THE IMAGE IN THE MIRROR:
HOW FOUR ELEMENTARY MUSIC TEACHERS
UNDERSTAND THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

by

Alberta Kim Eyre

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Abstract

Ongoing development of professional identity is critical for pre-service and in-service elementary music teachers to grow and evolve as music educators over the course of their careers. This study was designed to gain insight into the factors surrounding the formation and ongoing development of professional identity of 4 elementary music teachers in southwestern Ontario, Canada. Narrative in both design and approach, the stories of 4 individual elementary music educators, each at different points along their careers paths, were told using their own words. My personal narrative was also added to the discussion. The participants were known to me in advance of the study and invited to be part of the study because they are all reflective practitioners who were comfortable sharing their stories of teaching music with me. All participants were women, which parallels the reality of the profile of elementary music teachers in Ontario.

Over a period of 4 months, I met with each participant for semi-structured interviews and in-school observations. Interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and later transcribed and verified by participants. Field notes were kept during classroom observations and supplemented by journal writings. Informal conversations, via telephone, email, or face-to-face further supplemented the data collected. The data was analyzed by reading and rereading, looking for themes, commonalities and differences
of the participants. The results of the study are not meant to be generalized to a larger population, but to provide rich illustrations which may lead to common understanding.

The identities of these participants, and my identity, were first influenced through early experiences with music and teaching in the home, at school and in the community. As the participants began university undergraduate programs, both positive and negative experiences informed their developing identity as did experiences in pre-service and in-service teaching. The research findings and recommendations of this study have implications in several areas, including: issues of teacher identity, ongoing professional development and, pre-service and in-service education.
Acknowledgments

My parents, Donna and Ken Eyre have always been my most ardent supporters and continue to love me unconditionally. My father provided me with my first impression of what it means to be a music teacher. It was due to my mother’s determination that I beat “million-to-one odds” and survived at all, after being born 10 weeks early weighing 2 lbs., 3 oz. Along with my sister and brother, now joined by brother-in-law, sister-in-law and five wonderful nephews and nieces, my family has always encouraged me in whatever I’ve chosen to do, especially in my educational adventures and travels. Thank you to Mom, Dad, Lynda, Phil, Walter, Gail, Dominic, Nadia, Niklas, Alysha and Ryan for your constant support.

As a secondary school student, I benefitted from belonging to strong music programs in two different schools. It was during these years that I had the good fortune to learn from a fine musician and even better teacher. His passion for music showed in his face and body and his delight in his young students was apparent. I also found my first role model of a female music teacher during this time and I had visions of being just like her when I grew up. Thank you to my secondary school music teachers.

I have had the good fortune to study with many passionate educators in my undergraduate, diploma and masters programs. To those who introduced me to the philosophy of Zoltán Kodály at The University of Western Ontario, Wilfrid Laurier University, The University of Calgary, Holy Names University and The Kodály Zoltán Zenepedagógiai Intézete, you have guided my growth as a teacher. Köszönöm szépen.
My years of teaching in elementary schools were truly blessed. Thank you to the students, staff and administration at Ryerson and John Dearness Public Schools and the L. B. Pearson School for the Arts for supporting me as I made my first attempts at teaching and along my continuing journey as a teacher. I count among you teachers who continue to mentor me and many of you who I am privileged to call “friend.” I delight in learning news of former students and even more in having the opportunity to work with some of them again as they complete pre-service and in-service teacher education.

The past years teaching at the Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario have been immensely rewarding and are responsible for my decision to pursue a PhD. Thank you to fabulous faculty and staff who continue to support my learning and teaching. My greatest pleasure is interacting with the remarkable emerging teachers with whom I am privileged to work. The teaching profession is truly blessed to have such dedicated, passionate, creative and committed teachers entering the profession. Your future students are fortunate indeed.

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Finally, I must conclude by thanking my partner in life who has patiently supported me day in and out throughout this entire adventure in his own quiet way.
Steve, I can’t begin to thank you for all you continue to do. Your car has memorized the path to the train station and you are almost as familiar with the stories of my participants as I am. Thank you for your unwavering belief that I could do this and for continually supporting me throughout this long process. I look forward to the near future when time will allow us to engage in a joint adventure ... Alaska? Australia? Your call.
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Dedication

To elementary school music teachers everywhere who,

like Janice, Annabelle, Rose and Olivia,

continue to inspire their students
to be the best they can be every day
through and in music.
Music is interwoven with parts of my life, especially with family. The two cannot be separated. My grandmother was a church organist, my father a musician and music teacher and my mother, possessing possibly the best musical “ear” of all, played the piano instinctively, without any training. A passage taken from a story-of-self describes my family’s relationship with music and a typical family gathering.

From my earliest memories of family gatherings, music has played a central role. My paternal grandmother was a piano teacher, church organist and choir leader and each of her four children played at least one instrument. Her husband, my grandfather, liked to joke that he played one instrument well – the radio. While all four siblings have retained their love of music throughout their lives, through participating in community music groups, my father was the only one to pursue it as a profession. He became a music teacher.

As well as playing an instrument, each of the children sang. In the attic of my parent’s home, I’m sure there are still stacks upon stacks of certificates from local music festivals awarded to my father for various vocal and instrumental categories.

My earliest memories of holiday times include my grandmother at the piano and everyone who was old enough to read, or pretend to read, with music as we sang together. The various combinations of vocal groupings seemed endless, for example: male barbershop quartet or chorus; grandchildren only; women only; siblings only. Soon anyone who had an instrument handy joined in too.
In the summer, we took our instruments and went outside. My father would bring home band scores and we would all gather in our backyard and play marches and other concert band music to the delight (?) of our neighbours.

My grandmother would accompany all of her 10 grandchildren for school tests, conservatory exams and at music festivals. I felt very lucky because she knew my strengths and weaknesses well enough to “cover” for me by playing a little louder than necessary when need be.

My grandmother died when I was in my 2nd year of university and family gatherings have not been the same since. (Journal notes, January 20, 2004)

As this story illustrates, music has played an important role in my immediate and extended family and continues to do so today. Whether it is through conversations with various cousins, aunts or uncles, when we happen to meet about their current music making experiences or cheering my sister, niece and nephews on as they perform, music provides strong family connections.

When I was growing up, it was through my grandmother and her music that strong family connections were made. My immediate family attended the church where Grandma was the organist and my sister and I sang in her junior choir. However, when I look back at my time in high school, I realize that one of the most thoughtful gestures my grandmother made was to accompany her grandchildren when we were performing music, whether it be school exams, music festivals, church or other performances. I remember her coming to our house to rehearse with us, encourage us and offer gentle suggestions to guide the performance. Not only did she play the piano part for us,
Grandma knew our strengths and weaknesses so well that, if an upcoming section of the music was difficult for us, she would help us out by slowing down slightly or playing a little louder, whatever it took to “cover” for our weaknesses. This was something I took for granted at that time; after all, that’s just what Grandma did. As I reflect back on it, I realize that she was really taking much care of us so that we would have the best possible music making experience. Apparently, this was not something that Grandma did only for her grandchildren, as my father remembers her doing this for him and his siblings when they were young performers.

When I was growing up, live music was often heard coming from our house as my sister, brother or I would be practicing our instruments or my father would be preparing scores for one of his school or community groups. When I was in secondary school, Saturday mornings would be especially busy with my father teaching brass downstairs and me teaching piano or flute in the living room. My mother deserves a medal for doing her work around the house in spite of this cacophony of sound.

As family and music are entwined, so are community connections with music in my life. One of the strongest, not unusual for a musician, is in the church. In fact, my first distinct musical memory of church is of singing in the choir.

I was about 5 years old and was really excited as all the choirs at the church we belonged to were combining together to sing for a special Christmas service. I was careful not to crease my long white choir gown and tried to stand still. This was a difficult task, as the large choir loft seemed to be overflowing with singers. My age group was the youngest with the adult choir being the oldest. I was in awe of the “big” high school boys singing the solos in We Three Kings. Their voices were deep and
loud when they sang. I remember being so proud of being part of such a group. (Interview, February 4, 2004)

This was the first recollection I have of a strong link between music and church. It seemed to me that the most beautiful offering we could give to God was the sound of voices and instruments praising His name. Even today, my spirituality is connected with being inside the stained glass windows and high ceilings of a church and making music with and for others to celebrate and offer praise. When I am involved in the act of making music in church, I often experience intense emotions of joy, peace or grief, as the occasion warrants, and connections to those with whom I am making music and to those who are involved in the music through listening in the congregation. We are all joined together for the same purpose. A story telling of a recent event echoes the connection I originally made between music and church over 4 decades ago.

Not long ago, the church to which I belong celebrated an important milestone of the church, its 150th anniversary. As one would expect, the anniversary of the church is celebrated each year and for the last 25 years the music ministry has celebrated by commissioning a Canadian composer to compose a piece for the musicians of our church to be premiered on Anniversary Sunday.

In anticipation of the 150th Anniversary Sunday, something special was called for. A local composer was asked to write a celebratory piece which included parts for senior choir, youth choir, junior choir, organ, two flutes, two trumpets, two trombones, two percussion, and hand bells.

I was honoured to play one of the flute parts and began my personal practice. It was only when the final rehearsal schedule came out that I became aware of a conflict. Due to the difficulty of bringing together
approximately 90 singers and 16 instrumentalists, only one full rehearsal was planned before the premiere performance on Anniversary Sunday, 2003. Unfortunately, the day of the rehearsal I had a previous commitment to present a workshop in a city 4 1/2 hours away from my home. As a result, the first time I played the piece with all the other musicians present was during the performance. As we prepared to begin the performance, my eyes were drawn to the congregation where almost every pew upstairs and down seemed to be overflowing with people curiously watching the 100+ musicians at the front of the church. The singers and players seemed to catch the feeling of anticipation as well. As we began the work, I felt a surge of energy, excitement and overall tingling as I experienced this piece as a whole for the very first time. It was as if we were all in sync with one another and nothing could go wrong. Musicians and listeners were connected together in one purpose. In fact, before I knew it, the piece had ended and the composer was being led to the front of the church to receive flowers and recognition from the appreciative musicians and congregation. (Journal notes, November 17, 2003)

Again, a strong connection of making music with others in a church setting to celebrate – in this case, a very special anniversary resonates strongly for me. However, the connection with the music of the church is not always relegated to performance in the church.

I was thrilled to be chosen to play in the first National Youth Band of Canada, in the summer of 1978. As we began to rehearse the first selection at the first rehearsal, the Vaughan Williams arrangement of *Sine Nomine*, many previously made connections played a role in my experiencing intense emotion. I was away from my family for an extended period of time, something that was a new experience for me. I was making music with other players, the quality of playing was very high and the selection we were
playing held memories of singing this melody in church. All these factors combined to make the experience very meaningful to me.

While I took piano and flute lessons and did perform as a "solo" act, my most memorable music experiences involve others. In my early years, it was my family and later friends made at school or in various ensembles. In fact, after almost 30 years, I am still in touch with some of the friends I made in the National Youth Band. Sharing the experience of music with others in various musical communities is something that is important to me and it is in this setting that intense feelings come to the surface. The following example, taken from my experience as a graduate student in California, illustrates this point:

As I walked into the Recital Hall, I marvelled at the sweet smell of spring in the air and the lushness of the flowers and trees. The fact that the calendar said it was September didn't change that feeling of spring for me. Back home, days would be getting cooler, leaves would be turning colour and school was back in session -without me. For after 9 years of teaching, I was suddenly a student again, working toward a Master of Music degree. I felt selfish, giddy and somewhat "cool" to be living in California for a year.

We were there to participate in a choral reading session, led by composer-arranger Betty Bertaux. We proceeded in reading through many of her pieces, enjoying the experience of singing together, and soon we pulled out May Day Carol. As the simple piano accompaniment began, joined soon with a lovely unison melody, I read the words. "I've been travellin' all the night and the best part of the day. And when I come back home again, I'll bring you a branch of May.” As the verses progressed, the unison sound grew to two- and three- part singing. I was “in the moment,” experiencing the exquisite sounds of this piece – the vocal parts, the
accompaniment and the text. I could hardly wait to do this song with one of my school or church choirs.

Just as suddenly, it hit me that I didn’t have a church or school choir anymore. To my embarrassment, tears started dripping down my face and little sobs escaped before I could control them. Fortunately for me, the colleagues on either side of me were still engrossed in the music and didn’t notice my loss of control. By the time the song ended, I was mostly composed.

In this experience, the intensity of the music, being away from home and knowing that my usual musical outlets were gone, all converged in a way in which I had not previously experienced. (Journal notes, January 20, 2004)

In looking back on my involvement in making music in my family and various musical communities, I realize that my future teacher self was being shaped through these experiences. I believe that every student deserves to participate in a music community where his/her voice is welcomed and encouraged. Every student should have the opportunity to experience the intense and transformative power that involvement in music can bring. Every student should be supported in his/her music making attempts, knowing that they will be encouraged in their efforts and will not be laughed at or ridiculed. These tenets are especially important for me in my current work as a teacher educator working with pre-service teachers, many of whom have not been involved in music making for several years, if at all.
Learning from Teachers

My connections with music, family and community often involved learning and teaching in an intricately woven fabric that has shaped and continues to shape me as a person. From the time I was young, I related best to teachers with whom I had some kind of a personal connection and who were interested in my development as a learner and person.

By the time I was in secondary school, I had decided that I wanted to be a high school band teacher. In retrospect, this is not unusual, as this was the model I had at home in my father. I've always known that he must have been an influence on me as I learned to become a teacher. However, it was not until I began writing about “my father the teacher” during doctoral course work that I began to realize just how influential he was.

In addition to enjoying the sound of my father’s band, I also liked meeting and talking with the high school band members. As the children of the teacher/conductor, the band members usually spoiled us and we liked being the centre of attention. Long after the concerts were over, groups of band members stayed close to my father, wanting to talk to him. They cared about him and wanted him to know about their lives. I remember one year when they somehow discovered that their spring concert day happened to also be my father’s birthday. Unbeknownst to him, they had arranged for a large birthday cake to be delivered to the stage. When my father gave the downbeat for the final piece of the program, the band played “Happy Birthday” instead. They had been practicing on their own, without him knowing. My father, who can be a very emotional man, was unable to speak for a moment, as he was very touched that they would do this for him. (Journal notes, March 22, 2006)
In reflecting on my memories of my father in his role as music teacher, I realize the powerful connections that were being made for me. My father’s students cared for my father and enjoyed making music for and with him. His music students and ensembles were communities that he, and they, nurtured as illustrated by the birthday cake vignette.

The music teachers with whom he worked later on in his role as music consultant in the school district also formed a community, one that he carefully nurtured with assistance from my mother. Through hosting meetings and social gatherings at our house, that specialized community was brought into the community of our family. As I got older, the music teachers welcomed me into their talking circles about music teaching.

My father included me in his vision of teaching music, through conversation, participating in instrument repair, music purchasing trips and watching and participating in school performances he was coordinating.

The themes of caring for people and community have surfaced in many ways in the story of my father; he not only cared for people and built community he was the recipient of much care too—something that impacted my growth as a person and music educator as well. I still remember that summer day in 1983, as a new Bachelor of Education graduate, when the Director of Education of my home school district sat me down in his office and vowed that in spite of the fact that teaching positions were few and far between, he would find me a teaching position. After all, my father had given so much to the board and I was a “talented young teacher who should be teaching.”
Lucy, I soon had a job in another city, but did appreciate the caring and respect he showed for my father by trying to find a teaching position for me.

When I began teaching, my father and I entered a new phase of our relationship; that of professional colleagues. He and my mother have always supported and encouraged all their children but I was the only one who followed in my father’s footsteps. As a result, I feel a special bond with my father through our shared experiences of teaching and music. As I write this, I find that my throat is tight and my eyes a little watery. Feeling and showing emotion when engaging in music making and/or teaching is something that my father is not afraid to do. This is a gift he has given to me as I often react in the same manner.

When I look back at my elementary and secondary school music experiences, they were mixed at best. However, they did provide me with other examples of how I would or would not conduct myself as a teacher.

When I think about it, I believe I became a music teacher in spite of my early school experiences. I have very few memories of music experiences from elementary school days. In Grade 6, we had music once in a while. The only song I remember singing was *California Dreamin’*. In Grade 7 it was *Yellow Bird*. I don’t think we had music in Grade 8, but I remember another girl and I playing recorder duets at recess.

In high school, the department head was what I think of as the “old school” band teacher. We played well, but he often got results by yelling at people. (Interview, February 4, 2004)

Fortunately for me, a new teacher arrived at the school, one with whom I could identify.
When I was in Grade 10, Mrs. C. came to teach music at my school. It didn’t take long for me to realize that when I grew up, I wanted to be like her. In fact, I still want to be like Mrs. C. when I grow up.

When I think back on things, I realize why I wanted to be like her. She was a woman (all my other teachers were male), she was short like me, she was knowledgeable, kind, patient, caring, understanding, determined, had high standards, and put up with the head of the department who could be a bit of a bully.

We stayed in touch after my graduation and still do – through a mutual friend. I think of her often and should let her know how much of an impact she has had on me. (Journal notes, January 6, 2004)

When I reflect back on my school experiences, I realize that there are learning opportunities here, in relation to what I want for my students. When my elementary school age students look back on their elementary school music experience, I want them to remember music as being something that we joyfully engaged in several times a week. I want them to remember many songs, games, activities and performance opportunities, not only one song. I do not want my students to remember me as a bully, as someone who yelled at them if we did not place first in the music festival or made fun of them if they couldn’t play a certain part, but hope that I might be a model for young women of what can be accomplished if one is professional, kind and positive.

When I think about learning what it meant to be a music teacher, I realize that the most profound mentor I had was my father. He taught me the importance of creating and nurturing a caring community where each person is valued for who they are. He taught me to be dedicated to my profession and strive to be the best that I can be and to
keep the focus where it belongs, on the students. He taught me that the best way to
demonstrate leadership was by leading and supporting others. He taught me that it is
acceptable to have strong emotional reactions to the transformative power of music and
the caring of others.

**From Teacher to Teacher-Educator**

I have been very fortunate in my teaching career, as I have always been
surrounded by supportive teaching peers and administrators. Instead of becoming a
high school band teacher, I became an elementary music teacher and have taught in a
variety of elementary schools with a variety of teaching assignments from Junior
Kindergarten to Grade 8 including both homeroom and music (band and choral). I have
learned a great deal from my colleagues, but perhaps even more from my students.

Eight years ago, I was seconded from my school board to teach music to
elementary specialist and generalist pre-service teachers at the Faculty of Education,
The University of Western Ontario. My previous teaching experiences involving adult
learners were very rewarding, and I welcomed this opportunity to share my passion for
music education with emerging teachers. With little preparation as to how to teach in
this kind of a setting, at first I worked mostly by instinct. My first task was to make the
students feel comfortable in my classroom. It is not always as easy as this might seem.

As part of the primary/junior and junior/intermediate pre-service program
at The Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario, students
are required to take Teaching and Learning Theory courses in all
curriculum areas, including music. While some students eagerly anticipate
the opportunity to continue their involvement in music, many experience
varying levels of anxiety. When they come to the realization that there is a reasonable likelihood that they could be required to teach music in their elementary school classroom when they enter the teaching profession, the anxiety sometimes turns to panic.

The organization of classes of students within the 16 sections of Teaching and Learning Theory courses is random, with the result being that one student with an undergraduate music degree or several years of private lessons or choral experience could end up sitting next to another student who has not had any kind of music experience since their early elementary school education. In addition, the kinds of previous music experiences of students are mixed. While some have fond memories of nurturing, enthusiastic music teachers and rewarding, even magical, music making experiences, for others the experience was quite different. These students’ remembered experiences, related in a ‘music information survey’ completed the 1st day of class, include:

being belittled by my Grade 7 band teacher because I couldn’t play the clarinet.

The music teacher laughed when he heard me sing.

The choir teacher said I could be in the choir with my friends, but only if I promised to mouth the words.

In Grade 1; the music teacher grouped us according to our singing ability. There were three groups: the “nightingales,” the “bluebirds” and the “crows”. I was a crow and was OK with being a crow. One day, she listened to me sing and promoted me to the bluebirds. After about a month, she listened to me sing again. I had a cold at the time and I told her that, but she didn’t listen. Instead, she put be back with the crows. I never wanted to sing again. (Journal notes, May 10, 2003)
I soon realized that many of my students entered music class for the first time filled with misgivings, based on their personal history involving school, and other music experiences. If they did not trust the other students in the class and me, I doubted if they would be able to open themselves to new and positive music experiences. Even if they remembered positive, nurturing music experiences, they were often insecure about their own personal ability to teach music. I needed to let all students know that my classroom is a safe place, a place where they are encouraged to take risks without fear of being laughed at or made fun of. This class represents a family or community for the time we are together, just as my own family and community music experiences were and continue to be for me. For it is with this foundation that one can risk, explore and discover along the journey of becoming who s/he is as a teacher.
It is critical that emerging music teachers have the opportunity to explore the realities of what it means to be a music teacher to assist them in making the successful transition from student teacher to teacher. When, in my role as an instructor of pre-service music education, I ask pre-service music education students why they want to become music teachers, their answers revolve around similar themes of making a difference in the lives of their students and sharing their passion for music with their students. They have visions of opening their students’ lives to the joys, gifts, mysteries and wonders of music, just as many of their music teachers did for them, so that music will be as important a part of their students’ lives as it is of theirs.

Dolloff (2003a) had this same vision for herself as an elementary school music teacher. She relates the story of her 1st day of teaching elementary school music. With a “missionary spirit,” she intended to provide for her students a creative, engaging experience in music that she had missed in her own elementary school music education experience (p. 23). While this approach worked well for most of the classes she taught that 1st day, it was not well received by one class of Grade 8 students. She was crushed. Dolloff’s experience is similar to the experiences of other emerging teachers when they enter the teaching profession to find that their preconceived ideals of teaching fail to match with the realities of a beginning teacher (Cockburn, 2000; Lynn, 2002; Richards & Killen, 1993; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). They are unprepared for the reality shock that is often experienced during the 1st year of teaching (Richards & Killen,
This can lead to feelings of frustration, failure and disenchantment with teaching (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Hebert & Worthy, 2001). If these conflicting feelings are not resolved, implications for both the teachers and their students they teach can result. Some teachers may become discouraged with teaching music, which could impact their performance in the classroom, future development as a music teacher or cause them to not want to continue their career in teaching music. Studies have shown that, in North America, approximately 30% of teachers with 5 or fewer years of teaching experience choose to leave the teaching profession. While the reasons for leaving are complex, and may not be fully understood, studies cite the lack of positive experiences in teaching as a major contributing factor (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2002; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001).

Cockburn (2000) holds these experiences of frustration, failure, and disenchantment with teaching are also felt by some experienced teachers at various stages of their career. He further proposes that this can impact teaching performances, relationship with students, colleagues, other in the educational community and further development as teachers. In other words, perception of identity as a teacher, or professional identity, is deeply entwined with teaching practice.
**Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of this study are to explore:

1. the perceptions that elementary\(^1\) school music teachers have of their own professional identity,

2. the factors contributing to the formation of identity, and

3. the impact their perceptions have on their personal teaching practice and continuing development as teachers.

The research findings and recommendations of this study will have implications in several areas, including: teacher satisfaction, ongoing personal professional development, teacher retention and pre-service and in-service teacher education.

**Research Questions**

In order to gather as much rich data as possible to assist in understanding the formation of professional identity of the study participants and guide discussion, the following questions were developed:

1. How do 4 elementary music teachers see themselves as music educators?

2. What is the impact of their perceived professional identity on their teaching practice and continued development as music educators?

\(^{1}\) I use the term “elementary” the way in which it is used in the Ontario, Canada, school system. Children enter elementary school at age 4 in Junior Kindergarten and graduate from elementary school upon completion of Grade 8 at age 14.
Sub-questions.

1. How do these music teachers describe their own professional identity?

2. How is professional identity constructed in these study participants?

3. What factors affected the development of professional identity of these study participants?

4. What are points of intersection between music teacher identity and teacher practice for these participants?

Definitions

These definitions are used to delimit the terms of the study and help determine the theoretical framework.

Elementary School: Junior Kindergarten (age 4) through Grade 8 (age 14).

Holistic Teaching: “pedagogical approaches that consciously attempt to (a) promote student learning and growth on levels beyond the cognitive, (b) incorporate diverse methods that engage students in personal exploration and help them connect course materials to their own lives, and (c) help students clarify their own values and their sense of responsibility to others and to society” (Grauerholz, 2001, p. 44.)

Identity: “the imaginative view or role that individuals project for themselves in particular social positions, occupations, or situations” (Woodford, 2002, p. 675).

Musician-Teacher: “school music educators, illuminating and celebrating the fact that making music is so important to music teachers that many, if not most, also
make their own music and live rich musical lives outside the classroom” (Bernard, 2005, p. 10).

**Musician-Teacher Identity:** [a term used] “to describe the professional identities of school music educators as a way to highlight two of the shifting positions and contexts in music educators’ professional identities – musician and teacher – that exist in relation to one another in various ways” (Bernard, 2005, p. 10).

**Narrative Inquiry:** “a broad term encompassing the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experience and reporting that kind of research” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 171).

**Perceived Self-Efficacy:** “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71).

**Qualitative Inquiry:** [a broad term] “for all forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data (i.e., data in the form of words), including ethnography, case study research, naturalistic inquiry, ethno-methodology, life-history methodology, and narrative inquiry” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 213).

**Qualitative Research:** “work that illustrates at least some of the following characteristics. First, qualitative studies are a systematic form of empirical inquiry that usually includes some type of field work. Artifacts such as textbooks and curriculum materials may be the focus of study, but qualitative work is typically field based, so that researchers may attend to the context in which events unfold. Second, once in the field,
qualitative researchers are expected to do more than mechanically record their observations. To put this another way, their ability to see and hear is regarded as an achievement rather than a task, and knowledge is viewed as something constructed rather than as something given, found, or solely existing independently of the researchers. Third, qualitative studies usually assume an interpretive focus. Researchers may seek to understand the meanings of educational experiences from the participants’ perspective (the so-called emic view), with respect to theory (the etic view), or both. The point, however, is that qualitative research is designed to examine meaning as a social, psychological, or political phenomenon. Fourth, data analysis strategies in qualitative research are typically thematic and sometimes emergent throughout the course of a study. Fifth, qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of voluntary participants” (Flinders & Richardson, 2002, p. 1160).

**Reflection:** “refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action” (Richards, 2001, p. 4).

**Self-Efficacy:** “the belief in one's ability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2).

**Solfege:** an approach to sight-singing using the syllables do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti and do to represent the pitches of a scale.
Teacher Belief: “a particularly provocative form of personal knowledge that is generally defined as pre- or in-service teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught” (Kagan, 1992, pp. 65–66).

Transformative Learning: “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

Professional Identity

Over the past 3 decades, educational researchers, including Bergner and Homes (2000), Bernard (2005), Beynon (1998), Bullough (1997), Clandinin (1986), Clandinin and Connelly (1991, 1995), Cox (1997), Dolloff (1999a, 1999b), Joyce (1975), Kiglstrom and Klein (1994), Korthagen (2004), L’Roy (1983), McCall and Simmons (1978), Prescesky (1997), Roberts (1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1993), Rose (1998) and Woodford (2002) have focused on the individual when looking at teaching. Their view is that the professional identity of a teacher is constructed socially (Bernard, 2005; Roberts, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1993; Woodford, 2002). While some feel that it is still a poorly defined concept (Beijaard et al., 2000), a common understanding of professional identity is required to provide the context for this study. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, professional identity will be defined as “the imaginative view or role that individuals project for themselves in particular social positions, occupations, or situations” (Woodford, 2002, p. 675); a definition with which others in the field, including Dolloff (1999b), McCall and Simmons (1978), and Roberts (1991b) agree.

The formation of identity in undergraduate and pre-service students has been the focus of extensive research in Canada, including Beynon (1998), Prescesky (1997),

Some consideration of the role of teacher education programs, both initial and on-going, is also appropriate in this study. Goodlad (1991) and Beattie (1995, 2001) view the process of learning to teach as a holistic process, involving the development of the whole person. By assisting the teacher candidate to reflect on his/her own personal journey and what brought him/her to teaching, those involved in undergraduate, pre-service and in-service education can all work together in a larger professional community to support the ongoing growth of a teacher from the pre-service years and through the course of his/her career.

**Methodology**

As this study is concerned with learning about the construction of identity in elementary school music teachers, the most appropriate way of getting at this is through some form of qualitative inquiry. The approach chosen here closely aligns with Flinders and Richardson’s (2002) definition of qualitative research which includes some kind of field work, and maintains that: knowledge is constructed, not given or found; meaning of educational experiences are viewed from both the perspective of the participants and
from previous theory; and data analysis are typically thematic and sometimes emergent throughout the course of a study. In such a paradigm, qualitative researchers usually work with small sample of voluntary participants (Flinders & Richardson, 2002).

Within this large genre, I looked to the approach that would help to best answer my questions surrounding the perceptions that elementary school music teachers have of their own professional identity, the factors contributing to the formation of identity and the impact their perceptions have on their personal teaching practice and continuing development as teachers. Those involved with education and educational research have long understood the value of personal experience (Bowman, 2002; Eisner, 1991; Elliott, 2002) and recently those in other professional fields have recognized its place in research as well.

I concur with Doyle (1997), who views teaching as a unique “local event,” which cannot be categorized. He posits that the telling of stories of teaching is likely the only way of knowing teaching (p. 95). The telling of stories has always been a powerful medium for sharing, educating and personal reflection. Beattie (2001) argues that for those involved in the arts, narrative inquiry may be especially appropriate. This is certainly true in my personal experience.

An important part of narrative inquiry deals with looking for the “good” in the stories of teachers and teaching. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) use the term “portraiture” to capture the innumerable ways that goodness in teaching can be expressed. By looking at what is good in teaching in a variety of different ways, a rich, vivid depiction of a teacher can be communicated.
Narrative inquiry encourages participants to share their personal stories of teaching as if they were living them again in the moment. Feelings of joy, sorrow, passion, frustration, jubilation and elation are experienced once again. Artifacts, such as letters, notes, drawings, and photographs, audio or video samples are eagerly shared. Teachers sing, dance, cry and laugh as they relive, consider and reconsider episodes from their teaching. Stories are written, emails exchanged, telephone calls made and face-to-face discussions ensue as these teachers have the opportunity – some for the first time- to share their thoughts and ideas about their personal teaching experiences with someone who sincerely is interested in their personal experiences and relationship with teaching music in elementary schools. Three kinds of data were collected in this study: teacher’s stories, observation and personal data. The use of multiple data provides a source of triangulation.

**Boundaries of the Study**

This study is qualitative in nature, employing a narrative inquiry approach. Four teachers were specifically chosen as research participants and their stories are intertwined with my own personal narrative and are not meant to generalize the larger population of elementary school music educators. The conclusions and recommendations of the study are also specific to the educators involved in this study. However, it is hoped that the commentary, summary and implications for teacher education practice will inform those involved in music teacher education at the pre-service and in-service levels, and assist other music teachers in reflecting on their own evolving professional identity. While generalization is not possible, the research findings and recommendations of this study may have implications in several areas, including:
teacher satisfaction, ongoing personal professional development, teacher retention, pre-service and in-service teacher education and life-long learning.

Procedure

In addition to writing my own personal professional narrative, I interviewed 4 music educator participants, each at different points along their career paths, including one newly graduated teacher, one beginning teacher with fewer than 5 years experience, one teacher in her 9th year of teaching and one veteran teacher with 18 years teaching experience.

Elementary music teachers at various stages of their careers were included in the study purposefully, to explore identity formation from a variety of time and experiential lenses. By adding my voice to the discussion and working with teachers at various stages in their careers as music educators, rich connections emerged that seem to offer new understandings about the professional identity of these elementary school music teachers.

The 4 participants in this study are women, which parallels the profile of elementary music teachers in Canada. The emerging teacher involved in the study was a student of mine during her pre-service year. However, before she was approached regarding her participation in this study, her final grades had been submitted to the registrar’s office and to her, thereby eliminating any conflict of interest. While no attempt was made to exclude males from this study, few teach elementary music in the geographical region in which the study was conducted. However, it would be interesting to conduct future research with male elementary music teachers to add to the findings
of this study and learn what role, if any, gender plays in the development of identity of elementary music teachers.

It is important to note that I have had professional contact with the 4 teachers chosen for this study in the past. They were chosen because I feel they are all reflective teachers and were comfortable in speaking with me about their personal professional practice, in describing their personal reflections in journals and would welcome me in into their classrooms. The school administrators were also supportive and encouraging of this research … and proud of their music teachers.

Over a period of 4 months, I asked my participants to tell me the stories of their teaching, including interactions with students, parents, colleagues and administrators, as well as stories of their personal life experience as it relates to their career. I observed each teacher in her classroom at least twice and kept field notes and journals of my experiences. The exception was the newly graduated teacher who worked for the last 2 months of the year on a long-term occasional contract. Although she was willing to have me come into the school, I was unable to secure ethical approval from the school board in time to do the two classroom visits.

I engaged in informal conversation via email, telephone and over coffee with each participant. Following the collection and transcription of data, I read, reread and analyzed the data collected, looking for themes, commonalities and differences between the experiences of my participants as they explored and considered who they are as music teachers. While computer software programs exist to assist with such analyses, I chose to conduct my analysis pouring over hard copies of the data again and again,
immersing myself in the words of the teachers. This setting drew me into the stories and lives of these women as I compared and contrasted their experiences with coloured highlighter markers in hand. As I again became involved with the individual stories of their teaching lives, I listened closely for larger connections among the stories which I then explored as the broad themes. After tentative themes were identified, I again looked back at the data to confirm my themes and again reread the stories until thematic categories were saturated. After rejecting some themes and confirming others, I explored intersections with research literature and implications for future research.

I shared my writing with each participant, to ensure accuracy of portrayal and to further the discussion. Even now, it is not unusual for 1 of the participants to share stories of her teaching with me when we met or via email, the story often beginning with “You might be interested in this for your study.”

It is important to note that the results of this study are not meant to be generalized to a larger population. Rather, the narratives created are intended to provide rich illustrations which may provoke personal reflection or vicarious experience and lead to common understanding.

**Presentation Style**

The study is divided into three large sections entitled The Research Context, The Stories of Music Educators and Commentary and Implications for Practice, with my personal story appearing as a Prologue to the study. It is important for me to share my own story as part of this study, to allow the readers of this study an opportunity to understand my personal understanding of who I am and continue to become as a
teacher. Hopefully, my story will assist in creating the context for the stories of the participants of the study.

**Part I: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT** includes the Introduction (Chapter 1), Literature Review (Chapter 2) and Methodology (Chapter 3). As the title suggests, this section contextualizes the study and shares information about the research that has already been done on the professional identity of teachers. When possible, the work of Canadian scholars in general and specifically those working in the field of music education has been highlighted. The aim of trying to highlight the work of Canadian scholars was also employed in looking at narrative inquiry.

**Part II: THE STORIES OF MUSIC EDUCATORS** introduces the participants involved in the study and provides some background into the events and influences in each teacher’s ongoing journey as a music educator (Chapter 4) in a way I hope does justice to the vibrancy and passion of each of these women. Chapters 5–8 focus on themes that emerged from my analysis of the findings, some unique to each woman and some common to some or all of these experiences, including mine. Extensive passages of each individual story are referenced, as it is through each participant’s unique voice that her stories come alive.

The quotations were categorized using the initials of the pseudonym each participant chose and to indicate the first, second or third interview. For instance, “RT 3” indicates that it is Rose Tambor who is speaking during the third interview. The letters “A” and “B” are used to indicate that the observation or discussion occurred during the first or second time I visited that teacher’s classroom. Therefore, “JJ B”
indicates that the observation or discussion occurred during my second observation in Janice Jones’ classroom.

This doctoral research project was approved by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto. Potential participants received a letter outlining the commitments required of participants and permissions were obtained from the participants and their principals. The information related to interviews, journals, observations and other communication is stored in a locked cabinet. Electronic data is stored in a password-protected computer. Only my research supervisor and I have access to this data.

To ensure confidentiality, I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym. Each woman carefully considered the pseudonym she chose for herself and the results proved to be serendipitous in that the kinds of names chosen and the reasons behind the name selections further illuminated the uniqueness of each of these individuals. Long after the pseudonyms were chosen and an attachment to these pseudonyms was formed by the individual participant and me, it was discovered that there were two people living in southwestern Ontario whose (real) names match the fictional names of 2 of the participants; both happen to be teachers and one is a music teacher. Neither of the participants was aware of the existence of an actual person by the name they chose to be known as in the study. This occurrence is purely coincidental. Any other identifying information, such as the school name or names of colleagues and students was changed.
Part III: COMMENTARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE includes the commentary or discussion of the themes presented in Part II (Chapter 9) followed by a summary and implications for teacher education practice and further research (Chapter 10). Three large themes emerged from the stories of the three experienced teachers and two themes from the newly graduated teacher. While the emergent themes of each woman are unique, some overall commonalities are present. Two principal themes emerged when looking at the stories of all 4 participants. In addition to comparing and contrasting the themes that emerged from the 4 participants and bringing my personal stories into the discussion, this section summarizes the experience of the individuals involved in this study and makes recommendations for those involved in teacher education; including undergraduate music education programs, pre-service education programs and school boards. Although the experience of the individuals in this study is unique and is not meant to be representative of all elementary school music educators, it is hoped that some common elements may be found to inform a greater audience.
Chapter 2: Literature Review


In the 1980s and 1990s, a growing number of researchers of music teaching and learning turned away from quantitative approaches to the emerging field of social psychology of music education (Flinders & Richardson, 2002, p. 1159). By viewing the teacher as an individual, they hoped to gain new insights into the phenomena of teaching and learning, insights that could shed light on the questions being considered in this study. Looking at teaching from the perspective of the individual teacher, concepts such as the construction of teacher identity, teacher beliefs, self-efficacy, the role of emotion in teaching, life cycles of teachers and the role and perceptions of teacher education programs were explored in a way they had not been previously.

Looking at Teaching

As early as 1970, some researchers began focusing on the individual when looking at the question of “good” teaching. Although this term is open to much interpretation and tends to be avoided in current literature, it was the term first
associated with looking at the complex subject of teaching and the intent is still understood. Humanistic Based Teacher Education (HBTE) focused its attention on the person of the teacher, the individual (Korthagen, 2004, p. 79). Joyce (1975) noted that the HBTE “stresses above all the unicity and dignity of the individual” (Joyce as cited in Korthagen, 2004, p. 79).

Korthagen (2004) encourages researchers and teacher educators to adopt a holistic view when looking at teachers and teaching. He recalls Clandinin (1986) in suggesting that teacher education should focus less on the transfer of scientific knowledge and focus more on becoming conscious of one’s own “personal practical knowledge” (1988) or the knowledge of self based on previous life experiences, current realities and plans for the future. Korthagen (2004) also cites the work done in the area of self-concept by Bergner and Holmes (2000) and Kiglstrom and Klein (1994) and in teacher identity by Bullough (1997) as exploration in these areas leads to self-understanding.

Korthagen (2004) echoes the view of many contemporary researchers looking at ways of knowing what good teaching is when he says that a teacher’s competencies are determined by each individual’s beliefs. He echoes others when he states that it is impossible to provide a definition of a good teacher, as “the answers may be different depending on the context, and perhaps it is even impossible or pedagogically undesirable to formulate a definitive description of ‘the good teacher’” (p. 78). Instead, he suggests that researchers turn to stories of teachers to address this question.
Connelly and Clandinin (1988) coined the term “personal practical knowledge” to reflect their “epistemological interest in the personal and practical nature of education.” They define personal practical knowledge as:

a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher’s past experience, in the teachers’ present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher’s practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 1)

Their interest in teachers as knowers “of themselves, of their situations, of children, of subject matter, of teaching, of learning,” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 1) led them to view teacher knowledge in terms of narrative life history, as “storied life compositions.” They adopted a metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape to help them capture the complexity of teacher knowledge.

A landscape metaphor is particularly well suited to our purpose. It allows us to talk about space, place, and time. Furthermore, it has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse people, things, and events in different relationships. Understanding professional knowledge as comprising a landscape calls for a notion of professional knowledge as composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places, and things, we see it as both an intellectual and moral landscape. (p. 2)

Connelly and Clandinin developed the concept of personal practical knowledge and professional knowledge landscape to help them explore and understand teacher knowledge, and their groundbreaking work has informed and influenced greatly the work of researchers working in the area of professional identity.
Social Construction of Music Teacher Identity

Woodford (2002) defines identity as “the imaginative view or role that individuals project for themselves in particular social positions, occupations, or situations,” (p. 675) a definition with which others working in this area, including Dolloff (1996b), McCall & Simmons (1978) and Roberts (1991b), agree. Woodford states that “Identity ... is socially constructed in the sense that knowledge of self and others and of appropriate behaviour within particular social roles and context is acquired through prior experience” (p. 675). As such, it is also open to debate, reflection and change. Mead (1934) theorized that the mind and self are constructed socially, through interaction with others. "The symbolic interactionist school of sociology is based on this theory.²

Two kinds of socialization can greatly influence identity formation of undergraduate music education majors: primary, which occurs during childhood and often involves people to whom individuals have an emotional attachment, such as family, teachers and others, and secondary, which occurs after childhood when specialized knowledge is acquired, such as during studies in a secondary school or university setting (Woodford, 2002, p. 676). Primary socialization has the most influence on the socialization of undergraduate and pre-service teacher candidates, as most point to childhood experiences with family and teachers as the reason for their initial interest in music (Beynon, 1998; Dolloff, 1999a, 1999b; L’Roy, 1983; Woodford, 2002). Many undergraduate music education students often acknowledge their high school music teachers as being the reason they decided to take music at the university level; a form of secondary socialization. By the time students reach the undergraduate level,

² For further information on symbolic interactionism, see Mead, G. H. (1934). Mind, self, and society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
secondary socialization does not seem to have as much importance in the formation of music teacher identity in undergraduate music education majors (Cox, 1997; Woodford, 2002). However, as Beynon (1998), Roberts (1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1993), Rose (1998), Woodford (2002) and others have found, many students enrolled in undergraduate and pre-service music education programs are actually struggling to come to terms with two often distinct identities: “teacher” and “musician.” Woodford (2002) finds that while the pursuit of identity is key for music education students to freely explore who they are and who they might become as teachers, educational institutions in general tend to stifle this kind of “individual and collective initiative, thereby inhibiting the search for personal and professional identity among students” (p. 675).³

Roberts’ (1991b) ethnographic study of the construction of professional identity in undergraduate music education majors is considered a breakthrough in this area of research. This study involved participant observation and unstructured interviews of 116 undergraduate music education majors from five different Canadian university schools of music. Among other things, he explored the labels “musician” and “music teacher,” what they meant to music education students and how they impacted the students search for their own identity. As music education students come to music education first as performers, some had trouble reconciling their “musician” identity with their emerging “music teacher” identity. Depending upon the university at which the students studied, the hierarchy within various departments within the School or Faculty of Music contributed to negative perceptions of a music teacher as a failed performer.

Other researchers have also found that a conflict exists. Prescesky (1997) worked with 4 music education student participants in her study which found that students who viewed themselves as performers first had more trouble reconciling their musician and music teacher identities than did those who viewed themselves as musicians and music teachers. In fact, 2 of her 4 participants decided to pursue graduate work in music performance rather than head directly into teaching. Hoffer (1993) and Klotman (1972) also see a conflict between musician and music teacher identities, and contend that to be successful, music educators must choose teaching music over music making. Stephens (1995) contends that a balance between music making and music teaching must be present in a healthy professional life. Erwin, Edwards, Kerchner, and Knight (2003) see teacher and performer roles are blended, “because great teaching is a performing art and a great performer is always teaching” (p. 1).

Bernard (2005) envisions the identity of music teachers as something that is socially constructed on multiple layers and always evolving:

By conceiving of identity as something that is constructed on multiple levels, I argue that our identities are always evolving in response to our experiences and to the social context. As we negotiate the meaning of our identities from moment to moment, we construct who we are. (p. 5)

The construction of identity takes place simultaneously on three levels: individual, social, and cultural. Bernard explains:

When I step back and wonder who I am in my professional life, I wonder who I am on all of these levels. On an individual level, I think about myself: how I know myself, how I have thought about myself over the years of my life, and how I would like to think about myself. On a social level, I wonder who I am in relation to the other people around me: other music
educators, other musicians, other researchers, and so on. I also wonder about the ways that others regard and respond to me, as well as the ways that I regard and respond to other people. On a cultural level, I wonder who I am in relation to the context: in what ways I feel I do and do not fit in, do and do not understand what is going on around me, and do and do not feel comfortable and connected to activities and events. (p. 6)

Bernard disagrees with Erwin et al. (2003), Hoffer (1993), Klotman (1972), Prescesky (1997), Roberts (1991b), Stephens (1995) and others who posit that identity construction of many music education students involves conflict between their “teacher” and “musician” roles. Bernard feels that the goal of researchers and teachers taking this view see their role as transforming a student who arrives in their class as a “musician,” with the end goal that the student be a “teacher;” with the “teacher” identity taking precedence over the “musician” identity (p. 10).

Bernard (2005) developed the term “musician-teacher” to refer to school music educators, illuminating and celebrating the fact that making music is so important to music teachers that many, if not most, also make their own music and live rich musical lives outside the classroom (p. 10). She uses the phrase “musician-teacher identity” “to describe the professional identities of school music educators as a way to highlight two of the shifting positions and contexts in music educators’ professional identities—musician and teacher—that exist in relation to one another in various ways” (p. 10).

**Teacher Beliefs**

Johnson and Pajares (1996), Kagan (1992), Pajares (1992), and Schmidt (1998, 2008) are among those who believe that study in the area of teacher beliefs holds rich promise for educational practice. They posit that beliefs are the best indicators of the
decisions individuals make throughout their lives. When this is considered using the lens of teacher education, the importance of research of this nature is clear.

Kagan (1992) defines teacher belief as “a particularly provocative form of personal knowledge that is generally defined as pre- or in-service teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught” (pp. 65–66). She cautions that this definition focuses narrowly on specific academic content and reminds the reader that the term teacher belief is not used consistently. However, she feels that despite this variety, empirical studies have afforded two generalizations:

1. Teachers’ beliefs appear to be relatively stable and resistant to change; and

2. Teachers’ beliefs tend to be associated with a congruent style of teaching that is often evident across different classes and grade levels.

Schmidt (2008) looks at the relationship between mentors and mentees in assisting beginning string teachers to become successful teachers. She cautions that although the mentor/mentee relationship can be positive for both parties involved, it is critical that the personalities chosen complement one another well. The mentee must believe that the mentor is there to offer support throughout the journey. The mentor must understand that they are there “for the long haul,” and that intensive observation, discussion, modeling and patience over a long period of time might be required for success. An unanticipated finding of this study is that by asking a beginning teacher to assist in supervising teacher candidates along with her/his mentor, the beginning teacher is able to consider, articulate and perhaps reconsider
her/his own beliefs, perceptions, frustrations and fears about teaching (p. 646). Mentorship of new teachers and reflective practice continues to be a focus among teacher educators at the pre-service and in-service levels, school boards and many government Ministries of Education.

Johnson and Pajares (1996) looked at the confirmation or adjustment of belief systems of teachers in a study that explored the idea of shared decision making (SDM) as an opportunity for school improvement. Over a 3-year period, they interviewed all administrators, teachers, support staff, students and parents at a large secondary school in the southern United States as they worked to achieve a model of shared decision making. Although it took a sometimes “bumpy” 3 years to implement SDM, positive benefits ensued, including: shifts in traditional kinds of power so that all voices were heard, even those with quieter voices; breaking down barriers between administration and teachers, and the barriers that kept teachers isolated in their classrooms and not discussing the practice of teaching with their peers; and changes in beliefs and attitudes. Teachers and staff now feel they have a voice in shaping policy and the direction of the school. They tend to be more engaged in the success of the school overall and willing to fight to make change that they believe will benefit the school and the students. Through the establishment of SDM, all teachers (beginning and experienced) were encouraged to consider and stand up for their beliefs about teaching and what a school could and should be.

It is encouraging to know that although teacher beliefs tend to be resistant to change and associated with a congruent style of teaching (Kagan, 1992), more recent initiatives such as a long-term meaningful mentor/mentee relationship and shared
decision making models are providing opportunities for beginning and experienced teachers to reflect upon and possibly adjust their personal belief systems as part of their professional identity.

**Self-Efficacy**

Bandura’s (1994, 1995) groundbreaking work in the area of self-efficacy has implications in many areas, including professional identity of teachers. He defines self-efficacy as “the belief in one’s ability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (1995, p. 2), and perceived self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (1994, p. 71). This can be related to emerging teachers who are asked to teach music in elementary schools. If non-specialist music teachers feel they can teach music successfully, they will likely be able to do it to some degree, even if their skill level might be lacking. The other extreme is also true. If non-specialist music teachers have some skill and knowledge to teach music, but are not confident teaching music, it is likely that they will fail. One might expect that pre-service students possessing an undergraduate degree in music or similar experience would be confident in teaching music but, as evidenced in my own experiences teaching pre-service students and documented by others, including Roberts (1993) and Hanley and Roberts (2000), this is often not the case.

In her 2005 study, Kane set out to study the self-efficacy of pre-service teacher candidates as they transitioned from education studies into their first years in their own classroom. Among the key factors affecting self-efficacy in music teaching was the
amount of content knowledge the teacher candidates had gained during their teacher education to take with them as they began teaching and the amount of practical experience in music teaching, such as occurs in large and small group peer teaching episodes. She framed her work using Bandura’s (1986, 1994) theory of four key factors affecting the levels of self-efficacy of teacher candidates, which include enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physical and emotional states. She also looked to the more recent work of Pajares (2000), Sloboda (1999), and Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy (1998), and within each of these categories to assist her in articulating current work in this area as cited by Kane (2005). Drawing on the work of the authors listed below, Kane (2005) explicates the work of Bandura in these four categories.

1. **Enactive Mastery Experiences**

   Individual perceptions of competence are developed from interpretations of personal performance and the outcomes of attempted tasks or activities. Therefore, it is important to develop relevant knowledge and skills and to work towards mastery to enable stronger performance and better results.

2. **Vicarious Experiences**

   Another major influence on the development of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1986) is the impact of social modeling in the form of vicarious experiences. The strength of this impact is dependent upon the individual's perceptions of their similarity to the models.
3. **Social Persuasion**

   Social persuasion is a means by which the appraisals or assessment of others can influence individuals' beliefs in their ability to succeed on specific tasks. Social persuasion works in conjunction with vicarious experiences to build self-efficacy expressed in the form of “confidence in ability”.

4. **Physical and Emotional States**

   Self-efficacy is also influenced by the value or level of interest placed on the task or activity itself and the emotional and physical reactions that are aroused by that specific task or activity. People often judge their capabilities and personal efficacy in relation to their emotional responses and moods. (pp. 3-4)

   Other factors impacting on self-efficacy might include the knowledge, skills, and expertise that a person brings to a particular task, their background experience of success or failure in that area and expectations of themselves and others. Pajares found that in relation to academic self-efficacy, students engaged in tasks in which they felt self confident and avoided tasks in which they did not hold the same kinds of beliefs about their personal competence (Pajares, as cited in Kane, 2005, p. 4).

**Sub-Identities and the Role of Emotion**

Mishler (1999) believes that within each person’s larger professional identity, a series of sub-identities may exist. These sub-identities may support each other or they may clash. As a composer, arranger, church musician, choral conductor, and professor of music education, Dolloff (2007) personally identifies with Mishler's notion of the
analysis of the relationship of the plurality of “identities” and his use of the metaphor of a choir to further illustrate his analysis.

To give expression to this, Mishler uses the metaphor of “our selves as a chorus of voices, not just as the tenor or soprano soloist”... An individual’s professional identity consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonize. The notion of sub-identities relates to the individuals’ different contexts and relationship. Some of these sub-identities may be broadly linked and can be seen as the core of teachers’ professional identity.... For me, teacher education should focus on helping our students to harmonize the various voices that they bring to the teaching/learning situation. This sentiment is echoed by Beijaard et al. (2004): “it can be concluded that the better the relationship between the different identities, the better the chorus of voices sounds.” (Dolloff, 2007, pp. 3-4)

Dolloff (2007) makes the distinction between the terms “role identity” and “professional identity.” Dolloff sees “role” as what a teacher does and “identity” as who a teacher is (p. 3). She cautions against sectioning or compartmentalizing aspects of identity into categories such as “identity,” “professional identity” and “role identity.” Dolloff explains:

It is impossible to categorize which parts of us belong to which of our identities, yet we tend to concentrate on the professional and role identities as our thrust in teacher education, because we have seen teaching as “behaviours” – as something we do, rather than seeing “teacher” as someone we “are.” I see a distinction between “Identity” [upper case], referring to how a person sees him- or herself in general, and “identity” [lower case], which I will use to refer to the individual identities we construct for the variety of contexts in which we exist. (p. 4)

She suggests that we look beyond the narrow constraints of educating undergraduate and pre-service students in what we do as teachers in order to broaden our focus to looking at ourselves and teaching through lenses.

Dolloff (1999), Mitchell and Weber (1999) and Weber and Mitchell (1995) invite their students to explore their own teacher identity through the use of their own drawings of their personal image of a teacher. The drawings serve as a springboard to
initiate reflection and discussion of teacher image and identity. No matter what their own personal experiences, many students reproduce a stereotypical image of the conservative female teacher, complete with eye glasses and a pointer in hand, standing at the black board drilling spelling or math facts. This image seems to be prevalent no matter the cultural background of the student (Dolloff, 2007). To get at these kinds of long-held caricatures of teachers, Dolloff (2007) asks her students to reflect on “the teacher that I am.” Then Dolloff (2007) asks them to ponder the question “Who is the teacher I would like to become?” before asking them to consider “the teaching I fear becoming” (pp. 7–8). It is through the narratives her students construct in answer to these questions that they can begin to make conscious their emerging professional identities, especially in one area she feels is missing in the discussion: the role of emotion.

In their reflections, the stories students and teachers tell about their experiences with education are often filled with emotion. Indeed, it is often a deeply felt emotional response to a single engagement with music that first brings a person into the world of music. Music teachers work hard to provide a similar kind of experience for their students, and reaction of their students to a music making opportunity the teacher has provided offers yet another emotional experience for the teacher. The stories we choose to share about our engagement with music as a child, student, emerging teacher and teacher assist us in framing and reframing our personal identities and these stories most often have an emotional component. Dolloff (2007) concludes:

I would like to suggest that as we are choosing elements in the construction of our Identities (in general) and our music teacher identities (in particular), we choose elements from experiences that we enjoyed,
that we value(d), experiences that make us feel valued, and that make us feel successful. (p. 14)

**Life Cycles of Teachers**

Mezirow (1991, 1995, 1996, 1997) argues that humans have a basic need to understand the meaning of the experiences in their lives. His theory of transformative learning, defined as “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference.” Mezirow (1997) suggests:

Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience –associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses- frames of reference that define their life world. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions though which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings. They set our “line of action.” Once set, we automatically move from one specific activity (mental or behavioral) to another. We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration–aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience. (p. 5)

Transformative learning is a significant consideration for those working in pre-service and in-service teacher education to assist teachers as they progress through their careers. It is also important for individual teachers to be aware of transformative learning in order for healthy and active growth throughout their careers.

Lynn (2002), McGaha and Lynn (2000), and Steffy and Wolfe (2001), are among those who work in the area exploring the “life cycle” or “career cycle” of teachers. All speak to the need to attract and retain “highly capable individuals” to the teaching profession (Lynn, 2002, p. 179). In North America, various studies cite statistics showing that approximately 30% of newly graduated teachers leave the teaching
profession within 5 years (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2002; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). Of those who stay, some continue to grow, develop and refine their teaching practice, while others may stall. The “Life Cycle of the Career Teacher” model (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997; Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000) is “based on the premise that, given the appropriate learning environment, teachers will continue to grow and develop throughout their professional lifetime” (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, p. 16). The six phases of development identified in this model are: Novice, Apprentice, Professional, Expert, Distinguished, and Emeritus. The goal of this model is that all teachers will develop at least to the Expert stage, meeting the expectations required for national certification in the United States (Steffy, 1989). A few gifted teachers will reach the Distinguished and Emeritus stages.

Steffy and Wolfe (2001) apply Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning. “Mezirow sees adulthood as a transformative process that includes alienation from roles, developing new ways of knowing, and regenerating life with greater vigor” (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, p. 17). They describe the application of the model:

As teachers progress throughout their careers, they can engage in transformational processes including critical reflection on practice, redefinition of assumptions and beliefs, and enhanced self worth. Or they can disengage from the work environment as a source of stimulation for new learning and begin the gradual decline into professional withdrawal. One essential role for educational administrators should be to promote transformative learning among all staff, especially classroom teachers. (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, pp. 16 – 17)

In their view, the key to continued development is a reflection – renewal – growth cycle which can provide such benefits as:
Teachers learn that a teaching career involves continuous growth and motivation to become an expert.

Administrators support the reflection-renewal-growth process by addressing needs of teachers operating in the different phases.

Teachers entering the profession are prepared to reflect on their practice under the guidance of a trained mentor.

Teachers in withdrawal are encouraged to reflect on their successes as a means of returning to the reflection-renewal-growth cycle. (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, p. 19)

Lynn (2002) looks at a variety of models to understand the “winding path” of the career cycle of teachers. She chooses to further explore Fessler’s 1992 career cycle model, based on “self-reported characteristics of teachers on the variable of enthusiasm, interactive teaching skills, attitudes toward students and teaching, and attitudes toward the teaching profession” (Lynn, 2002, p. 179). Fessler’s career cycle consists of eight stages: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down and career exit (Fessler, as cited in Lynn, 2002, p. 179). Lynn (2002) explains:

Movement in and between these eight stages is dynamic and flexible rather than static and linear. Teachers do not necessarily circulate through all the states. At first glance it does appear that the model (Fessler 1992) represents a linear process, with an individual entering at the pre-service phase and progressing through each phase to the career exit. However, the significance of the teacher career cycle model lies in the implication that teachers move in and out of career stages in response to personal and organizational environmental conditions. (p. 182)

Examples of personal and organizational environmental conditions might include the unexpected death of a spouse or an unwanted change of teaching assignment. Lynn (2002) feels that just as teachers at the pre-service and induction stages should be strongly supported, so should experienced teachers, as the circumstances surrounding
an individual’s life outside of school, as well as inside school, can impact greatly on one’s performance as a teacher.

For all teachers across the career cycle, the concept of staff development and professional growth should be broadened to include concern for the personal needs and problems of teachers, such as financial loss, divorce, illness of a loved one, and chemical abuse by a family member. Support systems should assist teachers in dealing with personal environmental factors that may likely affect their career path. Organizational policies on liberal sabbaticals, modification of job assignments, job sharing, and leaves of absence should be examined to provide support for teachers at various phases of the career cycle. Teachers at all career stages need support and assistance to realize their professional potential. (p. 182)

The formation of professional identity is intensely personal. It is complex and ongoing. Identity formation often begins early in a teacher’s life, through experiences with family, friends, school and community. It continues during the university years and throughout the career of a teacher. It often involves emotion, self-efficacy and teacher beliefs. Identity can be influenced by both positive and negative experiences in a teacher’s life and active reflection on and renegotiation of one’s identity as a music teacher should not only be encouraged, but is a necessary component in the growth of a music teacher.

**Perceptions of Teacher Education Programs**

It is important to consider the role of teacher education programs in the formation of identity in teacher candidates and beginning teachers. Everyone involved in education seems to have an opinion on the state of teacher education programs, their weaknesses and what teacher education programs *should* be teaching pre-service students. I have found this to be true from my own personal experience and in discussion with other instructors at the Faculty of Education in which I currently teach.
Some cooperating teachers and principals do not understand why teacher candidates are not more prepared to write extensive lesson plans when they first go into the schools only weeks after entering a Bachelor of Education program. Specific school districts demand that the approach they currently use to topics such as classroom management, inclusion and assessment and curriculum, be taught as part of the university program. Some cooperating teachers inform the teacher candidates assigned to them that they will not learn anything at “teacher’s college;” the place they will learn how to teach is in their classroom, watching and replicating the associate teacher’s model of how teaching should be done. Although the principals, teachers and teacher candidates who use the term “teacher’s college” are continually reminded that “teacher’s college” in Ontario has not existed for several decades, they persist in using this terminology. Even more disturbing is the notion that some may still see a Faculty of Education as a “teacher-training” facility and not an institution of higher learning where a variety of ideas and theories are explored. It is no wonder that teacher candidates receive conflicting messages about learning to teach, from their university instructors, their associate teachers in their practicum classrooms and even the practicum advisors who act as liaisons between the Faculty and the participating schools.

As much as there is no shortage of thoughts on what the role of a Bachelor of Education program should play in the development of a teacher candidate, the same is true when considering what skills and attributes administrators and others feel are important in a music teacher. In an unpublished study I conducted in 2002 (replicating a Montgomery 1994 study), a sampling of administrators, elementary music specialist teachers, elementary music generalist teachers and pre-service teachers were asked to
rank a series of competencies according to their importance. The five broad categories included: musical knowledge; [knowledge of] musical materials; instrumental skills; vocal skills and extra-musical skills (such as creative, compassionate, organized, and energetic). The findings were consistent with Montgomery in that three of the four groups participating in the survey rated extra-musical skills as the most important, while the pre-service teachers placed this second to vocal skills. While musical knowledge was ranked highly by the elementary music specialist teachers, it was at the bottom of the administrators' list. The administrators said that they wanted the students to have “fun” in music class and most did not seem to value skill or conceptual development as an important goal of music in schools.

Others, such as Beattie (1995, 2001) and Goodlad (1991), have a more inclusive, holistic view of the process of learning to teach. While Beattie’s 2001 book *The Art of Learning to Teach: Pre-service Teacher Narratives* focuses on the development of an emerging teacher, her words also hold implications for teachers at various stages of their careers who are developing and reinventing their own personal identity.

It is understood that teacher education focuses on the development of the whole person who is becoming a teacher, and that it involves the development of self-knowledge, knowledge of others, and knowledge of working collaboratively with others in classrooms, schools, and communities. Becoming a teacher and learning to teach are inextricably intertwined. Professional learning is grounded in the individual’s first learning and teaching experiences, current purposes, and future aspirations. Individuals construct meaning as they live their lives, and learning involves the reconstruction of what is known in the light of new insights and understanding. (Beattie, 2001, p. v)
Learning to teach is a complex, holistic endeavor. Scrutinizing and restructuring previous knowledge and experience of teacher candidates and practicing teachers can form the foundation of effective teacher education. By providing a pre-service experience where teacher candidates have many opportunities for reflection and reconsideration of their personal knowledge and experience, they will enter the teaching profession with the skills and abilities to continue to do so over the life of their teaching career.

Beattie (1995) dreams of professional schools:

where teachers at all stages of their careers learn by talking to each other about practice and ways of improving practice. Such communities would provide a context within which teachers would plan and work together and which would maximize the educational possibilities for those learning to teach ... Within such communities where pre-service, induction and in-service programs are interconnected, teacher educators, teachers and teacher candidates can engage in the inquiry and reflection necessary to challenge their practices and change the stereotypes of teaching and learning which exist currently, and are obstacles to reform and the reconceptualizing of schooling, of teaching and of learning. (p. 53)

The building of such a community where all involved in on-going teacher education encourage open and reflective dialogue begins at the undergraduate and pre-service teacher level, establishing a practice that teacher candidates will continue to observe throughout their careers as teachers. This is even more vital when considering the elementary music teacher, as these teachers are often the only music teacher in their school.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In any research endeavor, the selection of the purpose is fundamental and the research questions will follow. Once the research questions are set, the research methodology must fit the question (Elliott, 2002). The issue under consideration in this study concerns the development and continued evolution of professional identity of elementary music teachers. With this in mind, the following primary research questions were developed:

1. How do 4 elementary music teachers see themselves as music educators?

2. What is the impact of their perceived professional identity on their teaching practice and continued development as music educators?

The following sub-questions also were considered:

1. How do these music teachers describe their own professional identity?

2. How is professional identity constructed in the study participants?

3. What factors affected the development of professional identity of these study participants?

4. What are points of intersection between music teacher identity and teacher practice for these study participants?

With these questions in mind, I considered how I might go about my research in order to establish a guiding hypothesis or model to answer my questions and perhaps pose new questions and yield data that was as rich as possible. As this study is
interested in the ongoing development of identity in elementary music teachers, it is clear that the best framework for investigation does not lie in the realm of collecting numbers and statistics used to measure or quantify, but in the personalized voice of individual teachers reflecting on their teaching path and discovering who they are as teachers. The goal was not to “prove” a theory, but to illustrate practice of the participants to provide rich illustrations that may lead to common understanding. As such, I looked to qualitative research. In making this decision, I followed a movement in educational research that saw its beginnings in the middle of the 20th century and has continued to grow since then.

**Qualitative Research**

Schwandt (2001) defines qualitative inquiry as:

a broad term “for all forms of social inquiry that rely primarily on qualitative data (i.e. data in the form of words), including ethnography, case study research, naturalistic inquiry, ethno-methodology, life-history methodology, and narrative inquiry.” (p. 213)

Flinders and Richardson (2002) define qualitative research as:

work that illustrates at least some of the following characteristics. First, qualitative studies are a systematic form of empirical inquiry that usually includes some type of field work. Artifacts such as textbooks and curriculum materials may be the focus of study, but qualitative work is typically field based, so that researchers may attend to the context in which events unfold. Second, once in the field, qualitative researchers are expected to do more than mechanically record their observations. To put this another way, their ability to see and hear is regarded as an achievement rather than a task, and knowledge is viewed as something constructed rather than as something given, found, or solely existing independently of the researchers. Third, qualitative studies usually assume an interpretive focus. Researchers may seek to understand the meanings of educational experiences from the participants’ perspective (the so-called emic view), with respect to theory (the etic view), or both. The point, however, is that qualitative research is designed to examine
meaning as a social, psychological, or political phenomenon. Fourth, data analysis strategies in qualitative research are typically thematic and sometimes emergent throughout the course of a study. Fifth, qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of voluntary participants. (p. 1160)

This study aligns well with Flinders and Richardson’s (2002) description of qualitative research in the following ways. In addition to meeting with my participants for semi-formal and informal interviews, conversations and telephone and email exchanges, I ventured into the field, to visit my participants in their school settings and observed them “in action” with their students. I was not an unacknowledged arms-length observer in the classroom, but an invited guest, welcomed warmly into the experience of each music class. The teachers, and often the children, invited me to sing, dance, play and experience their joy in and through music with them. Once my observations and field notes were recorded and interviews transcribed, I worked to construct some kind of meaning of these experiences, honouring and giving voice to the stories of the participants and the community I experienced in each classroom. I consulted with each of my participants along the way for their thoughts, clarifications, suggestions and further discussion. Through a process of reading, rereading and continuing communication with my participants, I tried to find a greater understanding of what it means to be an elementary music teacher for these participants. This process was ongoing, emerging as I worked through the study. I looked for similarities and differences among the experiences of these women and also how their experience related to my own. To allow for the personal and unique nature of this study, I kept the sample size of my participants small at 4 and also included my own reflections.
**Narrative Methodology**

The next step was to consider which approaches within the realm of qualitative research would best fit with my study. This genre is immense, and has evolved to become quite diverse over the last 4 decades, gaining acceptance and credibility within the realm of educational research. Indeed, qualitative research has become the leading approach to research in education (Flinders & Richardson, 2002). The wide array of approaches to qualitative inquiry or research can be bewildering when one is trying to choose the research approach most appropriate to fit with the questions. How do I get at the formation and evolution of professional identity of elementary music teachers?

Narrative inquiry, as a method, is "a broad term encompassing the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experience and reporting that kind of research" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 171). It can take a variety of forms, including life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies and more recently, music, dance, photographs and film. Indeed it is the flexibility and variety of approaches within the realm of narrative that allows for the kind and depth of reflection and discovery. Narrative, or the telling of a story, is embedded in context and the particular context gives richness to a particular story.

As someone who has always been drawn to stories involving people and events, and who learns best through story, narrative is a genre that resonates with me as a researcher. As I write stories from my life, I find that I am experiencing then anew. When I listen to the stories of music teacher colleagues, I am transported into their
worlds. I laugh with them, cry with them and understand more about who they are as music teachers. I begin to reflect upon and reconsider who I am as a teacher as a result of them sharing their stories with me. Narrative research breathes life into studies and makes them accessible to all researchers, scholars, practitioners and students in a way in which other forms of research may not. Narrative helps us learn through our personal experience and by relating to the experience of others.

Doyle (1997) maintains that the practice of teaching is a “local event” with unique and particular features that defy categorization. Students in a classroom participate in events and it is through these events that students come to know. “If teaching is event and action with respect to a curriculum, then story is a quite appropriate, if not the only, way of knowing teaching” (Doyle, 1997, p. 95). He feels that the relatively recent focus on narrative in research on teaching and teacher education “is an effort to bring the richness of this particular way of knowing to the complex world of classrooms” (p. 96).

While narrative has been increasingly employed as a research tool by general educational researchers, it is only fairly recently that music education researchers have embraced it. Beattie (2001) notes that narrative inquiry and the sharing of stories through a variety of approaches may be especially resonant for people involved in the arts:

Narrative and story have long been regarded as an intellectual resource in the arts where narrative forms have been used to describe and interpret the experiences of human beings down through the centuries. Narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomenon of human experience, of studying it and of representing it. The field of study referred to as narratology includes such areas of literary theory, drama, film, art, history, theology, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and education. In narrative inquiry, theory and practice are integrated within an individual's narrative
unity of experiences, as the individual determines what has significance for him or her in the context of that individuals' whole life. This is based on MacIntyre’s (1981) concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative that links birth to life to death as narrative unites beginning to middle to end. (p. 169)

**The Importance of Stories**

In looking at the role that elementary music teachers' professional identity has on their teaching practice and development, it is clear that stories play an important role. Storytelling has always been recognized as a valuable way in which to not only entertain, but educate (Butcher, 2006; Kirkpatrick & Brown, 2004). Educational researchers have come to recognize the value of individual educators telling stories of their teaching, to encourage reflection and development of one's own teaching practice and provide insight for the larger field of music teacher education (Eisner, 1991; Prescesky, 1997; Bowman, 2002; Elliott, 2002; Dolloff, 2003; Richardson, 2006). For example, when teachers gather together in the staff room, at the local hockey arena or at social gatherings, they often tell stories of life in the classroom, in colorful and vibrant detail, allowing both the teller and listeners the opportunity to reflect on the deeper meaning of the story. Bowman (2002) summarizes:

> What makes education worthwhile, and presumably an important part of what distinguishes the educated, are experiences whose vividness and richness fundamentally change who we are by elevating what we expect of experience, of life, of each other. Education works through experiences that transform our expectations of the world and, consequently, who we are. (p. 67)

Eisner (1991) also calls for the recognition of the importance of these kinds of experiences of knowledge:
This new realization in education concerning the importance of tacit knowledge...has increasingly turned the attention of educational researchers to the use of narrative, such as teacher stories about teaching, as a way of understanding what teachers know when they act. Why narrative? Because stories get at forms of understanding that cannot be reduced to measurement or to scientific explanation. (p. 208)

Elliott (2002) concurs that,

the meanings of anything in life -research, education, music- are not to be found in some different, objective “external” reality to which a discussion or event refers. Instead meanings lie “inside” texts (discussions, institutions and events) in the stories (or narratives) that people tell for and about these things. (p. 96)

Within the realm of stories of teaching and teachers, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) believe in focusing on the positive. They frame their research within the context of portraiture when looking for the good in teaching, rather than looking for what is lacking, which is sometimes called a “deficit” or “pathological” approach.

Portraiture resists this tradition-laden effort to document failure. It is an intentionally generous and eclectic process that begins by searching for what is good and healthy and assumes that the expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfections. The researcher who asks first “what is good here?” is likely to absorb a very different reality than the one who is on a mission to discover the sources of failure. (p. 9)

They reiterate the point that there is not one definition of a “good” teacher that is shared by all, but rather a portraitist feels that “there are myriad ways in which goodness can be expressed and tries to identify and document the actors’ [teachers’] perspectives.” (p. 9)

Canadian music education researchers have been among the first to consider using stories to assist undergraduate music education students to understand their emerging music teacher identity. Prescesky (1997) asked 4 pre-service music education
student participants to share their personal stories in a variety of ways to help them discover more about whom each of them currently was as an emerging teacher. Beynon (1998) and Richardson (2006) considered the path of pre-service music education students as they transitioned from “student” to “teacher.” Dollof (2003) invited her undergraduate music education students to draw pictures of their image of an elementary music teacher and then asked them to tell the story of their picture as a way of examining their preexisting notions of what an elementary music teacher might be. These personal and individual stories of teaching promote our greater overall understanding of teaching and learning.

**Study Participants**

To allow for deep and meaningful sharing, a sample size of 4 elementary music educators, at various points along their career path, was chosen for this study. The decision to work with 4 study participants was a conscious one, to provide the opportunity for a variety of narratives to be shared, but still keep the number of participants small enough to allow for each teacher’s story to be told in extensive detail. This size also serves to keep the data manageable. Participants who were at various points along their journey as a teacher were invited to be part of the study in order to provide insight into the formation and reformation of identity in elementary music teachers as they progress through their career. Potential participants for this study were identified because of an already established professional relationship I had with each of them, in a variety of different ways. Of the 5 elementary educators who were approached, 4 were able to devote the time required to participate in this study. All happened to be women, which parallels the traditional profile of elementary music
teachers in Ontario. The 4 music educator participants were all at different points along their careers paths at the time of the data collection, including a newly graduated Bachelor of Education candidate, one beginning teacher in her 4th year of teaching, a mother of two young children in her 8th year of teaching, and an experienced teacher with 18 years of teaching elementary music. I had hoped that a teacher with over 2 decades of teaching music in elementary schools would be part of the study, but between a busy professional and personal life, the potential candidate was unable to devote the time needed to the study. Two of the teachers are employed by Catholic school boards in Ontario and 2 are with public school boards.

Working with known participants is an issue that has caused some debate among the research community. While some feel that this may create an insurmountable bias, I argue that it does not. In fact, working with people with whom I already have an established relationship of trust and mutual respect allowed us to begin meaningful discussions immediately. Our discussions were candid and seemed honest and frank. During our interviews, the 4 women also felt comfortable enough to take risks in sharing their fears and regrets as well as their excitement and joy in teaching music. These teachers were not chosen because I or someone else decided they were particularly outstanding or remarkable. It is not that they are not outstanding or remarkable, but the reason they were invited share be part of the study is that they have stories to share. All teachers have stories to share, from the beginner to the most experienced teachers. I situate the study by including my personal narrative in the commentary and also disclose my researcher bias. In retrospect, I realize that the prologue served as a pilot study for the research questions.
This study was designed to be highly beneficial to both the educational community and each individual participant with no risk involved. Through participation in the study, each participant had the opportunity to explore and examine her own teaching practice in a deep and meaningful context. As I began gently guiding the discussion and exploration, I was conscious of the comfort level of each participant and respected any limits to the discussion they imposed, which turned out to be very few. Even when 1 of the participants started to cry during one of our interviews, she wanted the information to remain as part of the study.

When I shared my writings about each participant with the woman involved and asked for her pointed and direct feedback, she did not ask me to remove any information. Occasionally, the participant used this opportunity to clarify a point or expand on a topic, which further enriched the study. One participant requested that I turn the tape recorder off once during one interview, when she wanted to share a story she did not want on tape. I willingly complied. I felt the participants shared a comfort level with the process in that during the study the participants came to me with anecdotes, stories, artifacts, and even – in one case – a scholarly article she thought might enrich the study.

Each participant was advised of the number of hours required to be involved in the study in advance and had the right to pass on any questions or subjects with which they were not comfortable. Again, there was very little that was “off limits” as far as these participants were concerned. Although they also had the right to resign from the project, if they desired to do so, all remained with the project through its completion (see Appendix A for the letter to potential participants outlining the project). It is interesting to
note that each participant expressed regret when our interviews, conversations and classroom visitations came to an end and informal discussion of some of the topics raised continues today, either face to face when we happen to meet or via email or telephone. After each section in the study was written, it was shared with the participant seeking her comments, clarifications, corrections, additions and deletions.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, no identifying information about the participants is revealed in this document. Each participant thoughtfully and carefully chose a pseudonym for the study and any identifying features specific to a particular participant, such as school name, names of colleagues and students were also changed to retain the anonymous nature of the reporting. All information relating to interviews, journal entries, observation, and other data collected is stored in a locked filing cabinet, including audiotapes used in interviews.

**Interviews and Observations**

I met with each of the participants three times for a series of semi-structured interviews that lasted between 45 to 90 minutes each. I prepared a list of initial questions (see Appendix D) and used those as a starting point for our discussions. Participants were asked to tell me the stories of their teaching, including interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators, as well as stories of their personal life experience as it related to their career.

Having already established a basis for trust and a history of discussion surrounding educational issues, the participants felt comfortable sharing their stories of music and teaching with me, stories that were celebratory, joyful, poignant, frustrating,
and sad. The participants seemed alternately confident and vulnerable. Each woman sang and some danced at some point during our discussions to illustrate a point and one cried. Many shared meaningful artifacts from their teaching careers, including notes, cards, and pictures given to them by administrators, teaching peers, students, and parents of students. They opened their souls and freely gave part of themselves to this study to ensure that the data collected will be meaningful and relevant, not only to each participant’s practice, but to the larger field of music teacher education.

I also observed each of them in their classroom on two separate occasions. The exception was the most recent graduate. While she was fortunate to have secured a long-term occasional elementary music teaching position for the final 2 months of the school year, after completing her Bachelor of Education degree, I was not able to arrange permission from the school board in time to observe her in the classroom. However, the stories she shared with me of her initial experiences in the classroom were valuable to the study.\(^4\)

After the intended participants had agreed verbally to participate in this study, I also provided them with a consent form to sign and gave them a copy of the signed consent form for their files (see Appendix B). I also met with each principal to explain the intent of the study and provided each principal with a consent form to allow me access to observe these teachers in their classrooms (see Appendix C). I was pleased

\(^4\) As stated earlier, the newest teacher involved in the study was a student of mine during her preservice year. However, before the student was informally approached regarding her participation in this study, her final grades had been submitted to the registrar’s office and to her, thereby eliminating any conflict of interest.
with the enthusiasm for the project from both the participants and their principals. All were totally supportive and expressed an interest in the findings of the study.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Once I identified the participants, my next decision was how to best get at their stories of these teachers and share them in a way that provides a holistic impression of these participants, while maintaining the integrity of their stories. I liken my approach to that put forth by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) as what they term “portraiture.”

Portaitists seek to record and interpret the perspectives and experience of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions – their authority, knowledge, and wisdom. The drawing of the portrait is placed in social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portaitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image. (p. xv)

By looking at data through the lens of portraiture, each participant’s unique voice emerges in the study. As the woman shared their stories, the power of the narratives was apparent. For this reason, I have included long passages to allow readers to interact with the narratives directly. Many of them contain colloquial language, as these women were talking in an informal manner, with a colleague, during our interviews together. To alter any of the stories or the way in which they are told would be to tamper with the voice of the participants and would change the data. For the same reasons, this particular data does not distill into charts and graphs. This kind of treatment impoverishes the story and threatens to misrepresent it. The use of personal and emotional references and descriptions of the scene situate the context for the stories themselves and assist in painting a portrait of these women as people as well as teachers.
With my participants’ permission, I audio taped and transcribed each interview for future reference. Each participant read the transcription of each of her interviews for further clarification and any corrections. The interviews for each participant occurred about a month apart and the classroom visitations took place in between the interviews. The time allotted between the visitations and interviews allowed for the transcription of the interviews and formal documentation of the observations as well as the opportunity for questions and clarification of the data collected. I was welcomed warmly into each school and classroom I visited and was introduced to the students (unprompted) as a friend of their teacher. During each of the classroom visitations, I took field notes as an observer but also participated in the classroom activities, if requested to do so by the teacher and/or students. After entering the field notes in my data base, I made journal entries based on my reflections of the experience. Often, the music teachers wanted to speak with me following a classroom observation, to provide me with more insight into their students and the lessons I observed. In addition, I kept a journal of all my contact with my participants, detailing my thoughts, reflections and ponderings as we worked through the process of this study together.

In narrative research, it is important to share the stories of the participants first, to allow readers to begin to engage with the participants and their stories. A tension exists between allowing the teacher voices to speak clearly and the research’s job of analysis. To analyze too soon risks distortion of those voices by filtering them through the researcher’s own voice. My goal was to uncover each teacher’s story and illuminate their practice for others. I made no attempt to place any kind of external ranking or value system on the various stories that the participants shared because in the act of sharing
them, the participants have placed an implicit value on them. As in any research context where there are pre-existing relationships between the researcher and participants, the stories shared may reflect a desire to please and meet perceived expectations. I was mindful of this in my analysis. Transcripts of the interview indicate that the participants successfully negotiated this potential for colouring the data.

As I started the analysis process, I began to identify themes and made note of them. I then read and reread the data, looking to confirm or reject my initial impressions. When there was nothing new coming out of the data, the themes were saturated. Although software programs exist to assist in this kind of analysis, I found that reading and categorizing by hand using coloured highlighters worked well. After making initial connections, I left the data briefly before returning to it for further consideration. This process was repeated over and over again until the organization seemed to most accurately represent each of the unique participants in the study. As this process continued over a period of months, I shared my writing with my participants, for clarification and further analysis, working through the process of “storying, restorying, and restorying again” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p. 272) looking for themes that emerged within the stories of each participant.

I then looked at the emergent themes across all 4 candidates and considered my own narrative, looking for commonalities, differences and other information worthy of commentary. I referenced these findings with existing literature, as it confirmed, denied and otherwise informed this study. I then was able to craft a summary, suggest implications for teacher education practice and propose suggestions for further research in this area.
**Credibility**

Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that additional criteria are needed for evaluating the credibility of findings or theory constructed using qualitative research approaches. They suggest that researchers provide information based on criteria they developed in 1990 to answer the question “What evaluative criteria should be used in judging the research products?” (1990, p. 3). The information need not be detailed, but “sufficient to give some reasonable grounds for judging the adequacy of the research process as such” (2008, p. 307). Corbin and Strauss (2008) pose 13 questions as a guide to judging the credibility of qualitative research. Of the questions they posed, the most applicable to this study include:

1. How was the original sample selected? How did later sampling occur?

2. What major categories emerged?

3. What were some of the events, incidents, and/or actions (indicators) that pointed to some of these major categories?

4. What were some of the statements of relationships made during the analysis and on what grounds were they formulated and validated?

5. Do the findings become part of the discussions and ideas exchanged among relevant social and professional groups? (pp. 307-309)

These questions address issues related to sampling, data analysis and findings. They served as a yardstick to ensure the credibility of the study. I will specifically address these questions in Chapter 9.
Conclusion

As an instructor of pre-service and in-service music teacher education, the notion of each teacher’s story is important to me. Pre-service and in-service teacher education programs are often criticized for not being as effective as they might be, for not assisting teachers in knowing themselves and shaping and recognizing their professional identity as a teacher. Exploration in the area of each teacher’s story, using narrative as the vehicle, holds much promise for addressing issues related to teacher satisfaction, ongoing personal professional development, teacher retention and pre-service teacher education. By recognizing the potential for Clandinin and Connelly’s “personal practical knowledge,” teachers are able to “create, refashion and redefine their identity as a teacher” (Clandinin & Connelly, as cited in Bowman, 2002, p. 76). By hearing and understanding one’s own story, through narrative, a teacher has the tools to understand and enhance his or her own practice as well as uniquely contributing to the broader realm of music education and music education research.
PART II: STORIES OF MUSIC EDUCATORS

Chapter 4: Introducing the Participants

This section of the study introduces the 4 participants of this study to provide a context for each woman's journey as an elementary music teacher. The stories are presented in order of teaching experience, beginning with Olivia, the newly graduated teacher and concluding with the most experienced teacher, Janice.

Each of the participants grew up in the same geographical area and, although this was not known when the participants were selected, 2 of the participants attended the same music enriched elementary and secondary Catholic schools and sang in the same community choir, and 2 attended the same public secondary school, although years apart. All the participants attended the same university for their undergraduate and pre-service music education, again at different times.

The Story of Olivia Madeira

Olivia is a vivacious and confident emerging teacher who is in her 1st year of teaching music. Recently married, she has moved away from her family home to a metropolitan city where her husband has an established teaching career. Although her undergraduate music education and Bachelor of Education programs were focused on teaching music in elementary schools and her first short-term continuing occasional teaching position was teaching JK–Grade 8 music, Olivia was recently hired as a long-term continuing occasional music teacher at the secondary school where her new husband teaches.
Olivia’s parents are Portuguese and moved to Canada 25 years ago. Olivia and her older sister were born in Canada. All other “blood” relatives live in Portugal. Olivia’s father plays clarinet and banjo in a Portuguese band and Olivia has fond memories of her and her sister singing along with her father’s clarinet when they were young children. She also remembers her grandfather visiting and enthusiastically with full voice singing Portuguese folk songs in their kitchen. Olivia and her sister would sing along, making up the words as they did not understand the Portuguese language.

Although her father plays the clarinet and banjo well, Olivia observes that he is not a strong singer. However, her maternal grandmother was said to be a wonderful natural opera singer who is still remembered and revered in the community in which she lived in Portugal. Olivia began piano lessons at the age of 4 and studied until she achieved her Grade 10 piano certificate, which coincided with her year in Grade 10 at school.

Olivia recalls that she and her sister sang in many music festivals across Ontario when they were growing up. She credits her sister with instilling the will to perform in her, as she used to watch her older sister perform and wanted to be up on stage too.

Olivia has no memory of school music in her local Catholic school during Grades 1–4, but she auditioned and was accepted into a school with an enriched music program for Grades 5–8 and was deeply (and happily) immersed in music for these years. In her later elementary school years, she also began playing the piano and organ and singing at her church, accompanying both the Portuguese and English language choirs. It was her experience accompanying the Portuguese choir that Olivia credits for
her ability to improvise and transpose, as the conductor often asked her to “make up” the accompaniment or “play it down or up a tone.” It was at this age that Olivia also began teaching piano privately and founded her own summer theatre camp.

In Grade 7, she joined her sister as a chorister in a world-class youth choir for young women, a choir she continued to sing with until she began university. Her favourite memories are of the wonderful music this choir made together and many wonderful choirs they heard and sights they visited during their many tours. It was while singing in this choir that her curiosity and interest in the philosophy and approach of Zoltán Kodály was piqued, and the challenge of sight singing has been one of her favourite parts of making music ever since.

When she entered secondary school, she continued to be involved with music in the music-enriched setting this school too provided. One of the opportunities Olivia experienced in Grade 12 was to return to her former elementary school as a music co-operative student. While she appreciated the enriched music opportunities offered to her when she was a student at the school, the opportunity to return as a young adult and see it from a slightly different perspective made her appreciate her elementary school music teacher even more. She remembers that her teacher inspired all her students to appreciate music and also understand the commitment one makes to learning and participating in music.

Olivia also credits her first piano teacher for helping her to understand the commitment that learning to play an instrument takes as he gently pushed and encouraged her to progress in her studies. “You can do it, Olivia, I know you can.”
Olivia works hard at everything she does and credits her parents for her work ethic and also for her positive outlook on life. Olivia recalls that she always wanted to be a teacher because she wanted to help people and share her love of music with others.

She may have been influenced by the model her mother provided for her. Olivia’s mother was a teacher in Portugal and when she moved to Canada, began teaching at the Portuguese language school on Saturdays. Not only did she become fluent in English, she is a grammar “expert” who was the best editor of Olivia’s and her sister’s assignments throughout their school career. She works at the rectory of the local Catholic diocese. Olivia’s father worked in construction, but had to retire early due to an injury.

When it came time for Olivia to decide on a university program, there was no deliberation. After being immersed in music at her school, church and in the community, music was the only choice. Her great love of music combined with her strong desire to help people, led her directly to music education at the university in her hometown.

After completing an undergraduate music education degree, Olivia enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program, with a focus on teaching in the elementary school. In addition to her studies, she also performed in the school musical, was a co-conductor of the school choir and assisted the pre-service office with promoting the program for future potential students. Upon her graduation, she received a Dean’s Award for her contributions to the community of the Faculty of Education.

Only days after the completion of her Bachelor of Education program, Olivia accepted a part time short-term occasional teaching position in a Catholic elementary
school, teaching JK–Grade 8 music for the months of May and June. Although the timing of this assignment might not be ideal for an emerging teacher to begin his/her teaching practice, Olivia embraced the challenge. While she saw each class only once a week, the students responded well to her efforts and were sad to see the end of the school year. The principal was impressed; she tried everything she could to find a full-time music job for the fall for Olivia. Other teachers and principals also encouraged her to stay in the city, although they were aware of her upcoming wedding and plans to move to the city where her husband teaches.

The principal at the secondary school where Olivia’s husband teaches chanced to meet Olivia one day during the summer when she happened to be in the school with her husband. He mentioned that there was an opening for a long-term occasional music position open at the school, and after talking with her at length, offered her the job. While this was not the kind of teaching position Olivia envisioned for herself, she was thrilled to have the opportunity and approached it with her usual enthusiasm and drive.

In addition to adjusting to married life, living in a new city, a new teaching assignment in a new school, Olivia and her husband have recently built a home. On weekends, they often return to the city of Olivia’s childhood where she continues to play and sing at her church, for weddings and other functions and to visit family.
The Story of Rose Tambor

Rose is a gentle and enthusiastic elementary school music teacher who is currently in her 6th year of teaching and her 4th year at her current school. She teaches half-time JK–Grade 8 music and half-time Grade 4 homeroom at a small, rural Catholic school in Southwestern Ontario.

Rose grew up in a family who supported her in whatever she wanted to do, including her pursuit of all things musical. Rose remembers that she sang before she talked and would sing around the house all the time, including when she was in bed for the night. She wonders how her older brother, whose room was next to hers, could get to sleep with her singing Somewhere Over the Rainbow in full voice. She was enthralled with songs of the musical theatre and her parents encouraged this interest by purchasing recordings for her and encouraging her to sing. She had several “signature songs” taken from the American musical theatre canon and her cousins and other family friends would beg her to sing for them.

While Rose says that her mother is not musical, she did take some piano lessons as a child and would track the notes to the hymns for Rose as they sang in church. Her father liked to sing around the house for fun. Rose took piano lessons as a child, from the time she was 7 until she was 14 years old.

Rose attended a local Catholic elementary school, and remembers music class in her primary and early junior grades as a place where she was given the opportunity to sing and loved it. In Grade 6, she auditioned for and was accepted to a Catholic elementary school with a specialized choir and orchestra program, where she stayed
until she graduated from Grade 8. She reveled in this environment and has many fond memories of the music she made there; a favourite memory is singing a solo with the orchestra when she was in Grade 8. She was also awarded the vocal music award at Grade 8 graduation. After graduating from Grade 8, she attended the secondary school associated with her elementary school, where she continued with the specialized music program. She credits her secondary school music teacher as a huge influence on her development as a musician and future path in life. In particular, she remembers him offering this advice: “Do what you love and love what you do.”

In high school, in addition to her participation in the various ensembles the school had to offer, she played the lead role in two musicals. When she was in Grade 12, Rose returned to the elementary choir and orchestra school as a secondary school co-operative student and this is where she began thinking that teaching might be something she might like to do. From this experience, she began teaching private voice lessons to a young student. She also began singing at weddings and other community events during this time.

Through her secondary school years, Rose sang with a world-class women’s youth choir. She credits the conductors with teaching her a great deal about teaching and conducting. It is an interesting parallel that Rose and Olivia attended the same music-focused elementary and secondary school, and sang in the same women’s choir, albeit years apart.

Following high school, Rose entered an undergraduate music education program at the local university, as Olivia would do later on. While she initially wanted to enroll in
performance, she decided that the music education route was a wiser choice and enrolled in this program as a "safety net." After completing her undergraduate degree, Rose still was not totally sure she wanted to be a teacher, so she decided to focus on her singing voice. She moved to a large cosmopolitan city to take lessons and explore performance possibilities there. Rose also taught as a supply teacher during this year and grew to enjoy teaching through her love of singing and music. The following year, she entered a Bachelor of Education program, enrolled in the primary-junior teaching stream and, with the experience at one of her practicum schools in particular, fully discovered a passion for music and teaching children that has stayed with her and motivated her ever since.

Rose began her teaching career teaching JK–Grade 8 music at two Catholic schools in a small, but vibrant city in southwestern Ontario. After teaching there for 2 years, she transferred school boards in order to return to the city in which she was raised and educated and where her family still lives. Her current school is located just outside the city.

Rose currently spends her mornings teaching subjects other than music and while she enjoys the Grade 4 class she team-teaches, she lives for the afternoons when she teaches music to all the students in her small school of just under 300 students. She strongly identifies herself as a music teacher and provides choir and musical theatre experiences for her students. Now in her 6th year of teaching and 4th at her current school, Rose does not have access to a music room and has a cart she wheels from classroom to classroom. Her "office," and the space where she stores her music
teaching materials and cart, is an unsecured, tiny room that doubles as the school’s health room, as this is the only unclaimed space in the school.

Each class in the school has one 40 minute music class scheduled per week. Following her morning homeroom teaching, Rose loads her cart up with the CD player, puppets, balls, and other materials needed for the four classes she teaches each afternoon. While some of the classrooms have lots of space for her and her cart, others do not. In the primary grades, the children gather on her signal to a small carpet at the back of the room. In the junior and intermediate classes, the children remain in their desks for music class. When asked what their favourite things was about music, all classes polled, from Grade 1 to Grade 8, answered with a variation on “fun” and “we learn things.”

When Rose is not teaching, she enjoys reading, working out and participating in music making. Her latest project is performing in a musical theatre production.

The Story of Annabelle Petch

Annabelle Petch is a vivacious, enthusiastic elementary school music teacher in her 9th year of teaching. Currently she teaches half-time JK–Grade 4 vocal music and half-time Kindergarten in a large urban JK–Grade 8 school of over 900 students in southwestern Ontario where she has taught for the past 4 years, with some time off to give birth to two children. Teaching Kindergarten is a new assignment for her this year and this is the 1st year she has been back teaching full time since the birth of her children.
Annabelle remembers that when she was a child, there was always music or singing in the house. Both Annabelle’s parents were engaged in music making. She remembers her mother singing constantly to Annabelle and her two younger siblings when they were growing up. Annabelle’s mother took piano lessons when she was young and earned her Grade 8 piano and Grade 2 theory certificates from the Royal Conservatory of Music. Annabelle started piano lessons herself when she was 3 or 4 years old. While Annabelle’s father did not have any formal training in music, he has a wonderful musical ear and sang in a rock band for many years, until Annabelle – the eldest of three siblings – was born. In fact, the “gigs” with the rock band earned him more money than his “real” job … teaching in an elementary school.

While Annabelle does not remember participating in community music making when she was a child, she has vivid memories of participating in music classes and extra-curricular activities throughout her elementary and secondary school career in the contiguous public school district where Olivia and Rose were educated. She has fond memories of school music teachers and the music they sang and played made her feel “warm and bubbly” inside. She does not remember Grade 9 math but treasures all the wonderful experiences in music class.

In elementary school, vocal music was part of the curriculum from Grade 1 on. In Grade 7, Annabelle was given the opportunity to play the French horn. Throughout her elementary school experience, there were also opportunities to participate in choirs, band and musicals and Annabelle took advantage of every one. When Annabelle entered secondary school, the pattern continued. She took both vocal and instrumental music classes and participated in a variety of choirs and instrumental ensembles.
Unique opportunities, such as participation in international music festivals, still hold fond memories for her.

Annabelle knew from an early age that she wanted to be a teacher and remembers playing "school" with her younger sister and always claiming the role of "teacher" while her sister was relegated to the role of "student." Likely, she was influenced by the fact that her father was an elementary school teacher, as were several relatives on both sides of her family.

In her later secondary school years, as Annabelle considered which undergraduate university program would assist her in achieving her goal as a teacher, music quickly came to mind. She enrolled in an undergraduate music education degree program at a well respected university, the same university that the other teachers in this study attended. She began as a horn major but by the end of her 1st year switched to voice after she lost confidence in her abilities because she felt that she was treated badly by her teacher.

It was during her time at university that she began teaching piano and voice privately, a practice she continued into her first few years of school teaching. After completing her undergraduate degree at the same university, Annabelle completed a 1-year Bachelor of Education degree with a secondary school music focus, where she won one of the top graduating music student awards.

Annabelle began her career teaching one-quarter time JK–Grade 3 music at each of two different rural elementary schools located in the most western part of her school district. To supplement her income, she maintained her private piano and voice
students and would teach them in the late afternoon and evening, after her hour-long drive back to the city. During Annabelle’s 2nd year of teaching, she increased her teaching time at one of the schools to half-time music and half-time library. A bonus for her was that her principal was a former music teacher and was extremely supportive of her efforts and shared helpful music teaching “hints.” In spite of the 2-hour drive daily, this teaching situation was a wonderful “fit” for Annabelle, until her principal was transferred to another school 2 years later. She lost his support and his unique understanding of her role as a music teacher. After 1 additional year at this school, Annabelle chose to transfer to a school closer to home. She accepted a full-time JK–Grade 4 music position at the large urban elementary school where she still teaches. This school has approximately 900 multiculturally diverse JK–Grade 8 students and the physical arrangement of the school is in effect, two schools; one JK–Grade 6 school and one for Grades 7 and 8 classes. In addition to a main office, there are two smaller offices to serve each of the two “schools” within the main school.

The four Kindergarten rooms in the school are arranged as spokes coming from the centre of a wheel. Originally, Annabelle shared one of the rooms with the learning resource teachers, but during her 1st year of teaching there, she lost the room as it was needed as a classroom. Since then, she has mainly taught in the centre of the wheel, a space referred to as the “atrium,” although she did get her room back for 1 year before losing it again. In reality, the atrium is nothing more than a spacious hallway, with Fisher-Price-type climbing and riding equipment set up along one wall, a photocopier and table and chairs along another. Annabelle sits on a chair in the middle of the hallway to teach and the children sit on the tile floor in front of her, a floor that several
groups of children and adults have recently walked on as they entered the school. There is a piano nearby, and easel and a CD player; otherwise the “atrium” seems cavernous, dingy, and devoid of any natural light, except for two small sky lights set into the ceiling.

It is a regular occurrence that students late for class and parents bringing young children to school enter Annabelle’s teaching space noisily and talking while she is teaching. She recalled that one parent pushed a baby buggy right through the middle of the circle of children as Annabelle was leading them in a singing game. Although the noise and apparent rudeness of the students and parents bothers Annabelle, she is not concerned about teaching in such an open environment and welcomes feedback from her administration and teaching colleagues.

When Annabelle began teaching at this school 5 years ago, her teaching position was full-time JK–Grade 3 music. She saw each class three times in a 6-day cycle. Part way through her 2nd year at the school, she began a maternity leave. When she returned the following year, her full-time program had been cut by 50%, leaving her teaching almost the same number of children, but for half the contact time she had previously, a scheduling decision that remains in place today.

Teaching music is an important part of who Annabelle is and participating in active music making is just as important. However, at this point in her life, as a full-time teacher and mother of two young children, Annabelle does not have the time to participate in a choir. She is frustrated by this but knows that when her children are older, she will return to group music making. Until then, she and her husband are
focused on raising their two children and instilling a love of music in them, just as Annabelle’s parents did for her and her two siblings. In fact, Annabelle relates that her daughter does not have many spoken words in her vocabulary, yet she can match pitch perfectly with her mother.

**The Story of Janice Jones**

Janice is a compassionate and thoughtful elementary school music teacher in her 18th year of teaching. After teaching JK–Grade 6 vocal music and Grades 7 and 8 winds at a mid-sized rural school in southwestern Ontario for 13 years, she transferred to a large urban school in the same geographic region and same school district as Annabelle. Currently in her 5th year at this school, Janice teaches JK–Grade 4 vocal music.

Janice remembers that early on she knew that music was important to both her parents. Her mother sang in choirs and participated in musical theatre productions. Her father had learned piano in his youth and his piano ability was often spoken about by Janice’s grandmother. Janice also recalls her father playing the music of Bach on the stereo and enthusiastically conducting along. After her parents divorced, when Janice was 8 years old, she and her older brother continued to live in the family home with their mother. While Janice does not have memories of participating in community music making, she does remember that she and her brother took instrumental lessons offered through their elementary school. Janice has recollections of practicing on a “pretend” keyboard made of cardboard, while her brother took violin lessons through the school.
As a shy child who suffered from self-esteem issues, music would prove to be an important part of Janice’s elementary and secondary school experience.

Teaching was another influence in Janice’s life from an early age, as her mother taught business in a secondary school. Janice remembers her mother working long hours during the school year and preparing careful and detailed plans for lessons. Janice’s paternal grandmother was a music teacher and private piano teacher, although Janice did not ever see her grandmother play the piano as she developed a brain tumour before Janice was born.

The first memory Janice has of music as a subject in school was in Grade 6. Her homeroom teacher taught the class the song *One Tin Soldier* and the experience remains poignant for Janice. The memories of the impact of the text and melody continue to resonate with her today. However, it was at the beginning of Grade 7 when music really began to have an impact on Janice’s life and future career when she and her classmates were offered the opportunity to play a wind instrument for the first time. When Janice tried to make a sound on a flute, she was easily successful and the music teacher commented on this. She stuck with the flute and music class quickly became the area in which she experienced the most academic success in elementary school. As a child who lacked confidence in herself and her abilities at school, this was a huge boost for Janice’s self-esteem.

Janice’s involvement in and love of music continued in secondary school where she was involved in every aspect of the music program, taking instrumental and vocal music and participating in all the extra-curricular music opportunities the school offered.
in band and choir. In addition, in her final year of secondary school, she auditioned for and was accepted as a member of the Ontario Youth Band, an annual project supported by the Ontario Band Association where outstanding secondary school wind and percussion players are selected from across the province to form a concert band for a week-long series of clinics and concerts.

It was also in secondary school where Janice first experienced two very different approaches to music education and the dichotomy of the approaches continues to cause her anxiety today. While both her high school music teachers strove for excellence in their programs, their approaches were very different. For one teacher, the sign of a successful program was excellent technique, winning competitions and the drive to be the best ensemble. All members of the ensemble were pushed and prodded to play their part for the greater good of the ensemble. Individuals were not important; the group was. In contrast, Janice’s other secondary school music teacher was aware of each individual in his ensemble and while a quality performance was a high priority, the focus was on the enjoyment and growth of each individual within the ensemble.

Following secondary school, Janice enrolled in an undergraduate music education program at the same large southwestern Ontario university as the other participants in this study. Here, she also found that she was torn. Although she was fairly sure she wanted to be a music teacher, she was very frustrated by the politics and competition that seemed to permeate all areas of the Faculty of Music, including performance on major and minor instruments as well as theory, history and other subject areas. She was so torn that she took 4 years off after her 1st year of university to decide if that was where she really wanted to be. After working in various office and
secretarial positions, she strengthened her resolve to fulfill her goal of becoming a teacher and returned to complete her undergraduate music degree, managing to block out the negative aspects.

After completing a Bachelor of Education degree at the same university with teaching music in the secondary school as her focus, she won an award as a top graduating music education student. Shortly after, Janice began her teaching career in a mid-sized rural school where she was the full-time JK–Grade 8 music teacher, a position she held for 13 years. She enjoyed this school community very much and established a consistent and successful music program. It was also during this time that she married and gave birth to her daughter. When her daughter began school, this is the school she attended. Janice’s husband taught at the same school.

Janice’s eventual transfer from the rural school was prompted when the music program at the school was cut by 50%. Before she chose to transfer, Janice was given the option of teaching music to the primary and intermediate classes for half of each day and serving as the homeroom teacher for a Grade 3/4 class for the other half of the day. Under this arrangement, the junior teachers at the school would be assigned the task of teaching music to their students. She instead chose to accept a music position at a large, urban JK–Grade 8 school. Her current assignment consists of teaching music to all the JK–Grade 3 classes, as well as one of the three Grade 4 classes. Janice sees nine classes each day and each class three times on a 6-day cycle for lessons that are 35 minutes in duration. Another music specialist teacher teaches music to all the remaining classes in the school.
Sharing a music program with another teacher has been an interesting experience for Janice and has brought back the dilemma she struggled with in secondary school and university. The other music teacher at her school, who thrives on the competitive aspect of music, wants to have the “best” choirs, and to this end, her focus is achieving this goal and her students are expected to adhere to that goal. Janice’s approach with the younger students is very different, as her focus is enjoying music and improving their musical skills and abilities while becoming the best people they can be.

Janice’s teaching space and the room she was in when the data for this study was collected is a former home economics room and still contains a sink as well as a working washing machine and dryer. The room is large, bright and inviting and there is enough space for Janice to have a larger area with a carpet and chairs in one part of the room while leaving the other half of the room empty for playing games.

A variety of music and teaching related posters and pictures decorate the room and the message on the bulletin board is “Are my words and deeds … Kind? True? Necessary?” The room is well equipped with an acoustic piano, stereo system, a variety of pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments, a chart stand, bulletin board and music texts.

At the end of the past academic year, Janice was told that her room was needed as a regular classroom and that she had to move. She packed everything up and moved to another, larger, room. One week after the start of this current academic year, she was told that a possibility existed that this room too, might be needed as a
classroom due to a larger influx of new students than anticipated. If this was the case, Janice would then teach music “from a cart,” traveling from class to class to deliver the music program. Fortunately, Janice did not lose her room this year.

Although Janice tends to avoid the spotlight and prefers to focus on her own practice with her students, she recently became part of a small team of teachers who are involved in a “train the trainer” form of professional development. After receiving training with a board-wide teaching initiative, Janice will then in-service the teachers at her school, both by sharing the information she has learned in a series of workshops and by demonstrating the approaches learned with her own students while her colleagues observe her teaching.

As Janice shares her love of music with her young students, she also makes music herself through singing in her church choir and playing her flute in small ensembles. When she is not teaching or making music, some of her favourite times are spending time with her husband and daughter at their summer home in a Newfoundland outport.

Extending the Story

In Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8, I will present themes and categories that emerged from my analysis. In narrative research, it is important to share the stories of the participants first, to allow the reader to begin to engage with the participants and their stories. There is a balance or tension between allowing the teacher voices to speak clearly and the research job of analysis. To analyze too soon risks distortion of those voices by filtering it through the researcher’s own voice. My goal was to uncover each teacher’s story and
illuminate practice for others. I made no attempt to place any kind of external ranking or value system on the various stories that the participants shared because in the act of sharing them, the participants have placed an implicit value on them.

As I started the analysis process, I began to identify themes and made note of them. I then read and reread the data, looking to confirm or reject my initial impressions. When there was nothing new coming out of the data, the themes were saturated.

When looking at all the themes that emerged from the participants, some were unique to a certain participant and others had some commonalties among some or all of the participants. The data and themes were interpreted by me, with these particular participants. Although I have identified some themes that have resonated with me, each reader is invited to interact with the stories and create her or his own meaning, using their own particular lens.
Chapter 5: Becoming Olivia Madeira

“MUSIC can do that!”
Olivia Madeira

Olivia, a recent Bachelor of Education graduate, has been involved in music and, to a lesser extent, teaching her entire life and these influences have impacted on her who she is as a person and teacher strongly. Her year of student teaching as part of her Bachelor of Education program and a 2-month, long-term occasional teaching position following the completion of her Bachelor of Education degree, opened up new experiences for her as she continues to evolve as a music teacher and person. Two themes emerged during my discussions with Olivia:

1. Creating and recreating self through teaching music, and

2. Helping others be the best they can be through music.

Creating and Recreating Self Through Teaching Music

The cultural music of Olivia’s parents has been an important part of Olivia’s family life since she was a baby and, in many ways has shaped her growth as a person and musician.

[My parents] were born in Portugal and they moved here about 25 years ago, I guess. So, they moved to Canada and my dad joined the Portuguese-Canadian community and he used to come home and play the banjo and he would make up songs. My sister and I used to sing along…
[There is] just [my sister and I and our parents]. Actually, that’s it for family in [this city]. So we used to play together and do everything. Other memories are just vague. I remember hearing a tape of my sister and me singing with our [paternal] grandfather. He came from Portugal for a visit and he used to sing – I’m not joking – for hours straight. He used to improvise and make things up and we would do the same. Of course, we didn’t know what we were saying because it was in Portuguese. We spoke Portuguese at home, but we didn’t know the songs, we made them up. That’s my first memory of music in my family. (OM 1)

Music making was always a source of enjoyment for Olivia and her family and often included “making up” music. Even as she and her older sister began taking formal music lessons, their father modeled the importance of a consistent practice routine and even made practicing fun.

[My sister] started piano when she was 4. I also started piano when I was 4, but I was very, hmmm, how should I say this? I liked to move a lot. I guess you could put it that way. I couldn’t sit still when I was 4 years old. So, I started again when I was 5. So I really started when I was 5. And then I took piano until, gosh, until Grade 10. I should have taken my ARCT (Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto), but then I started university. As my years in school progressed, I was also in the same year in my piano. And my dad used to practice on the clarinet. So, he would play on the clarinet – every day was an hour practicing – while I practiced on the piano – which kind of made it fun, because you know that practicing is hard. And then we started playing recitals, coming into play. I remember that. My first recital was me singing *The Ferry Boat Song*. You know that song, (She sings) *Ferry me across the* … Do you remember that song? I remember that I played it and sang and played for myself. We have a tape of it. That’s my first recollection of performing in front of an actual
audience. And then we started – I don’t know if it was a competition or not, but I remember going to [another city] and playing with musicians from all over the area. I don’t know if we went into different levels or not. (OM 1)

Her parents recorded her musical performances and the tapes became part of the family musical lore, to be played again and again and reminisced over. While Olivia and her sister saw their father and grandfather participate in music making, they also heard stories of the vocal skills of their maternal grandmother.

Apparently my grandmother, my mom’s mom, was an opera singer. I never met her, but it was said that she was just a natural opera singer back in Portugal, in the little towns. They used to say she had the voice of an angel. Even when we went back to visit, that’s what they would say. And so maybe [my talent is] from there, I’m not sure. My sister and I always used to make up plays and things and I love to perform. (OM 1)

Music was also an important part of Olivia’s religious life when she was growing up. Her family attended a local Portuguese Catholic parish and before long, she and her sister were heavily involved in the music program, an involvement that continues today.

I played and sang [in church] and I could sing in Portuguese. We went to a Portuguese parish and that was a big deal, right? We started in the English choir and then I was asked to play for the Portuguese choir, which taught me a lot about improvising because they don’t ever have a written out accompaniment in Portuguese music. And they would change the order of the mass – not the order of the mass – but the order of the program on the day of. They would give me the music and say “Oh, can you put it down a tone?” and I had to make up the accompaniment. I was in about Grade 8, Grade 9 [when I started]. And then I just had to learn to do that because they expected me to. That’s when I would just improvise,
make it up. So then after that, I continued with the church thing. Now I play at [my current parish] on the weekends, play and sing. (OM 1)

Olivia’s first school experiences with music were not as rich as her home, cultural, and church experiences. However, this changed part way through her elementary school experience when she had the opportunity to change schools.

You know, I don’t ever remember music class [when I was in Grades 1–4]. No, that’s not right! I actually remember one and [my singing voice] was too loud. I was the only one singing and I thought that’s weird. That’s what I recall. And I remember playing *The Entertainer* in a talent show and that’s my memory of music from Grades 1–4. And then, I guess my teacher said I should try out for [a school with an enriched music program] and my sister was there as well. I tried out for that and I made it and that’s where everything took off, I think, because I was so heavily immersed in music. We did plays, like the *Fire Maid* in Grade 5 and, I forget what it was called, but something about *Priscilla the Prune* in Grade 6. And all the [musicals] like *Trial by Jury* and that’s kind of where it started. There was music all around, like playing at church and singing at church. (OM 1)

Olivia’s school, community and private music teachers fostered her love for music and understanding that participation in music requires hard work and commitment. She fondly recalls one of her elementary music teachers.

I did my [secondary school] co-op placement with [my elementary school music teacher] and she was my Grade 5 and 6 music teacher at [my elementary school]. She was excellent for music appreciation. She showed love for music and she wasn’t afraid to show the students her love for music. I took bits and pieces from each [music teacher I had]. Definitely I took from her. She wasn’t afraid to show her love so her students weren’t
either. We weren’t afraid to open our mouths wide. She had such a love for music and her students that we weren’t afraid to be silly. I think that’s true for every teacher; music appreciation, to instil that in their students, especially nowadays in the education system.

Another thing, I would say – I don’t know how to put it - to always try. Like [it] always seemed [important] when I was in [community choir], school and music lessons, [that] when the going got tough, you didn’t give up. We’re all so busy, it would be really easy to drop out of choir or not go and it was the commitment. Maybe that’s a good word to sum it up, I think on all those [things]. At music lessons I had to commit 1 hour every week to those lessons and then all the practicing. At choir, we couldn’t be late. The conductors were committed and we had to be as well and I give them credit for that. (OM 1)

Olivia found that she was fascinated with one particular aspect of music making.

I remember wanting to be on stage when I used to see my sister, when she went to [the school with an enriched music program]. I used to think, “I want to be up there!” And I was fascinated with conducting and thinking “I wonder how [the singers] understand that lady or man.” I thought about that for years because nobody would tell me. My sister was just like “Olivia, you just understand.” So, that was my curiosity. I wanted to learn how to conduct. It seemed so out there for me. (OM 1)

Olivia’s musical curiosity continued to grow and would be fed by her participation in a nationally renowned community youth choir.

I was asked to audition for [the youth choir] when I was going into Grade 6, after my sister went in it. The youngest age, now anyway, is now 12 or 13. I think my sister was the youngest ever to get in it when she was 11. Seeing my sister and how busy she was, she was always gone on
Tuesdays and gone on concerts and I thought “I don’t think I’m ready for that” in Grade 6. So, I said “No, I’ll audition at the end of Grade 6.” And that’s what I did. I started when I was in Grade 7. It was great for me, because I liked to be challenged musically. At school, I was challenged, but we were at a certain level. At [community choir] the music was harder. My favourite thing was conducting, once I figured out how that all worked at [school], and sight reading, sight singing. So, I loved sight singing, even though people think that’s bizarre. (OM 1)

She sang with this group for many years, until she was in university. For her, the excitement of making music at such an elite level was the most important aspect of her participation in the group, not the competitive aspect. She discusses her feelings about participating in a national choral competition.

It wasn’t even that we won. That was exciting, but that wasn’t the [real] excitement. It was that we worked on it and we had to stay in tune, because they checked our tuning afterward. I remember [one of our conductors]. I think he [conducted] the last song, and he checked with the keyboard and said, “We did it.” We actually stayed in tune. I think achieving that, with girls I had sung with for so many years, because I was older, maybe a year before I was going to leave and a lot of the girls were leaving, so I knew the choir was changing. I think it was achieving that on our own level. We didn’t really care about winning the entire competition because there were [other] choirs out there. And they are [all] so good. How do you compare? (OM 2)

Olivia was anxious to share her love of music and performing with others and she entered the world of teaching at a relatively young age.
I started private teaching in Grade 7 or 8. Just one student down the street and then I started getting my own clientele and teaching out of my home. With that, I did music recitals with my students and then I started a theatre camp during the summer. Because for me, I loved how I learned to improvise, to make up music. I probably could be much better at it, but I thought “What a great skill.” So that was the focus to teach students or children at a young age. (OM 1)

Once she began teaching, she realized that this was her vocation, as teaching music was an effective way to help people. She credits her mother with inspiring her to become a teacher and providing a model of what a teacher should be.

My mother was a teacher in Portugal before she came to Canada, so for about 8 years. She couldn’t teach here because of the entire whole certification thing but she taught at Portuguese school. She was, I think, my best teacher. I think that’s why my sister and I are the way we are. I think she really instilled those values in us at such an early age. She sat with us and did homework every day. She has better grammar than I do. Writing essays, she would correct our grammar even though her first language was Portuguese. (OM 1)

Olivia soon discovered that the practice of teaching allows teachers to learn new things every day. Although she had previously taught music to students in a private studio setting and had just completed 10 weeks of practice teaching, Olivia was surprised to discover that she was nervous her 1st day of teaching students in an elementary school as a continuing occasional music teacher.

The main thing [I learned] the 1st day teaching is that I discovered that I still get so nervous that I can’t eat or talk or – and this is so funny, because I’ve taught privately and we’ve just finished our practice teaching,
but I discovered that you feel so different when it’s your own classroom and there’s not someone to say “Oh, you might want to put this before this” or “Did you remember to do this?” to just ask those questions. Before I went teaching, and I start at 9:35 am because I have prep first thing in the morning, I was looking at the clock and looking at the minutes and I was literally counting down the minutes. My stomach was turning and I haven’t been that nervous in … oh, I can’t remember.

I remember being in my own little world and being so nervous. I have a cart and I go to their classrooms and I thought, “I’m not going to bring it. I’m not going to use it and I didn’t want it to become my crutch.” I knew that if I brought it the 1st day, I would hide behind it and it would become my crutch. It’s like “No, I have to go there and show them just me and introduce myself and just do that.”

My first class was a Grade 7 and I walked in the room and they were doing French and they were all over the place doing an activity and I thought “Oh no, will I be able to bring them back?” but I established my role with a cue card with my rules. The first thing, I introduced myself and told them a little bit about myself because I knew they’d be interested and curious. I asked them to make name tags and we played a name game. And I told them my expectations as a teacher, as a teacher of music and I said, “I know you’ve done things differently.” I talked about their music teacher, because I thought that was important. It’s hard for them transitioning at the end of the year, right? I spoke about her and said, “I know that you have probably done things very differently” and went on and on, “but I want you to be open to new ideas. That’s one of the main things in our class. Respect for each other and for me” and you know. So I have my rules and I say that in every class that I go into because I see them only once a week and they forget it. It takes like a minute and that’s it. It went well and they remember. It’s funny how kids remember and I forget that they remember everything and they say, “Are
we going to play the whatever game at the end of class?” and I’m like, “Yes, we are!” It’s a good experience and I’ve learned a lot, especially classroom management.

I’ve tried different things, but it feels like my school. I don’t have to justify anything that I’m doing. I’m doing this because I want to and it’s part of the curriculum or I think it’s what the class needs. I thought I’d feel uncomfortable with the teachers coming into the class, but the teachers like coming into the class. I like it. They give me feedback too. And we’re doing breathing, because we’re doing singing and just different things. I’m just learning that you need to tie it into everything for kids, depending on the age. The other thing I have discovered that teaching the younger kids, kindergarten and Grade 1, are the hardest for me. You know how we each have …. Every time I go in, I think “Okay, I’m ready!” They are so different, so I put on a different hat and discipline differently. But it’s fun. (OM 2)

She found that creative approaches were necessary to capture the attention of some of her students.

My Grade 8 class is … I walk in there, they are always talking. They are never sitting forward. They’re not doing much of anything. They are just a really difficult class. And then I have a Grade 6 class that when I come in, they sit on the edge of their chairs, bless their hearts. They’re so ….!!! With the Grade 8’s I went in the 1st week and we did a little review. It was OK, I still had them, but the week after I could tell that I was losing them. The whole excitement at having a new teacher has worn off. So I said “I have to do this differently.” So the week after, I came in and said “What’s your favourite music artist?” and I brought in a few and they were all appropriate and I said “We’re going to do some music listening.” And I played a whole genre of music because they needed to learn conducting and they hadn’t touched that at all and they need to. So, they said “What
are we doing? We’re listening to music and there’s rap in here?” “But there’s a beat. What is the beat? Listen to the beat.” So, we talked about that and some couldn’t get it, but they were intrigued. The week after, we continued that a little bit, but then moved on. So, it was good to hear that they, even the really bad ones who aren’t often there because they are always in the principal’s office. They were conducting and, you know, and actually trying because they liked the songs. (OM 3)

As she became more comfortable in this teaching situation and got to know the students and staff, she put her heart and soul into this teaching experience. She considered herself fortunate to have had this experience as her first teaching experience.

It was wonderful. I loved it. It’s been a really good learning experience for me. I went into the school, coming in at the end of the year. That was my biggest hesitation, with all these warnings about the Grade 8 class and how horrible it is. And I thought “Oh gosh, I don’t know …. Can I do this?” And then, so, it was just so great. I made a goal and I was thinking “Okay, do I go by the curriculum and what they need to fulfill?” but when I review with the kids, they didn’t know much of anything. So I thought I can’t do that because it’s pointless because they can’t do the stuff, anything musical. So I did review sessions and I thought … a general goal was to appreciate music. To not just think of it as a spare period to sit out and that’s how it started. I could tell with certain classes. I’d walk in there and it’s just “Oh, you know.”

So I made the whole school learn a song, the same song, even the little, little ones to the Grade 8’s, all of them, because they’ve never sung before, never. So I was shocked, obviously. So tomorrow is our final assembly and that’s when the whole school is going to stand up and I chose one person from each class, because it’s Kindergarten to Grade 8,
to play an instrument, just based on different things. So we’re going to have a little percussion ensemble at the side and the whole school is going to sing it. It’s in African and English, so it’s really simple, but I wanted something that is catchy. It was something that was simple but would grow on them.

It’s called *Siyahumba*. What I did was I used it as a way to teach all the other things I wanted to teach. So, in every class I’d review the words. One week in English and the next in African. So once we kind of knew it, with percussion, I want this side or group to do this rhythm and I’d write it on the board. What is this called? How many beats does it get? And so that’s the one thing I learned, hands on, was at this school, I needed to use one resource and get them focused on this one thing while I taught the other things, because they wouldn’t stay with me. I could tell from the 1st day.

It’s great. They’re good. It’s really good. They’re really excited. I think it’s that they’ve never had a concert, unbelievably. I think maybe they’ve have had a talent show with dance, and not really music. So, this is sort of a concert. The parents will be there and it will be nice. We're going to end with *Siyahumba*. I spoke to the principal and she came into all the classes to observe. I could tell by the look on her face that she is just shocked. The little kids know what they’re doing with instruments and it’s a good learning. And I can tell the kids like it too, so, I’m excited for tomorrow. (OM 3)

When asked to reflect on the experiences of these few months, she sees the experience as an opportunity to continue to develop as a music teacher.

I have so much more to learn. There’s so much more to learn. I just feel like, I feel more at ease because what I thought it would be is what it is and more. Personally, that’s how I feel. The one thing that I know is
different is that it has made me hungry to do more. I wish I could have taught more to them. I wish that I’d had them since the beginning of the year so that I could do them justice…

I understand more of the things that go on in a school with staff, with administration, things like that. I learned more of the behind the scenes. If you want help from teachers, your staff members, to inform, first of all, but you need to be involved and help out or else you’re not going to be helped in the end … Which you would do in the beginning anyways, but I see it more, I see the teachers that don’t [help], that just stay in their room and they don’t want to do it. Not that they are mean or anything, but that’s just how they deal with their things and I just kind, you kind of learn about these kinds of things and you see how like there’s a good school with a good staff and administration that if there is a good school with positive reinforcement and all that stuff, it’s because the whole staff is working together. Because even if there is one or two, you just notice, you just notice how it’s not coming together. I learned that. (OM 3)

As she has continued her path to becoming a teacher, and has worked with her “real” students in both practicum and continuing occasional situations, Olivia finds that her understanding of what it means to be an elementary music teacher and what is important in teaching music is being transformed.

A perfect or wonderful music class? What would make it perfect so that I would go to the principal and say “I love teaching?” OK, a perfect music class would not be – I guess I can start with that – it would not be if all the kids got all the notes and the rhythm. I think that before teaching, before going to my practicum that would have been it. If I sang something and they sang it back perfectly. But now, I can honestly say, the perfect music class now, at this point, at least for me, would be students who loved music and regardless if they sang in tune, got the rhythm or really
understood much of going on, because understanding, I can get them, over time. That would come at least a little bit. But if they loved it, showed it and tried, I think that is it. Those are the things, if I walked into a class and they were just excited and thinking “What are we going to do today in music?” and having that appreciation for it. I think that would be the perfect class. (OM 1)

She has come to value small successes in her teaching as a way to keep a positive outlook.

For me, even if I didn’t receive [positive feedback], and it’s not every single day, but I find positive moments every single day. For instance, if there is a student who has been slouching and one day I come in and he’s sitting up, I think, “Thank goodness!” So, I find them. You can find them everywhere, I think. (OM 2)

She wishes all teachers could function with a positive outlook.

I kind of wish that all teachers [had a positive outlook], but even thinking back to some teachers I had, I know they didn’t. And I think that it was because they didn’t have a positive outlook and they were tired. And we’re all tired, but you do things in a positive light. You get there, you have your job to do to help reach [students] in some way and teach them something. (OM 2)

Olivia credits her mother for helping her focus on the positive.

I think this comes from my upbringing too, and we don’t have family here in Canada, so my mom would always say, “That’s OK.” We’ll keep together as a family and friends. But if you have one friend that’s important, one friend that you trust, that’s all you need. She’d try to teach
me to think of the positive and she always taught me that the more you give in any way, you will receive double. And it’s true. When I was younger, I used to think “Oh, yeah, whatever. That can’t be true,” but then I remember kind of trying it out and thinking “Oh well, you know, if you help someone pick up their books, maybe the next day maybe they’ll smile at you.” So, I think that, and I remember being a child and I know that kids feed off the energy of a teacher. With anybody, you feel their energy, if it’s positive or if they’re sad. You can feel that and I think most kids read into it. So, when I go into a classroom, no matter what is going, you need to have that positive outlook and energy and for the kids to have that, whether it is in music or any other subject. (OM 2)

Connections with students and a positive approach are key in all teaching, but especially music.

I think you can kind of feel it if you have a connection with the kids. As far as just the teaching aspect of whatever subject that might be, it’s not so much if they understand it all because music, especially music, because kids don’t get everything. Like they may not understand how to sing or counting. But if they enjoy it and try and that genuine “I want to try” attitude in the classroom, that’s important. I think it needs to be in a positive light. Whenever there’s negativity, at least in my mind, is not good. Classroom discipline is good, but if there are things like “This is dumb” it needs to be addressed and talked about. I think for any subject, that’s not appropriate. I think if they have a positive light about it. (OM 1)

She has learned the importance of communicating with students, teaching colleagues and parents.

You know, as a teacher you have to have your ideas and beliefs and be able to back them up. We also have to justify, to certain parents, and I’m
talking music now, especially if it’s not important in their culture, why is this important for my child? You have to be ready for that. I think it can impact a beginning teacher a lot if they don’t have the support of the parents. There’s always going to be the parent or colleague who doesn’t support, but if you have five others that do, it can help you to keep a positive outlook, because you are not going to please everyone. I think as long as you believe in what you are doing and that what you’re doing is good for the students and well help them in the future, it doesn’t matter what people think. But communicating with them is really important. So, the first thing I would do is communicate with them, so you don’t receive it after and that might be uncomfortable.

Right now, I’m doing a mass at the school I’m at and I don't really know how they run their masses. I have no idea. I asked if there were any teachers who would like to do the mass with me, because I don’t know who used to do it. And two of them came to me- I’m so glad I asked as they would have been insulted- and said “Music is my passion.” And I would have no idea if I had not asked. And I thought “Thank goodness” that I asked her and it is helpful to me because I don’t know how they run it. So, just communicating, I think, is the main thing. It can make your job that much more enjoyable. Teaching is wonderful, but it’s your staff and you go to your staff room every day, right? For lunch and to work. (OM 2)

Olivia learned that asking for advice from colleagues and other experienced teachers is a wise strategy.

I think talking with another teacher or talking with someone else who they trust, just so they know that it’s OK, it’s normal and not a reflection on you most of the time. I ask the principal and other teachers to come in the class because I want to get feedback. I want to get better. I don’t know what I’m doing really. You just do what you think. They have so much
more experience so why not use their experience? Why go through it all yourself if you can have some help. And I ask for feedback. What should I change? We did that a little bit [during my Bachelor of Education program], but I think that not being afraid to receive criticism [is important]. I learned that in undergrad, and that was the hardest lesson for me to learn. We would sing and all we would receive is someone criticizing you. I think “I worked so hard and all you can do is criticize me?” But I thought “You know what. I’m going to use it in a positive way and take what I want from it.” Anything I disagree with, I just put it to the side. Mentorship is what they call it. (OM 3)

Olivia feels that the identity of a teacher continues to evolve over the course of a career, based on her beginning experiences in teaching music.

I would think [identity] changes, because even with this experience I learned so much about myself, so much about being in a school, just different things and I’m sure that every school you go to and every grade you teach, there’s something new that you’re learning. I would say it changes, but I think your basic philosophy, not your full philosophy, because I’m sure that will change over the years – over this year, mine changed – but the basic one, your fundamental reason for being a teacher needs to stay, needs to be there for the passion to be there and maybe that’s what people lose. They get lost. At first it’s all exciting but I think you need to continue to be excited about it. So that your students see that and it makes it so much more enjoyable for you as a teacher, to learn more and continue growing. I would say it would change. (OM 3)

She feels that in teaching, there is always something new to learn, no matter how long one has been teaching.
I think you can always get better as a teacher. You can never say you are the best, like “I’m in my 20th year.” You can be in your 1st year or your 20th year. I think that a teacher needs to continue being a learner and that’s a big thing. I can think of some teachers in my past and you just knew they had stopped learning. Cause they were just out of date. Not that they have to wear hip things, that’s not what I mean, but they should connect with the students and the culture. There are many different things. I don’t know if there is ever a time when you can be the best you can be, but I think a good teacher … I think you just have that in you. (OM 1)

She believes that effective teachers are “called” to the profession.

In my mind, good teaching is not just having good organization or having good lessons and initiating that process. And also with that, maybe that is 50%, but the other half is the love of teaching and that comes from within you. You can’t help love your students and have that patience if it’s not within you. I think a good teacher has that drive to want to see other people excel. You want all your students to achieve or be the best they can be. As a teacher I’m sure that I will do whatever I need to do in order for my students to do well. It has a bit of both, but I think it’s within, that you have that calling. Just as a doctor would have that. (OM 1)

She wants her students to remember her experiences with her as they continue to shape their adult lives.

I would want them to say that their musical experience, when I was teaching them, was a positive one. That’s the main thing. Of course, it was fun, but fun in a way that they actually learned something. I don’t want them to look back and “You know, I liked music, but all we did was sing songs.” I want them to come out with some skills or something in a positive way. So, it they could come back to me years later and say
“Because of your class or teaching or whatever that might be, I put my children in music.” You know – that kind of thing. It’s not that they go on to become musicians but appreciation. I always go back to appreciation. The worst part is to hear about these cutbacks in the arts. I think it’s such an awful thing, but not just because I’m in music, but because I think we need to live in a balanced world and it is being taken away. So I think if they were to continue that way in their future that would be good to hear. (OM 1)

As a result of her teaching experiences during her Bachelor of Education year and working as a continuing occasional music teacher, Olivia has had the opportunity to validate her desire to teach music.

Oh yes, I know that music teaching is for me. I have friends who think, “Oh, I’d never teach music” and not that I’d never teach a homeroom, but I know more so now, that for me, I want to teach music. It’s a passion. I really do. But it’s nice that I have this little time to really figure that out. (OM 2)

The examples given above and many more that were too numerous to include, provide a vivid and vibrant portrait of Olivia, the emerging music teacher. Music has been a constant in Olivia’s life and has played a critical role in her development as a person and as a teacher. Making music first with her family and then at church, school and in a community choir in a variety of ways highlight its importance in Olivia’s life. She has grown in and through music. Teaching has long been a constant in Olivia’s life as well, first in teaching private music and running a summer theatre camp for children. As she experienced teaching in elementary schools during her pre-service year and long-term occasional teaching position, she was excited to try new things and adjust her
teaching to engage and fulfill her students. She also recognizes that there are always new things for teachers to learn as they continue on the journey that is a career. The constant will be passion that initially drew her to teaching music and will sustain her for years to come.

### Helping Others Be the Best They Can Be Through Music

Helping others to be the best they can be through music has been a theme that has been part of Olivia almost all her life. From an early age, she focused on helping others as a way to provide balance and a level “playing field” through music.

I think I knew from a really young age that I wanted to be a teacher. My mom will tell me now, as we reflect back, that I always wanted to help people and I still do. I like that aspect of it and I want everyone to do well. I looked in my class for anyone who was a little lost because I really wanted everyone to do well. I still do that with children in my class or people my age. Everyone can do well. If they don’t understand, you just have to change how you are explaining it in a way they will understand it. I remember at a young age of really doing that and really focusing on that, wanting everyone to come together. I don’t know. My other interest when I was younger, although I focused on music, was art. I loved drawing and that kind of thing. I guess when I was in Grade 1 or 2, my teacher, at that time, her husband was an artist and he did some type of study in art, artistic … I don’t know what it was. So he took my paintings and told my mom, “If she would continue in art as her focus, she could be …. There’s something there.” But it’s not art, like I can’t do people. But the way I see things, like the way I see a classroom, it’s really odd, I’m a visual learner. So to me, when I see a classroom I’m focusing on the children. I can see when something is off balance. Like in a painting, if something’s not balanced. If a child doesn’t understand something, I see that. So that’s
why I want children or classmates to all be at the same level. If I think back, I think that's why I had this inclination at such a young age. (OM 1)

One of Olivia’s first opportunities to experience the joys of helping one of her students be the best she could be was when she was teaching private voice lessons.

With my private students, I have one student who has a learning disability. I have a recital with my students at the end of the year, and this was last year. She has a beautiful voice. She was 9 at the time, this was last year, and her voice is beyond her years. She could be an opera singer. Just wow. You listen to her and think “Wow! This is coming from this little body.” And she’s never performed before and she was so scared. She walked up to the stage and I looked at her and she looked like she wanted to just crawl into a hole and die. The first time she performed [was] in my house in front of my parents. That was the rehearsal. Her voice is strong, very strong, but she sang so quietly. And we talked about that. She got up there [at the recital] and I thought, “Oh, she is not going to be able to sing” because her posture was so introverted and she opened her mouth and just let it go. She had no expression, but she really did it. And I was – I accompanied her - I just smiled. I felt like a mother, you know. It was so great. (OM 2)

Olivia was very proud that her young student, who has some challenges in learning, was able to conquer her fears of singing in front of other people and sing to the best of her ability. Olivia’s pride in her student is similar to what a parent would feel for her child. This event brought out the nurturer in Olivia.

In her practice teaching experiences, Olivia also experienced the rewards of helping students be the best they can be, both in class learning and individual accomplishments.
Generally, when I’m teaching something, even if it’s recorder or band or even just four lines of something and they are not getting the rhythm – like in my last practicum, we were doing recorder and we were learning *In the Jungle*, and they couldn’t get the dotted rhythm. Knowing the song beforehand, they knew the song in a different way. Going home [from school that day], knowing that we had another rehearsal with them, I thought “How can I teach that?” so it’s just not by rote, which is important, but I wanted them to understand it. So I remember kind of making up this little exercise and they played it and they got it. I remember thinking “Oh, my gosh!!! Thank goodness!” That would be one little example. That’s one within a music class.

But, my first placement I had a Grade 5/6 split homeroom class and they had never received music before. Well, if they did, it was listening to a tape, and I don’t consider that music class and I just remember one boy. He had lots of problems at school and family problems I’m sure. He never spoke to me once. He was always in trouble and always sent to the office, you know, that kind of story. I believe that he had some form of learning disability or other. I remember that he would never talk to me. I remember that I thought I had to get to him somehow or I never would be able to teach them. It was very uncomfortable for me. Then we went to music class, the teacher pulled me aside and said “I’m just warning you Olivia, he doesn’t do well in a normal music class. He may not respond. I’m just warning you.”

I remember not having any belief in that at all. It’s funny because I usually believe what people tell me, but I didn’t this time. I thought “That’s what you can believe, but I don’t.” So, we started the music class and everything went fine. It went well. I was teaching them *Great Big House* because it was kind of fun. [The teacher] could not tell me anything musically about them. When his next music class occurred, about 2 days later, I still didn’t know how they felt about the first music class. Some of
the girls said “Oh, that was fun,” but nothing concrete. Music class started and I was teaching them some of the basics, because I thought “I’m going to leave here at least teaching them the basics.” Then there was literally 1 minute until the bell. And [the teacher] always put music in the last period of the day, if you can imagine. One minute to go and this student was always the kind who was standing at the door, ready to head out and he put up his hand and said, very shyly, “Ms M., do you think we might be able to sing through Great Big House? Without thinking, I said “We sure can!” Who cares about the bell, kind of thing. I just remember my associate’s face. I didn’t want to look shocked, you know, in front of the class. So, I said, “We sure can. And if anyone has any requests, we can do those too. How wonderful it is that you remembered the words!” And my teacher, my associate, had the biggest look of surprise on his face. He thought, because this child is from a family background where they are not really allowed to do music in their culture. And for him to step up and really want to do that was just wonderful. I don’t know why but for some reason music touched him. I am actually going back to do a special music day for them because they wanted that. And I thought “Music can do that!” …

I will remember him always. I couldn’t reach him at first, and he would not talk to me, but I think that was because I was female as well. He said, “I don’t talk to women.” …

He hugged me! And he never - It was just so strange. It almost seems now like I was in a dream. On the last day [of practicum], kids were crying. You know I kind of was too. I miss them. A homeroom class is different from teaching hundreds of students, so I got to know each one very well. They all made me cards and I kept them all. (OM 1)
Olivia has also made connections with students in the 2-month continuing occasional music teaching position she held following the conclusion of her Bachelor of Education program.

Well, one of the most recent experiences that I can think about is the job I’m doing now [continuing occasional position until the end of June, teaching Grade 1 through 8] and the Grade 8 class I was telling you about. They are just awful. They have a lot of attitude problems and such. I walk in there and I’m a young teacher, right, and this is the first class. A lot of the boys are lying on their desks and not participating at all. I tell them to sit up, but they are not really doing much, but by the end they are at least sitting up and still not doing anything else, but I think “OK.” But one boy, at the end of the class, - I was told after because the actual Grade 8 [teacher] stayed in the class with me- and she said came up to me after and told me that he is the worst behaved in the class. I didn’t know that at that time. He’s the one who’s at the principal’s office all the time, he has attitude and never does anything. He’s a handful. At the end of the class and I was gathering my stuff and leaving, and he said really loudly, because he always speaks really loud, “Oh my gosh. We’ve learned more in this one class than we have learned the whole year!” And I thought, great, well, continue learning! I didn’t know how good that was for him to be even interested in a class. The teacher came up to me afterward and said, “You have no idea! He never does anything” and he was actually - even though he didn’t participate the way he could - he was engaged and he actually learned something! …

I see [that class] every week, because I do yard duty at lunch and I have them right after lunch. We were coming in and he said- it was funny, “Do we have music now?” and I said “Yeah, yeah we do.” And he said “Oh, okay.” And I thought, “Oh, oh, okay. That’s nice.” but I could tell he wanted to say something else. So, we walked to the class together and he says
“What will we learn today?” and I thought “Wow” and said “We have to learn the songs for the mass” and he said “Oh, we have to sing?” I said, “Yes, but everybody’s going to sing.” He said, “But we’ve never had to sing before.” And I thought “Well, things have changed and what a good day to start!” It was so good! …

I think it is those little moments that keep a teacher motivated, so they know what to teach – at least for me. When I hear things like that, I know that they want to learn, even if they are lying down on their desks and it doesn’t matter about the body language, that’s their age. They want to learn. And I think you have to read everything and those are the things I read. To me, those are the moments – it’s not the grades that they get, those are just the logistics, and you just have to do those things. Those are the moments you know they are actually learning something and they try. If they sing something in tune they’ve never seen before. Little moments like that.

Oh, it makes me so excited, because to me, music is exciting. But I can understand that it’s not exciting to everybody. I think the nice thing with music is that you can grab everyone with something different, a different aspect of it. I know that this boy has some problems, so whatever he’s missing in his life, at this point, he’s excited about something and he’s never really been excited about anything. (OM 2)

Olivia revels in providing opportunities for all her students, no matter what the age, to be engaged in and through music. She enjoys the challenge of discovering which aspects of music education that will engage her students. The story told above is a perfect example of this approach. Olivia had been “warned” about this student and his disruptive behaviour in music class. Instead of labeling this child and setting low
expectations for him in the class, she enthusiastically presented her ideas to the class and they were swept along with her, this young man included.

During her classes at the Faculty of Education, Olivia was pleased to see her peers working to be their best and she was happy to help. She was especially close to the group of 30 junior-intermediate stream teacher candidates who made up the class that traveled together to the compulsory subject specific classes; language arts, mathematics, music, health and physical education, science, social studies and visual art. The students were grouped randomly, and possessed a variety of undergraduate degrees in various curriculum areas.

I loved my JI [group]. That is the one thing I loved about being in JI or elementary level. We became close [when taking] Monday and Wednesday classes [together]. So, we got to music and I just remember thinking, or expecting, that if people opened their mouths, something would come out. I forget what the first song we sang [was] to get it going, but [I was] singing it and nobody else [was] singing, or it was like the drone effect. I was shocked. It was a moment of discomfort. I didn’t want anyone to think that I was trying to show off or anything; because they knew I was in music. It was like that in every subject. In art, that art people will be fantastic, right? I wanted to make them feel comfortable, that was my main thought and I thought “If I sing out loud, does that make them feel comfortable or uncomfortable?” So, after that first class, I remember a lot of them coming up to me and saying “We can hear you” and that kind of thing and I asked “Does that help you or what would help you?” because we were all very open. So, I asked them because I didn’t want to feel uncomfortable in every class thinking “Oh, do they hear me?” You know. They said “Oh, no, we need someone to help us.” And there were other people who could sing and I think the group of us kind of held it together
and people felt more comfortable. But I loved that class. It was so neat to see people my age with the same goals of teaching in the future, but then being a student, like going back to that and seeing them evolve through that, while trying to learn how to teach it - that kind of idea. I thought it was so great, the exercises we did, like we had to present a song and teach it to a small group. I loved that one because even my group, anyways, they really got into it. Even before class, they came up to me and asked me to record the song so they could feel more comfortable. They really wanted to do well. It wasn't like “Oh, this is music and I can’t sing so I’m not going to try.” I liked the fact that they really put their foot forward and put themselves out there and learned a lot. And I think a lot of them grew. And I thought “That’s so great. They actually sang all by themselves.” One girl told me that she had never sung by herself. I think we had this discussion in class, that she couldn’t sleep and couldn’t eat and it was such a big thing – and I remember those moments, because I used to have them when I was younger, but it’s the same feeling. (OM 2)

One of the issues that held much interest and was the topic of much debate in the Bachelor of Education program was classroom management. As much as this topic can be discussed and explored, it is in actual teaching episodes that a teacher learns strategies to manage or share ownership of the classroom. As is common with any beginning teacher, and is to be almost expected when coming into a “new” school during the last 7 weeks of the school year, Olivia has experienced times when classroom management is an issue, but still is determined to make the experience of her classroom a learning opportunity for her students.

It was a day [in late June] when I guess there was a baseball tournament going on and this Grade 8 teacher … I don’t mean to dwell on the Grade 8 class, really they’re fine. I like them. I don’t dread going in there, which I
thought I would, but I like them. I went there and all the “good” kids were
gone, because they are the ones who are involved, so they’re gone [to
play in a baseball tournament]. So I have all, about 20, and literally 20 of
all identified kids or if they’re not identified, they have psychological issues
and with me not even knowing what [the issues] are, it makes it kind of
difficult. So, I went in and I didn’t know this because nobody had told me.
So I walk in and thought “Oh my goodness.”

So I walk in and it was a hot day so they all had water bottles and OK,
here’s the scene. They have a hole in the top of the water bottles and they
are squirting water everywhere. The desks are wet, they’re drenched,
puddles and I’m thinking “Oh, my gosh!” Welcome to teaching! And they
have a new Grade 8 teacher who just came back from her maternity
leave. And to top it all off – chaos – and the school’s watching a movie
that day. They knew they were going in a half hour, after music, to watch
this movie.

So, one of them – he’s never been in the class because he has issues but
he is put in my music class in another grade, and I had previously talked
to him and tried to see why he was so bitter and so on. He was in
the class today and he would not listen and you can’t touch them. I said, “Turn
around!” but he would just not listen, so I said to him “If you’re not going to
participate, that’s fine, then you need to be quiet because the lesson has
to continue. So, then he threw the water thing and I thought “You know, I
don’t want to throw him out, because that’s what he wants. He wants me
to throw him out.” So, I said, and I don’t know if it was mean or not, but I
was fed up and he was making a ruckus and it was distracting. I said “I
have this great rhythmic thing I want you to try. I need a volunteer.”
and come on up here.” And it was like pulling teeth, but I didn’t care. I
wasn’t going to back down. I said “I don’t care if the movie starts, we are
staying here and I don’t care if the movie starts. I’m the teacher. We’re
staying here until we finish this so you better try.” He really didn’t say anything, but he tried the rhythm and he did it. And I said “Wonderful. Now sit down and listen up.” And that was it. But it was so like, I didn’t want to, it was one of those moments when I thought “Oh my gosh. What am I going to do?” I was really lost. For a good 10 minutes, it was just chaos and I’ve never had that before.

That’s one thing my mom told me. She said “Olivia, you never leave a classroom without being in control [of student behaviour]. It doesn’t matter if you’ve taught anything. At the end of the class you have to gain control of the students, especially the older ones.” So, I had to do that. (OM 3)

She feels that understanding a student is the key to opening something wonderful and unique in them. She continues to discuss the student mentioned in the vignette above.

Music is very important to me and I want children to appreciate it, but I really feel like in order to teach anything, you have to get to know each child and understand where they’re coming from. With this particular student, we talked and I know that, at least in my mind, every time I have the opportunity, I want to figure something out and for them to gain my trust, because I am still new and why would they trust me? And if they are goofing around in class, you throw them out and that’s what they want. And so, I would say that understanding where they come from helps you to understand why they are acting in a certain way. You can use that and kind of try to nurture that in some way.

Yeah [I know that student] and I know his background. I knew that he had rhythm and I just knew that was his thing because he is always playing with his pen and stuff. So, instead of saying “Stop that” I thought “Okay, if that’s what you’re going to be doing, let’s use that. (OM 3)
When asked to describe who she is as a music teacher, Olivia does not hesitate with her response.

The first word that came to mind – and I don’t know why – is loving. And I don’t, and now that I think about it, loving in every way. Like, I love music and really I love the children. I really, it’s funny how attached I’ve become in only a few weeks. … Yeah, and I’ll always remember them. I think in a loving kind of way, not mushy, gushy loving, but I want the best for them and I want the best for their future. Not that music will change their world, but it will make each one a better person. I think that each child has something to offer and it’s important for them to feel loved. (OM 3)

Whether it was helping her friends when she was a child, guiding her private voice student to perform publically the first time, encouraging her fellow candidates as they discover their own musical talents or finding just the right approach to engage students who had been labeled “problematic” by other teachers, Olivia was passionate about helping others through music.

Olivia’s identity as a person and teacher has been largely informed by her involvement with music. Another important part of Olivia’s identity is someone who helps others, a belief that was modeled first at home. She is highly motivated to help others be the best they can be and teaching music is used as the vehicle she chooses to encourage self growth and awareness in others.
Chapter 6: Becoming Rose Tambor

“I sang before I talked.”
Rose Tambor

Rose teaches half-time Junior-Kindergarten through Grade 8 music and half-time Grade 4 classroom at a Catholic school in a small rural community in southwestern Ontario. After beginning her career teaching music as an itinerant teacher in two schools in another small community for 2 years, Rose changed school boards and has been in her current position for 3 years.

Three distinct themes have emerged from my work with Rose. They include:

1. Teaching music as a way to experience fulfillment in life,
2. Recognizing an unknown talent through participating in music, and
3. Teaching music as a balance between enjoyment and perfection.

Teaching Music as a Way to Experience Fulfillment in Life

For Rose, teaching music is an important part of who she is as a teacher and as a person. From the time she was a small child, singing was part of her identity.

Basically, I sang before I spoke and I would sing in my bed in the middle of the night and wake up the entire family. The first song I sang was *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and at three o’clock in the morning, everyone wants to listen to that from a 3-year-old! Right! I would sing all the time, songs like *Somewhere over the Rainbow*. I just fell in love with *The Wizard*
of Oz, and that was one of my signature songs. And I fell in love with musicals like Annie and such. (RT 2)

I used to sing in bed to put myself to sleep! My poor brother had the room next to me and I don’t know how he could stand it. I also come from a big Italian family and my cousins would drag me into the bedroom and say, “Sing Annie, Sing Annie!” I remember singing in church one time. I was a little worm in church, but when it came time for singing the hymns, I was right into it. I remember once this woman who was sitting in front of us, she turned around and gave me a quarter because she really enjoyed listening to me sing. I could really belt it out. I was probably about 7 or 8 years old. (RT 1)

As a young child, Rose was encouraged, recognized and rewarded for singing by her family and others in her community. As she grew older, the same kinds of opportunities were present in her elementary and secondary school choral experiences.

I always liked singing but never saw myself as some big star until – well, I still don’t see myself as a big star, but you know what I mean. Anyway, it wasn’t until Grade 8 that a realized that there might be more to my singing than just enjoying it, that there might be some talent too. I had a solo with the orchestra at the [school] Christmas concert and that was a big thing for me. The other thing was -and I remember this vividly – in Grade 8. We were [practicing] Vivaldi’s Gloria and we each had to sing our vocal [line] by ourselves. I am a soprano and sang my part and after a bunch of other people sang, [the teacher] said that I was the first one to stay in key the entire time. I’m like, “Whoa! Check it out!” I was excited for that. I won the vocal award that year too. Going into high school, the first time [the vocal teacher] heard my voice, he commented on how beautiful it was and he said that he had lots of solos for me. So, that really reinforced what I was doing too. (RT 1)
In addition to participating in choir at school, Rose became involved in musical theatre at her secondary school and also became more involved in music making in her community. It was during this time that her first experiences with teaching occurred.

We did *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Anything Goes* and I had the lead in both of those musicals. I sang in [a renowned community youth choir] for 5 years. And then in late high school, I started singing at weddings and things and got into private teaching. I guess the bud for teaching was in Grade 12 when I did a co-op placement at [my former elementary school] and I [was placed in the] Grade 8 vocal [class] with [my former elementary music teacher] and I loved it. I guess I went back to my roots and it was neat. (RT 1)

Although the seed for teaching music was planted through a secondary school co-op placement, the desire to perform, something she was consistently rewarded for, was still stronger for Rose. Still, when it came time for her to choose a music program in university, she made a practical choice to enroll in a music education program, rather than vocal performance.

Ah, yes, that was a big decision. [Music education] was my safety net. There was a big part of me that wanted to go into performing, but I just thought that I could get an education degree and have a safe foundation in case things don’t work out regardless of what kind of degree I get. If I want to perform, I can go perform. (RT 2)

Even after she completed her music education degree, Rose still was unsure of whether she wanted to teach and explored other options.

When I was in university, I did an education degree, but I didn’t really know whether I wanted to become a music teacher. So, after graduation, I
went to Montréal to work on my singing voice and gave myself some time to think about things. In between when I did my degree and went to Montréal, I did a bit of supply teaching at [a private music studio] and got a taste of what it would be like to be a teacher. It's funny, because the 1st year in Montréal, I didn’t want to go into teaching at all, but as the year progressed, I thought, “I don’t know if I have this in me to be a teacher, but I love singing, and I love music.” After the supply teaching, I thought, I'm going to give this a go. (RT 1)

Rose’s dilemma between her “performer” self and her “teacher” self is one that has been documented by a growing number of music education researchers, including Roberts (1993) and Prescesky (1997). In some cases, prospective teachers reconciled their “performer” and “teacher” selves easily, but for others, this provided to be difficult and sometimes impossible. With a growing interest in teaching music, Rose entered a Bachelor of Education program, but it wasn’t until she was placed with an associate teacher who taught only music (JK–Grade 8) at one school that she knew she had found her calling.

But it was the experience that I had in [that] classroom that led me in the right direction. It felt so natural and right for me to be doing that [teaching music]. (RT 1) … Ever since I was a child, music was always an integral part of my life. So the notion of doing anything in my life that didn’t involve music … Even now I can’t fathom that. I don’t know what I’d do with my life. I’d feel like something was wrong. (RT 2)

After 5 years of teaching music, Rose is still convinced that she made the right decision in choosing teaching music as a career instead of pursuing voice performance. If anything, teaching music has made an even stronger impact on her life than she may
have expected. She uses the phrase “Do what you love and love what you do” (RT 2) as words to live by in her career.

[Teaching music is] all encompassing and that’s what I love about it. It’s my way of life. I know people who say that people involved in music are mostly right-brained, but I don’t agree with that. It’s the whole brain that is used because you have the mathematical side of music but you also have the aesthetic side. There is so much more to it... I find it fulfilling. I find that, especially when I’m having those positive experiences, I get that feeling in my gut of “I’m doing exactly what I’m supposed to be doing with my life” and it’s fulfilling. And when other things in my life get me down, I can always turn to that and say “I’m doing something in my life that I absolutely love.” (RT 4)

As music is an important part of who she is as a person and teacher, Rose wants her students to have the opportunity to experience the same kinds of “tingles” as the ones she experiences through her participation in music, a feeling that is usually tied to both the music and the people involved in the music experience. “When I get the tingles, more than anything it’s ... it’s the emotion that’s involved with the music and the interaction of other people.” (RT 1) She wants her students to experience the same “magic” with music that she did when she was growing up, through music making opportunities such as musical theatre.

I had this experience [musical theatre] when I was growing up and knew how much I loved it. It’s so much fun to do a musical – the magic of performing and having an audience in front of you, clapping for you. I remember the rush I got in doing it and want that for my students. There is nothing like that feeling. I think all kids need the opportunity to feel that. (RT 1)
It is often the seemingly simple things that fulfill Rose as a music teacher, such as then she can help students to sing in tune, or to see her “regulars” attending all the extracurricular activities she leads.

It’s so neat when they are singing right in the basement and then when you sing in their ear, they pop right into tune… My participation in extracurricular activities makes me feel good. I don’t have huge numbers, but I have a core of people who come out for everything. (RT 1)

Rose finds that she and her students “feed” off one another’s energy.

[I’m excited] when I see the kids are getting it. When I see the kids are enjoying it and even more than getting it, when I see they are enjoying it, I enjoy it too. I think we bounce off of each other. If I can see that I am disciplining – this is mostly with the intermediates, but also all the way down- if I am disciplining in a way that I have them under control, that makes me happy and it makes the kids happy too. (RT 3)

Rose takes her role as an elementary music teacher seriously and feels that the role of an elementary music teacher is and should be different than a secondary music teacher.

[It’s] totally, totally [different] because in elementary school music you are responsible for igniting the flame, sort of thing. You’ve got to see that they enjoy music and I think that’s an enormous responsibility, teaching a kid to read and getting them to enjoy reading. That’s our responsibility as an elementary school music teacher to keep them engaged and in elementary school, kids have to take music whether they like it or not, so we deal with kids who “I hate music class” and that negative attitude whereas in high school music, you’ve got kids who already come with an interest and they’re there because they want to be and you can just do
higher level... I shouldn’t say higher level, but you can do more challenging music... [My goal is] that they love it, that they love learning it. I think that’s the most important thing. The fact that they are good at it or know all of these other things in secondary [does not matter as much]. When you are in elementary school,[you] won’t go on [to study music in secondary] if [you] don’t love [music already]. (RT A)

She wants her students to look back on their time with her and feel the same kinds of emotion and satisfaction she felt as an elementary music student when they do. I want them to look back at music class and think “I really enjoyed the things I did with Ms. Tambor and I enjoyed learning the different songs and I think it’s neat that I know this, this and this!” They have [learned] skills they can take with them for the rest of their lives. I’ve experienced that [with my students] already. I have a Grade 4 class and they tell me that the only thing they remember from [all of the subjects they studied in] Grade 2 is [the song] Hickey Tikety Bumble Bee. I think that’s great. If that’s the only thing they remember from that whole grade, then mission accomplished! (RT 2)

Two related themes emerge from the theme of teaching music as a way to experience fulfillment in life. The first is of view of looking at a situation as a glass that is either half empty or half full. While Rose is fulfilled in teaching music to her students at her current school, conditions are not perfect. Rose teaches music half of the day and Grade 4 for the other half day. She only sees each class 40 minutes each week for music. She does not have a designated teaching space for teaching music and pushes a cart with the materials needed for each lesson to each homeroom class to teach
music. In many of the rooms, there is little space for her and her cart and limited space for the children to move from their seats for activities requiring movement.

Rose does not have an office in which to work or store her equipment and resources for music, but shares a tiny office with the public health nurse and all the health related school equipment.

I have a quote unquote office where I keep the bulk of my materials; I am on a cart where I have a CD player, my books, my ball and puppets. But if something is forgotten and I have to dash down to my office to pick it up. It’s like “Who’s in charge until I get back?” It takes like 30 seconds, but that’s the frustrating part that you are always on the go and sometimes you don’t always have what you need. So that’s a bit of a challenge.

[The children in] Grades 3–8 stay at their desks and the Grade 1 and 2 [students] come to a piece of carpet [at the back of the room]. With the older kids, if we want to play a game, we have to move their desks.

[One of the biggest challenges is that] I don’t have control of what the classroom looks like. I like a clean classroom, but that’s not always the case. Sometimes I walk into a pigsty and I don’t have much say in it. I don’t always have a place to put my things either. Some classes have a nice table at the front where I can put my things and in other classes I wonder where I can put things. I sometimes don’t have any board space either. (RT 1)

In spite of these challenges, Rose maintains a positive attitude about her circumstances.

I think [the way in which situations are approached have a lot to do with] personality because different people could have a similar experience, but
respond to it in a different way. I mean, the whole thing of the glass is half empty or half full. This is what you’ve been given. What are you going to do about it? It’s your attitude of how you’re going to approach the situation. (RT 3)

Over the last 3 years teaching at her current school, she is slowly coming to accept the realities of her teaching situation and, while she is sometimes discouraged, she tries to accept the external limitations placed on her and her program.

I get discouraged first when I see that something’s not working and I get discouraged when I see tons of things I’d like to be doing but I realize my limitations in seeing the students only once a week. (RT A)

Not being able to accomplish as much as I’d like to because of time constraints [frustrates me] and there are things I’d like to be better in. I’d like to be much better at discipline and classroom management in Grade 7 and 8. I do realize that is an ongoing process. And the challenge for me there, that others don’t have, is that I [only] see [my students] once a week, so they see me as more like a glorified supply teacher and they see it as down time. (RT 2)

She offers advice for beginning music teachers entering the Catholic school board system.

I would have limited advice for the public system because I’ve had limited experience with it, but if they were coming into the Catholic system, I would say “Enjoy yourself and don’t stress yourself out too much about covering this, this and the other thing. Make sure you have some good repertoire that will get the kids interest, but still teach it in a way that they are learning something, but in a way they will still enjoy themselves. (RT 2)
Although teaching classroom is a reality for her, teaching Grade 4 does not offer Rose the same fulfillment as teaching music.

I know [the lack of fulfillment in teaching Grade 4] quite solidly by the fact that I am half and half… half Grade 4 [teacher] and half music [teacher]. I come to life in the afternoons when I get to teach the music and there are some wonderful things about classroom teaching, but it doesn’t light that fire inside me… For somebody else, they may get that fulfilling feeling from something else. [Teaching music is] what it does for me…. I think [music teachers] are probably following a passion they’ve had since childhood… I say I’m a music teacher and I don’t say I’m a teacher, I say I’m a music teacher. (RT A)

The second related sub-theme is “creating and recreating oneself through teaching music.” Rose understands that developing as a teacher is an ongoing process as she discovers more and more about who she is as a teacher.

I think your identity starts from day one, even before you become a teacher because all the training that you have is working to build the teacher you are going to be, so to nurture that, to cultivate who you’re going to be is very important. To keep as many ideas from your whole career to help build upon. And you should keep developing until your last year of teaching… I don’t think there is a certain time-line [to becoming a good teacher]. Some people can be amazing after 1 year. For most people, it’s a lifelong process. That’s where professional development to build professional longevity comes in. (RT 2)

She strongly believes that the development of one’s identity as a teacher is in the domain of one person – oneself.
Never mind professional identity, any kind of identity is up to that person to develop. It comes from different sources of how they choose to develop, but sole responsibility lies on them, I think. (RT A)

She has strong feelings about actively seeking out professional development.

The people who have decided not to [engage in professional development activities], are the people – and I shouldn’t say this because it is such a generalization – who are most likely to quit [teaching music] and take the easier way out – I shouldn’t say this either - and go into [teaching] classroom. I shouldn’t say that it [the classroom] isn’t necessarily easier, but having done both, I think it is, quite frankly. I am sticking with it and taking these courses and learning more because this [teaching music] is what I am passionate about. I want to be the best that I can be for myself, for my students and that’s why I’m spurred on to take more courses, because I’ve been at both ends of the spectrum where I think “I am doing an amazing job,” but then there are other times where I think “Why do I even bother!” (RT 3)

Rose “walks the walk” as well as “talks the talk” in the area of professional development. She recently completed a 3-week music education summer course and discusses the experience.

I use some of the stuff from the course. It could be as basic as how am I doing a rhythmic dictation with the kids. My instructor did something really neat. If she was going to clap ta, ti-ti, ta, ta, she would clap it, but also say “bah, bah-bah, bah, bah,” so the kids would hear it, but also get the vocal sound. They internalize it. I’ve found that many kids like it and have a bit more success with it. I like the ideas. I think it’s interesting that I take this course and then a couple of months later I drop my solfa program. Much of it I can’t use because of the way my program is, but I am able to
incorporate more dances and singing games, which is great. I find that just as valid. And sometime down the road, I will be able to teach –if I end up in a [specialized music school] or if I end up teaching in the public board, I’ll see my kids more often and will be able to do it. I still have my solfa cards and will keep them and use them when the time arises… And I did find too … This sounds so conceited … that it was a little below my level, because I was heading into my 5th year of teaching. The first few days of the course, I felt like I could have taught the course myself because she was teaching us how to teach ta, and I’ve been doing that for the past 4 years. But then there were other things, like the musicianship part of the course, were a bit more challenging. But the majority of people taking the course have no teaching experience whatsoever, so it was sort of at ground level and validated what I do as a teacher. It was a confidence boost. And I got some nice compliments from my teacher as well, so that was good. (RT 3)

For Rose, every experience is one that can help her become a better music teacher.

I’m striving to know more and to be the best that I can possibly be and all that stuff for the kids. They seem to respond to it and the communities I’ve taught at seem to respond to it so, why not? … I have more confidence in what I’m doing. I think I have more of a knowledge base to do for kids what they need, what they are going to respond to, how to keep a lesson really moving along and how to balance it out more. But that alone is still a work in progress. (RT 3)

She sees each year that she teaches as a unique opportunity for self growth. “I would hate, 30 years from now, to be the same teacher I was in my 5th year of teaching.” (RT 3)
From the time Rose was a very young child; she was recognized and rewarded for her singing voice, a practice that continued throughout her elementary and secondary school experiences and into her university experience. She was fulfilled when she was singing or performing in musical theatre. Even after completing an undergraduate degree in music education, she was not sure if she wanted to be a teacher. It was the experience in one of her practice teaching placements in her Bachelor of Education year that helped her discover a sense of fulfillment in music, just as she had always felt in singing. As she began her teaching career, that sense of fulfillment not only has been maintained, but continued to grow. Along with this growth, Rose has learned to focus on the positive and work within the time and space restrictions imposed upon her.

**Recognizing an Unknown Talent Through Participating in Music**

As music making has always been a rewarding and gratifying part of Rose’s life, it is important to her that her students have the same opportunity to experience the gifts that music can bring. This is especially true with students who have not had previous experience with music.

There is a boy in Grade 7 who was the lead in the musical I did at Christmas. He is a hockey player and he can be a bit of a goof-off in class. He is so talented as a singer and actor. It is raw, very raw, but he set the standard for the others to work up to. He was so much fun. He was great. I actually told him that he could have a career out of this if he wanted to. He doesn’t read music; otherwise I would love him to go into [a community boys’ choir]. He’s too old for the training choir and can’t read [music] well enough to be in the big choir. After I told him that he could do something with his gift, he was surprised, and this is the card he wrote me. It says:
“Dear Ms. Tambor: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to find a talent that I didn’t know I had.”

In class, he’s still a bit of a goof ball, being a Grade 7 boy and all. But, that’s OK, because even if I don’t touch another child again in my next 30 years of teaching, I can at least say I did it once! (RT 1)

This young man was clearly delighted to discover that he had an artistic side as well as athletic side to the person he is. Through music, Rose has touched him in a way that could impact the way he leads the rest of his life. Although she says that he is still very much a young adolescent male, she has seen a change in him. For instance, he has joined the choir that sings for mass at the church affiliated with the school.

I think a lot of it is underground and unspoken because he is such a boy, but he comes out to church choir now. That little unspoken gesture indicates that he is interested. I also find opportunities for him, like singing a little solo in some of the church music. (RT 1)

Another student found an interest and talent he did not know he had through a research project Rose initiated.

I was doing a composer study with the Grade 8 students. They have to select a composer, write an essay on this composer, make a poster and create an oral presentation. They can work either by themselves or with a partner. What I did is I had a sign-up sheet outside my door. I gave the assignment a week in advance and had another hockey player boy came up and said, “I want Bach. I know when his birthday is.” I told him that he could sign up when the sheet went up. He said, “Can’t I just get dibs on it now?” “No,” I said, “You can sign up when the sheet goes up like everyone else. So, this past Tuesday when the sign-up sheet went up, he
had his mom drive him in early so he could make sure that he got Bach. I was really pleased that he was so interested. That’s something else, if I think kids are racing to do something like that, I figure that I’m doing something right! (RT 1)

This young man surprised Rose with his enthusiasm for this project and his excitement lasted through the development of the project through to the day when the projects were presented and judged at the “Composer's Hall of Fame.” Largely by coincidence, I was asked to be one of the judges for this experience. I still recall the experience clearly.

As soon as I entered the school, I could see and hear excited students carrying posters, CD players and other props into the gymnasium, where the displays were to be set up. The noise level increased substantially as I opened the gym doors. Students were everywhere, taping posters to the walls, setting up small tables for any other artifacts they had. As is common with any group of students of this age, some were quite focused on the task at hand and some less so. Some girls were braiding each other’s hair and some boys were engaged in a pushing game. There was an acoustic piano set up in one corner for some students who wanted to play the music of their chosen composer and someone was practicing intently. Several students were also dressed in the style of the composer they researched.

With the final touches on the displays completed and the arrival of the other judges and a reporter from the local paper, we were ready to begin. Ms. Tambor focused the students and welcomed the guests. She explained that the judges would try to get around to as many of the displays as possible in the time allotted. The students were to provide the judges with an oral summary of their project, show their poster, as well as
any other artifacts, which might include a recording or live performance of a piece by the composer, and be prepared to answer any questions the judges might have.

One student seemed particularly interested in getting my attention. A tall boy who couldn’t seem to stand still waved his arms, jumped up and down and pleaded with me to talk with him about his project. He had chosen Bach and excitedly shared with me all the things he had learned about “his” composer. He was knowledgeable, articulate and displayed a sincere interest in the subject. He was able to answer my questions and appreciated any extra information I shared with him. He thanked me for stopping by his display and added that his music teacher was a really good teacher and he liked what they did in class. He didn’t learn much from the previous music teacher, but this one was good and taught him and his classmates many interesting things about music. (Journal notes, June 2, 2002)

It seems safe to say that this particular student will remain a fan of Bach throughout his lifetime and this may lead him to explore other composers, styles and eras of music, igniting an interest in classical music that this young man may not have known he had.

Rose would like to reach every child and help them to discover the power of music in their lives, but she realizes that this may take time and will sometimes be frustrating undertaking.

I ask myself, “What can I do to reach this child?” and then on other days I realize that I’m not going to be able to reach everyone, that some kids are just on a different plane than I am. That they will never recognize the value
of music education and that’s a shame. And then there are other days when I am determined to reach this kid! (RT 1)

While she sometimes is discouraged when she can’t reach every student, Rose’s tenacity keeps her going and the rewards are well worth it.

There are certainly times when I’ve left the class thinking that I stink and that I’m not good at this. But, this is why we go into teaching. Why become a teacher if you are going to give up on a class or a student so quickly? Maybe it wouldn’t even be quickly, but I don’t think you can ever give up on your students. That’s what we are there for, to support them and keep at it until they get it.

And when they get it, it’s just the best! The best! I’ll never forget the first time … I think it was still my 1st year of teaching … and I got a kid to sing in tune and there is just nothing like that. It was so exciting and especially that very first time it was so exciting! They are just so happy, probably because they are mirroring the expression on my face. (RT 3)

During one of my visits to Rose’s classes, I had the opportunity to see a Grade 2 child struggle with a task and then eventually succeed in another area.

All students have a turn to sing individually during the song Hey, Hey. One student has trouble matching pitch and Rose tries various strategies to assist him. After trying two or three different strategies, he still is unable to match pitch. However Rose congratulates him on trying hard and doing his best and moves on. He looks sad.

The students move together from their circle on the carpet to sit in front of Rose to read from five different rhythm cards featuring 16th-note patterns. They repeat the process, this time clapping instead of chanting rhythm syllable names. The students move back into their circle and instructions
are given for individual reading of the practiced rhythm cards. The students are eager to participate and are very patient waiting their turn and encouraging of their peers. Following each individual effort, Rose smiles at each student, makes a notation in her mark book and thanks them for their work. The one little boy who had trouble matching pitch was successful with this task and his little face beamed! Perhaps the only person in the room who looked more pleased was his teacher. (Personal journal, June 2005)

Experiencing success in one area of music soon after struggling with another task was a motivator for this student. He knows that he has a talent in some aspects of music, and this knowledge will likely encourage him to work hard in the areas that do not come as easily to him.

Rose is passionate about teaching music, but even more so about assisting her students find their personal strengths and talents in music. This is an important part of teaching music for her, as she wants her students to experience the same kind of joy and engagement in music as she felt as a child and continues to feel as an adult.

**Teaching Music as a Balance Between Enjoyment and Perfection**

Rose’s experiences with music in music-enriched elementary and secondary school ensembles and her participation in a nationally renowned youth choir provided her with myriad opportunities to make music at a very refined and complex level. In each of these experiences she has competed in local, provincial, national and international music festivals and these groups have consistently earned the highest standings.
Participation in these groups and other musical experiences has also been a source of great fulfillment and enjoyment for Rose. In her teaching, she tries to balance both the enjoyment factor while striving for excellence. When asked what her former teachers’ goals for music might be music education, both these areas were discussed.

I think they’d say striving for excellence, doing the best you can, tapping into your talent, having the confidence to do what you can do. Especially from [the secondary teacher], that’s what I gathered. Also from [the elementary teacher], there is that standard that he set that we all worked towards. It made me work hard... The [elementary] experience was very much about going for the gold. At [the secondary school], it was much more doing your best job and appreciating your talents. (RT 1)

Rose has taken each of these views and has merged them into a working philosophy for competitive experiences with her own ensembles.

[Participation in music festivals] is more for the experience. We strive to do our very best. My attitude, based on my parents, my education and teachers is that you always but your best foot forward. So, you do your very best. I said to my kids today, as a matter of fact, that I would rather have them get a bronze and put something into the song rather than just singing through the notes and getting a silver. It’s important to put your best foot forward and have the standard there, but also enjoy the process of getting there too. (RT 1)

This approach is the one used in her music classes as well.

Enjoyment! I want the kids to enjoy the class that I’ve done with them. It would be nice if they all could sing in tune ... in an ideal world! If they picked up the concept I was teaching and at the end they would say, “I really enjoyed the class. I learned a lot and it was fun!”
I hope [the students] would say that they learned a lot but had a good
time while they were doing that. Maybe relate to the different times they
did things. “I remember that we got to compose a rondo and I brought
my guitar in and it was great.” And tell stories about the things they did in
my class. (RT 1)

While one of Rose’s goals is to have her students enjoy their time in music, she
still pushes them to do their best. This was apparent when I visited a Grade 1/2 class.

Rose sits in the centre of the circle with a utility ball in her hands. She
begins singing a greeting song and rolls the ball to the first student. The
child sings the answer and the entire class joins in on the last part of the
song. Each child has a turn to sing his/her verse of the song. If matching
pitch is a problem, Rose asks the student to sit up straight and sing with
confidence. Depending upon the child and what s/he sang originally, Rose
asks the child to sing loudly, or quietly and in each instance, the child
matches pitch correctly. Each child in the class successfully matches
pitch! After each member of the class, including Rose has a turn. Rose
then signals to the children to give me a turn. (RT A)

In addition to only teaching each of her classes once a week for 40 minutes,
Rose does not have a designated space to teach music, but is “on a cart.” She piles all
the materials and equipment she will need for a block of lessons onto a cart with wheels
and pushes it into each classroom according to her schedule.

Time and space limitations have meant that Rose has had to adjust her program,
both in the kinds of activities she does with the children and the content of her lessons.
Making the decision to drop the solfege portion of her music program was a difficult one.
Yes. It broke my heart to have to do this, but I don’t get to teach perfect lessons. Finally, after struggling with it for a long time, I had to drop my solfege program. It was a really hard decision to make, but, it was the right decision to make because it was interfering with my goal of what I wanted to achieve as a music teacher. I wanted them to enjoy music, I wanted them to have fun with it and I wanted them to learn something. I maintained my rhythm program and I’m at the point where my most advanced rhythmic learners are learning *tam-ti* and I’m happy about that. With the solfege, I am teaching literacy, but it is just impossible to accomplish that in just 40 minutes a week. It’s not worth it. It was stressing me out, it was stressing the kids out and that isn’t what I’m there for.

It was a hard decision to make. I made it in the fall and I have enjoyed teaching music that much more and I think the kids have too. I like to have fun with my kids and be energetic. And I think that especially in elementary school, you can either pull kids in or push them away, depending upon the way in which you approach the subject matter. Well, really any subject matter. So, I like to go in and do fun things and interesting things. Have them do interesting things, but learn things too. (RT 2)

In making the decision to drop the solfege aspect of her program, but maintaining the rhythmic reading, Rose is trying to adjust the balance of what she can accomplish in a program where she sees her students only once a week. She wants music class to be a pleasant, enjoyable experience for her students, but also a time where they learn musical skills and concepts as well. She recalls some advice that one of her former teachers gave her.

I need a good purpose for doing things in my classroom. I know some people have their students learn the names of the notes on the staff in the
treble and bass clef and the sharps and flats. I don’t do that because I have to have a good reason for why I’m doing that. I actually got that from my former music teacher. He said “Be reflective and ask yourself why you are doing something” and I have. So, with the note names, they have nothing to apply it to right now. When they get to high school, they will learn all of that and they will have all that information to apply, but to teach it so isolated, apart from anything, I just don’t think they are really going to appreciate it. So, I don’t do that kind of stuff with them and maybe I’m cutting them off from something, but it just doesn’t seem worth it for them to have to know something that they can’t apply. I will do composer history, because they are learning about something they will have forever other than “Father Charles Goes down and Ends Battle.” I think it’s more important for them to know in 20 years, that Beethoven’s father hit him on the hand when he made a mistake. It’s just more interesting for them to know. (RT 3)

While her efforts in her current school are valued and Rose is trusted to develop and run her music program in the manner she sees fit, this was not always the case.

The principal I have now is very supportive and is constantly patting me on the back and saying “Good job. I really enjoyed that. Good for you.” She comes to Kiwanis [Music Festival]. I always get a card from her after the kids perform, or any play, saying “Congratulations. You’ve made such a difference here.” That makes me feel really great.

I had a different experience with my principals in [another community where she began her teaching career]. It’s not that they thought I was doing a bad job, I think they were fine with what I was doing. With one of the principals, it was very frustrating because I didn’t get to conduct the extracurricular ensembles. There was a recently retired Grade 2 teacher who, even in my 2nd year, came back to do the choir. Even if [the
principal] says that I am doing fine in the classroom, something like that undermines my confidence, because it tells me that she doesn’t think I should do it. So that was very upsetting for me.

Then the other principal, he told me during my 2nd year there – just to think about it drives me nuts! – he told me in early November to drop my program from Grade 1 to 8 and teach Christmas carols. What a waste of time! My time and the kids’ time! His reasoning was that the kids don’t know all the words to the Christmas carols and they should just enjoy themselves. He thought the program was going fine; it’s just that he doesn’t think it’s important if that’s what he wants me to do. That was the year that I did a Christmas musical, I had a choir. I was only there for 2 lunch hours a week and we pulled it off. And after the presentation, with parents still piling out of the gym, he came up to me and said “Do you have any thoughts about what you are going to do in the spring?” I thought “I still have to come down from this first!” That’s the same kind of thing as being called the support teacher or prep teacher. You’re a functional person there to make the principal look good.

[When he asked me to stop my program,] it stripped me of my identity, because I was there doing something that a cartoon could probably do. It takes away the meaning of what I do, it takes away the purpose. I am trying to teach these kids, make them well-rounded and give them a background in things they may have no knowledge about. The words stripped me of my identity, but the strength of my convictions and what I should be doing became stronger.

So, I just went on with my program. There was 1 day that I kept the classroom door open and it was very close to the office. We just happened to be singing “Jingle Bells” and it was the tail end of class and I thought, “You’re probably pacified now.” There was no way I was going to interrupt
my program. Those classes were 50 minutes long and I can't imagine singing Christmas carols for 6 weeks! (RT 3)

These less than positive experiences with the first two administrators Rose dealt with as an emerging teacher could have devastated Rose as a beginning teacher. Fortunately, the opposite happened. The strength of Rose’s convictions and of what should be doing in her program became stronger through these experiences, providing her with the opportunity to further sharpen her image of what an elementary music program should be and how it should be balanced.

Rose’s personal experiences with music during her elementary and secondary school years are quite different from the lives of her students. She attended elementary and secondary schools with a special focus on music and sang is a world-class youth choir. She was used to performing difficult repertoire and polishing it to almost perfection. The reality of her teaching situation is that she teaches in a “regular” elementary school and sees her elementary students once a week for music. She recognizes that she cannot expect the same kinds of performance levels with her students as she experienced herself. While this certainly does not mean that she does not have standards for her students, she recognizes that she places primary importance of her students’ first enjoying music class and being engaged in and through music. She does have of her students and she pushes them to achieve, but she tries to balance that with her students’ joy in being involved with music.

Rose came to teaching after first being personally fulfilled by performing music. She discovered her own talent and passion for teaching music and delights in assisting
her students in discovering their own individual passions for music. Although she sets high musical standards for her students, she is cautious in remembering that their engagement and delight in music should always come first.
Chapter 7: Becoming Annabelle Petch

“Music has been in my life forever.”

Annabelle Petch

Annabelle, the participant with 8 years teaching experience, is the only participant in this study who has a young family. With children aged 5 and 3, she has been on maternity leave twice thus far in her teaching career. Being a parent has made an impact on who she is as a teacher and the decision to have a family perhaps has also impacted on her teaching assignments. Three distinct themes clearly emerged from my collaboration with Annabelle, including:

1. Music as an opportunity for all students to shine,

2. Participation in music as an emotional experience, and

3. Music education as an integral part of a child’s education.

Music as an Opportunity for all Students to Shine

This theme is one of the basic tenets of Annabelle’s philosophy of music education and it is apparent in both her words and actions. The roots of this philosophy began to form through her own participation in music as a child and her feelings of being special when participating in music. When she recalls her experiences with music in elementary school, and a special music teacher, her memories are “warm and bubbly.”

[Music in elementary school was] just such a happy time and, for me, a comfort level since I was in my element. I was always a smart kid, so I
never had to worry. I did my work but I never had to work hard to do well, it came naturally to me, especially in elementary school. Not so much in high school, but in elementary school. So, I might have shone above other kids and everything is so social when you are in elementary school. [Music] was what I was good at. I was never afraid to get up and sing a solo in front of the class. I’d volunteer. It was a feeling of confidence. Even now when I listen to a beautiful piece of music, that makes me feel warm and bubbly and whatever inside, I remember him [my music teacher] and his music classes. (AP 1)

The feelings that she had about herself as a person through her participation in music remain strong for Annabelle, and she works hard to provide the same kinds of experiences for and feelings in her own students, and herself.

My 1st year [of teaching], I taught Grade 1 [music]. I taught three classes of Grade 1 and one class of Grade 2. I saw them every day I was there, which was every other day. Just for a half an hour or 40 minutes. I also had primary choir fit into my schedule, which was fabulous and I had all the Grade 1, 2 & 3 students [in the choir] but I didn’t teach them all music, which made it difficult. The Grade 1’s that 1st year were so incredible. I ended up taking them to the music festival, if you can imagine. They were incredible. And the piece we had to sing was this God awful thing. I don’t remember what it was called, but I think someone just grabbed it off the shelf and said “Unison, perfect!” It had a crazy range! We went to the festival and they were so proud of themselves. And I was so proud of them. These little 6-year-olds up there and they were watching me. My principal was my accompanist! It was my first festival experience as a teacher and it was great … for them and for me! (AP 1)
Her first class of Grade 1 students had an opportunity to shine through a music festival experience and Annabelle has continued to provide experiences for her students’ shine, to help them – literally and figuratively – find their voices as musicians.

My Grade 3’s this year are phenomenal singers. I just had them do a little song for education week and they got up in front of the school and sang. I can't believe them. They are amazing. I love Grade 3. Everything cooks in Grade 3. They find their [singing] voice[s] and you don’t have, well not many, off [pitch] anymore and you can be so musical with them. (AP 1)

While Annabelle values the opportunity to assist students to shine in group music making experiences, she also values the occasion for students to shine in individual music making opportunities. Annabelle demonstrated her philosophy of providing each student with an opportunity to shine in many of the lessons I observed. The first occasion was a Grade 3 music lesson in which individual students were performing rhythmic compositions they had written in an earlier class. My observation notes explain.

The students had an opportunity to first practice and then to perform for the rest of the other students in their class. Annabelle explained the marking criteria, which is modeled on a 4-point rubric system. “A “4” is perfecto; a “3” is a few little breaks or slips; and a “2” is several breaks or slips.” The possibility of a “1” is dismissed with “We won't have any of these!”

Before the performances begin, Annabelle cautions the students to not go too fast and she sets an appropriate tempo for each performer. As each child performs, Annabelle assists any student who needs help by pointing at the beats. All students are encouraged and provided with enough time
to do the best performance they can. “Do you want to start again?” “Good for you!” “Good for you honey!” You did it!” “Good girl!” “Good job!” and all the students applaud. In each case, the performer beams with pride at his/her accomplishment.

After several students perform, Annabelle comments “Oh no! We’re almost out of time.” At the look of dismay on the children’s faces, she relents. “Okay, we’ll do one more” and the children cheer. (AP B)

Annabelle takes the time to work with each child individually, at his or her level. Through the experience of being a parent of a differently-abled child, Annabelle is very aware that each child she teaches is unique and should be valued for their individual gifts.

I think just realizing that, especially with [my child] who has sort of special needs and different abilities and she is just amazing to me. She doesn’t have a lot of words yet, but she can sing and match pitch. It helps me be more patient with my kids at school. It makes me realize that every kid who is there is somebody’s child. I think teachers sometimes get in a pattern of talking about this kid and that kid, but we forget that the kid goes home to their mom and dad. That is their child. Now being a parent, I think about that more. Now I have nursery school teachers telling me what [my child] has done today. (AP 1)

When asked what the role of the music teacher is in the development of children, Annabelle has definite opinions.

This was our big question in teacher’s college and, not so much in undergrad because we didn’t talk about it. Are you a teacher or are you a music teacher? Is it the subject or is it the child? And I say, I can’t answer that. I think you can’t be a good music teacher unless you are a musician
and I know lots of people who teach music who are not professional musicians ... who play the piano or whatever, or who sang in a choir once. And that’s not what I mean. I also know some amazing professional musicians who should not be teaching in elementary schools. At the same time I don’t want to be a snob about it but there is a difference between someone who has a degree in music education and learned about music history and theory and all those things and can bring a bigger amount of knowledge of the subject to their kids than somebody who has played in a band in high school.

Do I teach the child or the subject? I always say “Not every kid is a math and science kid.” Music might be the only “A” they get and they deserve an “A.” They deserve it because they are fabulous. So, why shouldn’t that be a highlight for them? Not every kid is going to be great at everything they do, and if they are great at what they do for me, isn’t that telling? We round them all out. They need us. Doesn’t it tell their parents something? Doesn’t it tell their teachers and the administration that kids need music? They know this! (AP 2)

She is a firm believer in educating the whole child and that children “need” music.

We had to write a philosophy of education when I was at teacher’s college, which I don’t know if they still have to do, but I look back and think to myself, it was almost a selling thing. Sell yourself, sell what you do to whoever, based on Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences. It’s all true. It’s all true. I say “Yes, we have to educate the whole child.” Not every child is going to be linguistic, or mathematical or spatial, so can I do something with musical intelligence? It’s all true. Everything that I wrote 8 years ago to sell myself to a principal and get hired for a job … “I am that teacher” is how I ended my philosophy. This is what they need and I am that teacher. Yes, I am that teacher, absolutely I am. (AP 2)
She feels that through gaining experience in teaching music, she is able to provide moments for her students to shine. “It’s probably less about the subject and more about the kids, more just about doing the best for those kids and meeting them where they are, in that world.”

A subtopic of this theme is “music teachers touch so many lives.” When Annabelle’s classes or choirs perform in a music festival, education week assembly for their peers in other grades and parents, or in front of each other, their music is touching both the singers and those for whom they sing. Annabelle is aware of this opportunity and responsibility. In planning her lessons and performance opportunities, she is aware that each child in each class is an individual and her planning must provide the flexibility for each class and child to shine.

We [music teachers] have the benefit of seeing so many kids so we have that benefit of being able to touch so many lives. But I think it changes from class to class. I think … I teach three Grade 3 classes and the same … the content might be the same but it’s not going to be the same way that I teach it. Each class is a little different. One class might be more high needs, one class might be more attention deficit, some classes are absolutely perfect and you can springboard on to other things. (AP 2)

Annabelle firmly believes that all children can benefit from experience with and in music and that for some children; this will be the area of the curriculum in which they will become especially engaged and shine. Children have different strengths and affinities and those who have a special delight in music deserve the opportunity to explore that area of their being.
Participation in Music as an Emotional Experience

From the time she was a young girl, expression through music has been part of Annabelle’s life. She says that “Music has been in my life forever.”

When we were young, my mom sang to us constantly and we were always singing in the house, things like that. I started to learn piano when I was 3 or 4. Mom helped me. (AP 1)

Music was something that the entire family did together and became part of what family was and meant to Annabelle. It was also something her parents had both participated in as children. Her father continued to make music as an adult.

Mom has her Grade 8 in piano with formal lessons all the way through and did her theory and all that stuff. My dad never took a formal lesson but he is an amazing musician with an amazing ear. He was in a rock band all his young adult life. Even up until they had me, he was still doing gigs on the weekend and that sort of thing ‘cause it would pay more on the weekend than he would make all week of teaching. (AP 1)

In addition to being immersed in music in her family life, Annabelle also experienced a consistent music education program in her elementary school and credits her elementary music teacher with providing her with the gift that music became in her life.

My music memories from elementary school ... I think that probably really solidified the love of music for me, even though I was taking piano lessons all along and was one of only a few kids in the class who was doing that. But I think [my teacher], he was amazing. I remember singing Pussywillows, Cattails. He turned on the record player – back in those days that was the karaoke-type recordings, it
would just be accompaniment and we would sing along. I remember that so well. Forever! Every day we did it and it made me feel so good, so happy. (AP 1)

When she was in Grade 7, Annabelle learned to play the French horn and continued with her study of the horn in secondary school, where she also enjoyed participating in various choirs and bands. She remembers her time spent in extracurricular music ensembles as one of the few areas of school that was fulfilling for her.

We did musicals in elementary school as well as choir and band. Everything you could possibly do, we did. We even formed our own little groups to get up and perform at assemblies. Those were the days of at least once a month whole school assemblies and I don’t know of any school where that still happens anymore... And then in high school, everything was school based, but there was so much. There was concert choir, chamber choir, madrigal choir, eight-voice choir with two on each part, so many different bands, there was everything.

I don't remember Grade 9 math, well I remember it, but it doesn’t bring back any good memories. High school wasn’t a favourite time for me. High school to me seemed like a stepping stone to get out into the real world. I wanted it to be done so I could be at university... When I think back to it, that’s was high school was. Those early morning rehearsals, singing, performing and the excitement of festival and preparing and it was all wonderful in my head. (AP 1)

When asked to guess what her school music teachers’ goals for music education were, Annabelle did not hesitate.

I think probably, first is to instil a love of music, for all kinds of music, in their students by performing and learning and practicing, not just the skill
but more for the feeling of it or the emotional part of it. That’s what I think. Not that there isn’t skill involved, of course there is because you need to know what you need to know to do it well, but if I asked them [teachers] that’s what they would say. (AP 1)

Annabelle “always” knew she wanted to be a teacher, but her choice of music as a major was a more pragmatic selection.

I think I thought about it [going into music] for about 2 minutes. I was in Grade 12 and I thought about what I would apply for to take in university the next year. I thought about being a teacher. I knew I wanted to be a teacher since day one. So, I thought “I have to get a degree in something.” And I thought, “What would I get the best marks in an undergraduate degree that I would be accepted into teacher’s college the first round?” And I thought, “Gosh, I’m pretty good at music. Maybe I should do music.” And literally, that’s as much as I thought about it. (AP 1)

However, her choice of a major instrument was not as easy. On the advice of her secondary school instrumental teacher, she auditioned and was accepted into a music education program as a French horn major because she was told by him that she was “a much better horn player than a singer.” However, lessons with her horn teacher became “miserable” experiences for her and she would be stressed and physically ill before each of her lessons in anticipation of the yelling and bullying that would occur in the lesson. Fortunately, a voice instructor heard her sing in a compulsory 1st-year voice class.

So I got up there and sang the Schubert Ave Maria. And after class he said “Are you a voice major?” and I said “No.” And he said “You should be.” And I said “It’s funny that you say that, because I’m going to quit
school or change something because I can’t keep on going the way I am.” And so he gave me three or four lessons for free and prepared me for an audition. We had the early auditions in March. He prepared me to do an audition and it was easily at the level of a 1st year jury. And he said “If you can do a 1st year-type audition, they should let you into 2nd year voice.” And it was a big mess because there are lots of voice majors and not many horn majors. They also said that I could be a voice major, but I would have to go back and do 1st year again. The voice instructor said “That’s not right, because she can go right into 2nd year.” So, some strings had to be pulled, but they were pulled and as of 2nd year, I was a voice major. (AP 1)

The resolution of this conflict eliminated the negative aspects of Annabelle’s undergraduate program and she grew and thrived as a vocal major. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Annabelle enrolled in the secondary school (intermediate senior) vocal and instrumental music stream for her Bachelor of Education year and, upon graduation, began teaching music in an elementary school. Currently, she teaches music to primary grade students. When asked why she chose the secondary route in the pre-service program, Annabelle’s reasoning is again pragmatic.

I decided to take IS [intermediate/senior] music because I wanted to go with the "sure thing" as far as getting in to [a Faculty of Education.] I didn't want to be put on a waiting list and I figured with so many applicants, my best choice for acceptance was IS music vocal and instrumental. Truly I never intended on teaching IS.... I wanted to get the degree and then go ahead and take my primary qualification so I could teach Grade 3 [homeroom], which was my ultimate goal.

I ended up teaching primary [music] because of [a practicum experience I had]. I asked for an elementary placement for my second placement and
was thrilled to be placed [in a JK–8 rotary music placement.] Until I started teaching music in [that] classroom, I don't even think I wanted to be a music teacher. But once I saw what fun it was, that I actually had some talent for music teaching, that I could impact so many kids, I fell in love. Then I realized that there are hundreds of classroom qualified teachers but not so many music qualified teachers and that gave me an edge in getting a job! It's funny how things work out! So while I was busy making other plans for my life, what I was meant to do fell into my lap. (Personal communication, August 17, 2004)

As well as the fulfillment of teaching music, active music making has always been an important part of Annabelle's emotional and spiritual life. However, as a music teacher and mother of two small children, she has had to give up this part of her life, for now.

I miss it [making music] terribly. I'm finding that choir is missing in my life and it's sad. It's really hard right now with my kids the age they are, it's hard. Even with my church choir, which for me is both professional and spiritual, I really feel that missing right now. (AP 1)

For Annabelle, balance in her life is important and personal music making, to fulfill the emotional and spiritual parts of her need balance as well.

Everything is balance. And that's how I know whether life is good or bad because I feel it like that. It's everything. It's my relationships, it's my friendships, it's my family, it's my job, it's my exercise, it's my spiritual self, it's all of those things. And sometimes one thing gets out of whack and you feel all cranky and you think “What's going on?” “Oh, it's because I haven't done this for a while.” I think as a musician, we just have an extra little outlet, right? That other people, maybe they have it in a different way.
But when you have grown up with music your whole life and it’s what you do, and then you take that part away, the professional performance part, it’s tough. (AP 2)

The emotional impact and excitement that Annabelle feels when participating in music is something she sees as unique in teaching and something music teachers can provide for their students and themselves.

My most favourite thing about being a music teacher … I think probably when I have a good group of kids who can get up and sing, whether it’s my junior choir when I don’t even teach those kids but have them for rehearsal or my Grade 3’s who were just wonderful singers. When they can practice something, rehearse something and listen to what you have to say, crescendo and watch for the cut offs, and then get up and perform that. The excitement I feel, even if I’m accompanying, and I’m always accompanying and conducting with my head, but I think that’s my favourite thing. I don’t think a classroom teacher can have that same experience, but maybe a different one. I think a single kid could do something spectacular that would make their heart swell or whatever. Lights going off for kids and all that, but I think that when we get with them, we can do something incredible, whether it’s singing in front of another class or singing for their teachers or singing in an assembly. (AP 3)

When parents of Annabelle’s students watch their children make music, it is often an emotionally impacting experience for them too.

I think that just the performing or working on a show [is exciting]. Working with colleagues to prepare an hour-long musical and even though it’s May and you started in January with auditions – -and how many extra hours of work – - but that night the kids just shine and they are so proud of themselves. And the parents are sitting there with their jaws on the floor
because they can’t believe that’s their kid in Grade 6 getting up there and singing a solo. (AP 3)

At a recent assembly for a principal who was being transferred from her school, Annabelle wanted to honour him through the medium that touches her the most and hopes that it touches him as well.

We sang for the entire school and that’s a lot of kids. And I’ve got 75 [Grade 3 students] up there on my four little risers squished together. But the sound they made, it was just incredible. I thought I was about to cry. They were so happy! We sang for the principal on his last day because he is leaving and we prepared a song for him. We had three 45 minute rehearsals and they did it!

[The song] was called *May Sunshine Light Your Way* and it was a perfect song for him. The principal didn’t say anything at the end of the assembly, because there were a lot of classes who did things and it was a very long assembly, over 2 hours, but I emailed him later. I emailed him and said “I’m not sure if you heard the words to the song, but I just want to tell you that the last words of the song are ‘Go in peace, go in love, go in song.’” It was just my way of saying goodbye to him. And he’s a musician, my principal, so he knows. And he emailed me back and said “Thank you for teaching the students a very meaningful song. I appreciate what you do for the kids and the school.” (AP 3)

When asked to articulate what she would want her students to say about their musical experiences with her, Annabelle does not hesitate.

I would want them to remember that we had fun. I want them to have that same warm feeling. I remember singing *Pussywillows, Cattails* and the emotional impact it had on me and I want them to say “Remember when
we sang that [song] and got up in front of the entire school?” which is a 1000 people. So that’s a big deal for them to get up and sing in front of the school. And [I want them to remember] how it made them feel. (AP 1)

Making music has been an emotional experience for Annabelle from the time she was young, singing with her family at home. She experienced the same kind of joy and specialness when she sang with her class in elementary school and performed with various ensembles in secondary school. She lost that feeling for a while in university, but with a change of her major instrument and instructor, found the joy again. During her pre-service year, it was a placement in an elementary school after two experiences in secondary schools that confirmed for her that she was meant to work with younger children. It is through their engagement in and emotional response to music that the emotion she felt making music as a child is renewed.

**Music Education as an Integral Part of a Child’s Education**

Annabelle believes that music education as a key part of a child’s education, something that makes many students “whole” and gives many children the opportunity to achieve in ways that may not be possible in any other medium. As such, music education deserves the same respect, place in the curriculum, appropriate physical space and materials and quality of instruction as the other subject areas are given. Currently, this is often not the case in many Ontario elementary schools. However, her belief in the value of music education is such that she was willing to accept less than ideal circumstances, teaching part time music in two different schools a long way from her home town in order to teach music.
[My 1st year of teaching I taught] one-quarter time in each of two county schools and I drove an hour each way. [At the one school,] the 1st year was wonderful because I had a music room. I had space. It was perfect. That was 1 day [of the 6-day cycle] and then the next day I’ll go to [my other school] which is the most westerly school in our entire board. It took me a long time to get there and the space was not wonderful. I didn’t have a [music] room, I was teaching in the [homeroom] classrooms and I didn’t even have a cubby for my books. I was living out of the staff room with my coat on a chair. It was awful. So the 2nd year, I decided to increase my job from half time to full time [at the second school]. They had a half-time library position and they increased my music to half time by shuffling things around at the school. I was sad to leave my first school, my staff and my room. But things were better in my 2nd year. At least I had my library as a home-base, but still taught music in the classrooms. So, I still had to drive, but only to one place. So that was fabulous.

I had a wonderful principal who is a musician and supported whatever I wanted to do. When I got there, he’d be like “How can I help you?” I loved it, it was perfect and beautiful. I loved the balance between music and library. It was really, really rewarding. So that’s when I took my library course so that I was qualified to work in the library. So I did that for 2 full years. The 2nd year I wanted to transfer. I was thinking about having a family and I wanted to be in the city and at the last minute I decided I wouldn’t transfer. I didn’t end up signing my transfer sheet. [My principal] said to me “You’ve made me the happiest man in the world.” And then he got transferred!

And then we got an awful principal who made everybody on staff cry at least once during the year. And that year we had decided to do a big musical. We had 100 kids involved and parents and every staff member was doing something and this man was horrendous, totally not supportive!
Here we were breaking our backs … but then again, we were doing it for the kids of course. So anyway, so I transferred again. (AP 1)

As the previous vignette offers, in addition to considerations such as physical space, support of the administration is another key to making music education important in Annabelle’s view. The “musician” principal seemed to understand and appreciate the important experiences she and the other staff members were offering the students, while the new principal did not. For this reason, and to eliminate the long commute, she chose to transfer to a school closer to her home and to a school where music education was viewed as being more important.

I got a full-time primary music position at [my current school], which, if you can imagine how crazy that is. How can one walk into a job like that, only teaching primary music? It was wonderful. And I had [an amazing person] at that time as the principal and he hired me on the spot because I was the only one who interviewed for the job. Nobody else wanted this job. That was crazy and maybe it was because it was all primary too. There are lots of teachers who would apply for the position if it was Junior Kindergarten – Grade 6, but they may not want to only do primary. I think that was part of it. But who cares, I got the job and I loved it! (AP 1)

The administrator who hired Annabelle was similar to her first principal, in the fact that he demonstrated his belief in the importance of music education in his actions.

[The principal] would come out to my portable, play a game with us and sit in the circle with the kids and sing. He was fabulous. He would come at least once a month, which doesn’t seem like very much, but when you have such a huge school it is! He was always popping his head in and always, always, every time anything happened, like if we sang at Remembrance Day, he would write a note and put it in my mailbox.
“Thank you for having the choir sing. They did a great job.” He would pop by choir practice at lunch time to thank them for doing a good job and for putting in extra time and extra work. Then, that was it. When he was gone, I haven’t heard anything from my other principal. (AP 2)

By singing with the children and dropping by to watch the choir rehearse, the principal was demonstrating to them that music education was important and something he enjoyed being part of. The note to Annabelle following events such as the Remembrance Day observance let her, and the choir, know that their extra efforts made a difference in the life of the school.

However, circumstances at the school were soon to change. This principal was transferred. Annabelle went on maternity leave and upon her return as a part time music teacher a year later, the music position had changed.

After a year maternity leave, I went back half time, but they did not replace the other part of my program. They cut my program in half. It used to be three times [a 6-day cycle] for 40 minutes. Now I see the students twice [a 6-day cycle] for a half an hour. It’s ridiculous. The Kindergarten students I see only once a cycle because the Kindergarten teachers get their prep in other ways. You know, they could really care less about what programs they’re going to cut. That’s how it seems to be, anyway. Not all the time, but with this particular principal right now. It’s always a numbers game. (AP 1)

In addition to the changing place of music education in the curriculum, Annabelle’s physical space was also in flux. When she first began teaching at her current school, she did have a room to teach in, although there were no chairs. This
was not a problem for the kindergarten and primary children, as they sat on the carpet. However, she also taught Grade 4 and without chairs for these growing children, it would be difficult for them to sit properly to sing and even more difficult to begin learning to play the recorder as Annabelle wanted them to do.

Soon, Annabelle would lose this classroom space, as it was needed for a home room class, and would share a room with the educational assistants at her school. This worked well for a short time, until this room was needed for the learning resource teachers to instruct individual children. She then had a choice of working “on a cart,” and going into the home rooms of each class she taught, an idea that the home room teachers were against, or to teach in the school “atrium.”

The alternative to that is teaching in their classroom, which to me is no alternative at all. Number one, there’s a tiny carpet space and hardly any room to play games and I think the kids need that change of venue, even if it is to a hallway, which is not ideal, at least they are going somewhere. (AP 2)

During my first visit to the school to observe Annabelle in her classroom, I had an opportunity to view the atrium where she teaches and recorded some observations.

Annabelle teaches music to students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 4 in a very large, urban school in a mid-sized Southwestern Ontario city. The school is so large that it is essentially divided into two buildings, with primary-junior and intermediate wings. In addition to the main office, which is located in the intermediate wing, there is a smaller office located in the primary-junior wing of the school.
She teaches in what is called the atrium, a large area near the centre of the primary-junior section of the building. While it is optimistically called an “atrium,” it is really a large hallway. Located on the main floor of the building, the atrium has a low ceiling, but some natural light is allowed through some skylights built into the ceiling. The atrium is the centre hub for many of the primary classes and several kindergarten classrooms enter their cloakrooms from the atrium.

The area does not have any furniture – or even an area rug – for the students to sit on, but Annabelle does have a piano, a portable CD player, an easel and one chair. There is a collection of playground equipment in two of the corners of the atrium and a small table with small chairs for quiet work. There are also two recessed and carpeted areas with graduated seating for TV viewing or group presentations. Annabelle uses these areas for her choir rehearsals. A photocopier is in another corner and other teachers seem to use it constantly while Annabelle is teaching. It is apparent that they try to be as quiet as possible and if two teachers meet and engage in conversation, they do so in hushed tones. The floor is tiled and clean, although it is important to note that the day of this visit, the weather was clear and dry. Displayed on some of the walls are music posters and artwork put up by the classroom teachers, making the space a little more cheerful. (AP A)

While Annabelle is resigned to teaching in a glorified hallway, and sees it as a better alternative to be teaching “on a cart,” she is discouraged by some incidents she has had to contend with over the years, situations she is sure that teachers in other subject areas would not be asked to deal with.

Right now and the past couple of years, it has been [frustrating] teaching in a hallway. That’s very frustrating and I pride myself on my patience. I am very patient. I really, really pride myself on being a patient person and
by the end of this year I was ready to lose it. I can’t believe that people could be so rude … mostly parents picking up their kids from Kindergarten. And yes, I do back on to the Kindergarten classes, but the teachers have been really good to take their children out and around the back way, but still parents come in every day dropping their kids off late or picking them up early and I’ve got a class of 24 kids there and you’re walking right through. Okay, walk right through. Do it quickly, do it quietly. You don’t need to have a conversation about it. You don’t need to jiggle your keys as you go or walk through my circle while pushing a buggy while I am teaching, which happened. And I thought, “I’m a mom too. I have a little baby.” I can’t imagine. Would I walk through somebody’s office in the middle of their meeting? No. And that really, really bothered me and made me sad. (AP 3)

The lack of respect shown by these parents makes Annabelle wonder if the work she is doing with children in music education is valued. Perhaps these parents do not understand that a music lesson is occurring with the students, for if the lesson was valued, would it not be held in a proper classroom? A similar lack of respect shown by those in charge of the lights at her school also makes her question the perceived value of what she does.

Another thing that made me sad and very frustrated was when I was on maternity leave and I found out that the teacher who was in for me had no lights. All of the pot lights had burned out and they were going to replace the pot lights with florescent tube lighting. But because everything in this board takes so long to happen, the only way he had enough light in his classroom area was by shining the light from an overhead projector onto the ceiling.
We did get lights. They must have come soon after I arrived back [from maternity leave] or maybe even before because I never had to do what he did. But I thought, “That’s disgusting!” First of all, you’re ousted out of your classroom [music room] because we needed a resource room and I don’t say for one second that amazing things don’t happen with amazing teachers and amazing educational assistants, because they do. But you get ousted from your class back into the hallway and they can’t even make it a logical place to be? That’s not good. (AP 3)

Annabelle considers herself very fortunate to have begun her teaching career guided by a principal who believed in the importance of music education as an integral part of the curriculum. She has since experienced principals who seem to hold a variety of different views. Sometimes these views are not verbalized, but their actions speak louder than words. In spite of these challenges, Annabelle is determined to provide a quality music education for her students as her former teachers did for her.

For Annabelle, participation in music has always been an emotional experience and she works to provide the same experience for her students. She feels that music truly does lie at the heart of the curriculum and that all children deserve the opportunity to participate as for some, this might be the one area of the curriculum where they shine.
Chapter 8: Becoming Janice Jones

“I am an inclusive teacher.”
Janice Jones

The most experienced teacher in the study, Janice has well defined beliefs as to the kind of teacher she is. The formation of these ideals was not always easy for Janice, but she feels she is a stronger teacher because of the process. Throughout my conversations and correspondence with and classroom observations of Janice teaching, three distinct themes appeared. They are:

1. Appreciating and enjoying music for its own sake and not for competitive performance reasons

2. Creating community through participation in music, and

3. Developing the whole person through music.

Appreciating and Enjoying Music for its Own Sake and not for Competitive Performance Reasons

Appreciating and enjoying music for its own sake and not for competitive performance reasons is a dominant theme for Janice and one that can be traced back to her own experience with music as child, beginning in her family.

We heard music at home all the time. My brother played the violin. My mother sang. She used to enjoy [performing in community] theatre and I remember being very young and going to see her perform in The Music Man. I remember my father unreservedly and passionately conducting Bach to the stereo. He also played the piano and was very
accomplished at a young age. Actually, his mother, my grandmother was a music teacher! I have her piano and that means a lot to me, but I don’t know why, because I wasn’t that close to her. She had a brain tumour removed before I was born. The tumour and surgery left her unable to play. She also had difficulty communicating. However, I feel a close connection to her because of the piano. I still enjoy sitting down at her piano and just playing my heart out! Actually, just talking about it makes me very emotional. (JJ 1)

The model for involvement in music, as practiced by Janice’s family, was personal appreciation of music. Her mother participated in community theatre for her own gratification and her father’s preferred mode of music enjoyment was conducting to the recordings. Having her grandmother’s piano resonates with Janice, perhaps because the instrument is a connection with her grandmother she never knew, through music.

However, Janice first experienced an intense personal relationship with music making as a result of two memorable experiences with two special music teachers.

I have a memory of Grade 6 and that’s my first real music memory. I don’t remember music before then, but my Grade 6 teacher, I think was also a music teacher. I remember a lesson in which she taught us One Tin Soldier. I remember being blown away. I remember connecting with the theme and connecting with the music. I remember the teacher and the lesson and think it was a really good lesson because she got us all into it. I still remember it vividly. She tied in the themes of peace and fairness. She definitely made a connection with the text and got us really singing into it.

It was the music teacher in Grade 7 who first made me feel like I was a musician. In Grade 7, we were allowed to choose an instrument to learn.
He had us try the mouthpieces of the different instruments and he told me, “Wow! You got a great sound on the flute the first time and that doesn’t happen very often.” At that age, I didn’t really have a good self-image and I thought, “This makes me feel really good.” I was totally hooked on music and the flute after that. He [the teacher] made it a lot of fun.

So, I think back to both those times and wonder, what if I hadn’t had those experiences? So I think it’s very important that there is a music specialist in the school to stimulate kids. For me, music was one of the most important parts of my school life. I felt successful. I wasn’t academically successful in those years, because I was accelerated and I just fell behind for a number of years, so music really helped me. (JJ 3)

The profound personal experience with the song One Tin Soldier made an enduring impact on Janice. Stephen Pepper (1942) with his theories of “World Hypotheses” would cite this episode as an example of contextualism, where the intensity of an experience is valued. In Janice’s case, the music, lyrics and wider applications to peace and fairness all came together to provide her with a lasting memory.

Janice’s initial experience with the flute was also personally rewarding, but in a different way. When her teacher commented on her initial success with the flute, she felt personally rewarded and successful, something that was important to her at that time in her life. Music and feeling good about herself as a person and student became synonymous. Music became such an important part of Janice’s life that she immersed herself in all the music classes and extracurricular activities available to her in the secondary school she attended. Interestingly, secondary school was also where Janice
first experienced the dichotomy common to many music education students that followed her throughout her university years into her teaching and she continues to struggle with it today.

I continued to play the flute throughout elementary school and really enjoyed it! I enjoyed it so much that when I got to high school, I decided to take instrumental and vocal music. I had different teachers for each of these subjects and had very different experiences. In vocal music class, I felt that I was trained to learn music, enjoy it and sing it. But in band, I was trained more to become proficient so that I would become good. It was that I would become proficient so that the band would sound good, not that I would learn and enjoy myself. The focus in band was around music festivals and other competitions and it was goal, achievement oriented. It was enjoyable because the conductor was able to achieve the goal of having the band get first place at the festival, so everyone feels good about that. But I came to realize that I didn’t like being driven toward the performance part, the product. (JJ 1)

As a result of her secondary school experience, Janice was already forming opinions about the approach to music education that resonated within her and she found that increasingly she valued the enjoyment part of learning music and did not care for the competitive aspect of participation in music. In fact, her experience with one of her teachers and his approach left a strong impression of what music education should not be.

Well, I had a high school teacher who encouraged me, but I think he really manipulated me. He would pump me up, encourage me and then kind of drop me later. For instance, he told me that I was the best piccolo player in all of Ontario and I was thrilled with the label. “Oh, really?” And then I
played in the Ontario Youth Band and I found out that no, I wasn’t the best and, in fact, I wasn’t very good. I thought “Oh, no, they’re really good and I’m just getting by, kind of thing.”

That was another thing I didn’t like about that [secondary school instrumental] group. It was very individualistic, very controlling. Technique was what mattered and you’d have to put in hours and hours of practice. That was a negative experience. (JJ 1)

In fact, what Janice experienced in high school is the subject of an ongoing conversation in music education between process and product (Leglar & Collay, 2002, pp. 858-859). Janice was much more interested in the making and enjoying of music than the performance and competition perspective. While this was a dilemma for her in high school, it proved to be much more dramatic as she entered an undergraduate music education program.

When I got to university, the competition and the negative atmosphere shocked me. When I entered the program, I thought it was going to be one big happy family, like some of the experiences I had in high school with people enjoying making music together and supporting each other. I thought that everyone was going to be happy about teaching music. What I found I didn’t like and I began to question myself. I thought, “Jeez, I mustn’t be in the right place.” I found the students very competitive. There seemed to be a competition as to who the best player was, who had the most expensive instrument, who had the best teacher and who was playing in the best ensemble. (JJ 1)

As a result, I left university after my 1st year. I didn’t have the maturity then to say “I don’t like this and it’s OK that I don’t like this.” After being in the workforce for a couple of years and reflecting on the experiences, observing and talking to teachers I knew, I decided to go back to school
and eventually became a teacher because that’s why I went into music, to be a music teacher. (JJ 3)

Janice’s university experience was one that would bring the process/product dilemma in music education to the fore. It confirmed her personal beliefs of what music education should be, and should not be, based on her personal experiences with music. These beliefs were shaped by her experience with her family and many of her music teachers and this grounding provided her with the will to return to university to complete her undergraduate degree in music education, in spite of the negative, competitive atmosphere she experienced. However, this dilemma would not end with her graduation and, in fact, continued to challenge her as she began her teaching career.

I remember once when I was teaching at my first school, a colleague from another school brought a huge band to play at my school. He had 85 kids from Grades 6, 7, and 8 put together to make a massive band. I could tell as a music teacher that what they were doing is showing off, trying to make an impression. And they did!

Maybe I should have done that with my students, throwing music at them to make them sound and feel good, but I’m not like that. I wanted the kids to learn methodically and well and, in my opinion, I don’t care about throwing stuff at them so we could say, “Look at us!” I just don’t care. I don’t think kids need that. They can be quite satisfied with doing things well.

So, when this happened, it made me think about my job. I thought, “Hey, I can do that sort of thing, but I don’t.” So, it gave me an opportunity to reflect. So, I went in and talked to my principal. I was actually feeling inadequate. I asked him, “Do you want me to do that sort of thing?” And he said – and I appreciated it – “Well, you could, but you don’t strike me
as that kind of person.” It made me feel so much better. He said, “I think you do a really fine job at what you do and I don’t think you would be comfortable doing that.” It was so good and I always appreciated that.

I had another principal earlier in my career, when I was a 2nd-year teacher, who I went to talk to about some ambitious plans I had for the music program. He was going to be retiring and I trusted him and thought I could talk to him. He said, “Yes, you could do all those things you talked about, but you need to watch your energy level. You might like to think about why you want to do those things.” If he had not said those things to me, I probably would have gone on to fill the previous teacher’s shoes and they may not have been the shoes that I wanted to fill. So, I think that as a general rule, we are not as encouraged as we could be by administration. I think a lot of them like to use music teachers and programs to make them, and the school, look good. I was really lucky that I had some decent ones. (JJ 1)

Janice was fortunate in her early teaching career to have some mentors in the form of principals who accepted and encouraged her to be herself as a teacher, to promote her personal vision of music education and who did not view her music program as only a vehicle to promote the school. However, she also dealt with some administrators who had a different point of view.

Once I had a principal who, when he was just new to the school, called me into his office and said, “You won’t be doing band the way you always did it. Next year, you will go on six trips. I want you to go to six different schools and take your band to play.” I didn’t say anything, but I thought, “This isn’t music education! This is a way to show off for the school.” I wouldn’t enjoy that because I wouldn’t want to teach to the concert all the time. So, I didn’t do it! (JJ 1)
This vignette shows that Janice’s professional identity, which was shaped from the time she was a young child, has developed to the point where she is able to stand up for her beliefs. One of the main issues in her growth as a musician and teacher is her belief in personal music making for the inherent gifts it brings, not to “show off” or focus on concerts or other performance opportunities.

When asked to describe an elementary school music education for her daughter or the students she teaches, Janice responded “It would have chances for them to express themselves musically, explore different aspects of music and gain a knowledge of music” and “I want them to feel a love for music and singing” and “feel the enjoyment for music.” This philosophy also extends to her goals for formal performances.

I want the kids to feel good about what they’ve done. They have practiced for it and they feel great. When I go to a concert, the kids don’t care if they are doing the best standard of music education. They don’t care. They are just happy to show Mom, Dad, Grandma and Grandpa that they are making music. The kind of concert I don’t like is when kids are put through hoops to perform. When someone says, “Oh, look how good you are.” I don’t think that’s what it is all about. (JJ 1)

During an observation of Janice teaching a Grade 2 class, the philosophy she espouses was observed in practice, as an excerpt from my field notes confirms.

As soon as the children were settled, the lesson began with a greeting sung by Janice. The students enthusiastically responded and this high level of motivation remained throughout the lesson. In each activity, Janice gave much ownership to the students, asking them how and to what level they would like to participate in the class. They were given the opportunity to individually sing a greeting to Janice and most of the children wanted to
do this. The children who did not wish to volunteer were never put on the spot. Instead, the next activity provided small group singing opportunities for children who were shy about singing on their own. They were able to sing with a group of about half the class. In other words, Janice purposefully does not make any child feel uncomfortable by putting them on the spot. Rather, participation and enjoyment is the focus. (JJ A)

Although Janice articulates and practices her philosophy of music education, it does not mean that the process verses product dilemma that haunted her first as a secondary school student has been put to rest. This became apparent when I inadvertently asked her a question that caused conflicting feelings to come rushing to the surface. At her request, I emailed Janice a copy of the list of questions I wanted to ask her the night before our last formal interview session. When she arrived for our meeting the next day, her eyes were teary and red and she explained that after reading one of the questions the previous evening, she burst into tears. The question was “When do you tend to be most down and discouraged about the teacher you are?”

And then, this morning I was telling my husband about it – and I’m going to cry now- and I started to cry again and was telling him all about it. I was just crying … but I’m glad. I’m glad because it just brings into focus and it’s about performance … it’s performance stuff.

Well, I think because when the kids perform because I’m always down about them performing because I always feel “Oh they’re not good enough.” (Her voice is subdued.) And I always worry and get really down on myself. It’s worse now because there is [another music teacher] there. But I was down before too. You know what, just very critical, you know this and that. I thought it was just OK.
My focus is on education and that’s where I get my joy. I’m not competitive and I don’t care if they’re the number one choir in Ontario. I just want it to be a lovely musical experience, which I believe [a recent performance] was. But, I guess I just feel … It’s something to do with the whole career and identity thing and it’s part of our identity. It’s [The performance] supposed to be much better and it’s supposed to be a much larger part of our identity. (JJ B)

I asked Janice who said that competitive performance was supposed to be a large part of an elementary music teacher’s identity. The following is an excerpt of the discussion that followed.

Kim: Who said that competition was supposed to be a large part of an elementary music teacher’s identity?

Janice: I don’t know! (She laughs.) It’s just the message I’ve always had.

Kim: Where or who do you think you got the message from?

Janice: I can think of several people, I guess, in my life.

Kim: Would it be any of your teachers?

Janice: Yes.

Kim: High school?

Janice: Yes.

Kim: What about university? What was the message there?

Janice: Performance was everything there, the most important thing.

Kim: Performance was valued above all else?

Janice: Yes. (JJ B)
Clearly, Janice’s emotional response to this particular question and the discussion that followed illustrate that, deep in her psyche, her personal struggle with the process versus product notions still exists. Part of her still thinks that a music teacher’s role is to train ensembles to compete in competitive performance opportunities, although this goes against her very nature as a teacher. It is not that she does not value performance; indeed she proudly shares her students’ music with others. It is the competition aspect that she is opposed to.

However, Janice does value meaningful feedback from her music education colleagues, based on the enjoyment of the students and recognition that their skills are improving.

Well, after my group sang last week, [at the retirement assembly for the principal and a teacher] I wasn’t down about it. I felt good about it and the other music teacher leans over and says “Good job!” and I just thought “I don’t need to hear that.” What I need to hear, what I would like to hear, and I had some people say this, was “The kids really enjoyed doing that and they looked happy up there.” I don’t need to hear “Good job” – and I know that I am kind of critical of this person – because to me it’s just an indicator of what’s wrong in our profession. I was talking to my husband about it and he said “You don’t believe in music Olympics.”

I had a nice thing happen with my accompanist. She had never accompanied my kids before and what happened was the week before we sang in the gym – I had four [Grade 4] classes that sang – and I couldn’t fit them all in my room [to rehearse] so we did two and two. We only had to go through [the song] once, they were solid and I was concerned that they wouldn’t be because they had never sung with the real accompaniment.
When we practiced in the gym for the first time, the gym was empty and it’s a really big gym. The kids were flat and I talked to them about sometimes this happens and don’t force your voices and try to focus on the piano if you can. And [the accompanist] said she just thinks it’s the gym, just too big a room and not to worry.

[The performance] was much better [with people in the gym.] I don’t know if it was perfect, but it was much better. But [the accompanist] was so complimentary. She said “Oh your choir is solid, they sound so good.” I think this was before the performance. She said “It’s just so easy to see why the junior choir [conducted by another teacher] sounds so good.” She said “Because you give them such a foundation.” And she said that at the festival, [the junior] choir was complimented on their tone. She said “The others choirs had a ‘shout-y’ style and [the junior] choir was complimented on their tone and I can see why with what you’ve done.” And it was like “wake up” and that was so nice to hear because I’m not going to hear it from anybody else. I really appreciated what she said and when she rehearsed with each group she said “They sound really great.” I was just pleased because they weren’t a choir. They were just the kids in the Grade 4 classes. (JJ B)

Meaningful feedback from people who recognize and appreciate the musical growth in children, without focusing on the competitive aspect of the performance is appreciated by Janice. The most important feedback for her is the response of her students during their performance. She recognizes that, although she leaves herself and her singers open to critical comments, there are important rewards for her students involved in performance as well.

The whole performance aspect with this group of Grade 4’s was so wonderful because they were so into it. They were pleased. They really
wanted to do it. They worked very hard. They were focused. They were everything I would want, everything. And so it’s good for us to have those experiences, but I do find that I kind of resent it because I have to stop my program and I don’t really appreciate that. So it is always a dilemma, but to not have any of these experiences for them either, that’s not good and I realize that. Then I feel like, oh well, I avoid them sometimes because I don’t want to feel the bad stuff after. (JJ B)

Although this kind of raw self reflection was difficult for Janice, she felt it was useful in her continued exploration of her identity as an elementary music teacher. “As soon as I read it and started to cry and then cried again … this is something I am going to work on.” (JJ B)

Participating in music was an important part of Janice’s life when she was an elementary and secondary school student. She connected emotionally with the music shared by her Grade 6 teacher. Success in playing the flute built her self-esteem. In music, she found an area of the curriculum where she did well and thrived in making music with her peers. It was in secondary school where she first encountered two very different philosophies surrounding the goal of music education in schools. One teacher focused on competitive performance and the other on personal growth through building skills, experience and enjoyment in music. This apparent dichotomy Janice experienced in secondary school, university and throughout her teaching career is one that has caused much debate and discussion in the field of music education. Music educators have very different ideas about what the goals of music education should be for students. It is interesting that Janice, who has strong beliefs about what music education should look like in elementary schools, continues to struggle with a
deeply embedded notion that she should value competitive performance as part of music education.

**Creating Community Through Participation in Music**

This theme also has strong roots in Janice’s early involvement with music. Through playing the flute in Grades 7 and 8, and later in secondary school, Janice felt successful and part of the community that was the music program. She felt valued, accepted and part of a “family.” This was due to the approach of most of her music teachers, who encouraged their students to work together to make music as an ensemble for the sake of creating music together. However, as noted earlier, when she began a university undergraduate music education program, she was surprised to discover that the atmosphere was very different.

I was shocked by the competition and the atmosphere. I think when I went, I thought it was going to be one big happy family and everyone is going to be happy about teaching music. What I found I didn’t like and I began to question myself and thought, Jeez, I mustn’t be in the right place. (JJ 1)

The model of music education where everyone worked together as a music community that Janice was exposed to by most of her elementary and secondary school music teachers, and certainly the model she responded to, was the one she expected in an undergraduate music education program. Instead, she found a very competitive atmosphere, and this phenomenon in university undergraduate music education programs has been documented by many music education researchers, such as Roberts (1993). As has been noted earlier in this paper, Janice’s negative reaction to
this lack of community in the Faculty of Music caused her to leave the program for several years, before returning as a more, in her words, “mature” student able to ignore the elements of the program that she did not like and to successfully complete her degree on her path to becoming a music teacher.

Support for Janice’s belief of the importance of building community through music is strongly illustrated through her actions in the classroom. Fortunately for Janice, community building is a priority for all the school administration and staff at her current school. This was apparent to me the first time I entered Janice’s school to visit her classroom, as recalled in my journal.

The first impression I have of [Janice’s] Public School after entering is one of a welcoming, bright, organized and clean environment. Signs and messages display the pride the teachers, staff and students have in this building. In a matter of minutes, the bell will ring to signify the end of the lunch period. The halls are still quiet and empty. One notices the colourful artwork on the walls and the clean stairwells and floors.

As I near the office, I see some teachers going in and out of the office, picking up their mail and chatting with the secretary and principal. Janice notices me as she approaches the office from the opposite end of the hall, waves and smiles. She introduces me to the principal and secretary and reminds them that I am here to be in her classroom for the first quarter of the afternoon. I am warmly greeted by the principal and welcomed to the school and invited to return to visit whenever I’d like.

The bells rings and the few teachers who are chatting near the office scurry to meet their classes. Janice unlocks her music room door for me and then proceeds to the classroom of her first group of students of
the afternoon, a Grade 2 class, to collect them and bring them to her music room.

Janice leads the quiet line of children into the room, smiling. They quickly find their assigned spots in three rows on the carpet and sit “tall,” ready to begin. Janice sits in a chair facing the students and sings “Hello everyone” using the pitches so and mi. They echo back, greeting her by name. She introduces the guest, me, as a friend of hers who used to teach children but now teaches adults who are being educated to become teachers. She welcomes me to the class and invites the children to greet me with their singing voices. With smiling faces they do, and smiling in return, I echo their musical greeting. (JJ A)

The community feeling evidenced by the look, atmosphere and attitude of the people in the building announces this school as a safe place, where people are welcomed and valued. Janice thrives in this atmosphere of community, as it is congruent to her own philosophy. Once she collects a class from their homeroom to begin a lesson, her total focus is on those children and the community of music making they will experience together.

From the opening vocal greeting, Janice focuses on, smiles at, encourages and supports her young students. She immediately includes me in the community of her classroom by introducing me as “friend,” signaling to the students that I am someone they can trust and accept in their classroom. She also invites me to join the community of this musical experience by inviting the students to greet me in song. I, in turn, respond to their greeting in return. With this gesture, I am one of them and for the remainder of the lesson, individual students turn to me, smiling - sometimes shyly – to
include me in the fun of the activities and to celebrate individual and group achievements during the lesson. When the class quietly lines up at the end of the lesson, several children wave good-bye.

On Janice’s bulletin board, I notice the following words: “Are my words and deeds kind, true, necessary?” I comment on the powerful message it sends and ask her why she chose to display this phrase. She replied that she feels that it is her duty as a teacher of children, to help them learn more than just about music.

I have things like that in my room. I talk to them about general behavioural things because I’m not just a music teacher, I’m an adult influence in their lives and so I feel I can use my role as their music teacher to promote good general behavioural things. Whereas people who are – I think this, it might not be true – the pro, pro, pro performance people could care less about whole general view of things, it’s like “I have this job to do and I’m going to get my job done.” (JJ B)

Janice also builds community through the kinds of activities she chooses for inclusion in her music lessons. Following the review of the first two verses of the song English Country Garden, and the learning of a new verse, Janice introduced a rhythmic activity based on this song.

Janice wrote an eight-beat rhythm pattern on the board and told the children that this rhythm was from the verse they just sang. She asked them to get into pairs to discuss where the rhythm pattern could be found in the song. They were immediately on task and in addition to the rhythm being spoken; singing and tapping were also heard. The students were brought back together with the well known direction to “Focus in five, four, three, two, one, thank you” and then were instructed to turn to find another
group to share their ideas with. Now each group would have four members instead of two. After a few minutes, the students were refocused and complimented by Janice with “I like the way you listen.” She then polled each group to see where they thought the rhythm pattern occurred in the song. All the groups concurred and the class celebrated. The class stood and sang the newest verse of *English Country Garden* while Janice accompanied them on the piano. (JJ A)

Janice has recently been introduced to the work of Barrie Bennett (2001), and his theory of “Instructional Intelligence” through an initiative of her school board and she finds that his focus on community resonates with her. She was chosen by her principal to be one of the teachers on her staff selected to be in-serviced on the work of Bennett and then return to her school and in turn in-service her own staff. The learning strategy demonstrated in the vignette above is based on Bennett and Janice is incorporating this kind of activity more and more into her lessons as she finds they are very effective in having the students work together and support one another. The children enjoy discussing the questions or problems posed in small and larger groups and Janice encourages them, while staying out of the way and applauds both the group work and ideas.

During another visit to Janice’s classroom, I had the opportunity to see another community building activity with a Grade 3/4 class.

The first activity is a concept attainment activity, where the teacher provides correct and incorrect examples of the concept she wishes the children to understand. Janice provides clues, written on a piece of paper, and the students decide if each clue should go in the “Yes” column or the
“No” column on the board. One by one, Janice places the clues on the board, without reading them out loud. Examples of the clues are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Face the conductor</td>
<td>- Slouching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clear words</td>
<td>- Not listening to the voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Best effort</td>
<td>- around you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Janice holds up the cards and asks the students to guess whether they are a “yes” or a “no.” The children are motivated, quiet, respectful and involved. They consult with one another when making decisions. When the card “Listen to your own voice” is displayed, discussion ensues as to why it could be a “yes” and a “no.” Various children make a strong case for each and it is decided to place the card in the middle between the yes and no columns. The same is done for the card that says “Breathing only at the end of a phrase.”

The students are then put into groups of four to guess the topic of the clues. Each child is labelled “A,” “B,” “C,” or “D.” Only one person in each group … who has not been named yet … will report to the rest of the class at the end of the discussion. The students are given 1 minute to discuss. The children are engaged in sharing ideas until time is up and Janice rings a bell.

The “B” person in each group is the one chosen to report to the rest of the class. They are given some time to confer with the rest of their group as to what they should say. After each group presents, Janice responds with “Thank you! Interesting!” Each group was correct in guessing that the topic was “The Do's and Don'ts of Singing in a Concert.”

The class sings “The Thank You Song,” one of the songs they will sing at the upcoming retirement for the principal and a teacher, while Janice accompanies them on the piano. [Janice adapted the words of a song,
adding special words directed to the retiring principal and teacher.] The entire school is learning the song and will sing it together. (JJ B)

While the above activity was time consuming, Janice feels that the time spent was well worth it. The students are thinking critically, working together to make decisions, and are at the same time gaining valuable insight for an upcoming performance. While Janice could have instead verbally given those instructions to the students, they will remember and act upon them after working through a process in which they were so personally involved. For the students who were randomly chosen to present their group findings to the rest of the class, the experience is likely even more valuable, as they were given a leadership opportunity in class, with the support of the community of their teacher and classmates.

Perhaps because her first models of music education were ones of community and working together to make music and as a reaction to the competitive atmosphere she found at university, Janice strongly believes in community building in her classes. She feels that she is responsible for the overall growth of the students in her classroom and that music is a wonderful vehicle for building community. She makes her students feel welcomed and at home as soon as they enter her classroom and she carefully plans music activities to further build the feeling of community in her classes and choirs. I felt that very strongly when I visited her classroom. The children accepted me readily as she made me feel part of the community she and her students share. On a larger scale, this feeling of community was present from the time I entered the school. Modeled by the administration, this school is a warm, welcoming community for all parents and children.
Developing the Whole Person Through Music

It is more difficult to cite specific examples of developing the whole person through music in Janice’s early development, although it is clearly her focus. However, Janice comments that she grew up in a “dysfunctional” family, following her parents’ divorce when she was 8 years old and that this may have played a general role as to why she became a teacher.

The dysfunctional family thing ... I don’t think it had an influence on my becoming a teacher other than having a general impression, I believe, that people who go into teaching and nursing and all those helping professions that often they do come from a dysfunctional situation where they want to help others. (JJ B)

Links also go back to her profound initial experiences with music beginning in Grade 6 and continuing through her secondary school experiences with music and music teachers, with one exception.

I think the negative one [secondary school music teacher] would say that the goal [of music education] is to make every student the best player ever or the very best they can be technically and through that end they will achieve the “aha” moments if they are very talented. That’s my perception. And the other one, I imagine it would be that students feel good about themselves through music. He can’t solve everyone’s problems, but making music together would go a long way. (JJ 1)

She recalls the “pleasant” teaching of her secondary school vocal teacher and the “positive experiences through performance” with him. It is obvious that this is
something Janice tries to emulate with her students, to help them become the best people they can be, through the vehicle of music.

I don’t know if it’s just today’s society, but I think we [teachers] definitely have a role in raising the children. That’s my definition of a teacher and I think that’s a very important part of our job. And so, I like to emphasize in my lessons a positive thing. I don’t think, “Hey! This isn’t about music and we are supposed to be learning about music and don’t take up my time.” I’d rather take the time to say “You know, boys and girls, wouldn’t it be the nicer thing to see how your friend is doing if something is bothering them.” I think it’s important, so I try and look at my job as an extension of the classroom teacher and the values they instil. I should carry on with that. The same thing is true with our administration. I have a really good administration at my school and they try and emphasize that we are everybody’s teacher. All those kids belong to us. So, I try and do that and just try to be a loving example to these kids. (JJ 2)

When she thinks about the kind of music teacher she is, Janice is succinct.

I was asked this a few months ago and asked to sum it up in one word. I put “inclusive.” I tried to think of one word and that’s the word I came up with because I try to do that all the time. I don’t think that they [students] can learn music, really, unless they are included fully in the experience. (JJ 1)

At the same time, Janice tries to model humane behaviour for her students and is not afraid to admit when she’s made a mistake.

I remember little moments, not big “aha” moments almost daily. Today, which is classic, we all get stressed about this. The Grade 2’s come in and they are chatty anyway. So, I talked to them and said “We have this problem. We have to learn this song really quickly. Then I noticed one little
girl whispering to another little girl beside her. I jumped on her and thought afterwards “Oh no!” Anyway, I said “You are talking and I just got finished saying we all had to concentrate and work really hard. What in the world is going on?” She said “Well, I was just telling my friend that not everybody was sitting up straight.” So I apologized to her. I really believe in apologizing to students. When I make a mistake like that, I felt badly and I apologized to her. I believe in being straight with the students. (JJ 1)

In the story above, not only did Janice admit that she was wrong in jumping to conclusions, she also reminds us to think before we act. She also has some wise advice for beginning music teachers … and those of us who have taught for some time.

I would tell them to think about each child as a person. I would tell them that each person has talent. Try and make a connection with each student. If a student is getting under your skin, probably, they want your attention or somebody’s attention and maybe a bit of attention can help. I’d tell them to slow down and enjoy it. I’ve found that over the years, if I pull myself back and see the big picture and not get caught up in all the little things, things are better. I don’t know. It’s a perception of pulling back. I’ve found it to be very helpful. It’s very calming and it helps the students too. It gives some ownership to the students because they realize that the teacher isn’t involved in everything…. (JJ 1)

My hope would be that they treat the kids as human beings and not little music producers. They need to realize that they are working with people who want to make music and are capable of the most beautiful things. The process of what they’re doing is important. For me, I would not encourage a new teacher to focus on product and everything being perfect and everything has to be perfect because you don’t want to have the students to live up to that. You can get so much through the process. (JJ 3)
There is a familiar story told of a group of teachers who were asked what they teach. One replied “science,” another “English” and another “Grade 6.” However, the fourth teacher had a different answer. She replied “I teach children.” It is obvious that Janice teaches children and values daily, small positive experiences in her classroom.

On a daily basis, I try to go back and look at the big picture, look at the class and look at their body language. If they are enjoying what they are doing -not carrying it over the top, but enjoying it – then I feel good because, look at these kids. This might be the only happy thing they do all day. Hopefully not. So, I think that if they are singing something new, something they have never sung before, and if they are getting value out of it and enjoying it, then I feel really good about it. And I don’t really look at the big ... For instance; I don’t look at the concerts and competitions. That is not the highlight of my year. What I think for some teachers, the competitions and concerts are the highlights. It’s not for me. I really enjoy the day to day activities. (JJ 2)

She also tries to extend the work that the classroom teacher is doing, to provide a seamless, rounded education for her students. “I try to tie it in with units they are doing and school and just have it as part of their life. This is a natural extension of what they are learning.” (JJ 2)

A related theme is developing self-esteem and identity of a child through appreciating and participating in music. As many of her former music teachers did for her, Janice works to assist individual students “feel good about themselves through music,” sometimes in an almost serendipitous manner.

I have a little boy at my school. He is in Grade 2 and he wanted to join the choir, which is really sweet, because he is one of my worst singers.
So, he joined the choir, and his older sister came along with him – she’s in Grade 7 – to walk him to school at 8:00 am. I’ve connected with her before, although I’ve never taught her. I connected with her when she first came to the school 2 1/2 years ago and I’ve taught both of her brothers. I’d say, “Oh, your name’s Emily and my daughter’s name is Emily too.” She didn’t really fit in.

So, then she showed up the first day of choir and said “Do you need any help?” I said “Sure,” even though I didn’t really need any help. I said “Do you want to walk the kids down the hall?” I had to go with her because she’s not really any help anyway.

To my surprise, a few weeks ago she said, “Do you have any music for any of those songs that you teach those kids in choir, because I’d kind of like to learn how to play them on the viola? Do you have the music for the Hello Song? I said, “Yes” and went and copied it for her. I didn’t really twig to the fact that she would have to transpose it or anything. So, then I found out that she went to her string teacher and found out how to transpose it on the viola. She showed up at choir the next week and asked if she could please play for the choir. It was really sweet because she seems so sad.

The middle child, who’s in Grade 4 now, seems angry. The other two seem really sad. They don’t really fit in. The little one seems a little better lately and I’m trying to lower my ego and say that it’s not because of me, but it’s because he’s in the choir. I’m really glad that he’s in the choir. I try to connect with him frequently, just to give him some positives, because he is very meek and sad and blah. He does seem happier.

So, then before March Break, she [Emily] came up to me again and asked if I had any more music, so I sat down and transposed the music for her. She played it for me yesterday and it was so sweet. It made me think about our earlier conversation because as I’m sitting there transposing the music, I thought, “You know, I really like doing this.” I see this as part of
my job as a music educator. It gives me a lot of joy, to figure out the music for this kid who is only going to play it once, or who knows? Right? But I thought that was maybe my reflection of my attitude as a music teacher that I would spend the energy doing that rather than worrying about where are they going to perform and this and that. (JJ 2)

This vignette speaks volumes about Janice’s approach to teaching music. When one of her young students expresses an interest in joining the choir, he is automatically a member of the choir, even if he is one of the “worst” singers in his grade. Janice comments that he and his siblings – relatively new to the school – seem to be “sad” children and, through participation in the choir, Janice thinks that the young man is not as sad as he was. His older sister is given the duty of walking him to choir practice early in the morning, and asks Janice is she needs some help. Although Janice does not really need any assistance, and the girl is not much help anyway, Janice welcomes her to the community of the choir rehearsal.

Soon, the older sister is interested in one of the songs the choir is singing and asks for a copy so she can play it on her viola. After transposing the song and practicing it, Emily asks to play it for the primary choir. The success of this experience prompts her to ask Janice for copies of the other songs the choir was singing.

Janice’s philosophy is that any child who is interested in singing in the choir is welcome. In the case of the “sad” little boy who is new to the school, his acceptance and participation in the choir seemed to make him less sad and likely boosted his self-esteem to be part of this community at his new school. His older sister, originally present at the rehearsals because she was given the job of walking her brother to
school early in the morning, became somewhat of a “helper” to the choir and became part of their musical community by playing the songs they were singing on their viola, allowing her to shine and participate in their music making, connecting with this group of children in a way that she did not seem to with her own age group. This experience, and the efforts of Janice to transpose music for her, gave Emily the opportunity for some kind of acceptance at her new school and the occasion to feel good about herself and her music.

During my visitations to Janice’s classroom, I had the opportunity to see Janice building self-esteem with other individuals, almost instinctively. One instance occurred near the end of a Grade 2 music lesson. Janice asked the students if someone would like to suggest a singing game to play. One student shyly asked if the class could learn a new game she learned from a teacher in the school she used to attend. Janice looked at the clock and wondered that there might not be enough time to learn the game today, but negotiated with the student to teach the game another day.

Janice’s model of inclusion and respect was also shown in her conversation with the student who wanted to play a game she knew, but was unknown to the rest of the class. Instead of dismissing her request, Janice focused on the lack of time left in the lesson and suggested that the girl teach her the game at a recess sometime and together they would teach the game to the rest of the class. (JJ A)

Instead of dismissing the idea without reason, Janice took the time to explain why the game couldn’t be learned that day and suggested that the child teach the game to her and that they would team-teach the game to the class, thereby validating the child’s
idea and providing her with the important – and special – task of teaching the game to Janice before teaching her class the game.

Another instance was more subtle and occurred in a Grade 1 music class.

The *Hello Song* is reviewed together and students raise their hands to volunteer to sing the answer alone. Janice chooses the volunteers and smiles at them while they are singing. The pitching is very good … quite accurate. Janice comments that there will not be time to hear everyone today and chooses a final volunteer. When he has finished singing, she comments to me that this young man is just learning to speak English! (JJ B)

Following Janice’s proud announcement that the young student is new to the English language, the young man looked back at me and beamed. Not only was Janice providing him with an opportunity to practice his English and singing voice, she was building his self-concept as a singer and English speaker. It was difficult to tell who was more proud, the young boy or Janice.

As the above vignettes illustrate, Janice continually, and likely unconsciously, assists her students to “feel good about themselves through music.” One of her former students expressed this very well.

I once had a student who was not very popular, but seemed to connect with me. She didn’t really fit in anywhere, but seemed to be very comfortable in music. I remember that when she was in Grade 5, she shyly handed me a little card she had written. It was about music. She used it as an acronym. It said things like, “M is for melody, so pleasing to
the air.” The C was “Create me in music.” I remember being very moved when I first saw it. I still have the card, all these years later! (JJ 1)

“Create me in music.” I am not sure that a “learned person” could have expressed this sentiment any better than this Grade 5 student did in a simple acrostic poem.

Janice believes that part of her role as a teacher is to assist in “growing” her students as human beings. She calls herself an inclusive teacher, one who tries to make connections between music and other areas of her students’ lives. She views her students as individuals and looks for ways to help them as they grow as people. Whether it is assisting her ESL students to learn to speak English through music, providing opportunities for students new to her school to feel part of the school community by participation in choir, she goes out of her way to provide such opportunities. Janice notices which students might be having a bad day, or feeling down and encourages them, building their self esteem, confidence in themselves and helping their development as a person.

The themes that emerged from the stories of Janice are closely intertwined. Her teaching practice is informed by her belief that music education is about assisting students to appreciate and enjoy music for intrinsic reasons and not with the goal of winning first place at the music festival. As such, she works hard to build a feeling of community in her classroom, where all children feel valued and safe to explore and express their own response to music. She also believes that her responsibility as a teacher is to assist her students in their overall development as human beings and the vehicle she uses is music.
In some cases, the themes that emerged from each of the participants are unique to each woman and in other cases, similarities exist. The next section of this study will explore the themes and consider how the resulting information can inform future practice.
Chapter 9: Commentary

*Teachers’ Professional Lives in Counterpoint*

There are several qualities present in the participants of this study when they are engaged in the act of teaching and when they share stories of their teaching. They view teaching in general as a “helping” profession and feel that music education in particular provides a unique experience that all students should and must have the opportunity to explore. Evidence of tenacity, passion and vibrancy is apparent in the stories of each of the participants in this study. Although Olivia’s first “real” teaching experience was not ideal, in that she was hired for a long-term occasional position for the last 2 months of the school year, she was determined to make a difference in the musical lives of her students. Although the Grade 8 students resisted her efforts at first, they eventually responded. She kept a positive attitude and celebrated small successes, such as a student who learned to sit up straight in his chair instead of slouching. All the students in the school were caught up in her enthusiasm for music and her principal was especially impressed that she taught the entire school an African song to be sung at the final assembly of the year. She was so impressed, in fact, that she would have liked to have Olivia on staff full time. This is the kind of teacher she wants on her staff.

Annabelle passionately believes that her primary students deserve the best possible music education, which includes the physical space they require to explore music in a variety of ways; including singing, moving, dancing and playing. As such, when she lost her music room to a special education class that needed it, she agreed to
teach in a space that is euphemistically called an "atrium," when it is in fact a rather dark, dingy hallway. She tolerates students, parents and teachers from other classes wandering in and out of her space because she feels this space is a better space for her students than the alternative – the students’ overcrowded homeroom classrooms where she would not be able to run the music program she feels her students deserve. She loudly and proudly cheers on her students’ small and large successes in music education and is fond of sharing her belief that children deserve a quality music education, just as they deserve a quality education in language, mathematics and other areas. She enjoys reminding her listener of Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993) as one of the intelligences identified is "musical intelligence." For those not familiar with the work of Howard Gardner, a brief summary is in order. Gardner believes that humans possess many kinds of intelligences including: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (1993). Since 2003, Gardner has given serious consideration to other kinds of intelligences, namely naturalist, spiritual, existential and moral. Gardner (2003) uses the term “intelligence” in three distinct ways:

1. A property of all human beings; we all possess each of these Intelligences

2. A dimension on which human beings differ; No two people – not even identical twins - possess exactly the same profile of intelligence

3. The way in which one carries out a task in virtue of one’s goals; Joe may have a lot of musical intelligence but his interpretation of that piece made little sense to us. (p. 9)

Generally, in educational settings, linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences are employed by teachers while the others are not usually addressed.
Gardner’s theory has assisted educators in being aware of the many other kinds of intelligences. Of particular interest to music educators and advocates of music education is Gardner’s musical intelligence, as it is the only area of the curriculum which encompasses all of the original intelligences. Gardner feels while every person possesses all the intelligences, it is important that all students should have the opportunity to develop through each of the intelligences, not a select few. This kind of thinking resonates strongly with Annabelle.\footnote{It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze Gardner’s theory. The explanation is included to give readers a context for Annabelle’s comments.}

Rose views herself as a music teacher who also teaches Grade 4 and she “lives” for teaching music. She has taken it on as her mission to help her students discover the musical parts of themselves that they might not have known existed. She feels that even if she only touches one student, she has fulfilled her mission in sharing her passion for music. She is especially proud of the young man in Grade 7 who she convinced to be part of the school musical, even though hockey was his passion. Soon after she convinced him to act in the show, he was hooked and actually joined the school choir following his participation in the show. She makes sure that there are some solo opportunities for him in the choir. Her student recognized what she had done for him in a note where he thanked Ms. Tambor for helping him discover a part of him that he didn’t know existed.

Providing a non-judgmental environment for her students to explore music is a priority for Janice. She focuses on their growth as musicians in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. She is thrilled that one of her choir members views choir
practice as the highlight of her week. Janice was delighted that a child new to her school chose to join the choir and provided opportunities for the older sister who walked her brother to choir practice to feel part of the community of the choir through being an older helper. She gently nurtures her students as they discover their musical selves and purposefully and firmly shields her students from the competitive atmosphere that so disappointed her when she was younger. Janice stands up for what she believes is important in music education and resists pressure from some administrators who want to use her performing groups to “show off” the school.

Teaching as a helping profession was a dominant theme that was woven into each discussion, email exchange and classroom visit. The participants in this study devote their professional life, and many hours of their personal life, to helping all their students, but especially seem to focus on those who are struggling or who are a little lost or who have not discovered the richness that music can bring to their lives.

Each of the participants of the study views teaching as a helping profession and uses music as a means for students to discover more about themselves. As common to most music teachers, Janice runs a primary choir for any of her primary students who would like to take part. However, she also welcomed the older sister of a chorister who had the duty of walking her younger brother to choir practice in the morning. The family was new to the school and Janice was thrilled that the boy wanted to join the choir. The fact that he had not yet learned to sing in tune was not a problem for Janice, she was just thrilled that he wanted to sing. When the sister – who Janice observed was a bit of a loner – expressed an interest in helping with the choir, Janice happily brought her into the community of her choir, to help with tasks such as walking the children down the
hall. When the sister wondered if she might play some of the choir songs on her viola, Janice wrote out the songs for viola. Janice makes this kind of effort for any student who might need a little extra attention. She crafts her lessons to assist the many ESL (English as a Second Language) students in her classes with the acquisition of the English language. She carefully observes her students for particular joys and passions and provides opportunities to build on them. One of her most treasured cards from a former student thanks Janice for “creating the music” in her.

Although she does not have a physical space to call her own, Rose tries to create a musical community in each of the classes she enters, whatever space she is given. She comes prepared with a cart filled with materials, equipment and instruments and a well thought out lesson, designed to engage her students and provide positive musical experiences for them. In my observations of her teaching, it was apparent that she took special care to provide positive and successful experiences for children who might especially benefit from accolades. This included a boy in Grade 5 who desperately wanted to share what he knew about the piece of classical music his class had been listening to for the week. Guiding his enthusiasm and knowledge, Rose established this boy as an “expert” in the eyes of the rest of the class; a role that this child was obviously not used to playing.

From the time she was young and following a model that her mother displayed, Olivia was always aware of those who needed a friend or a little extra care. As is true with the other participants in the study, Olivia went about helping those who needed it unobtrusively, in a gentle, kind manner. Although she was only at her first school for 2 months, Olivia still managed to make a difference for some children. One that she
recalls fondly is a boy in Grade 8 who she was told would never be engaged in music. In fact, he seemed to spend much of his time at school at the principal’s office. The other teachers cautioned Olivia that this boy would not cooperate or participate in class and that she should not let it bother her, as he is like this in all classes. He did test her when she first began teaching his class, but she found a part of music that he really enjoyed; rhythm. She capitalized on this and soon found that he was searching her out on the yard to ask if they had music that day and requesting that they sing certain songs. Olivia was happy to alter her lesson plan to include his requests. The other teachers who dealt with this young man were amazed that, not only was he managing to stay in class without being disruptive, causing him to be sent to the principal’s office, he was actually engaged in the music lesson.

Both Rose and Olivia travel from classroom to classroom to teach music. They have little control over the way in which each individual classroom is set up and the kind of space that is available. Rose creates a musical atmosphere with her students as soon as she enters the classroom as she has a “signature” welcome song for each of the primary and junior divisions. As soon as the children hear her begin the song, they join in, clear their desks and, in the case of the primary students, they head to the back of the classroom and sit on the carpet near the classroom library. Olivia taught everyone in her school a common song to sing at the final assembly of the year and when she begins singing it, all the students join in with her.

A feeling of community is also created by these teachers through the activities, games and songs that they include in their lessons: activities that encourage cooperative work, song selections from various cultures and ethnicities, games in which
there are no “winners” or “losers,” but require that the participants work together for the game to be successful all contribute to the building of community. One example of this is the unit Janice does during Black History month, based on spirituals. She uses the opportunity to talk about the slave trade and the role of people in south-western Ontario who were part of the Underground Railway. When Annabelle discovered that her principal was being transferred to another school, she found a special song for her choir to sing to him at his farewell assembly. The words were especially appropriate: “Go in love, go in peace, go in song.”

When children today “play” school, many play it much as I did as a small girl. My younger sister and brother were the students – whether they wanted to be or not – and I was the teacher. Always. One of the perks of being the oldest sibling. While they sat quietly with hands folded at old-style student desks, complete with the hole on the top corner for the pot of ink that our parents had purchased at a garage sale, I stood at the front of the room with my pointer. As I recall, math facts and spelling were favourite topics. This unrealistic view of teaching may be the result of watching too many episodes of “Little House of the Prairie,” where I saw this style of teaching modeled, but it seems to be one that is common among children even today.

As Dolloff (1999, 2003b), Mitchell and Weber (1999) and Weber and Mitchell (1995) found when they asked their undergraduate students to draw pictures of their ideal music teacher, regardless of their personal experience, a common stereotypical image of a teacher continues to thrive. Dolloff (2003b) found gender differences in the pictures drawn by participants. Only men were drawn in instrumental music situations, portrayed as the conductor at the front of the room. Women were depicted most often in
pictures, especially in elementary music settings, in classrooms that were bright, inviting and contained a variety of resources for multi-cultural and creative activities. Other common depictions include a friendly smile, large ears for listening to their students, a visible caring heart, outstretched welcoming arms and energy and enthusiasm radiating from their bodies (p. 4). The implication is that the role of the teacher is much more than someone who is concerned with subject specific knowledge. Certainly, teaching a basic understanding of content and skills in areas such as the arts, languages, mathematics, health and physical education, and science and social sciences is required of an elementary teacher. However, parents generally expect much more than that. When I taught in an elementary classroom and parents came in for a parent-teacher interview, their first questions usually focused on the well being of their child. Was their child happy? Did s/he have friends? Was s/he respectful to others? As I gained experience teaching, I learned to look beyond specific curriculum areas to a broader view of my role as a teacher of children. The participants in this study had the same experience. They transitioned to a basic understanding of the role of an elementary teacher, with a holistic view of teaching. Grauerholz (2001) defines holistic teaching as:

pedagogical approaches that consciously attempt to (a) promote student learning and growth on levels beyond the cognitive, (b) incorporate diverse methods that engage students in personal exploration and help them connect course materials to their own lives, and (c) help students clarify their own values and their sense of responsibility to others and to society. (p. 44)

Each of the music teachers in this study views her role of the music teacher in this holistic manner. The comments of former MENC president, Mel Clayton would resonate with the participants in this study.
As we music teachers work with the young people in our schools, we do more than teach music. Rather through our music programs, we pass on those skills that will help our students become positive, healthy citizens of society. Further, we have a responsibility to do whatever we can to ensure that music programs will be available, equitably, to future generations, including children from all ethnic and economic backgrounds. (Clayton, 2002, p. 6)

The teachers in this study are passionate about helping their students be citizens of the global community they can be, and the vehicle they use to do this is music. It is almost impossible to separate teaching and music in this discussion. In all their stories it is through the power of music that students can be transformed and realized as human beings.

**Childhood Discoveries**

Music touched each study participant deeply and played a significant role in her development as a person. Each of the participants experienced music in a meaningful and life-changing way when she was a child; first in her family and later through school and sometimes community involvement with music. It is this experience each teacher wishes to share with her students, with hope they experience the same profound connection that she did.

The only blood relatives Olivia grew up with were her parents and sister. The rest of her extended family lived in Portugal. As such, the cultural and church-related music experiences in which Olivia participated with her father and sister were really an extension of her family. As she made music with the Portuguese choir at her church or listened to her father play in a Portuguese band, music was synonymous with “family” or “community” to Olivia. As she grew older, school and community experiences extended
the reciprocal feeling of music and inclusion for Olivia, a feeling which she tries to pass along to her own students.

Olivia self-identified as a teacher from a very young age as a result of the strong example her mother, a teacher, set. Her mother believed that everyone had the responsibility to teach and help others, especially those who needed a little extra care. Olivia had experienced this kind of teaching and caring through her music connections in her family, spiritual, school and community life. For her, teaching and music were a natural “fit.” Olivia’s story strongly resonates with me, as the connection between family, church, school, community and music is similar to my own experience, although some differences exist. While Olivia had only her parents and sister as “blood” relatives when she was growing up, I was fortunate to have a large extended family in my aunts, uncles, and cousins who lived in our hometown. My grandmother was the glue – and accompanist – who kept us all connected. She often organized us into various vocal groupings as we sang Christmas hymns and carols. She was also a church organist and my family eventually transferred churches to attend the church she served. It was quite natural for her grandchildren to sing or play in church with her at the helm. It was when singing or playing band arrangements with my immediate family plus aunts, uncles and cousins, that I felt a close connection with them. This was similar to the feelings I had when, as small children, my sister, brother and I were taken along to see and hear my father play, conduct or serve as Master of Ceremonies for a variety of community choirs, bands or musical theatre productions. We were all spoiled terribly by the musicians in these groups and we loved every minute of it. As I became older, I felt very special in being asked to play flute in many of the groups my father conducted.
Experiencing firsthand what joy a music teacher could bring to his/her students through the community of making music together and the respect and fondness these students had for my father had a profound impact on me and influenced my decision to become a music teacher.

Annabelle’s parents shared their love of music with their children and it was at this time of her life that Annabelle’s passion for music was born. She remembers her parents and siblings singing around the house, at the dinner table and at bedtime. Music was just part of what family did and was. Much as music was an integral part of home and family for Annabelle, it also was an integral part of Annabelle’s elementary and secondary school experience. Pleasurable and rewarding experiences confirmed her love of music making. Annabelle was part of every music opportunity her schools had to offer and it was where she belonged and thrived. She now works hard to provide that experience for her own students.

As a child, Annabelle recruited her younger siblings and other neighbourhood children to “play” school and, of course, she was the teacher. She enjoyed playing with younger children and became convinced early on that her destiny was to teach Grade 3. She was likely influenced in no small part influenced by her father, a master teacher who taught elementary school for many years. After retiring as a teacher, he continues to model for emerging teachers as an instructor in a Faculty of Education preservice program.

As I hear Annabelle talk about discussing teaching with her father and how much fun it was for them to attend professional development and other educational activities
together, I heard an echo of my own professional journey. While my partner, mother and siblings are very interested in my stories of teaching music and are very supportive, it is my father who really understands. Over the years, his colleagues have become my colleagues and more recently, I have had the pleasure of introducing my colleagues and students to him. One of my fondest memories of our special music connection occurred at a national music conference several years ago. I was asked by the organizers to bring a class of my primary students to demonstrate what a “typical” primary music lesson might look like. My father was asked to introduce me and my students. The room was packed with children, their parents and the teachers who were attending the session. In fact, crowds of people who could not fit in the room were clustered in the hallway, straining to see. My father began to introduce the children and thanked them for coming and thanked their parents for driving them. As he began to introduce their teacher (me), I was very surprised to hear his voice beginning to crack. The teachers in the audience didn’t really understand what was happening until he managed to croak out “She’s my daughter.” They began to smile broadly and began clapping and cheering. I knew he was proud of me.

For Rose, performing her music for her aunts, uncles and cousins was part of every family gathering. She was the centre of their focus and rewarded for her singing. She also gives credit to her brother and parents for putting up with her renditions of Broadway show tunes as she lay in her bed at night. She found this same recognition in participating in choirs and musical theatre in school and community settings and she is passionate about bringing this kind of fulfillment to her students.
Unlike Olivia and Annabelle, Rose did not discover her passion to teach until after she completed a Bachelor of Music degree. Her focus was on performing music, something she still enjoys and engages in today and shares with her students. It was the experience of supply teaching at a private music school that led her to enter a Bachelor of Education program and an experience she had as a student teacher in an elementary music classroom that ignited her desire to become an elementary school music teacher. It is not surprising that Rose would be torn as to whether or not she wanted to be a teacher. From the time she was very young, she was rewarded by family and friends for her singing voice. Even in school, she was the student who was asked to sing the “big” solos and was the lead in the school musical. Much of Rose’s identity at this time involved her singing voice. It is natural that she wanted to pursue the path of a professional singer. Teaching did not provide the same recognition for her, as she had not really experienced this role, and it was not until she had some experience teaching children that she knew that teaching music to elementary students was what she wanted to do with her life. She has not given up singing, but now singing is more something she does for her own pleasure.

Janice’s deep personal relationship with music developed in a manner different from the other participants. While Janice’s parents and family listened to music and made music to some extent, it was in elementary school where Janice discovered her connection with music, thanks to the efforts of her teachers. One teacher ignited a connection for Janice with music and emotion with the study of one simple song: *One Tin Soldier* (written by Dennis Lambert and Brian Potter). Another teacher discovered something that Janice, who states that she had a low self-esteem as a child, did well –
make a sound on the flute. It was out of these two simple experiences that music grew to be an important part of who Janice is and let to the development of a part of her being that otherwise never would have been discovered.

Teaching was always an option for Janice, possibly as a result of the model her mother provided as a secondary school business teacher. She also experienced a compassionate, caring music teacher as a secondary school student, a model she tries to emulate.

It was these early profound experiences with music and, in some cases, education that guided the participants in this study, and many other elementary music teachers, to dedicate their professional life to bringing quality music experiences to their students so that their lives too can be transformed. This phenomenon supports a view of the social construction of identity in undergraduate music education majors. Woodford (2002) summarizes authors, including Beynon (1998), Dolloff (1999), Cox (1997) and Roberts (1991), who contend that one of the kinds of socialization that can greatly influence identity formation is primary socialization, which occurs during childhood and often involves people to whom individuals have an emotional attachment, such as family, teachers and others.

**Teacher Education: Defining our Passion**

Janice enrolled in a Bachelor of Music (music education) program, excited to be continuing the musical journey she began in elementary and secondary school. When she began the program, she was shocked at the competitive atmosphere of the program, not at all like the supportive, collegial atmosphere she experienced in
secondary school. This was not what she envisioned that the environment of learning to teach would be like and she wondered if she was in the wrong place. She felt so strongly that she decided to take some time off following 1st year to decide if she really wanted to become a teacher. Eventually, she did return, resolute in her decision that she would ignore the aspects of the program she did not agree with and focus on her goal: to become a teacher.

Following the successful completion of a Bachelor of Music program, Janice applied to a Bachelor of Education program, the final step in her goal of becoming a teacher. She chose to enter the intermediate/senior stream, as this was the age that she discovered music and music teachers. Janice did not experience any of the competition she found at the Faculty of Music, as each teacher candidate was focused on her/his own personal development as a teacher. She enjoyed her teaching placements in secondary schools and especially one placement in an elementary school. This placement would become especially important when she was looking for a teaching position in a few months time.

When it came time to apply for an undergraduate university program, Annabelle made pragmatic choices. Since her eventual goal was to gain entrance to a Bachelor of Education program in her quest to become a Grade 3 teacher, she decided that her choice of an undergraduate university degree was important. Because she excelled in music in secondary school, Annabelle thought she would do well in an undergraduate music program; well enough to ensure her future acceptance into a Bachelor of Education program.
She did not experience angst at the competitive nature of the Bachelor of Music program, as Janice did, however a verbally abusive major instrument instructor almost caused her to leave the program in her 1st year. Another instructor noticed her ability with another instrument, her voice, and commented on it, Annabelle shared her frustration with her applied instructor and her decision to leave the program. This instructor went out of his way to ensure that she could switch her major instrument from horn to voice which made all the difference in her time at the Faculty of Music. The lesson she learned from this experience was how she would not treat her future students.

When Annabelle applied for a place in a Bachelor of Education program, she again made a pragmatic choice. She chose to apply to the intermediate/senior stream as she left she stood the best chance of being accepted to that program and she was. Annabelle's discovery of her joy in teaching music to elementary students came during one of her practicum placements during her pre-service year. Although she was in the secondary stream and she enjoyed her practicum placements, her dream was to teach Grade 3 homeroom. To experience what it was like to teach in an elementary school, Annabelle requested that one of her practicum placements be in an elementary school. She was assigned to a teacher who taught JK–Grade 8 music and this experience proved to be transformational for her. Upon graduation, she pursued elementary music teaching positions.

I recognize how Janice and Annabelle's understanding of what kind of teacher they wanted to be shifted as the result of a transformative experience, as this was something I also experienced. I do not have any memories of a consistent music
program when I was in elementary school. I recall singing *California Dreamin’* by the Mamas and Papas in Grade 6 and the Caribbean folk song *Yellow Bird* in Grade 7, but, other than a friend and I teaching ourselves how to play the soprano recorder in Grade 8, that was the extent of my elementary school music experience.

I signed up for instrumental music (band) in high school and remember asking my father which instrument he thought I should play before leaving for my 1st day of secondary school. He said something about remembering that I had to carry it to and from school each day and so, of course, I chose the flute. When it came time to decide what to take in university, I decided that I would be a secondary school band teacher; after all, this is really the only model of a music teacher that I knew. This continued to be my goal, until the summer between my 3rd and 4th years of university when I was fortunate to secure a summer job playing in a woodwind quintet. We played many community concerts that summer and the May and June concerts were often held in elementary schools. Once I interacted with these students and discovered how curious, smart and funny they were, I knew I had found my true calling; in the elementary music classroom.

Olivia knew from a young age that she wanted to teach music in an elementary school. She lived the identity of future music teacher comfortably and confidently throughout her secondary school years. She taught music privately and also organized summers arts camps for children when she was in secondary school. Olivia progressed through Bachelor of Music (Music Education) and Bachelor of Education (junior/intermediate vocal music) programs already identifying as a music teacher, enthusiastically taking on leadership roles whenever they presented themselves. She
had a wonderful opportunity to jump right into the teaching profession soon after completing her Bachelor of Education degree when she was offered a long-term occasional teaching position, responsible for teaching music to JK–Grade 8 students.

While Janice, Annabelle, and Olivia knew they wanted to teach when they entered an undergraduate music program, Rose was not certain at all. She wanted to become a professional opera singer and took the music education program as a safety net in case her dreams of singing opera did not turn out. After graduating, Rose moved away to study with a world-class opera teacher and to decide if a career as a professional singer was what she really wanted. During this time, she also did some supply teaching to make some money and discovered that she really did enjoy teaching music to children. The following year, she enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program, in the primary/junior stream. Her desire to teach music to elementary school aged children was confirmed as a result of being placed in a JK–Grade 8 music classroom for one of her practicum placements. Upon graduation, she was offered a position teaching Grade 1–8 music, something she has continued to do since then; albeit as part of a larger teaching assignment that has included teaching classroom as well. She did not give up her dream of performing, instead she shares this love with her students and helps them find fulfillment and joy in performing for others. The kinds of identity influences that occur during the university years, where specialized learning is acquired, align with the theory of secondary socialization (Woodford, 2002, p. 679).
Beginning Careers

A natural teacher, Olivia was always aware of fellow classmates or students who might need a little extra care or help, an approach modeled by her mother. Consistently positive in her outlook, Olivia took this philosophy to her first teaching assignment, a long-term occasional elementary music position obtained almost immediately after completing a Bachelor of Education program. She threw herself into the experience, engaging both students and staff. She was determined that her JK–Grade 8 students would experience a meaningful music making opportunity under her leadership. As such, she taught one song, Siyahumba, to every student in the school and the song was performed at the final assembly of the school year. Although she admitted to being nervous, she used all her experiences as “teacher” to provide a meaningful experience for her students. They viewed her not as a beginning teacher, but as the music teacher. While the administrator, staff and students of the school wanted Olivia to stay at the school for the next year, she had already committed to moving to the city where her soon-to-be-husband taught and was already applying for teaching positions in both the elementary and secondary panel.

For the first few years of her teaching career, Annabelle taught part time at two different schools an hour’s drive away from her home, as this was the music position that was available at the time. When a full-time primary music position came open at a school in the same city where Annabelle lived, she transferred and has been there ever since. She revels in the gains her students make in their musical skills and abilities during these formative years.
Annabelle has always viewed her classroom as a place where all students can shine in a community of music making. In turn, their music fulfills her. She cites this as her favourite thing about being a music teacher.

My most favourite thing about being a music teacher ... I think probably when I have a good group of kids who can get up and sing, whether it’s my junior choir when I don’t even teach those kids but have them for rehearsal or my Grade 3’s who were just wonderful singers. When they can practice something, rehearse something and listen to what you have to say, crescendo and watch for the cut offs, and then get up and perform that. The excitement I feel, even if I’m accompanying, and I’m always accompanying and conducting with my head, but I think that’s my favourite thing. I don’t think a classroom teacher can have that same experience, but maybe a different one. I think a single kid could do something spectacular that would make their heart swell or whatever. Lights going off for kids and all that, but I think that when we get with them, we can do something incredible, whether it’s singing in front of another class or singing for their teachers or singing in an assembly. (AP 3)

The community that can be created when children sing together can be rewarding for all participants and listeners involved in the experience and some of these experiences will be among the stories children – and teachers – tell when recalling positive memories from their elementary school days.

One of Rose’s most rewarding memories is of assisting one of her Grade 7 students to discover a part of himself that he did not know existed. This young man had a well-established identity as a hockey player, but Rose helped him discover his gifts as a singer and actor. He was delighted with this new part of his identity and credited Rose with helping him to discover his gifts. In a thank you card Rose shared with me, he
wrote: “Dear Ms. Tambor: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to find a talent that I didn’t know I had.”

Janice accepted her first teaching position in an elementary school, teaching Kindergarten–Grade 8 music, because secondary music positions were difficult to find when she graduated. She found that she enjoyed teaching students of this age, and was motivated to research of best ways to teach learners of this age. When her full time music position was cut to half time at her school, she chose to transfer to another school where her teaching assignment was teaching JK–Grade 4 music full time. She is amazed at how deeply children engage in and around music, if such opportunities are provided.

For Janice, and at least one of her students, the experience does not need to include public performance. In fact, one of her most cherished memories of making music with her students involves the rehearsal, not the performance. I happened to run into Janice at a social event and she came rushing over to tell me about something that had happened at school that day.

I was on duty at the end of the day when parents were picking up their children from school. The grandfather of one of the girls in my primary choir came over to me and introduced himself. He thanked me for running a primary choir and told me that the choir rehearsal was the highlight of his granddaughter’s week. Not the concert, the rehearsal. (Journal notes, January 2, 2005)

She was so pleased that for this young student, the fulfillment was in the act of singing with her friends on a regular basis. She did not need the approval of the audience to
fulfill her. This way of looking at music making also echoes Janice’s personal beliefs about making music. While her ensembles perform for their parents, peers and teachers at the school and in music festival settings, Janice values the act of making music and does not need external approval.

_I, teacher._

Each teacher involved in this study strongly identifies as a _music_ teacher and sees this role as distinct and unique from other kinds of teachers. Distinct in the special skills and abilities required for teaching music and unique in the experiences it can provide for students; experiences that every child is entitled to as part of a well rounded education.

When asked to describe her identity as an elementary music teacher, each of the participants in the study answered succinctly and – interestingly – each with one word: inclusive, caring, loving or engaging. All these descriptors could certainly be applied to any teacher, not specifically a music teacher but it is interesting that these are the words that were chosen rather than focusing on something to do with the subject they teach; such as musical, talented, good conductor, to name a few. Janice, the teacher who sees it her responsibility to nurture a well-rounded child is the self-identified “inclusive” teacher. She works hard to be sure that all her students are included in the community of her music classes and that they all have the opportunity to grow through music. Olivia describes herself as a “caring” teacher. This is a natural for this teacher who was encouraged by her mother to always take care of those people who looked a little lost and needed some extra attention. “Loving” is the term Rose used to describe her

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6 This is a paraphrase of the title of Roberts’ 1993 monograph _I, musician._
identity. Always positive and encouraging, Rose demonstrates for her students that she loves music and is passionate about sharing that love with them. That Annabelle chose to describe herself as an “engaging” teacher did not surprise me at all and it is most appropriate. From the moment her students meet her in the hallway she calls her classroom, she is energized, motivated, and sweeps them into her world of music. With an animated voice, face and body, she engages her students and very soon, their entire beings are as involved in the experience of her “classroom” as she is.

When describing one’s own personal identity, it is also interesting to consider the pseudonym each of the women chose for herself in this study. In looking closely at them, they mirror their owner’s teaching personality. As we were nearing the end of our conversations together, I asked each participant if she would like to choose a pseudonym for herself. Each woman gave it careful thought and most were confident in the name selected, although some gentle assistance from me was required in one case. "Janice Jones" is a perfectly fine name. It does not draw attention to itself and can be somewhat anonymous as well. This name fits Janice’s feelings of her role or identity. She does not enjoy being in the spotlight; rather, she would prefer the focus to be on her students and their learning and as such, she gets out of the way and guides them in their learning.

Annabelle commented that she always enjoyed the name “Annabelle” as she taught a child of that name and she was a “sweetie.” In her mind, “Annabelle” and “Petch” fit well together. Like Annabelle, the name “Annabelle Petch” evokes thoughts of someone who is engaging, lively, and just a little bit quirky perhaps.
I suggested the name “Rose” as Rose was having a difficult time thinking of a pseudonym. The images of a delicate, gentle flower matched the way in which this teacher approached her teaching and her students. She agreed to the name Rose and added “Tambor” as the surname to display the steady pulse of a percussion instrument to demonstrate the steady, ongoing involvement in music.

“Olivia Madeira” was chosen to celebrate both family and cultural connections, reflecting Olivia’s strong connections to family and culture. “Olivia” is the name of an extended family member with whom Olivia is quite close. “Madeira” is both the name of an island that is an integral part of Portugal and a fortified wine made in Portugal. Both reflect Olivia’s ties to her cultural heritage.

When I asked the participants to choose pseudonyms, I was not looking for deeper connections to identity, but rather for the participants to simply have a choice as to their name in the study. It was not until much later in the analysis process that it occurred to me that the names they chose gave me more insight into each woman’s identity as a person and a teacher. I wish that I had considered a pseudonym for myself when I asked them to consider one for themselves, as it would be curious to consider the name I chose for myself in light of my personal identity. I feel certain I would have chosen the first name “Claire” because it is my mother’s middle name and because I always liked that name as to me it sounds a bit exotic and certainly very intelligent in a British kind of way. I have no idea what I would choose as a surname, but know that if I tried now, I would be biased knowing that I would read more into the selection than simply a name.
A recent graduate of a Bachelor of Education program, Olivia feels she already has an identity as a music teacher. She credits the early formation of identity to the long-term occasional teaching position she took on for May and June. She was known in the school as “The Music Teacher” and all the children in the school knew her name and greeted her each time she walked down the hall. She feels that the music teacher – at least in this situation – was thought of a bit more highly than the other teachers in the school. We will see later in this discussion that this is not necessarily the view held by the other teachers involved in this study.

Annabelle also self-identifies as a music teacher, although this identity seems to be so ingrained in her that she had to think through this.

Yes, [teaching music is] different from being another kind of teacher. Like, I’m sure [my friend] who’s taught Grade 4, 3, and 2 doesn’t say “I’m a Grade 3 teacher.” She says “I’m a teacher teaching Grade 3.” I’m not sure if I say that I’m a music teacher … yes, I do. I say I’m a music teacher. That is interesting. I’ve never thought of that. Actually I separate that from … You know why? It’s because nobody does what we do. Very few people do what we actually do. We are not a classroom teacher who by chance picks up a few strands of music. When you are training to be a music teacher … and train is not the right word, but do you know what I mean? When you do 4 years of an undergrad degree and then a year at [a Faculty of Education] to be a music teacher, which was my entire focus all along, to be a music teacher. It’s hard to separate that from being a teacher. But you know when I went to [the Faculty of Education], I didn’t want to be a music teacher, I wanted to teach Grade 3. That was my goal. But that all changed when I [practice taught] with [a certain associate teacher]. It did. I saw the program and thought, “Oh, my gosh! I love it! This is what I want to do.” (AP 3)
She is also identified as the music teacher by her colleagues who are classroom teachers. They remind her of experiences she has had with their students and recognize the power of music has in providing meaningful experiences for the students.

For Rose, it is the passion for music that sets music teachers apart from other teachers. Although she spends half her day teaching Grade 4 classroom, Rose strongly identifies as a music teacher. Teaching in the other areas of the curriculum does not ignite the passion for teaching as music does for her, and she doubts that most teachers of other areas are as profoundly connected to their subject area as music teachers generally are.

Rose has continued to engage in singing for her own fulfillment, most recently participating in a musical theatre production. She shares this love with her students by staging musicals with her students at school. Some of her students have also seen her perform in musical theatre, showing them that involvement in music is a passion for her and can be for them as well.

As much as sharing her love of music with her students and continuing to make music are strong parts of Rose’s identity as a teacher, she is innately curious and actively pursues professional development opportunities to satisfy her own curiosity about various aspects of teaching music. She pushes herself to improve her own personal skills and how she might integrate this into her teaching practice to benefit her own students.

Janice, the teacher who has taught the longest of the participants in this study, views her identity as someone responsible for the development of each of her students
as a person, using music as the vehicle. She came to this realization after many years of experiencing music in her life and teaching. As an elementary school student, music provided Janice with a profound emotional experience in the simple singing of a song with her classmates and thinking about the context of the song. In later years, music built her self-esteem in that it was an area of the curriculum in which she excelled. In secondary school, the music room was where a place of belonging for Janice and the teachers and other music students were like family.

The intensely competitive atmosphere that greeted Janice in her 1st-year music education university program collided with her vision of music education as inclusive and supportive, based on her secondary school experiences; so much so that she left the program in disgust for a number of years before returning to complete her degree. With tenacity, she decided that those who viewed music education as a competition would not keep her from realizing her dream of becoming a music teacher. Next to Janice’s discovery of her personal fulfillment and feelings of self worth in music as an elementary and secondary student, the realization that others did not always view music education as she did and that she strongly disagreed with the view of music education as competition, was one of the profound experiences that assisted in the formation of Janice’s identity as an elementary music teacher.

Over her career thus far, Janice has been able to build her music program as she sees fit and as she worked with her students and observed their reaction to her experiences with them, she gained more and more confidence in her approach to music education. When she occasionally bumped up against an administrator or someone else who challenged her views, as she did with the principal who wanted her to promote
the school by taking the band to play at a series of other schools and the fellow music teacher who was focused on winning at the music festival, she learned to stand up for her beliefs. The “bumps” have served as opportunities for reflection and affirmation in her educational values.

After many years of teaching music to all grades in an elementary school, Janice’s job description changed to teaching mostly primary music and it is in teaching children of this age that she has found her “home” professionally. While she has not changed her identify as a music teacher, it has been redefined after working with these children. She now sees her role in a much more global sense, helping her students to become citizens of the world, with music education being the means.

Recently, Janice discovered that a new school district initiative has resonated with her beliefs about music education. She has done some reading about Barrie Bennett’s *Instructional Intelligence*, an approach to teaching, and found this congruent with her own beliefs about teaching. She became so interested in this approach that she volunteered to be among the first among her school district to receive training and became a trainer herself, now conducting workshops for her fellow staff members and other music teachers in her school district. Her approach to teaching music has been transformed and she is thrilled with the benefits to her students.

For each of these participants, music teacher identity seems to direct meaningful teacher practice. Each woman chose to become a music teacher because of profound personal experiences with music as a child. Because these experiences were so meaningful for each of them, they were motivated to create similar experiences for their
own students. Whether teaching music privately while in secondary school, running camps or other summer programs, volunteer experiences, practicum placements as part of a degree program, supply teaching or finally obtaining a “real” teaching position, all these experiences contributed to shaping the evolving teaching practice of these teachers. If an approach, activity, song, concept goes well, a teacher is likely to keep it in her repertoire and continue to hone it to be even more effective. If something does not go well, she/he may try and rework it to see if it can be improved or discard it. Likewise, as each of the participants gained experience and confidence in her teaching, she is willing to take more risks, to explore new areas of interest and begin to take on more leadership roles. The feedback that these participants value the most is internal. The other meaningful feedback comes from the reactions and comments of their students.

**Life Cycle: Evolving / Refining Identity**

The life-cycle of teachers also plays an important role in the continued development of the teachers in this study. As the most senior teacher, Janice’s daughter is now a teenager and more independent, leaving Janice with more time to reflect on her personal teaching practice and experimenting with new ideas, materials and practices. She is comfortable in directing her own professional development. If we consider her development as a teacher in relationship to the Life Cycle of the Career Teacher model put forward by Steffy et al. (2002) and Steffy and Wolfe (1997), Janice would be classed as an expert teacher, while Olivia would moving from the novice to the apprentice stage. Rose and Annabelle would be classed at various points along the
professional stage continuum. The goal of this model is for all teachers to reach the expert stage.

The novice phase begins when teacher candidates enter a university pre-service education program and start practice teaching in the schools. For most teachers, the apprentice phase begins when they are responsible for planning and teaching their own students and continues “until integration and synthesis of knowledge, pedagogy and confidence emerges” (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001, p. 16). This phase often extends until the emerging teacher has experience teaching for 2 or 3 years. As emerging teachers gain confidence as teachers, they enter the professional phase. Mutual respect between teacher and students plays an important role in this phase, as does student feedback to the teacher. The expert phase recognizes teachers who have achieved high standards in their personal teaching practice. In the United States, these teachers would qualify for national certification by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future in the United States (2007). Exceptional master teachers who are leaders in education in their school district and beyond are acknowledged as being in the distinguished phase. The emeritus phase is reserved for educators who are for acknowledged for making teaching a lifetime’s work. Many of these teachers remain active in the area of education, by working in teacher education programs, supply teaching or volunteering in schools (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001).

It is important to remember that teachers can be in many different stages at the same time and movement between the stages is fluid. For example, although Olivia is a novice teacher she is closer to the expert stage in terms of vocal production and
teaching singing. Looking at teaching using this lens further illustrates the complexity of identity of teachers.

Lynn (2002) explores Fessler's 1992 career cycle of eight stages: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and career exit (Lynn, 2002, p. 179). In this model, Olivia would be moving from “pre-service” to “induction.” Janice is in the “career stability” stage, having experienced some frustrations earlier in her career. While I am sure she still does experience some frustration currently, she focuses on her students and tries not to let the frustrations get to her the way they might have earlier in her career. Rose and Annabelle are likely somewhere in between the 2 other participants in terms of their career cycle. The point that Lynn makes about movement between the stages is important to remember; it is dynamic and flexible, not static and linear. Not all teachers progress through all eight stages, and it is not necessary to complete the stages in chronological order. The cycle can also be interrupted or changed depending upon circumstances within and outside of the school setting, such as the death of a spouse or the birth of a child.

While Annabelle truly loves teaching music, she is at the stage of her life where she has two young children at home and, as such, time and energy are precious commodities. She misses making music with other adults and engaging in other forms of professional development outside of her board based professional development, but knows as her children grow, she will have more time to pursue her personal professional development. She also feels that being a parent has changed her identity as a teacher in a positive way. She has a different understanding of how precious each
child in her classroom is and that a parent or parents, that child is at the centre of their universe.

A newly married beginning teacher, working at a school new to her, living in a different city, Olivia will likely be spending her time getting used to her new home, school and community. As someone who as returned to her hometown to teach, Rose is back in familiar territory and has the time to participate in music and theatre groups in the community, as well as becoming more comfortable at her school. The construction of professional identity began when these teachers were children, as it was the experiences these women had with music and music education that determined what they would do with their professional lives. They began to develop as people, and subsequent experiences in their personal, school and working lives all played a role in the construction and reconstruction of their identity which informs teaching practice and guides their development as teachers. As lifelong learners, this process will continue throughout their teaching careers.

**Teaching in the Margins**

In an interesting paradox, while each of the music educators profiled in this study proudly identifies herself as a music educator and is recognized positively as such by family, friends, teaching colleagues, administration, and students, at the same time, these music teachers feel marginalized in comparison to other teachers in their schools. The first area that this is apparent is in the physical space in which they teach. Janice lives with the knowledge that she could lose her teaching space, her music room, if the student population in her school changes. While this kind of reorganization of space is
common to all teachers when grade or division changes occur, her situation is different in that she is often not consulted on any possible changes. In fact, it was her custodian who told her that she might be moving rooms. She has learned to store her teaching materials in such a way that they are easily portable, as she will likely relocate from room to room on a fairly regular basis.

Annabelle teaches in an “atrium,” which is really a large hallway in the bottom floor of her school. The Kindergarten and Grade 1 classroom doors open into her teaching space and parents, students and teachers are constantly moving around and through her teaching space. While most people are considerate and try to move quietly, the constant movement is distracting for the students and Annabelle in the “classroom.” This teaching space is sparsely equipped partly because there is no secure place to store equipment and materials. The children sit on the concrete floor and Annabelle sits in a chair. An upright piano sits in the corner and she uses a kindergarten easel with a white board on one side for literacy and other written work. Annabelle brings any instruments, props, books, CDs, or other materials with her and locks her purse in the trunk of her car, as she does not have as much as a desk drawer to secure her personal belongings. She leaves her coat hanging in the staff room.

Annabelle did originally have a room in which to teach, but lost it when the special education teacher needed space. She had the option of teaching music “on a cart” or teaching in the atrium. Both she and the homeroom teachers decided that teaching in the atrium was the slightly better choice of two choices as there was more open space in the atrium and, with these children in the atrium, the homeroom teachers would be able to mark or plan in their own classrooms without interruption.
Rose and Olivia were not given a choice as to where they teach their music classes. They load up wheeled carts with all the materials and equipment needed for a half day of teaching and navigate hallways filled with students, shoes, backpacks and coats as they travel from one classroom to another. If Rose forgets a ball or CD in the tiny “office” space she shares with the school nurse, TV’s on carts and other AV equipment, she does without it for that half day or if the children are old enough, rushes back to retrieve the item. At lunchtime, between choir rehearsals and yard duty, she unpacks and restocks her cart ready for the afternoon classes. Once she arrives at a particular classroom, she tries to find a spot for her cart, an outlet to plug in her CD player and a space on the board for her chart paper. Sometimes there is a corner of a table for her to open her daybook to her lesson plan. Often this is not the case. Olivia does not have even a tiny office to call her own. The only space she has for planning is the staff room. She carries her teaching materials with her to and from home each day.

If the subject of music is replaced with almost any other subject in the Ontario curriculum it is difficult to imagine that similar issues with physical space would be present. What message does this send to students and parents about the relative value of a music education if appropriate physical space is not provided for its instruction and music teachers are not provided with a space to plan and mark, and a secure storage area for their equipment, teaching materials, and personal belongings? The same is true for the scheduling of music classes within the timetable. The amount of time students receive music education seems to vary with each school district and in each school. Annabelle’s students had music every other day and Annabelle was pleased with their engagement with music, and their developing skills and knowledge of music.
Then she went on maternity leave. When she was preparing to return to her teaching position following her maternity leave, she discovered that her full-time primary music position was now a half-time position. The principal had cut the amount of time her students had for music education by 50%. If Annabelle wished to teach full time, she would be required to either find another school to teach at for 50% of her teaching load or transfer to another school where a full-time position was available. She chose to voluntarily reduce her teaching load to 50%.

In the school district where Rose and Olivia teach, students receive music once a week, delivered by an itinerant music teacher. Often the itinerant teachers travel between two schools. In some cases, depending upon the student population of the school, music teachers are assigned to three or even four different schools. The school Olivia was assigned to for her long-term occasional position was large enough that there was a full-time music teacher at that school. Rose’s situation was a little different. The student population at her school allowed for her to teach music half time. Because she and her principal wanted her to stay at the school and not travel, she also teaches Grade 4.

**Dances With Administrators**

Although teachers regularly interact, and sometimes come into conflict with school board expectations, Ministry of Education curriculum and other mandates, parents and students, the primary discussion of the stakeholders in education centered around administrators with both positive and negative stories. While each of the participants in the study had some positive, empowering experiences with
administrators, they also had less than positive experiences. The school administrators
determined the physical space in which they teach and how much instructional time the
music program is allotted, elementary music teachers also often have to deal with being
told how to run their programs. While other subject areas are held to the dictates of the
provincial curriculum, as is appropriate, it seems that music teachers can be told what
they should or should not be teaching in the classroom by their administration and,
more often, are dictated as to the performance opportunities the administration would
like them to engage in.

Olivia’s long-term-occasional contract was for the last part of the school year and
student experiences with the previous music teacher had not seemed to be all that
engaging. The principal was thrilled – and shocked – when Olivia jumped right in to
involve the entire student population in singing together at the final school assembly of
the year. The support of the administration was unconditional and the principal did
everything in her power to try and keep Olivia at this school for the next academic year.
Unfortunately for these students, Olivia was being married during the summer and
moving to another city where her husband-to-be had a teaching position. Fortunately for
Olivia’s future students in her new city, they will experience her passion for music and
teaching for many years to come.

At the other end of the spectrum, when a new principal was assigned to a school
where Janice taught earlier in her career, he called her into the office and mandated
that she take her band to play for several other schools in their area that year to –in
Janice’s words – “show off” their music program. Janice was uncomfortable with this
approach, not because she did not enjoy having her band perform, but because she felt
strongly that the goal of music education was not to flaunt how much better one group of students could play when compared to another, but to find pleasure in one’s own music-making experiences. She much preferred that her students play for one another and for their parents and this is exactly what she did. This principal was not at her school for very long and when yet another principal was assigned to her school, she told him of the request of the last principal that she take her band “on the road” and asked him what his opinion was. He asked her what her goals for music education where and when she explained, he was very satisfied to have her construct the program according to her beliefs.

Janice also experienced a competitive attitude from the other music teacher at the school where she currently teaches. Janice’s choir had just completed their final rehearsal before singing in the music festival. This particular music festival did not award first, second, and third prizes for elementary school choirs, but rather ranked choirs against predetermined gold, silver, bronze, and merit standards. Janice agreed with this format and was proud of the work her students were doing. She looked forward to hearing the other choirs singing in this class with her choir and the constructive comments of the adjudicator. As soon as her choir had finished rehearsing their final song, the other music teacher, who had come to watch the rehearsal, came up to Janice and whispered “Your choir is going to smoke the other choirs!!” Janice found that she was very disturbed by this, as her goals for this experience were very different from her colleague’s and she certainly did not want her students to pick up on this competitive attitude.
Annabelle’s administration did not get in the way of her organizing musicals and concerts for her students and sometimes one of the administrators would attend one of the performances and leave a note in her mailbox thanking her for her work, but that was the extent of the support. No one asked her if she needed help, if they could do anything to make the planning, rehearsals, and performances easier for her. In fact, Annabelle does not think they noticed that she still came in to run choir rehearsals even when she was on maternity leave. They seemed to appreciate the positive feedback from the parents of the participating students, but did not consider the work that went into it.

The final straw for Annabelle was when one of her principals was leaving to move to another school. She carefully and thoughtfully found the “perfect” piece of music, in her mind, to give him the gift of a song to remember them by. She taught it to her choir and the children rehearsed and rehearsed in the sweltering days of June, to make it the best experience it could be. The day of the assembly arrived and the children dressed carefully and patiently waited until it was their turn to sing their song. Annabelle was thrilled with the message they shared and so proud of them. She waited and waited for some feedback from the principal to pass along to her young students. She heard nothing and finally sent him an email with the text of the song, explaining that it was chosen and rehearsed carefully as their parting gift to him. After a few days, Annabelle received back a brief and seemingly hurried reply. She was hurt by this response. She made it clear to me that she was not looking for all kinds of praise, just that the efforts of the choir be sincerely recognized.
Rose experienced the most blatant interference from a principal early in her career. Although she only saw her students only once a week for music, she still tried to offer a balanced music program to provide her students with as much variety of opportunities as possible. As an emerging teacher, and new to this school, Rose experienced some students who were resistant to some of the new ideas and activities she brought to music education. When she spoke with her principal, he asked her why she bothered and suggested that she just sing Christmas carols with all the students in the school instead. While this might have been a helpful comment if it was made in December, the comment was actually made in early November. It seems that this principal did not care what kind of music education his students received, as long as he did not have to deal with any student issues.

In a 2002 study, replicating two previous studies undertaken by Montgomery (1994, 1995), I asked a small sample of elementary school administrators, elementary school specialist music teachers, elementary school generalist music teachers, and pre-service music students enrolled in the primary/junior or junior/intermediate program at a Faculty of Education, to rank a variety of skills and attributes according to their importance for an elementary music teacher. The results showed that one of the main goals for administrators was that their students enjoyed attending music class and that they had “fun.” Also implied in their responses was that if the students were having fun, classroom management issues would likely be at a minimum and would not cause the administrators any more work. In addition to the children having “fun” in music class, the administrators wanted them to learn something, but it was difficult for them to define what they wished the student to learn. The mandated curriculum was a document that
most did not seem to understand and it did not appear to be of great importance. As is to be expected, the more of an understanding of music education the principals in the study possessed, the more likely they would be able to articulate what it was they thought children should learn. One principal in the study was a former music educator and he viewed music literacy and skill development in singing and playing as important pieces of music education. In the five categories used in the study, the administrators ranked extra-musical skills (skills common to any effective teacher, including engaging, positive, motivating, organized, to name a few) highest and, in descending order, ranked vocal skills, musical materials, instrumental skills and music knowledge as other important skills and abilities in an elementary music teacher (Eyre, 2002). The discussion and comments from this study seem to stand up when compared with the experiences of the participants in the current study. It is difficult for principals to balance the needs of all programs and often the music program gets overlooked. In addition, teaching music is often the furthest from their own personal teaching experience and this makes it difficult for them to guide their music teachers.

Olivia, Rose, Annabelle, and Janice all discovered their love for music as children, first at home and then at school. They were drawn to an undergraduate music education programs for different reasons and the experience was comfortable for some and not as comfortable for others. In the end, they all chose to pursue a Bachelor of Education degree, and this was generally where their passion for teaching was ignited and where they discovered the age level of children they most enjoyed teaching. As they began teaching, both positive and negative experiences helped inform, define and redefine who each woman is as a music teacher. In spite of challenges with space, time
and resources, they are determined to provide the best music education possible to their students. This includes continuing to make the case that music education is a critical part of a child’s education and that all students deserve to learn and grow in and through music.

Like the 4 participants of the study, music has always been an important part of my life, beginning with my family. Although I did not have the benefit of a consistent music education in elementary school, that situation changed in secondary school, and it was this experience that led me to an undergraduate program in music education. However, it was not until I had the experience of playing in a woodwind quintet and performing countless numbers of concerts for elementary school children that I changed my career path from teaching music in secondary school, like my father, to elementary music education. I have been blessed in my teaching career to have worked with wonderful students, colleagues, and administrators. When I look back over my career to date, I was a different teacher in each setting. While I have been teaching, it also seems as if I have never stopped being a student. Summer courses, diploma programs, and graduate degrees continue to shape and redefine the teacher I am. What has not changed is my passion for music education. Like the participants in this study, I continue to advocate for music education in the lives of all children.

Reflections on Study Participation

An area that deserves some discussion is the myriad of ways in which participation in the study assisted each participant in reflecting on her professional identity and how this reflection might have changed or transformed (Mezirow, 1991) her
identity as an elementary music teacher. It is interesting for me to informally observe the educational paths the participants have taken in their teaching careers since the data was collected and how transformational changes in their identity, however subtle, may have influenced their decisions to make these changes. Three of the 4 participants continue to teach in areas that are geographically located relatively close to where I teach. Our paths continue to cross educationally and sometimes socially, although I have not had the opportunity to see them teach. Olivia is the participant who moved from this area to marry and begin her teaching career. Although we email back and forth occasionally, I am not as aware of how her identity might have been changed due to her participation in this study but am confident that her strong sense of self efficacy (Bandura, 1994, 1995; Kane, 2005) will sustain her in any future teaching situation. I do know that she continues to teach in the secondary school where she first gained employment as a long-term occasional music teacher. However, she is no longer teaching music. While she is pleased to be staying at the same school with students she has come to enjoy, she misses teaching music but is hopeful that a position may open up in the future. In the meantime, she creates opportunities to bring music into the lives of her school community, an example of which is hosting a Christmas party for the children of the school staff. Olivia makes up songs, games and crafts to keep the children entertained. She also confidently and cheerfully created and presented a workshop on the folk music of Portugal to a group of music teachers at a provincial conference. However, I have the suspicion that even without participating in this study, her natural approach of “jumping-in-with-both-feet” is the reason the session was so well received by those who attended her presentation.
I have a more thorough understanding of some of the new ventures of the other three women in the study. Rose has become a cooperating teacher for teacher candidates enrolled at the local Faculty of Education and now realizes that she has much to offer as a mentor to those learning to teach. She has taken on leadership responsibilities in music education professional development, both in the organizing of professional development opportunities and presenting to her peers. She is also continuing her own personal professional development by taking summer music education courses in other parts of Canada and the United States. As a result of her continuing professional study, she has been asked to join the board of directors for a provincial music education association. She has also realized her dream of teaching music full time. She continues to teach music at her small rural school, but instead of teaching classroom for the other half of her teaching assignment, she now travels to a school in a different rural community to teach music there. To fulfill her own need to make music, she joined a community choir; a choir where many of the members are former members of the youth choir she sang in so many years ago.

Through participation in the study, Annabelle discovered that she really does know something about teaching music and this gave her confidence to become part of a team of teachers who presented a series of music workshops for generalist teachers. I was fortunate to be present at the workshop and privy to comments some of the workshop participants made following Annabelle’s presentation. Her natural enthusiasm, positive approach to learning how to teach music and her humble manner with the teachers gave them confidence to return to their classrooms and implement some of her suggested strategies. She has also considered serving as a cooperating
teacher for elementary teacher candidates, but has returned to teaching full time; as a half-time music teacher and a half-time primary classroom teacher. Because the content is new for her, she decided to wait until she is feeling more secure before she invites a teacher candidate into her classroom.

Janice has served as a cooperating teacher for teacher candidates for many years, and has become very intuitive in knowing how to assist each individual in his or her personal development as a teacher. She continues her involvement in the Instructional Intelligence program her board promotes and is pleased that her principal invited her to share leadership in making decisions about Instructional Intelligence and in implementing this program. In a small way, she now feels she has a voice in shaping the direction of policy and practice in her school (Johnson & Pajares, 1996). In addition to using the strategies successfully in her own teaching practice, she invites other teachers and administrators to observe her teaching so they can see the strategies in practice. She also has facilitated in-service opportunities for the other teachers in her school. However – as is common with the other participants – her primary focus continues to be her students.

When I concluded the final meeting with each participant, and thanked her for her participation in the study, the same reaction occurred with each woman. A puzzled look came over her face and the comments took similar themes of “That’s it? We’re done? Does this mean we won’t meet like this again?” It was gratifying for me to know that each of the women enjoyed participating in the study. I assume that part of the reason for this is because someone was actually interested in her personal story of how she came to be a music teacher and what being a music teacher means to her.
Like the participants in this study, I do not often have the opportunity to share my stories of teaching with others who understand what it means to be a music teacher. This is part of the reason why gatherings of professionals, such as professional development days, in-service learning, workshops, conferences, concerts where two or more schools come together to share their music, community participation in ensembles made up of – among others – music teachers, and other related activities are so important.

Staffing issues often dictate that there is only one music teacher in a school and this is especially true in the elementary school. Running rehearsals, sectionals, and preparing equipment and materials, especially if a music teacher is teaching “á la carte,” often means that music teachers have limited time to relax with other teachers in the staff room during the day. Even if they make the time, some teachers (and administrators) do not really understand what the role of the music teacher is and what the music teacher is trying to accomplish. Sharing stories of successes, failures, frustrations, breakthroughs, and great new ideas with music education peers can be therapeutic, cathartic, liberating, restorative, energizing and invigorating. This is not new as Lortie (1974) called for the sharing of stories. It seems that this practice is still undervalued as demonstrated in recent research, including Prescesky (1997), Beynon (1998), Rose (1998), Roberts (1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1993), and Richardson (2006).

**Issues of Credibility**

It is important to address the questions posed by Corbin and Strauss (2008) identified in Chapter 3 to establish the credibility of this study.
1. How was the original sample selected? How did later sampling occur?

The original sample size of 4 elementary music teachers at various stages of their careers was selected to provide access to a variety of teachers’ stories from a range of experience perspectives, yet keep the size of the data manageable. Five elementary music educators were approached about possible participation in the study. One declined because of personal time limitations. Four accepted and remained with the study until its conclusion. These particular teachers were approached because I knew each of them professionally and had already established a level of trust and mutual respect, allowing for almost immediate sharing of deep and meaningful stories.

2. What major categories emerged?

Two major categories emerged from the data collected: (a) the personally meaningful experiences of music, and (b) teaching as a helping profession.

3. What were some of the events, incidents, and/or actions (indicators) that pointed to some of these major categories?

Each participant believes in the power of music education for elementary students to provide emotional experiences, a sense of community and personal satisfaction and growth for teachers and students in and through music. They enthusiastically shared memories of profound music making experiences when they were children, with family, in school and through involvement with community music ensembles. Olivia made music with her sister, father and with the Portuguese community at her church. Music was an
integral part of her family and culture. Later she sang in a community youth choir with her sister and had the opportunity to travel internationally and sing with other world class choirs in festivals and competitions and these experiences still hold great resonance for her. Rose was identified inside her extended family as the singer and regularly entertained her cousins with her favourite Broadway songs. She also was a frequent soloist and lead in musical theatre productions in school and in the community. Music was a daily part of family life for Annabelle and something she enjoyed in school and did well in. It was the meaningful connections between music and peace through the study of the song *One Tin Soldier* in Grade 6 and a compliment from her Grade 7 teacher about what a good beginning sound Janice made on the flute that encouraged her to pursue music in secondary school and eventually become a music teacher.

Although each expresses it differently, each woman views her role as someone who helps students be the best person they can be using music as the means. The participants returned often to the theme of teaching as a helping profession. From the time she was a young child, Olivia made a point of going out of her way to help others who seemed a little sad, or needed a little help. As an emerging teacher, she looks for the students who appear to need help or who need a little encouragement to engage in music making activities. Rose delights in providing opportunities for her students to discover the same satisfaction in making music that she felt as a child. She encourages her students to find the artistic side of themselves that they may
not realize they had. Annabelle feels strongly that children need music as a part of their lives, especially those children who may shine only in the area of music and the arts. She sees her role as providing those musical and artistic experiences for her students. Janice feels that teachers have an important role in raising children and that teachers have a responsibility to all the children in the school. She works hard to create a welcoming community in her music classroom where all children are valued and are provided with the experiences and opportunities they need to grow and develop as people.

4. What were some of the statements of relationships made during the analysis and on what grounds were they formulated and validated?

Glaser (1978, 1998) advises that the question “What is this data a study of?” (1978, p. 57) be asked at each stage of analysis. Charmaz (2006) suggests by taking this course of action, “we might discover that particular meanings and actions in our studied world suggests theoretical links to compelling ideas that had not occurred to us” (p. 138). Indeed, coherence exists between the links in my participants’ experience and the literature being echoed, in my own experience and in informal comments from colleagues and committee discussions. By including the sometimes lengthy stories of the participants in their own words, I invite the reader’s imaginative participation in the described events and experiences. In the act of analyzing the data collected in interviews, informal discussions, classroom observations and my field notes, connections, links and relationships were formed and validated.
5. Do the findings become part of the discussions and ideas exchanged among relevant social and professional groups?

I have situated the study to be part of the professional discussion of teacher identity. My findings are congruent with previous research in the field, including Prescesky (1997), Beynon (1998), Dolloff (2003) and Richardson (2006). In particular, practicing teachers will find this research credible because I drew so strongly on the voices of the teachers. I tried to present those voices as directly and unmediated as possible. Some of the findings, such as transformative experiences with music playing an important role in why someone becomes a music teacher, confirm findings by other researchers. Other findings are being shared with representatives from school boards and university programs. It is hoped that the findings will become part of the discussion and decision making processes of these groups as well.

**Summary**

Teachers need to be given the opportunity to reflect on who they are, where they have come from as well as where they are going, throughout their lives as teachers (Lynn, 2000; McGaha & Lynn, 2000; Mezirow, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997; Steffy & Wolfe, 1997, 2001; Steffy et al., 2000). While undergraduate and pre-service programs have begun to include these opportunities for teachers in training, strategies to extend this reflective process throughout the life cycle of the teacher are needed. These participants found involvement in this study professionally rewarding and each one learned a great deal about herself as a teacher.
Annabelle, Rose, and Olivia all experienced music as part of their home and extended family life. It was synonymous with the warmth, love, acceptance, security, and community of being a family. As these women became involved with music in school and community settings, these same feelings of community, fulfillment and being rewarded or praised for their involvement in music motivated their further involvement in music. These experiences became strong foundations for their evolving teacher selves.

All 4 participants came to teaching through modeling and practicing teaching themselves. Janice and Annabelle grew up with a parent who was a teacher. Olivia’s mother had been a teacher in Portugal before she moved to Canada and remained a strong model for her and her sister. Each participant had some experience in organizing siblings or neighbourhood children in summer camps and plays or taught music privately. These factors profoundly affected the development of identity in these participants and began to inform each woman’s personal teacher beliefs (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Johnson & Pajares, 1996 and Schmidt, 1998) as they each began their personal journey as a teacher. Through and in making music, each felt fulfilled and rewarded as part of a community. Each experienced profound reactions to involvement in music and it is these experiences each tries to elicit in her own students. Observing the reactions of students who are so engaged in music continues to motivate these teachers as they continue to further their own teaching practices.

It was not only positive experiences however, that contributed to the formation of identity in these participants and it is likely that strong personal beliefs about teaching assist in sustaining emerging teachers through difficult experiences. When Janice returned to finish her undergraduate music education degree, after taking a leave
following her 1st year of study because of the fiercely competitive atmosphere, she returned resolute that she would ignore the competition and focus on completing her degree so she could do what she really wanted to do … teach. To this day, Janice still does not enjoy music teachers who teach music as a “competitive sport” and she resists any suggestion that she should use this approach in her teaching.

Annabelle’s experience with a verbally abusive major instrument instructor was enough to make her consider transferring out of music, but another supportive instructor was able to switch her major, allowing her the opportunity to enjoy the remainder of her program. This experience reinforced for her that all people should be treated with respect and that engaging in music should be a joyous experience, not one to be feared.

Rose’s struggle was within herself. Should she pursue a career as a professional singer or should she take the “safe” route and go into teaching? When she tried a bit of both, she discovered that she actually enjoyed teaching and was successful at it. She also realized that she could still continue to sing as well as teach. It is this love of performance and sharing her music that Rose brings to her students as part of her music class.

Although this small study is only a snapshot into the teaching practices of 4 passionate and dedicated elementary music educators, their individual stories of their educational journeys provide much rich insight for all those involved in undergraduate, pre-service and in-service education at the university and school district levels. The formation of a teacher identity begins early in life, likely even before a person may be
aware that certain that this is occurring (Dolloff, 1999; Woodford, 2002). Many music teachers experience a profound relationship with music which intersects with their desire to share their passion for music with others. Often, at the same time, many music students have the opportunity to engage in some coaching, mentoring or teaching episodes. The “music” and “teaching” experiences seem to become interwoven as a student of music becomes a young adult and an initial identity as a music teacher begins to emerge.

Experiences during the university years, both positive and negative, also play a crucial role in the evolving identity of emerging teachers where initial identities are subject to change and reconstruction. The 4 teachers in this study demonstrated each of these areas of growth. Once a teaching position has been secured and newly graduated teachers have their own students, further tweaking of identity can occur, sometimes in subtle ways and other times more profoundly over the course or life cycle of a career. Their positive experiences were strong enough to overcome the negative and pursue their vision of what music education can and should be.

This study was conducted in order to learn more about identity formation and reformation of elementary music teachers. While a growing number of studies dealing with initial identity formation of undergraduate music education students and pre-service teachers have been published, it is challenging to locate research looking at music teachers over the course of their careers. Rarer still is research that focuses on elementary music teachers at various stages of their careers. This is my initial attempt to address this situation and encourage others to pursue further research. The findings confirmed for me that reflective practice at all stages of a teacher’s career is critical for
growth. In undergraduate and pre-service programs, students should be encouraged to consider the role music and teaching played in their early lives at home, school and in the community so they can begin to understand the kind of teacher they might become. As emerging teachers graduate and begin teaching, school boards are encouraged to facilitate meaningful mentorship opportunities for these new teachers, to allow for the further shaping of a teaching identity. Reflective practice opportunities for all teachers as they progress through their career will aid in the continuing reformation of identity.

It has become clear to me that undergraduate university programs would benefit from being structured to provide students with the opportunity to experience what music education is like in a variety of settings, such as elementary, secondary, band, strings and choral. Many students’ understanding of music education is based on their own personal experiences. By making them aware of other possibilities, and providing them with an opportunity to experiment and explore within a variety of settings, they will be able to make informed decisions about their future teaching goals. It is hoped that the findings of this research will not only inform undergraduate and pre-service university programs and school boards, but also contribute to the discussion on lifelong learning and informing teachers. The following suggestions are shared to assist teachers along this journey of self discovery.

**Implications for Teacher Education Practice**

Teachers who are given the opportunity to reflect on who they are, where they have come from as well as where they are going, throughout their lives are better able to continue to evolve as teachers. While undergraduate and pre-service programs have
begun to do this, practicing teachers have little opportunity to continue this ongoing reflection throughout the cycle of their careers. These participants found involvement in this study professionally rewarding and they noted that they learned a great deal about themselves as teachers. As educational theorist Lee Shulman (1986) advocates developing a "lore" of teaching. Projects like this one that tap what he describes as "the wisdom," inform the ongoing development of the field of music education.

Identity directly impacts teaching practice, teacher development, and teacher satisfaction and happiness, and this is echoed by the work of many others, including Csikszentmihalyi (1992), who notes "It is not the skills we actually have that determine how we feel, but the ones we think we have" (p. 75). It would seem that when music teachers possess a positive image of themselves as teachers they are motivated to evolve as educators. If they do not possess such an image, their development as a teacher can be halted. This may lead to music teachers in crisis and has broad implications for music teacher retention, music teacher satisfaction and pre-service and in-service teacher education.

As a result of my discussions with and observations of my participants and considering my own stories of teaching music, some implications for those involved in music education in elementary schools have emerged. These apply to both university undergraduate and pre-service programs and school boards.

**Undergraduate and Pre-service University Programs**

1. Often, one's identity as a music teacher begins to be constructed through early experiences with music and teaching, through the influences of family,
school and/or community and reflecting on the experiences they have had watching music teachers from their perspective as a student. It is important that instructors of undergraduate and pre-service students invite students to share their personal stories and reflect upon how these early experiences impact on their emerging identity as an elementary music teacher. Guided discussion, encouraging the students to share their growing understanding of their identity should continue throughout the university experience.

2. University students would benefit from having the opportunity to observe many master teachers working with students and providing a variety of approaches to teaching. The focus then shifts away from “skill and drill” with a unitary focus on performance and competition to experiencing music in a variety of ways. It is important to stress that there are a wide variety of models of a successful music teacher and that individuality is to be encouraged.

3. The university years are and should be a time of growth, change, experimentation for students and the opportunity to explore different kinds of teaching should be encouraged. Often, we ask students to self identify as an elementary or secondary band, strings, or choral teacher early on in their university careers when many of them have never experienced what this is like from the perspective of a teacher. They are not sure what or who they want to be and even if they have a vision of what teaching is like, the reality is often not congruent with the vision they have carried in their minds since their days as a student. Because the secondary school music experience is the most recent and content-specific for 1st-year university students, this is the
experience they tend to gravitate toward. For many other students, the secondary school experience was their only consistent experience in music education. Many students need to be reintroduced or introduced for the first time to the elementary music education experience. As such, they have the opportunity to actively participate in a wide variety of music classrooms and to discuss their thoughts and questions with the teacher involved and their course instructor.

4. The idea of the “perfect” teaching position is open to reflection and change during the university years. Even though students may select a certain program in their undergraduate and Bachelor of Education degrees, instructors of pre-service cannot assume that the students know with absolute certainty that this is what they want to do. In fact, it is often through sometimes serendipitous experiences in practicum that a pre-service student finds the teaching situation where they are truly comfortable. By providing a range of teaching opportunities in the field, and talking with the students about their experiences, instructors of pre-service can assist them in finding their teaching “home.”

5. Many students apply to Bachelor of Education programs strictly on the basis of what they feel their best chance of being accepted is, as a great focus still exists on undergraduate marks. Some go through a year’s worth of academic courses and practice teaching experiences in areas in which they never intend to teach. How do these teacher candidates then learn to teach? Different ways of looking at admission requirements, course offerings and
flexible practicum placements will assist students in finding and experiencing their area of interest.

6. While many newly graduated teachers enter their own classroom for the first time confident that they know all there is to know about teaching, they quickly learn that this is not the case. For some, this realization comes as a crushing blow and they lose all confidence in their own teaching ability. As such, it is critical that instructors of pre-service students constantly reinforce the reality that learning to teach is a journey, one that will happily engage us for the duration of our entire careers.

**School Boards**

1. At the government and school board levels, it would be valuable to establish a meaningful mentoring program. Teachers in their first 5 years of teaching are still learning to teach. Some have little experience in the area in which they secure a job and they must be supported in their school and in their school district. This support could include a formal mentorship arrangement, of the new teachers’ choice, and funding to allow the partners’ time to observe each another teach. Time could also be set aside for discussion and questions. New teachers should also have access and funding for board and other professional development opportunities. The New Teacher Induction Program established by the Ontario Ministry of Education is a good start. Although it is expensive and difficult to coordinate, learning to teach from someone you
respect and someone who will provide encouragement and guidance is an investment that could make all the difference in a career.

2. No model of a “typical” elementary music program exists in elementary schools in Ontario. Elementary music programs are not consistent across schools in one area, let alone across school boards or across the province of Ontario. What a music program “looks” like often seems to be at the discretion of the principal of each school. Some administrators seem to view music education as a “frill,” as music programs, music teachers and teaching space are cut totally or continually face the danger of being cut. Consistency is key for Ontario’s elementary students and the dedicated teachers who work with them.

3. Every elementary music educator needs a dedicated teaching space, access to materials and scheduling that provides adequate contact time.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study has only begun to investigate the formation and reformation of identity of elementary school music teachers. It is hoped that the following suggestions for future research will guide my future research and also encourage others to continue and expand upon this initial discussion.

1. A larger study including male elementary music teachers to compare experiences.
2. A similar study with secondary school music teachers to compare experiences.

3. A narrative study to describe the reflective processes that undergraduate and graduate students use to make sense of their experiences to aid teacher educators in assisting teacher candidates to unpack their developing identity.

4. A longitudinal study to follow a music teacher (or selected music teachers) for 10 years or more to document the changing patterns an individual teacher’s identity, exploring the life cycle of teachers.
FINALE:
Chapter X: Concluding With Myself

As I reflect on my involvement with this study, I realize that Janice, Annabelle, Rose and Olivia have lived in my head, and heart, for a long time. I am still as intrigued with their stories as I was the first time I heard them. They have become part of who I am as a person and teacher. As I think about the deeper meanings that their stories might hold, I also consider their stories in light of my own personal experience as my identity as a teacher continues to be transformed.

When teaching generalist and specialist pre-service students, I am much more conscious of relating the topics considered in class to the teacher candidates’ personal experience with music and teaching. When appropriate, I share some of the stories of the participants of this study with them to assist in helping the students along their personal reflective journey of teacher identity. Uncovering personal assumptions created by life experience that they might consciously or unconsciously bring to music class will assist them in becoming open to the possibilities of music and music teaching. Once they experience the wonder, absolute engagement, emotion and other intangibles that music can provide, they will be much more capable of sharing this with their own students.

If I step back and look at the overall university experience for students aspiring to be music teachers, I have all kinds of visions for a program that would provide students with the opportunity to experience a wide range of models of music education, in both
elementary and secondary schools. By experiencing a variety of music making opportunities, they can make a more informed choice about their future teaching paths.

The largest area of growth for me in this process has been the emergence of an identity as a researcher. I have known myself as a musician-educator for 26 years and it is only since the beginning of my doctoral journey that I have become aware of existing research in music education and involved in personal research. While I am still at the beginning stages of growth as a researcher, my confidence continues to grow and my skills continue to develop. Even as I bid farewell to Olivia, Rose, Annabelle and Janice, I am already mulling over many different ideas for future investigations. Until we meet again, my friends.
References


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Appendix A: Sample Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear ____________,

I am writing to invite you to participate in my doctoral research project looking at elementary school music teachers and their perception of their personal professional identity. Since you are a reflective practitioner, and someone who is interested in exploring her own teaching, your input would be valuable to this study. You are one of four elementary music teachers invited to participate.

Participation is simple: the research involves 3 interviews, spread over a period of 3 months and my visiting your classroom 3 times over the 3 months to observe as you work with your students. I will keep field notes and a research journal and invite you to consider keeping a professional journal as well. The final paper will be a result of our mutual interpretation of the emerging narrative. I am interested in learning about how elementary music teachers create their personal professional identity and how this impacts on their teaching practice and development as a music teacher.

If you agree to participate in this research, I will contact you to schedule an initial interview at the time and location that is most convenient to you. I anticipate that the interview will take approximately one hour of your time. With your permission, I will tape the interview, to aid in the transcription and analysis process. I will transcribe the interview, analyze the data, and then contact you again for your input in the ongoing interpretation of the results. I will then arrange to visit your classroom and follow up by sharing my field notes and journals with you. The interview/observation process will be repeated twice more, at approximately one-month intervals, with the entire process concluding by July.

I do not foresee any risk to you through your participation in this research. In fact, this process offers the opportunity for you to reflect on your teaching practice. Information about you will be kept confidential. Your anonymity will be protected in any publications or presentations through the use of pseudonyms. The recordings will be used for transcription and analysis purposes only, and will not be used in any presentations or publications. Videotapes, floppy disks, and hard copies of data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and all electronic data will be password protected. Data will be stored for a period of five years and then it will be destroyed. You may withdraw from this study at any time without negative consequences. You may also decline to answer any question at any time.

Your participation in this project, and thus your contribution to research in elementary music education, would be most gratefully appreciated.

I look forward to your reply. You may contact me anytime by telephone, email, or regular mail.

Sincerely,

A. Kim Eyre
PhD. Candidate in Music (Education)
University of Toronto
Appendix B: Sample Participant Consent Form

Dear __________,

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the elementary school music teacher’s personal professional identity and how this impacts on their teaching practice and development as a teacher. I have invited you to participate in this research because you are a reflective teacher and someone who is interested in understanding more about herself as a music teacher. You are one of four elementary school teachers that I have invited to participate.

If you agree to participate in this research, I will interview you about your experiences as an elementary school music teacher. With your permission, the interview will be taped. The interview will take approximately one hour. I will contact you at a later date to go over the data and to arrange a time to observe you teaching. The interview/observation process will be repeated twice more, over a period of 3 months, ending in July. You may withdraw from this study at any time without negative consequences. You may also decline to answer any question at any time.

I do not foresee any risk to you through your participation in this research. In fact, the interview process offers a potential benefit: the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practice. All information about you will be kept confidential. Your anonymity will be protected in any publications or presentations through the use of pseudonyms. The recordings will be used for transcription and analysis purposes only, and will not be used in any presentations or publications. Videotapes, floppy disks, and hard copies of data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and all electronic data will be password protected. Data will be stored for a period of five years and then it will be destroyed. Only myself, and the supervisor of this research, Dr. Lori-Anne Dolloff, will have access to the data. After the research is complete, I will send you a summary of the results by email or regular mail, if you wish.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact [my thesis advisor], Faculty of Music, The University of Toronto at _________.

_____________________________________________________________________

I have read the above statement and freely consent to participate in this research. I understand that Kim Eyre will provide me with a copy of this signed consent form for my files.

_______________________________  ________________________
Participant’s Signature          Date
Appendix C: Sample Administrator Consent Form

Dear ____________,

As partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the Faculty of Music, The University of Toronto, I am conducting a study focusing on elementary school music teachers. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the elementary school music teacher's personal professional identity and how this impacts on their teaching practice and development as a teacher. I have invited the music teacher at your school, ________________, to participate in this research because she is a reflective teacher and someone who is interested in understanding more about herself as a music educator. She is one of four elementary school teachers invited to participate in this study.

Following her agreement of participation in this research, I will conduct a series of 3 interviews with her about her experiences as an elementary school music teacher. As part of the data collection process, I would also like to observe her teaching on 2 different occasions, between May and June. Please be assured that my focus will be on the teacher and not the students in her class. I will not record the observation using any electronic means, nor will I focus on or name any of the children in the class. My entire interest is on the teacher. I will act as a passive observer, taking notes, but not participating in the lesson in any way.

A summary of the time commitment to this project follows:

May:
1) initial interview of approximately one hour
2) classroom observation

June:
1) second interview (or meeting) of approximately 30 minutes
2) classroom observation

July:
1) third interview (or meeting) of approximately 30 minutes

I do not foresee any risk to either the teacher or her students through her participation in this research. In fact, the interview process offers a potential benefit: the opportunity for her to reflect on her teaching practice. All information will be kept confidential. Her anonymity and the anonymity of the school will be protected in any publications or presentations through the use of pseudonyms. Audiotapes (used only in the interview situations), floppy disks, and hard copies of data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and all electronic data will be password protected. Data will be stored for a period of five years and then it will be destroyed. Only myself, and the supervisor of this research, Dr. Lori-Anne Dolloff, will have access to the data. After the research is complete, I will send each participant-teacher a summary of the results by email or regular mail.

Your consent to my observing in your school is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact [my thesis advisor], Faculty of Music, The University of Toronto at _______________.

Sincerely,

A. Kim Eyre
PhD. Candidate in Music (Education)
The University of Toronto

I have read the above statement and I grant permission for Kim Eyre to observe music classes in my school for the purposes outlined in this letter only. I understand that Kim Eyre will provide me with a copy of this signed consent form for my files.

Principal's Signature ____________________ School Name ____________________ Date ________________

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Appendix D: Sample Interview Questions

Sample interview questions may include:

Do you remember any stories of childhood experiences with music and teaching, through either family, community or school connections?

Why do you think you were drawn to teaching and teaching music in particular?

Were there any experiences that you feel influenced the kind of teacher you are?

When you think about a music teacher from your past that has made an impact on you, what do you remember about that person?

If you were to ask music teachers who made an impact on you and your life about their goals for music education, what do you think they would say?

How would you describe yourself as a music teacher?

How would you say your personality is reflected in who you are as a music teacher?

If you were to picture a “perfect” lesson, what would you see?

If you were to picture a “perfect” choir rehearsal, what would you see?

Was there ever an experience in which your vision as a teacher was transformed?

What would you like your elementary students to leave with at the end of the school year from your classroom?

If we were describing an elementary school music education for your child or the students you teach, what would it look like?

If a former student came to me and talked about their experiences with music in your classroom, what would you hope they would say?

If you had any advice for a beginning elementary school music teacher, now that you are ___ years into your career, what would it be?

What makes a fulfilling career?

What is your definition of a “good” teacher?

How do you know when you are a “good” teacher?

How long does it take for someone to become a “good” teacher?