experiences are not just memories; they are bridges you can build with your students. The classroom thrives when your genuine interests shine through your teaching.

Start by reflecting: What lights you up? What moments outside of teaching have shaped the person standing in front of your class today?

Then, consider how to share these moments in ways that invites curiosity and connection.

Your students do not need a polished performance, they need authenticity. Sometimes, that means sharing a song from your past to open a lesson. Other times, may mean letting them see that creativity is not separate from real life. Your creativity is life.

Your voice matters. Use it, not to impress, but to inspire.

***Mentor** turns the name plate to 'Artist' and pulls out a Musical song book from her large tote bag next to the desk.*

**As Artist:** I recently found an old recording of my first musical performance.

**As Artist:** It was the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and the first time I ever performed as part of a cast.

**As Artist:** To say performing on that stage made me feel powerful would be a massive understatement.

**As Artist:** I always knew I loved music and singing, but this performance made me feel... seen you know, I mean outside of the collection of home videos of course.

**As Artist:** I originally had 3 solo lines throughout the cabaret style show, but a week before curtain, everything changed. A fellow student couldn't be in the show anymore and my drama teacher needed someone to step in for an entire character! They said, "You're an understudy!" I responded with, "What's an understudy?" I didn't even know what it all meant at the time, but what I did know was that I had just 5 days to learn a whole song, choreography, lines, and be show-ready for tech week.

**As Artist:** To some, it may have been an overwhelming task and in ways it was, but I was known to memorize an entire Spice Girls album or two at the age of 4 and perform them in their entirety WITH original choreography.

**As Artist:** I knew I could do this despite just two years prior crying in embarrassment after my first solo performance of “Breakaway” by Kelly Clarkson at a community talent show.

**As Artist:** Then, I didn’t think I belonged, but this time, maybe this time, it could be different.

**As Artist:** I sang Don’t Rain on my Parade from the musical Funny Girl; It felt like redemption. I was no longer embarrassed. I charged onto that stage with my top hat, massive silver hoop earrings, and frosted pink eyeshadow, sang my heart out, and never looked back.

**As Artist:** I was hooked.

**As Artist:** I performed every year after that, even multiple times a year! Musicals, choirs, plays, anything I could get my voice on.

**As Artist:** Over that time, I created my Top 5. These are dream roles or shows one would love to perform. They all felt like a long shot, but were fun to imagine.

**As Artist:** What was special about a Top 5 was that it was not me choosing to perform those roles, but that someone else might choose me to be that character or sing that song because they believed in me.

**As Artist:** There’s something magical about that feeling, that sense of belonging and purpose in something you love and connect to.

**As Artist:** Chicago was MY show. It tied together my love of theatre, camp, and jazz.

**As Artist:** Early in my career I was working as a French Immersion teacher, much like I am now. A local theatre group was holding auditions for Chicago; it was fate. I walked into that audition with my head held high and when it was all done, I looked at the panel and said, “I am your Velma Kelly.” This was quite bold, stupid even, but I wanted this more than I even understood at the time.

**As Artist:** A few weeks later, I was on lunch break at the school when the cast list was posted online. I was in shock and awe,

tearing up in front of my new coworkers because there it was, my name cast as Velma Kelly, my number 1, for all to see. When sharing the good news, some were excited, some said, "Oh, that's nice," but some also looked concerned.

*As the following lines are given, lights on stage darken and a single spotlight narrows more and more onto **Artist's** face.*

**As Artist:** When in conversation with my admin, the response was, "Christina, do you really think that show a good representation of a teacher? Are you prepared if a parent sees you? Maybe you should look at using a different name, just in case. You're gonna want to protect yourself, you know, professionally."

**As Artist:** I didn't know at the time if they were just trying to look out for me in the way in which they knew how, or were protecting themselves and the school from my potential embarrassment or 'wrong doing', but it didn't stop the feeling of impending doom.

**As Artist:** The tsunami of questions were barreling in, but one stood out, "Did I now have to give up a dream that once felt impossible?" A dream that I had finally clenched between my fingers!

**As Artist:** There were so many unknowns.

**As Artist:** I did go through with the production in the end, but I was guarded, hurt, and scared. I refused to be in any publicity, worried at every performance, didn't talk about it at work, and used a different name for the production.

**As Artist:** I haven't performed in a musical since.

**END OF ACT 1**

## ACT 2

*The lights return to the classroom. **Mentor** returns to the desk, turning the name plate back to 'Teacher' then places the song book on the bookshelf.*

***Mentor** is speaking to her teacher candidate.*

**As Mentor:** Classroom teacher wasn't an obvious calling at first. I don't remember ever playing "teacher" as a kid or folks telling me, "You should be a teacher!"

**As Mentor:** I always knew I wanted help people, connect with people, and create. What that looked like? As a kid? I didn't know yet, but that didn't stop everyone and their cow asking us what we wanted to be when we grew up.

**As Mentor:** When I was forced to make up an answer in the first grade, I said that I wanted to tour the world singing. Oh! And sell paintings I made along the way to pay for food and gas – I had a plan.

**As Mentor:** As I got older, I became as a swimming teacher in my early teens. That's where I learned how much I enjoyed being around kiddos. They're fucking hilarious!

*Looks back at "days since last curse word" and shrugs.*

**As Mentor:** I had a young student during my training who was so determined to swim across the shallow end of the pool in one breath. Each week he would practice before and after classes and one day when he was so close; he popped up, looked at me square in the face with his dinosaur goggles and said, "Man this would be easier if I had a damn blowhole!"

**As Mentor:** Despite my eternal 'Eau de Chlorine,' I loved helping students succeed, especially when it was with something they were previously struggling to accomplish.

***Mentor**, now *Swimming Teacher* stands at the edge of the stage as if she is talking to her swimming student in the pool below her. The lights shift to indicate a pool setting, and the background sounds of being at an indoor pool.*

**As Swimming Teacher:** You've been working so hard for so long. I can see how much you want this. But maybe, just maybe, we've been trying to swim the wrong way.

**As Swimming Student:** The wrong way?

**As Swimming Teacher:** What if we stopped thinking about swimming... and started thinking about music? You told me you play the violin... let's turn your swim into a song.

**As Swimming Student:** I think my mom paid for swimming lessons.

**As Swimming Teacher:** Yes, I know; what I mean is the rhythm of music and apply it to your swimming.

**As Swimming Student:** Like... playing the water?

**As Swimming Teacher:** Exactly! Picture 4/4 time. Each arm stroke is a beat—one, two, three—and your breath, that's the rest. Feel it. Don't fight the rhythm; swim it.

**As Swimming Student** (*taking a deep breath, softly counting and performing arm circles for front crawl*): One... two... three... rest...

**As Swimming Teacher:** Yes! Now add the legs like... like... sixteenth notes, fast and light, like your bow skimming the strings.

**As Swimming Teacher:** (*laughing, clapping as the swimming student reaches the other side*) You did it! You swam the rhythm! You turned your music into movement!

**As Swimming Teacher:** That's exactly what it should feel like...

**Mentor** *leans back on the desk. Lights return to general wash.*

**As Mentor:** I wanted to help my students feel their most confident and show them that their passions aren't only what make them amazing, but that those same passions can fuel so much more success in their lives as a whole.

**As Mentor:** That's when I knew I wanted to teach.

*Mentor picks up the guide again and begins to read the next chapter.*

**As Mentor** (*reading the book*):

## **Chapter 2**

### Beyond the Cover

Teachers are often asked to define themselves by lesson plans, evaluations, or test results. But you are more than a checklist or a portfolio. Who you are outside the classroom influences who you are inside. Your interests, values, and experiences all shape your approach. Students connect most deeply when they sense authenticity, when the person in front of them feels real. Do not shrink yourself into a polished cover page. Bring your full self into the school, because those personal layers build trust and connection.

Do not be afraid to stand out with new ideas brought forward by your passions! Just because something has been done one way before, does not mean it was effective or that it is the only way it can be done. Invite students to ask questions, make connections, explore their passions, and that it is okay to make mistakes as long as we learn and grow from them. Teaching is not just about curriculum; it is about the human beings who carry it.

*Mentor slowly pulls out a scarf, a pair of glasses, and a book bag from the large bag next to the desk; she hesitantly and almost with fear puts them on becoming Education Student. As she dresses to become Education Student, the lights shift to an orange and blue combination. She picks up the name plate and plays with it in her hands over the next stories.*

**As Education Student:** Before even starting classes, all of us first year education students were corralled into a room at assigned times to fill out two pieces of paper.

**As Education Student:** One orange, and one blue.

**As Education Student:** These papers were our first significant choice in claiming our teachable Major and Minor.

**As Education Student:** This choice would dictate the next 5 years of our lives and, if we did well enough, the rest of our careers.

**As Education Student:** I knew I wanted to work in high school so that choice was easy, but when it came to the teachable, I froze. I felt sucked into the white walls that surrounded us, being watched through the glass by the next group waiting to funnel in.

**As Education Student:** I knew from countless conversations with my own teachers and those I knew in the program that choosing French as my major was going to get me a job. That my dream of becoming a drama teacher, while not impossible, was not 'marketable' when teaching jobs of all kinds were so few and far between.

*Education Student sighs deeply*

**As Education Student:** "French major, theatre and film minor."

**As Education Student:** I handed the paperwork to the advisors and as they scanned the pages. They looked up at me and said, "Huh, French and theatre, a rare breed indeed."

**As Education Student:** It didn't take long to understand what that meant, especially once I saw what my cohort members had as their teachables, or the fact that I was often the only education student in my theatre classes.

*Voice over: Snap out of it. You are not a victim.*

**As Education Student:** Very early on and every subsequent year, we were asked the same question:

**As Education Professor:** Alrighty class, today we will be exploring what you think makes a 'good teacher' and a 'strong education' by answering the all-important question of: What is your 'teaching philosophy'? This philosophy will be the driving force behind everything you do as a teacher!

**As Education Student** (whispering to another student): They know we haven't started in the classroom yet, right?

**As Education Professor:** You! There in the front! Go ahead!

**As Education Student:** Me? (pointing to self) Oh, um ok...

**As Education Student:** Well, I'd like to be a facilitator of learning and... leadership! I want my students to learn through asking questions and building confidence not just in a subject, but in learning how they learn best!

**As Education Professor:** Very good!

**As Education Student:** I understood in many ways the kind of teacher I best connected with in my own education. It was just so odd that we were expected to just know without ever stepping into the shoes of a teacher. Most of us had to rely on our own experiences with the teachers we had rather than any experience actually teaching.

**As Education Student:** My high school math teacher is still to this day one of my favourite teachers because the best way to describe her was firm, funny, fair, and no matter what we did, we knew she cared even when she made us exchange our shoes and cellphones for an extra calculator.

**As Education Student:** Over the years I got really good at playing the role of student teacher. I wanted everyone to see that:

1. I knew what I was talking about even if I still had no idea what a "pedagogy" was,
2. That I was in this program because it was a calling, but most importantly,
3. I didn't want people to see my trickling decent into madness that once this program was done that, I realistically may never become a drama teacher.

*Pause*

**As Education Student:** A massive part of the program was reflection based on the articles we read, and presentations done by folks who clearly hadn't stepped foot in a school in years or were... dead.

**As Education Student:** The running joke was that our classes were about ideas and theory, but it was our practicum placements, that's where most theory went to die and you just needed to figure it out.

**As Education Student:** Now I'm not saying that most of the theory to practical application was wrong, misguided, or useless, no... There was just some... disconnect.

**As Education Student:** Our practicum was where we learned the most. The more time I spent in classes with students, learning shoulder to shoulder with educators, the more my abilities and confidence as a teacher were being molded. But at the same time, the worry about what I'd be teaching deepened.

**As Education Student:** One year, I was placed in two grade 4 French immersion classes. One teacher loved her job; you could tell that grade 4 was her element.

*Education Student takes a notebook out of her book bag and writes/reads aloud:*

*Projected on the screen*

Practicum Reflection Week 2: "I have never idolized and respected a grade four teacher as much as I respect her. She is a very warm and welcoming person, but as well she never lets anyone push her around. She has built such a connection of respect with her students that if one does something wrong or unacceptable she simply has to give them a "look" and they know to stop. She has built this connection of respect through being clear of what she expects from her students and as well if there is an issue she knows not to embarrass that student/students in front of everyone else. She never yells at her students, only used her firm tone and a serious expression."

**As Education Student:** It was a treat to be able to watch her teach. The other grade 4 teacher... well... she was different and certainly straight forward! Her directly telling me that she hated her job, never wanted to be an early years teacher, and that she wanted to teach high school, would not be an overexaggeration.

**As Education Student:** Did I mention that she also said it in front of the kids?

**As Education Student:** That experience pushed me to the deeper realization that I was probably never going to be a drama teacher because it was being hammered into us that if you can

teach French then you'll be teaching French. You go where the system wants you and were expected to be grateful no matter what because at least you had a job.

**As Education Student:** I'm still not sure why wanting to teach what your passionate about was mutually exclusive to being ungrateful, but here we are.

**As Education Student:** And for the record, I was grateful! For every experience, failed lesson, and opportunity to teach. So... So... and another thing-

*Voice over of a throat clearing.*

**As Education Student:** Sorry.

**As Education Student:** I had to find a way to keep connected with it...Her... because every course I took, I could see that what I once thought made me stand out, may also be making it more difficult to place in the existing world of education. Indeed, I was "a rare breed."

**As Theatre Professor:** Welcome everyone to Taking the Stage! This term we will be exploring who you are as an artist. What story do you want to tell and what impact would you like to leave on your audience? Let's start by going around and telling each other why we are in this course.

**As Education Student:** Well, I hope to teach drama and I want to learn some stronger ways in which I can be a director if I'm put in charge of a school production!

**As Theatre Professor:** That's really interesting, but remember, while you're an education student, don't try to let that consume you while you're here. Take this time to explore your voice as an artist... who is she and what does she have to say?

**As Education Student** (to audience): What I had to say? There's no script for that or textbook or article or or or... what did I have to say?

**As Education Student** (to **Theatre Professor**): For my first assignment, can you tell me what it is you're looking for?

**As Theatre Professor:** What I'm looking for?

**As Education Student:** Yes.

**As Theatre Professor:** You are the most “Right-Brained-Left-Brained” person I’ve ever met. I need you to stop trying to squeeze your art into a teacher shaped hole. Once you just let yourself “be” then I think you’ll feel a lot better and won’t need anyone to tell you what needs to be done. Okay?

**As Education Student:** Absolutely.

... (to self) RIGHT BRAINED, LEFT BRAINED? First “pedagogy,” now this!

*Education Student trying to calm herself down, slowly sits down on the floor with an intense stare of rage and panic.*

**As Education Student:** Just “be.” Right. Just.... “be.” Easy. Just “BE”?!

*Education Student taps her nails on the ground, unsettled she starts to hum a song that gives her comfort.*

**As Education Student:** Fuck it.

*Education Student gets up from the ground and dusts herself off.*

**As Education Student** gradually turning into **Artist:** Ok so...

*Education Student/Artist pacing and building with energy, embodying every word in a chaotic dance as if she is on an elastic string.*

No words...

Just feels... No. Feels... and music!

What is the missing piece? Don’t. Be. Literal.

Be moving, processing, processing... grief... loss.

Microwaves and highways to Vegas!

Pull back, forward, stuck... stuck, tired, tied... Tethered.

Fractured. *Stops.*

*Education Student/Artist takes a deep breath, and you see her entire body relax.*

**As Education Student:** I bawled after the last performance, not just because of how free, proud, and seen I had felt having my theatrical visions come to life, but because that may have been the last time. The first and last time I was able to extend myself not only as a performer, but a director. Someone with vision. The process while stressful was simultaneously effortless. It was as if all the pieces of my skills were clicking together as they were supposed to the whole time. I let go and let myself into a process and world where I was in power, where I was respected, heard.

**As Education Student** (to self): What do I have to say? There must be a way to make it all come together.

**As Education Student:** “A rare breed, indeed”

*Education Student returns to the desk. Education Student is now conducting a presentation for her education cohort on the use of Improv as a learning tool in the classroom.*

*Education Student stands downstage right and a Power point slideshow called “**Improv in the Classroom**” is displayed behind her. Images from the slideshow are added in the script at points where the slides change*

*Education Student clears her throat a couple of times trying to get the attention of her classmates.*

**As Education Student:** Good morning fellow Teacher Candidates! I am here to share with you the power of improv and how it can support learning in the classroom.

**As Education Student:** As many of you are already aware, I have a theatre background. I know, shocker (*Awkwardly laughs to self and notices that no one else is laughing*). And I was inspired by the drama teachers I had the chance to work with last year during our annual professional development day. Many of them were drama teachers who also were teaching other subjects in their schools. And as someone who hasn’t had the opportunity to teach drama yet in my own practicum, I learned how these teachers were using improv and drama to support their students outside of the drama classroom.



- Sage
- Combining curriculums and programs
- Working together



**As Education Student:** So, what is improv anyway? Well at its core, it's an art of creation. One could arguably say that we "do improv" or improvise just about everything in our lives, everyday! Some folks just get intimidated when it's tied to the thought of performing. What I've seen and experienced over the years is that it can be used in many different ways even beyond entertainment! It can be used to roleplay problem-solving, bettering listening and communication skills, or even exploring difficult subjects in a more hands-on and interactive way.



**As Education Student:** But first we must review the rules! Yes, there are rules to improv. These rules may vary from person to person, but at their core the idea is to listen, reflect, support, and move forward together. All of these rules are there to encourage collaboration and isn't that what we want to see from our students?



**As Education Student:** This isn't really part of my presentation, but if you think about it, these rules can be an interesting guide for life.

**As Education Student:** Oh! And there is a very important 'bonus rule': It's okay to fail! It's our responsibility as their teachers and learning facilitators, to create and encourage an environment where students want to take risks and expand not just their learning, but who they are as people. Spaces aren't inherently safe just because we say they are. A space is dictated by the actions, role modeling, and accountability held within that space. All things to consider when you're asking students to try something new.



**As Education Student:** On that note! Let's do some examples with improv exercises and how they support different subjects. Ready?

*The slides fade away, and Education Student makes her way to lean on the front of the desk facing the audience.*

**As Education Student:** This was not the first time I presented my drama side to my cohort. But I was the only student who had theatre and film as a teachable so, besides my two close friends, there were few folks who took interest in my ideas.

**As Education Student:** Most of my classmates scrolled on their phones and displayed zero interest in asking questions or engaging whatsoever. I really tried to not take it personally. But it was hard not to.

**As Education Student:** This was my graduating year and that presentation was the nail in the coffin of 5 years of trying to find ways in which I could keep my artist in harmony with becoming a teacher in the eyes of my peers. The worst part was that I knew what I was sharing worked. I was actively practicing the skills with students that year and they loved it!

**As Education Student:** So, what was I doing wrong? It was exhausting, it still is.

**As Education Student:** It felt... feels like begging.

**As Education Student:** And that's not even with the fear setting in.

*On the screen is projected a reflection assignment. **Education Student** makes her way to the stool after frantically pacing and moving about the room.*

*Projected on the screen*

Do I need to change who I am because I'm a teacher? I personally don't feel like I live a wild life in which I would have to change, but I can be a potty mouth with my friends. I have fixed it while I'm in my professional spaces, but when I'm at sporting events, I can become a .... passionate fan... It does scare me that I may get carried away and say something. I try to always have my teacher hat on, but I'm human.

September 20th (Graduation Year)

**As Education Student:** One of my profs told us the other day...

**As Education Professor:** Did you all hear about the teacher who was seen wearing a two-piece bathing suit by her students and their families over the summer? They reported her for it

**As Education Student:** No...

**As Education Professor:** Well, these are things that happen. Don't forget that we are public figures, held to a higher standard. So, be careful what you do outside of the classroom, because you never know who is watching.

**As Education Student:** Okay...

**As Education Professor:** That includes all your social media and anything online. Last thing you need is a student or a parent, or an admin finding your information and seeing something they don't like.

**As Education Student** (to audience): This wasn't the first time we had... "the talk." We were raised in the world of Tumblr and the birth of Instagram, but with interviews quickly approaching. It. Felt. Different.

**As Education Student:** By this time, I had already deleted most of my accounts, but with each story, the fear expanded beyond social media. I avoided malls near my practicum schools, drinks with friends after work, even switched to mostly work outs at home to have some false semblance of privacy.

**As Education Student:** Now I understand, if you chose to work somewhere, yes, there are professional standards like... don't do illegal shit! Don't post videos and photos of you to the world of getting black out drunk, or doing drugs, or being racist, or getting into arguments at football games even if the call was in fact complete garbage!

**As Education Student:** But we shouldn't have to hide, right? Right?!

**As Education Student:** I never asked to be put on some pedestal. But it was as if we were asked to curate a permanent persona because no matter where we were, we were never going to be able to clock out of being Teacher.

*Education Student storms her way to the bookshelf and pulls out a 3-ring binder that is labeled "TEACHING PORTFOLIO." Education Student sits at the desk and nervously plays with the binder.*

**As Education Student:** In an attempt to prepare us for interviews we were strongly encouraged to make teaching portfolios. These were binders or even websites that highlighted all the things that made us special, accomplished, and most importantly...hireable.

*Education Student flips through her old teaching portfolio binder.*

**As Education Student:** This is it.

**As Education Student:** Five years of planning lessons, practicum evaluations, projects, presentations, but why does this feel so hollow?

**As Education Student:** *(reading a section from a student teaching assessment, she slows down):* "Mme is firm and caring with her students. She finds ways to adapt and support all learners in her class." This was from last year! Those kids were something wild, but in the best way.

**As Education Student:** Oh, here is that French lesson all about travel and food. We used Google Maps to explore Paris. I had to completely reschedule that activity because the divisional network was down for 3 days!

**As Education Student:** Oh, and our presentations about our favourite music group or artist. "No Hun, you're not the biggest 'ventilateur' of One Direction. But that did inspire a whole other conversation about the roots and history of language along with the dangers of Google Translate.

*Education Student takes a beat and sees all the assignments in her French classes that she was so proud to have created and experienced with her students, but something is leaving her unsettled.*

**As Education Student:** There's pieces missing. Fragments. I can feel it.

*The stage goes dark and the projector lights up with the following quotes from a daily reflection journal written by the Narrator in her final year of her education undergrad program.*

*Projected on the screen*

Reflection #2048 "Putting this together was a bit of a struggle because I found myself only talking about my academic self and it wasn't until I let it sit for a bit that I realized that I needed to reflect on who I was outside of the classroom that effected who I was inside the classroom."

... I really don't want someone judging me based off my ... well... cover.

**As Education Student** (to self): It's okay, really. It's all going to be ok. You got this.

*Education Student opens the laptop and starts vigorously typing.*

**As Education Student:** "To whom it may concern..." Ew no. "Hello there!" ugh no. Too casual. "Howdy!" Absolutely not... "Bonjour and Good afternoon, I hope this email finds you well. I am a currently an education student... with a French Major and am very interested in being part of your school family..." no... too much..." school community! Please see my resume and cover letter attached. I look forward to our conversation!"

**END OF ACT 2**

### ACT 3

*Mentor puts ambient jazz music on in the background from her laptop and looks to her 'Teacher Candidate.'*

**As Mentor:** I like to set the tone for the evening, and I find 'café jazz' is the perfect balance of relaxed and professional.

**As Mentor:** I have found it tends to settle the nerves, which can be helpful for us and the students when we're feeling a little 'under the microscope.'

**As Mentor:** But you'll find what works for you - I just don't suggest Death Metal or Carmina Burana; might give the wrong impression.

**As Mentor:** Anyways... (*checks time*) We have about 45 minutes before our first meeting, so I'd take the chance to grab some pizza downstairs and get yourself settled, okay?

**As Mentor:** I'll be down in a bit, just got to get some last-minute things together.

*Mentor's eyes follow the 'Teacher Candidate' leave and her shoulders drop. She notices the guide on the desk and opens it to Chapter 3. This time when she reads the chapter aloud, it's with curiosity, sincerity, and a touch of sadness.*

**As Mentor:**

### Chapter 3

Balancing Acts – Merging the Personal and Professional You

Who are you when the classroom door closes? And who are you when it opens again? Every teacher walks this line—the desire to bring your authenticity to the world, and the need to maintain the professional presence it relies on.

This balance is not about building walls; it is about creating healthy boundaries. Both people can exist. The work is in deciding when each side leads.

Over time, these identities often learn to speak to each other rather than compete. The goal is not to choose one over the other, but to create a version of teaching that lets you be whole.

***Mentor** frustrated, throws the book across the room and the music stops. She looks to the sky in exhaustion, takes a deep breath and goes back to pick up the book to place on the shelf. While putting the book away she notices an old camcorder that has been placed on the shelf, but sort of hidden. She dusts it off, fiddles with it, turns it on and makes her way to front center stage as she delivers her next line to the audience.*

**As Self:** When did I become an artist? When did I see myself as an artist?

**As Self:** I don't think the doctor slapped me on the ass and said, "This one, she's gonna like showtunes... a lot."

**As Self:** I don't think I can capture a specific moment (*holding up the camera*) because I feel it's always been there.

**As Self:** I can say though that there have been peaks and valleys.

***Self** readjusts as the memories come in.*

**As Self:** There was once a time where I felt, maybe not my most "artistic," but like "Artist-uninterrupted."

**As Self:** I attended a Music Camp for 4 summers in my teens. It was an immersive experience where not only did we practice an art that excited and challenged us, but also, we were immersed into a supportive arts community.

**As Self:** Every aspect of my day was devoted to developing my skills and identity as an artist and performer.

**As Self:** It was also a chance to step away from any thoughts of doubt about the value of what I was doing.

**As Self:** No questioning, just simply existing joyfully, and unapologetically.

**As Self:** In high school, we called it the 'Post-Show Low.' The emptiness after being part of a production. This time at Camp ... it was... that... on steroids.

**As Self:** There was nothing like that camp.

**As Self:** In a way it felt like a fever dream, and I know deep down I've been chasing that feeling for years.

**As Self:** It wasn't even about the performance; it was the entire atmosphere continuously affecting how I saw the world and myself in it.

**As Self:** It's where I felt my most comfortable, challenged, and courageous.

**As Self:** The same feelings I've wanted my students to have when they learn in my classes; while at the time I didn't know it yet.

*Self sits on the edge of the stage*

**As Self:** What happened to her? Pushed away? Let go of? Hidden?

**As Self:** I don't think she ever disappeared; not completely.

**As Self:** Just chipped away by threats of joblessness, rolled eyes, and questions of credibility from colleagues, peers, professors, and (*sigh*) myself.

**As Self:** Fear is a wicked bitch.

*Self goes to the bookshelf and finds an old shoebox filled with broken pieces of what seems to be a small bust. Making her way to the front of the stage she opens the box looking at the pieces as they move around making noise. She sits cross-legged at the edge of the stage with the box open in her lap. Picking up the pieces she continues.*

**As Self:** Now I continuously struggle to pick up the fragments and trying to blend them into the parts of teacher that I sculpted for everyone to see.

**As Self (to self):** Constantly chasing her behind the scenes, chasing the feeling of wholeness.

**As Self:** When being "Artist" isn't part of my every day, it's easy to forget about the pieces that have fallen.

**As Self:** Then I catch a glimpse of others teaching, being artists all at the same time, and I sink back into sadness, fear, regret, and envy while pulling the fragments out of my pockets of once was.

*Self stands up to make her way back to the desk.*

**As Self:** I let a person be broken apart because I thought I had to.  
So, who am I now?

**Self** *puts the box down on the desk, picks up the name plate, plays with it in her hands, analysing each side. She pulls a marker out from the drawer and writes her name on the blank side, and places it firmly on the desk. Self makes her way to the door and leaves the stage/classroom out the door. The stage lights dim to just a soft spot on the name plate.*

**END**

## **Appendix D**

### **Code List**

1. Artist
2. Artist Identity
3. Artist-Teacher Identity
4. Character
5. Mentor
6. Persona
7. Student
8. Student Teacher/Teacher Candidate/Education Student
9. Teacher
10. Teacher Identity
11. Teacher-Artist Identity