

**Teaching and travelling in tune: Identity in itinerant band programs**

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## ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry explores teacher professional identity and curriculum making (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) in the experiences of three itinerant band teachers. The narrative experiences of Grace, Cole, and Denise reflect the complexity of teaching in multiple schools and working within a curricular framework that is diverse and multi-faceted. While most classroom teachers work with one group of students in a single school, the travelling nature of itinerancy sets them apart from this standard. Benson (2001) argued that “limited involvement in any one single school site, places her or him in a significantly different position than the regular classroom teacher” (p. 3). Staying in tune with students, parents, and colleagues, while concurrently working in several school settings, can be a challenge for managing relationships, assessment practices, concert obligations, and school events (Roulston, 1998).

An itinerant band program is a collection of stories with individual narratives being interwoven into a patchwork of identities, or narratively speaking, as people’s stories to live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin, Huber, Huber, Murphy, Murray-Orr, Pearce, and Steeves (2006) explained that curriculum making and identity making, acts that shape the stories to live by of teachers and children, are closely aligned. Students are immersed in musicking (Small, 1998) and curriculum making alongside their teacher. As stories are composed in unison, curriculum making represents "teachers' and students' lives together" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). Curriculum, viewed as a course of life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), involves the composition of identities and stories to live by. It is wrapped up with assessment making and identity making, with school stories intersecting with personal experience (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011). Individual identities dance with the collective identity of the group as curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 2012) is brought to life in the ensemble experience. Beyond the study of notes, rhythms, and technique, there is a web of interaction that pervades curriculum as it is embodied in the lives of students and teachers. It encompasses routine happenings in a rehearsal space, personal exchanges during recess breaks, recollections

of events from past experiences, and future plans for the ensemble. It is coloured by the experience of itinerant teachers who weave parallel storylines across a series of learning landscapes.

The complex nature of teaching initiates an ingrained inter-connectedness between personal and professional lives (Hargreaves, Meill, & MacDonald, 2002). Plotlines are blurred, making it difficult to distinguish between the two as they are inextricably linked by experience and emotion (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997). Lack of a single, permanent teaching space calls for deeper exploration into implications for curriculum and teacher identity. Narratively inquiring into stories of itinerant band teachers is one approach that studies the contextual nature of identity. Storytelling represents a mode of knowing (Bruner, 1986). Each story is told from “a particular vantage point in the lived world” (Greene, 1995, p. 74), holding a plurality of experience and interpretation. Stories are closely tied to how teachers conceive themselves in the place of school (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Working on the periphery of collegial connections and the school community imparts physical and emotional tolls on professional identity. These factors contribute to an overall perception about the nature of itinerant teaching (Roulston, 1998).

The shifting framework of itinerancy compounds the variable nature of teacher identity. Gathering artifacts and conversations about the storied existence of three itinerant band teachers, tensions appear over curriculum hierarchy, loss of instructional time and place, and collegial isolation. These are plotlines that exist within these school "borderlands" (Anzaldua, 1987). Contrapuntal lines of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) intersect with one another, some moving in relative harmony, while others create bumping points that influence perceptions of personal practical knowledge. Itinerant band teachers experience temporary shifts in self as they make sense of the fluid and changing world around them.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
CHAPTER ONE – STORIES IN THE KEY OF C: NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS AND CONTEXT.....	1
Narrative Beginnings .....	1
Reflections on Itinerant Teaching: Curriculum, Community, and Collaboration .....	3
Curriculum as Community .....	5
Connection in Curriculum: Collaboration in Music Making .....	7
Collecting Teachers’ Stories: Rationale for Research .....	9
Construction of Teacher Identity: Research Puzzles and Objectives .....	10
Conducting Research: Teacher Professional Identity .....	11
Itinerant Band Programs: Travelling in Tune .....	13
Nature of Itinerancy: Tensionality as Place .....	14
<i>Alla Breve</i> : Cutting Time from Arts Programs .....	16
<i>Tacet</i> : Composing Narratives for Future Stories .....	20
<i>Poco a Poco</i> : Light of Imaginative Possibilities in Itinerant Band Programs .....	21
CHAPTER TWO – CONTRAPUNTAL NARRATIVES: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS .....	24
Why Narrative Inquiry? .....	24
Experience as Story .....	24
<i>Tutti e Solo</i> : Constructing collective and individual identity .....	26
<i>Viva Voce</i> : Living Voice for Collecting Stories .....	28
Counterpoint and Personal Practical Knowledge: Musical Language in Research .....	30
Employing Narrative Inquiry Methods: Fine Tuning the Work .....	32
Research Participants .....	32
Narrative Inquiry Field Text Collection and Analysis .....	32
Ethical Considerations .....	33
Moving Forward: Transitioning to Narrative Accounts .....	35

CHAPTER THREE – GRACE: SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS .....	36
Passion and Personality: Dynamics of an Itinerant Band Teacher .....	40
Building Relationships with Children: Role of Contact Time in Itinerant Programs.....	42
<i>Train Heading West</i> : Multiplicity of Time and Place .....	44
Composing Curriculum alongside Children: Contrapuntal Lines in an Itinerant Program .....	46
Putting it all Together: Establishing Community through Performance .....	48
Unresolved Chords: Tension and Team Building on the Professional Knowledge Landscape .....	52
 CHAPTER FOUR – COLE: REHEARSING THE PARTS .....	 58
Maestro on Wheels: Bridging the Divide between Schools .....	64
<i>Song for Friends</i> : Interaction in the Band Experience .....	67
At the Podium: Building Relationships as an Itinerant Band Teacher .....	70
<i>Don't Throw Your Junk in my Backyard</i> : Sharing a Teaching Space .....	74
Dynamics of a Staff Room: Stories from the Road .....	75
<i>Rubato</i> : Loss of Instructional Time .....	77
 CHAPTER FIVE – DENISE: BRINGING LIFE TO THE SCORE .....	 81
“Progress not Perfection” – Student Ownership of Learning .....	84
Skills Concert: Musicianship and Assessment .....	88
<i>The Fisher who Died in His Bed</i> : Alignment of Curriculum and Connection .....	92
The Eighth School: Establishing a Culture of Community in Band .....	97
Off the Podium and into the Community: Animating the Score .....	99
On the Move: Bumping Points on the Professional Path .....	101
 CHAPTER SIX – CODA: FINAL REFLECTIONS ON ITINERANCY AND IDENTITY .....	 106
Revisiting Teacher Identity: Connections to Itinerancy .....	107
Waves of Dissonance in the School Landscape; Time, Place, and Space .....	108
Living Curriculum: Connections to Future Stories .....	112
Teaching and Travelling in Tune: Narrative Inquiry .....	113
 REFERENCES .....	 116

## CHAPTER ONE

### STORIES IN THE KEY OF C: NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS AND CONTEXT

#### **Narrative Beginnings**

“Who are you subbing for today?” This innocuous question startled me out of my photocopy induced reverie as I worked to prepare the endless array of sheet music for my senior band. As with any itinerant band teacher in September, school start-up meant a flurry of method book distribution, student enrollment confirmation, and concert repertoire selection. This brought with it many trips to the staff work room and subsequent moments of self-doubt. At times I felt submerged under water with the sheer enormity of recruiting and retaining over 300 band students, all of whom were dispersed across three local elementary schools. *Who will stick with their instrument and who won't? What will the program look like this year? How will staff and administration offer support with flexibility in scheduling?* These worries invaded my peace of mind as I struggled to keep up with the demands of being an itinerant educator. Yet today, when I was finally feeling like my classes had found their groove and settling into a comfortable routine, I was reminded that although I felt fully immersed in the curricular landscape of school, the plotline of itinerant band continued to exist outside the dominant school story.

This was the beginning of my second year in this teaching assignment, working exclusively with Grade Six, Seven, and Eight students in the subject of band. Emerson Elementary School acted as my home base because I spent half of the week working within a relatively large band program of 150 students. The rest of my teaching time was split between École Coldstream School and Rusholme School, driving from one to the next over the lunch hour. Time was a precious commodity, with every minute being used to tackle last minute instrument repairs and catch up on daily tasks. Recess breaks emerged as opportunities for extra help with students, as class contact time was a precious commodity. Carving out a place for band in the daily life of students was also important, as it could be several days before I saw them again with an instrument. Conducting several jazz bands and accompanying the school musical developed a sense of shared love of music, and

contributed to my identity as a band teacher. This role of conductor, leader, musician, and teacher existed primarily in the context of our rehearsal space. I took pride in the fact that students were often surprised to learn that I taught in multiple schools, assuming that I was just *their* band teacher.

Branching out into the wider story of school, personal connections with three school secretaries, six administrators, and fifteen homeroom teachers was paramount to establishing a regular rehearsal schedule and year-long concert calendar for our band program. While I came to know this cross-section of each staff fairly well, the same could not be said for colleagues and students in the primary wing of each school. Nevertheless, I was genuinely shocked when the Grade Three teacher at École Coldstream School politely asked if I was filling in for someone for the day. She was someone with whom I had exchanged idle chatter in the copy room before, and who had brought her students to attend a variety of our concerts in the year prior. Hiding my surprise and hurt, I passed off her comment as a joke, and pretended that I hadn't just been knocked off the proverbial pedestal of my own self-importance.

Later as I retreated to the safety of my band room, I wondered how I could have worked in a building three times a week for over a year, and still not achieved more than visitor status in the eyes of some. I was thankful that the bell had already rung, and my classroom was empty and silent from the rhythms of student life. It offered me a moment to be alone with my thoughts to examine who I was in the place of school. Indicative of my low level ranking was the lack of a staff parking space, a convenience reserved for teachers who taught a minimum of half time in the building. Perhaps this was a simple detail, but it was nevertheless a symbol of my place as outsider from the staff community. While I may have worked twice as hard to improve the delivery of our instrumental music program, I felt at a loss as to how to raise the profile of band in the wider school landscape. What could I do to be recognized as a valuable member of the teaching staff? How long would it take for everyone to know not just *what* I was (an itinerant band teacher), but also *who* I was as a person and educator? These questions persisted as a mundane conversation starter (“Who are you subbing for today?”) unearthed deeper tensions of what it means to be a teacher with tenuous ties to space, place, and community.

## Reflections on My Learning Journey: Curriculum, Community, and Collaboration

In deciphering the story of my teacher identity, and uncovering how it has guided me to consider a wider narrative of itinerant band programs, I struggle with the duality of existing as both character and inquirer into my story to live by, a narrative term for identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Examining who I am in the context of work is inextricably intertwined with my personal narrative:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.

(Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

Personal inquiry and self-reflection have at times remained unattended as curriculum and school life shifted and unfolded over time. I am uncertain if this narrative silence is a result of the active rhythms of my teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986) or an unwillingness to confront tension that resides below the surface. The relational aspect (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig & Huber, 2007) of this inquiry demands that I become part of the “metaphoric parade” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). I contemplate what this journey will feel like, travelling alongside those who have shared my experience of music itinerancy. Reflecting upon Lugones’ (1987) description of world travel as the “shift from being one person to being a different person” (p. 11), I must relinquish control over self-perception, “not worrying about competence, not being self-important” (p. 17). This unique vantage point offers the most possibility to “live, tell, retell and relive” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) my story to live by as a person, teacher, and colleague.

Considering how teacher identity is constructed in itinerant band programs, I am intrigued by the influence that personal history has on professional practice. Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997) defined narrative unity as the “threads in people’s lives that help account for the way in which they construct the stories that they live both in their personal lives and in their teaching” (p. 671). One compelling thread that I have pulled from narrative reflection is that of teacher professional identity. Perhaps, more to the heart of the matter: *Who am I as a band teacher? What has led me to wonder about the identity of itinerant band teachers? How*

*has their story been told in the dominant story of school?* I ask these particular questions because they strike at the core of how I relate to my students, colleagues, teaching environment, and subject matter. They hint at isolation from colleagues, joy in student interaction, complexity of perpetual motion, and commitment to sharing a love of music. Revisiting my own narrative beginnings for how they have led me to this point of inquiry, I am curious to explore how events, experiences, and musical engagement in my story to live by will shape an understanding of teacher identity in itinerant band programs.

My earliest memories of school are present in the form of cartoon lunch boxes, annoying pencil grips meant to help me hold a pencil in the correct way (a trait which I never fully mastered), and a love for working ahead in math and phonics workbooks. School was a safe and comfortable place to learn, make friends, and succeed academically. Music entered my life a few years later, inspired by the talents of Mr. C., my grade two teacher who would serenade us on the guitar and piano in between lessons. Impatient to do the same, I began piano lessons and eventually progressed to classics by Bach and Beethoven. *Für Elise* was the first classical song that I learned, playing it endlessly for anyone who would listen. It was the drama, technique, and emotional outlet that I craved, and continued to refine throughout my Bachelor of Music program. Piano recitals and music festivals terrified me, but I faithfully entered every year because I didn't want to fall short of my piano teacher's expectations. I picked up the clarinet in Grade Six, and began to sing and play in my church choir soon after. Although music was a large part of my life, pursuing a university degree in this area never crossed my mind until my senior year in high school. The U of S Music Department presentation instantly appealed to me because I could continue studying piano, and take classes until I followed my chosen path into the College of Law. I had always thought I would follow my mother's footsteps to become a lawyer, not knowing that a keen interest in debate would soon be trumped by a love for teaching. I was convinced law was my future story until my second year of university, when a student teaching experience opened my eyes to a career in teaching band. I realized that sharing a love of music with students was a vocation that I had unconsciously been working towards most of my life. Music was my connection to a meaningful life's work, and so I began my story as a music educator.

## Curriculum as Community

Community is an integral component of this narrative inquiry. It was a community that fostered my love of music and eventual desire to become a teacher. The community included my extended family, teachers, and close-knit group of university friends with whom I spent countless hours as I studied to become a music educator. This notion of community leads me to consider my understanding of identity and how it relates us to those in our immediate landscape. Colleagues, students, and parents are all members of the school community, contributing to a rich tapestry of personal stories and group experiences. I pause for a moment on this communal ideal, however, as I reflect on my experience of feeling isolated from the inner workings of the school community. The foundation of community is support, but that is not always the case when time and interaction are limited between its members. While our band program had a unique identity for its members who played, contributed, and experienced its flourishing dynamism on an everyday basis, it can also appear isolated and adjunct to the daily operations of the school community. At times, this lack of narrative cohesion appeared as episodes of tension in my story to live by, but ultimately also shaped an insular identity for both our band program and its teacher. Spurred on by incidents such as these, in my research, I collected and retold stories about community from itinerant band teachers, opening up educative possibilities within them.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote that “people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in social context” (p. 2). Within a musical context, Morrison (2001) explained that a Band program, and the ensembles within its scope, forge together to create a social unit. Thinking about community in curriculum, memories of a band mentorship project became a meaningful artifact as I explored school stories and experiences as part of my graduate work:

This month long initiative asks senior students in Grade 7 and 8 to pair up with a brand new musician in Grade 6. It enables them to act as leaders and role models for the younger students, and to offer them advice on how to get past the seemingly insurmountable problems of playing a high C or playing above the break. With 150 students in our band program, it is the only way that I can ensure that everyone is receiving one-on-one lessons, even if just for part of the year. (Class journal entry, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

I believe students can assume the role of both learner and teacher as they work together to develop rhythmic precision, pitch accuracy, and aesthetic awareness. The transfer of knowledge from one student to another does more than improve the playing ability of novice musicians. Rather, the true value rests in the dynamic interaction that arises as students co-compose their place in the Band program: leadership skills are honed, principles of musicianship are practiced, and a sense of community and belonging is forged. I find resonance with Morrison's (2001) description of the culture of a school ensemble: "the diversity within our classrooms is created by what students bring from outside. The unity that develops within our classroom is created by experiences shared" (p. 28). Students are immersed in making curriculum that is authentic and in tune with their learning needs. Our community of learners reaches beyond the Band room as their playing "is infectious as you can hear it from practically every corner of the school" (Class Journal Entry, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012). My position shifts to a supportive role throughout the course of this project, guiding senior students how to plan and assess the development of their protégés. At times I am a sounding board for senior students' frustration in working with struggling students, where I remind them that they sounded like that not long ago. The "squeak-squawk-splat" sounds seem to disappear by the completion of our mentorship initiative. Happily, this coincides with our first public performance in December.

Reflecting upon my own school narratives, I see that my professional practice has been rooted in a desire to facilitate a community of learners. This, in turn, shaped the course of my graduate research as I narratively inquired into how teacher identity, curriculum, and community are constructed within itinerant band programs. How does this artifact represent my identity and perception of curriculum making? Unity and belonging remain at the forefront of my understanding of curriculum as a "course of life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). In this manner, curriculum takes into account "teachers' and students' lives together in schools and classrooms" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 392). Beyond the study of notes, rhythms, and instrumental technique, there is a web of interaction that pervades curriculum as it is embodied in the lives of students and teachers. It encompasses routine happenings in a rehearsal space, personal exchanges during recess breaks, recollections of

events from past experiences, and future plans for the ensemble. Curriculum making, viewed as a course of life, involves the composition of identities and stories to live by. While Music is the subject that I teach, community is the curriculum that I seek to shape in the lives of students.

An itinerant band program is a collection of stories to live by, with individual narratives being interwoven into a patchwork of identities. Clandinin et al. (2006) explained that curriculum making and identity making, acts that shape the stories to live by of teachers and children, are closely aligned. Each student, as well as the conductor, retains a distinct identity within the group as a whole, but it is the unification of these collective voices that celebrates curriculum making and identity making. Sociality is embodied in every interaction, moment of assessment, and rehearsal period. What does this mean for assessment making within a communal landscape? My thoughts resonate with the work of Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin (2011) who explained that “curriculum making is interwoven with assessment making as well as with their identity making” (p. 69). Curriculum, identity, and assessment are connected amongst a tangle of relationship in the Band community: teacher with students; students with ensemble mates; mentors with protégés; protégés with mentors; students with program; teacher with program. In this way, the richness of the experience is a curriculum of lives (Clandinin et al., 2006) enlivened by the people that take part in it socially and relationally (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

### **Connection in Curriculum: Collaboration in Music Making**

Unconsciously, my interpretation and subsequent application of curriculum making is closely aligned with Schwab’s (1973) four commonplaces of curriculum: learner, teacher, subject matter, and milieu. In the Band room, curriculum comes to life through a collaborative relationship and engagement in music making. Inquiry into my stories to live by has revealed that *subject matter* (instrumental music) and *milieu* (rehearsal setting) have in part shaped my understanding of curriculum; however, it is the relational aspect of curriculum as *connection* that emerges as a dominant thread in my narrative of school. Collaboration underscores my understanding of what Band is, and the curriculum making opportunities that reside within it:

Students take math. Students enroll in science class. But students become members of the choir; they join the band; they are in the orchestra. Students take ownership of the ensemble experience in a unique and personal way. Participation becomes an aspect of students' self-identity. (Morrison, 2001, p. 25)

Formal curriculum in this setting includes musical elements such as rhythm, pitch, melody, and notation. It differs from Aoki's (2012) description of curriculum-as-lived, which adds a contextual element to planned curriculum. It is infused with integral understandings of authentic collaboration, children as learners, and community within the school. Collaboration with staff, students, and parents is pivotal in the life of an itinerant band teacher.

While reflecting on collaboration in music making, I wonder how my personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) as an itinerant music educator has shaped my story to live by, and how it will influence curriculum possibilities in the future. Personal practical knowledge is a term that encapsulates knowledge found in the "teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). My role as teacher has significantly evolved from my first position in three elementary schools in northern Saskatchewan. While previously favouring a highly structured environment with direct instruction, I am more attuned to creating curriculum possibilities that build collaboration, featuring students as teachers and leaders within our musical community. Collaboration becomes fundamental as the shifting foundation of an itinerant band program cannot rely upon place for stability. I turn to the research of Connelly et al. (1997) for deeper awareness of how environment and physical space shape a teacher's personal practical knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) defined place as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). I recognize place as a bumping point as "it is assumed that teachers spend their time in classrooms" (Connelly et al., 1997, p. 673). This does not mirror my experience as a band teacher, particularly in curriculum making moments that take place outside of class time: "My job during these informal curriculum moments is to simply listen to impromptu solos, give assistance when needed, and supervise the percussion section from becoming a truly riotous explosion of sound" (Class Journal Entry, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012). Spilling out into

hallways that become impromptu rehearsal halls, collaboration and curriculum happened outside the constructs of classroom walls and school bell schedules.

Early morning practice, recess duets, lunch hour jam sessions, and afterschool rehearsals are the milieu in which students develop their connection with Band as a subject, and live curriculum as connection. “The Band Room can be a place of music-making, joy, hard work, and, at times, a cacophony of sound” (Class Journal Entry, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012). I consider these moments and I am reminded of Aoki’s (2012) description of place: “the teacher’s dwelling place as a sanctified clearing where the teacher and students gather – somewhat like the place before the hearth at home – an extraordinarily unique and precious place, a hopeful place, a trustful place, a careful place” (p. 43). I endeavour to create such an environment for students to learn together, play together, and share their musical talents. The Band ensemble creates its own culture and fosters relationship amongst its members. It is relational as both teacher and student are immersed in the experience of turning notes into sound, interpreting musical sentences into phrases, and improving group dynamics such as balance and blend. It is responsive, directed from a child’s point of view, and structured with multiple composers of curriculum. Each student joins the musical family when they choose to play an instrument, participate in rehearsals, and take part in the rituals of band.

### **Collecting Teachers’ Stories: Rationale for Research**

Throughout this work I have focused on relationship as cultivated between a travelling teacher and students, and narratively inquired into the ways that teacher identity is shaped in itinerant band programs. After a decade of developing personal practical knowledge as an elementary band and music teacher in Saskatchewan, I am compelled to understand the wider story of itinerancy. As Crites (1971) explained, “stories are like dwelling places. People live in them” (p. 295). While narrative threads of identity, place, and community may appear in itinerant band programs, it is the individual experience of each teacher who lives that story that is the focus of this research. I believe that personal narrative accounts will add depth of feeling and broaden the understanding of what it means to be an itinerant band teacher. It is their lived experience that will uncover tensions as they construct curriculum opportunities and reveal inspiration for their continued work with children

in multiple classroom settings. Collecting and retelling teachers' stories calls for attentiveness to what identity looks like, feels like, and sounds like in multi-school instrumental programs.

Itinerant band teaching is a curriculum model that has been used for many years in both urban and rural instrumental music programs (Roulston, 1998). These traveling or roving music teachers (Fowler et al., 1985) experience a unique perspective of schooling. As music specialists, this involves instructional rotation and a flexibility to accept different buildings as schools, classrooms as learning spaces, and students as musicians. The shifting identity of these "circuit-riding teachers" (Shoemaker, 1970, p. 57) is underscored by McCarthy's (2007) contention that "music fills a space that is at once secure and fragile, robust and precarious, central and marginalized, like the patterns of the *arabesque* that come and go, appear and reappear" (p. 8-9). The multiple identities of an itinerant music teacher are shaped by a variety of spaces, and an integral acceptance of curriculum as a course of lives. It may also involve teaching other subjects other than band. As the landscape of schooling in Saskatchewan is changed by increased enrollment and burgeoning class sizes, the likelihood that band is taught in a designated classroom space is becoming less common. Band is increasingly being taught out of classroom places, with boot rooms, libraries, and gymnasiums filling in as rehearsal spaces. As place becomes central to their work, stories of itinerant teachers may collide with the dominant narrative of school, resulting in tensionality (Aoki, 2012) or bumping places (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2003; Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Murray Orr, 2009).

### **Construction of Teacher Identity: Research Questions and Objectives**

Fluid, variable, and kaleidoscopic: such is the notion of identity in the context of school. Clandinin et al. (2006) portrayed teacher identity as "a unique embodiment of his/her stories to live by – stories shaped by the landscapes past and present in which s/he lives and works" (p. 112). A narrative framework using the narrative commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) will be used to examine identity of itinerant band teachers through their school stories:

Each participant in the landscape, in the parade, has a particular place and a particular set of stories being lived out at any particular time. Our influence in the landscape, in the parade, is uncertain. We

cannot easily anticipate how our presence, our innovations, our stories, will influence other stories. The parade proceeds whether we wish it to or not.

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 161)

Attending to these stories raise the following research puzzles: *How is teacher identity constructed in itinerant band programs? What tensions emerge as music educators negotiate the landscape of multiple schools? How is curriculum scaffolded by the band community in multiple schools? How are possibilities for curriculum making understood within the framework of itinerancy?*

### **Conducting Research: Teacher Professional Identity**

Teacher identity is a starting point for this research. Its shifting nature makes it difficult to capture its essence in a single definition, as it is laden with nuance and dynamism (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Research indicates the importance of teacher professional identity and how it relates to teacher development (Knowles, 1992; Bulloch, 1997; Freese, 2006; Hoban, 2007). Sachs (2005) placed identity at the core of understanding the profession:

It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society. Importantly, teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience. (p. 15)

Understanding how teacher professional identity is shaped (Flores & Day, 2006) provides a “resource that people use to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others, and to the world at large” (MacLure, 1993, p. 311). Teacher professional identity can also be explained narratively (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Sfard & Prusak, 2005), as their stories to live by offer insight into teacher personal practical knowledge. The complex nature of teaching initiates an ingrained inter-connectedness between personal and professional lives (Hargreaves, Meill, & MacDonald, 2002). Plotlines are blurred, making it difficult to distinguish between the two as they are inextricably linked by experience and emotion (Connelly et al., 1997).

Inquiring into stories of itinerant band teachers is one approach that studies the contextual nature of identity. Relationships surface as influential landmarks on the storied landscape of school (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995) as teachers engage with students, colleagues, parents, and the subject matter itself. Within these narratives, reflexivity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) asks the researcher to self-reflect on the construction of meaning (Kovach, 2009, p. 32). Thus, we are able to “live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relive the changed stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 12). Storytelling represents a mode of knowing (Bruner, 1986). Each story is told from “a particular vantage point in the lived world” (Greene, 1995, p. 74), holding a plurality of experience and interpretation. Stories are closely tied to how teachers conceive themselves in the place of school (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Focusing on music teacher narratives, Beynon (2012) explained that identity construction is in an ongoing and reflective process. O’Neill (2012) theorized how narrative study provides direction for future stories: “We use stories to order and structure our lives; they help us make sense of our fragmented and sometimes confusing experiences by arranging them into coherent messages that offer a sense of meaning, unity, and purpose” (p. 178). As a result, focus is placed on personal experience of participants: “The beauty of storytelling is that it allows storytellers to use their voices and tell their own stories on their own terms” (Thomas, 2005, p. 242). In my research, I endeavoured to let the voice of my participants shine through the narrative threads of music itinerancy.

As this inquiry is situated in musical context, it is important to note that music literature has also commented on the relationship between narrative and identity (Finnegan, 1998; Berger & Del Negro, 2004; Bennett, 2000; McCarthy, 2007). These studies encompass a variety of disciplines such as popular music, music history, and ethnomusicology. While some elementary music programs are taught by generalist teachers, band programs are typically facilitated by specialist teachers of instrumental music. Music teachers assume a variety of roles, including conductor, musician, composer, and arranger (Hargreaves et al., 2002). Roberts (1991) conceptualized what this multiplicity could mean for how music teacher identity is shaped:

It is becoming evident that to understand what the teacher of music really is, in other words to understand the person who has constructed an identity as a music teacher, we need to unpack the social world in which the opportunities and obligations to construct these identities occur. (p. 39)

Through a narrative lens, Barrett and Stauffer (2009; 2012) inquired into diverse lives and stories in music education, while Roulston's (1998) research on Australian music education programs connected music teacher identity with itinerancy.

Barrett (2006) extended the role of music teacher beyond the classroom walls and school learning community to also encompass local and professional partnerships:

The realm of teachers' work that lies beyond the school involves a panorama of partners, relationships, and initiatives. Music teachers may take on leadership roles in professional organizations; organize music offerings in the community to promote lifelong learning; integrate community members and arts organizations with school programs; offer their expertise in partnership with higher education to young teachers through field study and student teaching placements; and collaborate with arts groups, artist-in-residence programs, and composers on behalf of the school. (p. 22)

In this quote we see that teaching music has multiple layers of responsibility and relationship. Applying this concept to teaching music in an itinerant program, the intricacy and commitment required to build several instructional programs and foster community connections within each is magnified as the school landscape is widened to include several sites.

### **Itinerant Band Programs: Travelling in Tune**

Itinerant teachers travel between multiple schools or even multiple towns, in their work as professional educators. While most classroom teachers work with one group of students in a single school, the travelling nature of itinerancy sets them apart from this standard. Travel may happen between schools in the middle of the day, or within a rotating schedule of full days at each school. Benson (2001) argued that "limited involvement in any one single school site, places her or him in a significantly different position than the regular classroom teacher" (p. 3). Staying in tune with students, parents, and colleagues, while concurrently working within

several school settings, can be a challenge for managing personal relationships, assessment practices, concert obligations, and school events (Roulston, 1998). This forces me to pay attention to the juxtaposition of joyful music making that happens in the band room with the experience of not having a permanent teaching space. “What is a teacher without a classroom?” (Class Journal Entry, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012) is a question that calls me back to think about the ways that curriculum and identity making unfold in itinerant band programs.

The itinerant teaching model is often reserved for specialist programs such as instrumental education, as cost effectiveness is dictated by instructional funding and student enrollment. Swenson (1995) used the word “variety” to characterize the nature of being an itinerant teacher. As Kluwin, Morris, and Clifford (2004) noted, every day of instruction is filled with a wide array of classes and students of varying ages. In the context of itinerant band programs, this may involve a teaching assignment of elementary school band at several schools concurrently, or a combination of elementary, junior high, and high school ensembles in the case of some rural instrumental music programs. Most school divisions in Saskatchewan begin band instruction as an optional course in Grade Five, Six, or Seven, and continue until the end of Grade Twelve. Some itinerant band programs operate as pull-out models, with groups of students leaving their homeroom class for instrumental instruction. Other itinerant band programs provide non-contact time for classroom teachers; thus, they are released to work on professional planning duties while all of their students participate in music class. As the itinerant band model varies in its delivery across the province, stories will be collected within an ever-changing backdrop. Narratives of experience will reflect the complexity of teaching in several schools and working within a curricular framework that by its very nature is diverse and multi-faceted.

### **Nature of Itinerancy: Tensionality as Place**

Lack of a single, permanent teaching space calls for deeper exploration into implications for curriculum and teacher identity. Itinerancy is an integral theme in this study, with most research framing it in the context of special education programs (Corn & Patterson, 1994; Hass, 1994; Olmstead, 1995). Some work has been done analyzing the efficacy of an itinerant model for early childhood inclusion specialists (Sadler, 2003), teachers working with deaf and hard of hearing students (Brelje, 1992; Luckner & Miller, 1994), or visually impaired

students (Correa-Torres & Johnson, 2004). Within these diverse stories of itinerancy are narrative threads that reflect meaningful work with a wide age range of students (Smith, 1994). The nature of itinerancy often entails the absence of a permanent classroom. Yarger and Luckner (1999) explained that “itinerant teachers regularly are reduced to working in such locations as hallways, gymnasiums, libraries, closets, and lunchrooms” (p. 309). Itinerant teachers may feel isolated while travelling between schools, with geographic distance contributing to professional distance from other staff members (Luckner & Miller, 1993; Seitz, 1994). May (1993) noted that itinerant specialists “are more professionally isolated or ‘invisible’ than classroom teachers because they do not work in a single, stable context or school community where collegial relations, mentoring and the swapping of professional wisdom and tips might develop informally and naturally” (p. 30).

Analyzing these findings in the context of music education, it is important to note that itinerant band teachers work within a different instructional model than special education specialists. Roulston (1998) noted that music teachers often work with larger groups of students as ‘non-contact time’ or preparation time providers. This translates into individualized instructional planning and delivery, without benefit of collaborating with classroom teachers. Stake, Bresler and Mabry (1991) observed itinerant specialist teachers in the arts, “those assigned to two or more schools concurrently, lose time and energy transporting themselves and their materials, lack a familiar home base, and have a difficulty perceiving themselves as *bona fide* members of faculties” (p. 331). The distinction of being the lone music specialist, set apart by subject matter and lack of a stationary teaching space, shapes a professional sense of belonging. Barrett (2006) outlined how narratives of isolation appear in the story of itinerant band:

This phenomenon is often exacerbated by the physical isolation of music rooms from the rest of the school, most often for soundproofing reasons, or by the transient nature of the itinerant music teacher’s assignment. Music teachers are likely to be singletons, or the sole teacher in their discipline, particularly in elementary school settings. Even in middle or high schools, where music teachers are part of a team of band, choir, orchestra, and occasionally secondary general music teachers, opportunities to work together rather than alongside one another may be rare. (p. 23)

Itinerant music educators may feel as though they are working on the periphery of collegial connections, which imparts physical and emotional tolls on professional identity. These factors contribute to an overall perception about the nature of itinerant teaching (Roulston, 1998).

### ***Alla Breve: Cutting Time from Band Programs***

Attending to the wonders of how identity is created in itinerant band programs, I am reminded of Read's (1956) definition of education: "cultivation of modes of expression – it is teaching children and adults how to make sounds, images, movements, tools and utensils . . . The aim of education is therefore the creation of artists – of people efficient in the various modes of expression" (p. 10). Music, dance, drama, and visual art make up the four strands of arts education in Saskatchewan schools, yet they are often the first affected by program cuts and space allotment. While they are required areas of study in provincial curriculum, instructional programs differ widely between schools and school divisions. My understanding of artistic purpose in education is shaped by my story to live by as a music educator. I privilege the arts in my conceptualization of education, admiring its capacity to provide a sensory experience for both artist and audience. I find resonance with the words of Marcuse (1977), who mused that an "encounter with the truth of art happens in the estranging language and images which make perceptible, visible, and audible that which is no longer, or not yet, perceived, said, and heard in everyday life" (p. 72). Looking forward, my understanding of education will inevitably collide with plotlines that do not align with the same educational purpose of the "creation of artists" (Read, 1956).

Recognizing this as a bumping place, further attention is required to address how music education is sidelined from a valued place in curriculum, and its subsequent impact on teacher identity. What impact would this have on the story to live by of someone who is keenly attached to music and finds fulfillment from participating in music making? In such a place, a music educator's story to live by would become that of an outsider from the dominant story of school. Identity is wrapped up in our areas of passion, and cutting time or diminishing value from the arts would also cut into my understanding of self. Despite full engagement in artistic milieux, his/her place on the school landscape would feel unsteady and tenuous if the threat of funding cuts or reduction in instructional time hung over head. While the focus of this research is on teacher identity

construction, I believe that similar damage would be passed on to students who connect their spirit and identity with being a member of the band. Seeing music through the eyes of an institution, and witnessing a systematic devaluing of music education, could discourage students from future involvement in artistic modes of learning.

A recurring thread I have pulled from research into music teacher identity is that lessons from the performing arts are often ignored and classified as frivolous or extraneous to education. What is the “main text” (Donoghue, 1983) of school? Why does it not include the arts? Within a stratification of subjects, music and the arts are placed at the bottom. Donoghue (1983) situated these subjects on the periphery of curriculum, describing it as a “place for those feelings and intuitions which daily life doesn’t have a place for and mostly seems to suppress. . . With the arts, people can make a space for themselves and fill it with the intimations of freedom and presence” (p. 129). I do not know when a hierarchical system developed to sort and stratify the subject areas that we teach. It cannot simply be a matter of money as many music programs operate with limited budgets, working to shape imagination in less than idyllic conditions. Eisner (2005) argued that if we continue to perceive the arts as a luxury, they will be the first on the chopping block to be eliminated and forgotten during funding cuts (p. 102). What impact will this have on future generations as the arts are devalued, music education is silenced by society, and commercialization trumps creativity? Furthermore, I am fearful of what this means for students and teachers who attach their identity and spirit to music education programs in schools.

As my mind draws connections between resource allocation and the arts, I think of the musical notion of cut-time (*alla breve*), which entails rhythmic time values being cut in half. A similar strategy seems to have been applied to the time and value assigned to instrumental music programs in schools. Music education has been placed along the margins of curriculum, receiving little time and recognition for its inherent educational value. Indeed, the mere existence of itinerant band programs points to the fact that instructional time and funding has been divided amongst several schools. Eisner (2005) articulated the notion that schools are a culture that develops the minds of children, shaping their views around curriculum presented to them:

The curriculum of the school performs a variety of important functions. One such function is to convey to the students what we regard as important for them to learn. These values are expressed in what we choose to assess in school, in the amount of time we devote to various subjects, and in the location of the time that is assigned to what we teach . . . By our works we are known. (p. 102)

Within a scientific understanding of curriculum, instrumental music is viewed as an emotive experience rather than an educational one. This belief has created an imbalance and hierarchical relationship between subjects, consequently influencing the allocation of instructional time. I would agree with Eisner's (2005) contention that "for the fine arts, Friday afternoons are very popular" (p. 77). In my experience, classroom teachers are more willing to schedule Band or Music classes on Friday afternoon, while mornings are sacrosanct periods reserved for Math or Language Arts. This does not mean that these same Friday classes will not be cancelled due to field trips, school dances, and important standardized testing sessions. Students notice when certain classes are cancelled at the expense of their artistic learning, teaching them lessons about what we do and do not value (Eisner, 2005).

There seems to be a lack of consensus on "what is valuable and useful and what ought to be taught" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). Are more math classes the answer for improving the institution of education? Will wide-scale assessment be the answer for creating better citizens? Looking at the overall structure and practice of schools, these appear to be the model for curriculum reform. I find little room in this paradigm for Greene's (1995) open spaces of dialectical movement or opportunities that release the imagination. Rather, it aligns more closely with Stevens' (1916/1964) metaphor fashioned for conventionality and confinement of curriculum:

Rationalists, wearing square hats,

Think, in square rooms,

Looking at the floor,

Looking at the ceiling.

They confine themselves

To right-angled triangles. (p. 75)

How can making room for music education in the school timetable oppose such a bleak and one-dimensional view of education? Pushing against Stevens' (1916/1964) notion of square rooms, the rehearsal hall becomes the site of co-composing curriculum amongst teacher and student. Physically, band rooms may be the least desired and last available space in an overcrowded school, but the intellectual work that happens within it can rise above the constraints of space and place. Lessons from the instrumental arts enable us to be fully present and engaged, seeing the world around us with a critical mind. As Eisner (2005) articulated, "the arts teach a different lesson. They celebrate imagination, multiple perspectives, and the importance of personal interpretation" (p. 132). Students learn to question, analyze, discuss, and represent their learning in a variety of musical and artistic ways.

Why then are music and the rest of the arts so misunderstood? I had never considered the distinction between intelligence and talent before reading the work of Eisner (1981; 2005), who argued that too often we assign "the former to verbal and mathematical forms of reasoning and the latter to performance in activities we deem more concrete: playing a musical instrument, dancing, painting" (Eisner, 1981, p. 49). His writing led me to question why *intellect* is often a term reserved for "serious subjects" that imply a rigorous academic curriculum, while *talent* is conversely used to categorize artistic endeavours that are more subjective and less quantifiable. In this dichotomy, intelligence and academic thought are removed from the equation of arts education, leaving only the perception that artistic work is inspired by gifts of innate talent rather than the sharpening of intellect. Speaking on behalf of the cognitive process attached to the arts, Eisner (2005) explained "[o]ne no more plays the violin with one's fingers than one counts with one's toes" (p. 82). I do not believe that it is talent alone that allowed Yo-Yo Ma to masterfully perform Bach's *Cello Suites* or Emily Carr to thoughtfully capture Indigenous culture in the Pacific Northwest on canvas. Intellect and serious study must have played some part in their development as artists. Why then are they lauded as talents rather than intellects? As I sit here listening to Glenn Gould's ground-breaking recording of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, I am invited to enter a world of imagination co-created by Gould and Bach. Their compositional cleverness and ability to convey aesthetic beauty remind me that "abstraction and transformation of one thing into another is a natural

human capacity upon which thought and consciousness itself depend” (Eisner, 2005, p. 61). Listening to such musical genius, I am left with the conclusion that thought cannot be removed from the equation of the arts, but that the arts require intellect as well as talent.

### ***Tacet: Composing Narratives for Future Stories***

A broad overview of subject-specific literature indicates an absence of teacher stories about the nature of itinerancy in instrumental music education, its subsequent impact on teacher-student relationship, and overall implications for musical engagement. A methodological strength of this inquiry is its relative untapped nature as a research subject. While narrative inquiry, teacher identity, music education, and itinerancy are reflected in educational research, the combination of these fields is largely unexamined. This creates many possibilities for better exploring how factors such as itinerancy, personal experience, and school plotlines affect the stories of band teachers. I agree with Crites (1971), who expressed that “these stories are like dwelling places. People live in them” (p. 295). Identity is closely tied to the relationships formed within a band community. Ultimately, I hope this will lead to a better understanding of the nature of itinerant music teaching and how it influences professional identity.

If music is a narrative thread (Clandinin, 2009) that connects these stories, then “meanings inherent in such experiences are entangled not only with the music making itself but also with the human relationships invested in the activity and the dialectic that sustains them” (McCarthy, 2007, p. 5). How will collecting and retelling stories of itinerant music educators shift the dominant story of school and school band programs? Barrett and Stauffer (2009) presented this gradual progression as a “move away from singular grand tales of music, music making, and music teaching and learning and towards consideration of multiple stories, multiple voices, and multiple meanings of music and musicking” (p. 19). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explained, “narrative insights of today are the chronological events of tomorrow” (p. 9). It will shape opportunities for a “restorying of the landscape” (Whelan, Huber, Rose, Davies, & Clandinin, 2001, p. 154) of itinerancy, contributing to a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of teacher identity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

## ***Poco a Poco: Light of Imaginative Possibilities in Itinerant Band Programs***

While inquiring into how identity, community, and curriculum are constructed in itinerant band programs, I am renewed by a sense of collective spirit and understated promise for gathering future stories in music education. I seek to listen and convey personal accounts on how this living voice (*viva voce*) comes to life as relationships are shared in “musicking” (Small, 1998). For a moment I dwell on this term of musicking because it represents a “a ritual by means of which the participants not only learn about, but directly experience, their concepts of how they relate, and how they ought to relate, to other human beings and to the rest of the world” (Small, 1999, p. 9). This description may also be extended to capture the shared experience, emotion, and relationship within a multi-school music program. Rituals imply tradition in a community, and I believe that humans united in musical endeavours establish such a community. Individual members within this group shape identity both personally and collectively, offering “new lenses through which to look out at and interpret the educative acts that keep human beings and their cultures alive” (Greene, 1995, p. 18). Community making is entwined with identity making, influencing our curriculum making as we connect both inside and beyond the experience of itinerant band. Thus, music ensembles are defined by their relationships: musician to musician; musicians to conductor; conductor to musicians; musician to instrument; musicians to audience; audience to musicians; musicians to the piece of music. Each speaks to one another, through introspective viewing, rousing applause, or anecdotal comments about the musical works and its participants. Little by little (*poco a poco*), the layers between these relationships are uncovered to reveal how identity, imagination, and community are constructed.

Relationships built in instrumental music programs have the power to release imagination and judgment to foster wide-awakeness to the world (Greene, 1995). Being encouraged to listen, view, and represent in a critical way is important for all people, but most particularly for youth. With a wider theoretical lens, the arts “help students find their individual capacity to feel and imagine” (Eisner, 2005, p. 135), gaining more empathy for the world around them and an ability to push back against conventionality and conformity. Why is this important? If Walt Disney had always been told to colour in the lines, and re-create rather than generate his

own vision of the world, we would be left without the Magic Kingdom and the dream to wish upon a star. If Martha Graham had never received dance lessons that inspired her to choreograph and conceive a new form of art, modern dance would be forever altered. These innovators used imagination “as the felt possibility of looking beyond the boundary where the backyard ends or the road narrows, diminishing out of sight” (Greene, 1995, p. 26). They were not constrained by “rationalists, wearing square hats” (Stevens, 1916/1964) or square ideals about what art is or should be.

Reaching for open spaces to “surmount the boundaries in which all customary view are confined” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 111), there must be an acknowledgement of how music education is delivered in schools. Perceived as secondary to genuine academic pursuits, cognitive and communicative benefits from instrumental music is minimized and pushed aside. It remains an ongoing battle, however, to demonstrate that music is an integral component of curriculum. In my story to live by as a music educator, I align my thinking with Eisner (2004) who stated “imagination is no mere ornament, nor is art” (p. 11). It is difficult to pierce the shield of standardization and scientific thought as instructional time becomes a precious resource, and education in the arts is marginalized. However, I am motivated by the words of Eisner (2004) who declared “the more we feel the pressure to standardize, the more we need to remind ourselves of what we should not try to standardize” (p. 8). Music education, with all of its imaginative potential and cognitive connections, is one such domain.

If schools are to become “a culture of opportunity” (Eisner, 2005, p. 129), time and attention must be paid to how the story of school is told. The “light of possibility” (Greene, 1995, p. 123) is present in the instrumental arts. As songs are composed, mentorship programs initiated, and repertoire rehearsed, there are multiple plotlines at play: imagination is encouraged, critical thinking is stretched, community is built, and curriculum is co-constructed. Warnock (1978) argued that “there is always *more* to experience and *more in* what we experience than we can predict” (p. 202). As students are moulded into musicians, their teachers become learners by viewing how their pupils envision and represent the world in imaginative ways. Each class and learning group brings with it their own stories to live by and unique sense of collective identity. So much of this experience is tacit and indescribable to anyone other than the participants who share the experience. I

wonder if this is why music advocacy is so difficult to achieve. Neither engagement in nor appreciation for the arts is automatic. It takes time and commitment to engage authentically and intuitively to immersion within it. When this happens, however, potential for newfound pathways and narrative beginnings emerge: “there are always roads not taken, vistas not acknowledged. The search must be ongoing; the end can never be quite known” (Greene, 1995, p. 15). As this is not an endpoint for me, but rather the beginning of my narrative inquiry into the stories of itinerant band teachers, I hear the words of Greene (1995) as a challenge to seek “new encounters in experiences” (p. 149). I have answered her call by listening, collecting, and reflecting upon narratives that speak of teacher identity in instrumental music programs.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONTRAPUNTAL NARRATIVES: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### **Why Narrative Inquiry?**

Attending to the motivation behind my exploratory research, I reflect on Kovach's (2009) query, "why did you do *that* research and why did you do it in *that* way?" (p. 109). I believe the starting point for this research is an innate curiosity of shared experience. As an itinerant band teacher, a detached sense of physical space and "world travelling" (Lugones, 1987) between classrooms and school buildings, had a profound effect on my school story. It affected the relationship I constructed with students, staff, and parents. At times, I felt more of a visitor than educator in the schools where I taught itinerant band. When I entered the world of educational research, I began to wonder if similar plotlines existed between my story to live by and those of fellow colleagues in instrumental music programs. Rooted in my experience as an itinerant band teacher, I am interested "not in prediction and control but in understanding" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 4) ways in which identity is shaped by stories of itinerancy. The methodology for this research is situated in the larger qualitative paradigm that Denzin and Lincoln (1994) formalized: "qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 2) but is specifically a narrative inquiry into the experiences of itinerant band teachers.

#### **Experience as Story**

Embedded in my research puzzle is the language of narrative inquiry, reflecting my belief that "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative inquiry, or the way of understanding experience as story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), is a research method that acknowledges narrative as both methodology and phenomena (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990): "Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as methodology entails a

view of the phenomenon” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). The experiences and stories of teachers in itinerant band programs will be the focus of this research. Within this methodological framework, narratives of teachers will be interwoven to produce an interwoven storied web. McCarthy (2007) illustrated this process with the metaphor of “spinning and weaving as analogous with the acts of making stories and creating narratives which document and interpret them” (p. 4). Inherently, narrative inquiry “allows wondering, tentativeness, and alternate views” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 25) to pervade the metaphoric language of story. The research intent behind this inquiry is not to produce a definitive depiction of itinerant band programs in Saskatchewan; rather, it is to understand more about the nature of the experience of teaching within itinerant band programs, and explore how teacher professional identity is constructed within it.

Rooted in a Deweyan (1934) view of experience, music education becomes an authentic immersion and conscious engagement with subject matter. Reflecting on experiential relationship, I am reminded of the musical term, *con anima*. Meaning “in a spirited manner,” I perceive how the spirit, or identity, of each participant (teacher, student, audience member) is engaged in meaning making. I am moved by the words of Greene (1995), who articulated how such a participatory way of knowing appears through individual experiences with artistic expression:

when students can share in learning the language of dance by moving as dancers move, entering the symbol system of novel writing and story weaving by composing their own narratives out of words, working with glass sounds or drums to find out what it signifies to shape the medium of sound, all these immediate involvements lead to a participant kind of knowing and a participant sort of engagement with art forms themselves. (p. 137)

As this way of knowing deepens, music and the arts can infuse spirit into its participants and jolt us out of a state of slumber, acquiescence, and ignorance (Kierkegaard, 1846). Schutz (1967) described this wide-awakeness as a conscious and active endeavour. I do not believe this revelatory process happens by accident or happenstance; rather, it evolves as careful, complex, and collaborative curriculum making take place. Band rooms are an ideal venue for such transcendental moments.

## ***Tutti e Solo: Constructing Collective and Individual Identity***

Contemplating Dewey's (1927/1954) notion of the conjoint experience, I wondered how performing, creating, and conducting within an instrumental group builds a concept of individual and collective identity. Addressing this research puzzle, I look to my own experience as a clarinet player to unpack the subtle distinction of building identity as an individual (*solo*), within small sections (*solli*), and playing together as a large group (*tutti*). While practicing an instrument is typically a solitary activity, rehearsing a piece of music with an ensemble is not. As a clarinet player, I bring previous knowledge, technique, and musicianship to my playing as one member of a section. As a conductor, I interact with all of the students as their multiple sections, or plotlines, shift back and forth between supporting and leading roles in the music. Perception of the ensemble, and how it in turn shapes personal narrative, reflects how we feel about our own playing, how we connect with the musicians or conductor, and how we feel about the work we do together. As Arendt (1958) described, everyone "sees or hears from a different position" (p. 57). This concept further underscores why I selected narrative inquiry as a methodology for this study into teacher identity in itinerant band programs.

Extending this same relational quality to itinerant band ensembles, we contribute in our own way to the construction of a collective identity. Scales, chorales, concert repertoire, and warm-up routines cultivate collaboration, dynamism, and a shared spirit for both the piece of music and its creators. Puzzle pieces are assembled to produce a unified and communal whole, indicating "the diversity within our classrooms is created by what students bring from outside. The unity that develops within our classroom is created by experiences shared" (Morrison, 2001, p. 28). Eisner (2005) conceptualized this puzzle as he told us "the phrase 'we are able to experience' is a crucial one" (p. 97). The words "we" and "experience" stand out for me within this quote as they underscore the significance of collective identity and feeling in band. Unique stories to live by develop into multiple plotlines of community, participation, and interaction. As Greene (1995) commented, the arts provide opportunities for us to take part in the "dance of life" (p. 72), reflecting a vision of societal connection and community. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) labelled this narrative dimension of social context as sociality.

Relationships influence a musician's story to live by, provoking the question, "who am I in my place in the school?" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 3). A more appropriate question could be, "who am I in this piece of music?" Through experience with instrumental music, I shape my inquiry into personal narrative by asking "how I am constructed in an other's world, how I am constructed in my world, how I construct another in my world, and how I construct another in an other's world" (Huber et al., 2011, p. 136). Exploring identity in the narratives of itinerant band teachers will address these puzzles of internal reflection and external perception.

Thinking about perception and sense of place, I realize how identity of teacher and students develop into an intricate and multifaceted entity that is tied up within relational elements of school. Greene (1995) described how these stories shift and evolve over time into multiple narrative threads:

Neither myself nor my narrative can have, therefore, a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on the way. My identity has to be perceived as multiple, even as I strive towards some coherent notion of what is humane, and decent and just. (p. 1)

This reference to a cultural crossroads makes me wonder if the presence of community and collaboration in music education allow for the drawing in of students who are most in need of such place. Perhaps by extension of its own marginalization within a subject hierarchy, music can be a refuge for students from "la frontera" or the "borderlands" that Anzaldua (1987) identified in our society. I believe that "those once called at risk, once carelessly marginalized" (Greene, 1995, p. 42) have much to gain from participating in experiences that encourage them to respond in experiential and aesthetic ways. If we are to support this widening of community, we must heed Greene's (1995) advice that "we need to be attentive and vigilant if we are to open texts and spaces, if we are to provoke the young to be free" (p. 121). What would this look like in the context of music education? There are possibilities for approaching curriculum making with a wider lens for diversity, to involve students in more opportunity of dialogue and critical analysis. In order to support our most vulnerable students, it may require us to relinquish some power in the art of balancing instructional time and identity, dialogue and diversity, curriculum and culture.

## ***Viva Voce: Living Voice for Collecting Stories***

A point of constancy for this research is a Deweyan (1934; 1938) ontology of experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Approaching narrative inquiry from this perspective, experience is “a changing stream that is characterized by continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39). Shaping my understanding with respect to narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Murphy (2009) argued that such an alignment “highlights the importance of situating the issues and elements of representational forms within the larger frame of the ontological commitments of narrative research” (p. 599). Inquiring into the narratives of music educators involved an authentic immersion and conscious engagement with their stories to live by. Reflecting this experiential relationship, I recall Dewey’s (1934) suggestion that “art has been the means of keeping alive the sense of purposes that outrun evidence and of meanings that transcend indurated habit” (p. 348). The term *viva voce*, Latin for “with living voice,” comes to mind as I contemplate how band programs are infused with dynamics of experience, emotion, and entanglement among its participants. While it may evoke thoughts of academia, I use the term more as a celebration of sharing artistic knowledge through discussion, application, and experience. As my inquiry is positioned within an artistic milieu, my reflection and retelling of these stories should also be told from this perspective. In doing so, I draw attention to resonant threads about composing and narratively understanding identity in itinerant band programs.

The “storied fabric of the school” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 36) acts as a tapestry of telling; woven into narrative inquiry are the “interconnected threads” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 26) that each story lends to create a comprehensive piece. Each contributor to the story (teacher, student, administrator, parent, researcher) tells their tale with a unique voice, history of experience, and background knowledge (Clandinin et al., 2006). In contrast, it is the convergence of relationships and shared living that draw these separate threads into a compelling and unified narrative. Clandinin et al. (2006) argued that “constructing knowledge in this way required an ‘integration of voices,’ a process in which each person’s knowing was interwoven” (p. 30). Moreover, it is the asking of questions, collecting of stories, and reflecting on “lives in motion” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 2) that uncovers the similarity amidst diversity. Translating personal experience, the stories and

narrative accounts of my participants will form the foundation of my research (Polkinghorne, 1988; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Mirroring the collaboration that happens within a band classroom, narrative inquiry acknowledges a place for the experiential knowledge and life of the researcher. As stories of teacher identity in itinerant band programs are explored, I look forward to the sharing of personal experience:

It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

Filtering out my own stories from this research puzzle would be difficult to achieve, and unnecessary as this research will be conducted within the framework of narrative inquiry. Silko (1997) illustrated this relational experience with a reminder that “viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on” (p. 27). As discussed earlier in my narrative beginnings, I inquire alongside my participants (Clandinin, 2006) and take part in the metaphoric parade (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Thus, in recognizing and reflecting upon my own stories of itinerancy, I will frame my research with a better understanding of who I am as a teacher and researcher.

Building upon the work of Dewey (1934; 1938), my inquiry into the identity of teachers as curriculum makers in itinerant band programs references the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality (past-present-future); sociality (personal and social relationship); and place (physical space) (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Plotlines, characters, and place are part of the school landscape, constructing relational environments in which identity and experience shape curriculum decisions. I consider how past experiences shape future stories, how interactions with members of the school community shape teacher identity, and how shifting physical spaces offer a tenuous foundation for itinerant band programs. Employing these commonplaces as boundaries of the three dimensional narrative inquiry space, I will pay attention to how “studies have temporal dimensions

and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 54). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) led me to consider how my path of inquiry may lead to four directions:

*inward and outward, backward and forward.* By inward, we mean the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality – past, present, and future. (p. 50)

This perspective allows me to return to my narratives and explore threads from a position as both character and inquirer. In doing so, I am able “to move back and forth” (Greene, 1995, p. 11) in understanding the construction of teacher identity in itinerant band. I reflected on the nestedness of teacher stories (Clandinin et al., 2006) as I encountered narrative threads in participant stories:

teachers’ stories to live by were nested within stories of school and school stories and that attending to this nestedness was important in trying to understand the meeting of the diverse lives of teachers, children, families, and administrators as their lives met in schools. (p. 13)

Wrapped up within one another are voices and stories of teachers, students, parents, and administrators.

### **Counterpoint and Personal Practical Knowledge: Musical Language in Research**

As a music educator, my personal practical knowledge is firmly rooted in the language of music. It has shaped my story to live by, and continues to influence curriculum possibilities in the future. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) embraced this connection between past, present, and future practice:

Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's 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 one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (p. 25)

In analyzing the composition of school stories, I turn to this vocabulary to bring meaning to narrative inquiry in the context of my own research. Music has shaped my personal practical knowledge as a band teacher, and will

continue to pervade the language of my work. Counterpoint, as defined by the Harvard Dictionary of Music (1966), is “music consisting of two or more lines that sound simultaneously . . . These two elements, distinct and yet inseparable, represent a generating and a controlling force respectively” (p. 208). It is also a framework for understanding that may be applied to the stories to live by that co-exist in schools. Contrapuntal lines (narratives) are at times in competition or conflict with the principal theme (dominant story) as they move in contrary or parallel motion, creating a harmonic imbalance (tension). These motives may be presented in their entirety (continuous storyline) or in fragmentation (interrupted storyline) within the overall work (school landscape). Juxtaposed against the three narrative commonplaces identified by Connelly and Clandinin (2006) – temporality, sociality, and place (p. 479) – a composition (story to live by) is influenced by the following: form, tempo, and duration (temporality); style, interpretation, and character (sociality); and tonality, modulation, and range (place). Contrapuntal narratives experience the greatest sense of harmony when the composer (researcher) applies Greene’s (1995) technique of “seeing big, shifting to see small” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 175). While my research assembled participants’ experiences into one collection of stories about itinerant music teaching, it is equally important that these narratives are preserved and viewed also as individual accounts of what it means to be an itinerant band teacher. The intention is not to create a grand narrative of itinerancy in music education; rather, it is to open spaces for teachers, to ask questions, and allow for ambiguity in its applications.

Just as there are fragmentations within the contrapuntal lines of a Baroque fugue, so too are there harmonic disruptions on the school landscape that make it difficult “to maintain or restore narrative coherence in the face of an ever-threatening, impending chaos at all levels, from the smallest project to the overall ‘coherence of life’” (Carr, 1986, p. 91). As discussed earlier, the threat of cost cutting measures is one that often looms over music programs. Teachers’ personal practical knowledge may bump up with the grand narrative of school, resulting in tensions and doubt over professional identity. Similarly, feelings of isolation and lack of support can disturb the professional knowledge landscape of music teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995). Overt signs that band programs are placed at the bottom of subject hierarchy (allocation of instructional

time and space) are another instance in which the personal practical knowledge of a music educator may be jeopardized. The ability to tell and re-tell these stories may be affected by such fragmentation and dissonance within the various plotlines of itinerancy. As both researcher and participant, I remained open to discussion and conflicting plotlines that cause professional doubt. In doing so, I followed a path of inquiry that is *inward* and *outward, backward* and *forward* (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

### **Employing Narrative Inquiry Methods: Fine Tuning the Work**

**Research participants.** In my experience of “living alongside” (Clandinin et al., 2006) music educators who teach in an itinerant band program, I used narrative inquiry methods to collect teachers’ stories of experience. Working with the assistance of instructional learning consultants in local school divisions, a letter of introduction was issued to invite teachers in itinerant band programs to participate in the study. Explaining the objectives and scope of the work, interested participants contacted me to take part in the research. Three experienced band teachers joined the conversation, generously sharing their narratives of itinerancy with me. The participants were at different stages in their teaching career, representing three different school divisions in and around a western Canadian city. They offered a diverse range of perspectives and experience in their role as itinerant band teachers, offering stories from elementary and high school programs with both an urban and rural voice. I had previous personal and working relationships with the participants, indicative of the close ties shared by music educators in the province. Grace worked in two community schools in the city, teaching elementary band (Grades Six to Eight) and arts education (Kindergarten to Grade Seven). Cole was a band teacher at four urban elementary schools (Grades Six to Eight). Denise worked outside the city in a neighbouring rural school division, teaching band at the elementary (Grades Five to Eight) and high school level (Grades Nine to Twelve).

**Narrative inquiry field text collection and analysis.** Kramp (2004) described story as the basic unit of analysis within narrative inquiry. The field texts of this inquiry include research interviews, field notes, journals, and artifact collection composed in relationship with the participants. I recalled the advice of Kovach (2009) who explained that “for story to surface, there must be trust” (p. 98). Semi-structured interviews were

the first stage of data collection, gathering first impressions of potential narrative threads and establishing a collegial relationship based on trust and respect. These interviews unfolded more as conversations than formal interviews, taking place outside of school hours without the presence of students. The framework of these questions was based in research literature and personal experience in the profession. Subsequent questions were asked to follow narrative threads previously uncovered in our conversations, stemming from stories or the sharing of artifacts from their work. Conversations ranged from 20 minutes to two hours. After each session, I recorded my thoughts in a research journal to gather my own impressions about their narratives, the classroom stories at the heart of it, and potential narrative threads within them.

The second stage of field text collection occurred during three weeks of school observations, spending a total of one week with each participant. Throughout this research gathering period, I made detailed observations about school life and landscape, engaging in authentic conversations and composing field notes alongside recorded work. As this study was influenced by a sense of place and the tension that is created by not being able to claim permanency, the setting for interviews took place in the “space between” (Aoki, 1996), as I travelled with the teachers. Time spent travelling between schools was used to reflect on classroom encounters and the nature of itinerancy. Narratives were composed in the moments before, after, and in between classes as the transient nature of the band program unfolded. In this manner, my narrative inquiry was both *relational* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig & Huber, 2007) as I collected stories from music teachers, and *living* as it occurred in our development of “collaborative stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12). Participants were encouraged to gather artifacts that sparked memories and stories of their experiences as itinerant band teachers. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described this compilation as a memory box, or “collection of items that trigger memories of important times, people, and events” (p. 114). These items consisted of concert programs, band scores, photographs, teacher planners, and other mementos.

**Ethical considerations.** Approaching the ethical framework of my research, I considered how to accurately represent the stories of my participants and honour their contributions for understanding teacher identity in itinerant band programs. I listened to the words of Kovach (2009), who reasoned that “reliable

representation engenders relevancy and is a necessary aspect of giving back to community” (p. 100).

Community in this context is that of travelling teachers, a cross-section of music educators who are often excluded from the dominant story of school. As a band teacher myself, I recognized that I cannot view my participants’ stories without drawing upon my own experience of itinerancy. My researcher’s lens attempted to truth gather rather than anticipate narrative threads to appear. Clandinin (2006) reminded me that research ethics are about “negotiation, respect, mutuality, and openness to multiple voices” (p. 52).

Participants were selected on a voluntary basis, with full consent and disclosure as to the nature of the research. At our initial meeting, I outlined how I would work to safeguard their stories. Pseudonyms for people and places were used to protect confidentiality of those involved. Participants were encouraged to read my notes and transcripts at each step of the process, revisiting their stories and holding back any part that they so chose. Each participant was given a copy of their narrative account to approve before finalizing this document. Institutional research ethics were obtained December 2013 from the Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at the University of Saskatchewan. Research ethics were also approved by the school boards prior to research taking place in January and February 2014.

I considered how emergent design would allow the overall research to unfold based on personal narratives and connecting threads, following “more of an in and out, back and forth, and up and down pathway” (Kovach, 2009, p. 45). Entrenched within my research is an acceptance of multiple ways of knowing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), which contribute to authenticity and resonance in potential findings. The work of Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) contributed greatly to my understanding of how this research invites implications for future conversations: “narrative inquirers embrace the power of the particular for understanding and using findings from research to inform themselves in specific places at specific times” (p. 24). I believe that narrative threads within the stories of itinerant band teachers may also open conversations about the experience of travelling teachers in other specialities in the wider school landscape.

## Moving Forward: Transitioning to Narrative Accounts

The previous chapters discussed personal, theoretical, and methodological justification for this inquiry. It outlined key narrative concepts and relevant research with regards to teacher identity, music education, and itinerancy. Moving forward, I look at the experiences of my three participants and consider who they are in their place at school (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) as itinerant band teachers. Stemming from conversations and notes during school observations, I created interim field notes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that illustrate some of the stories they told. These provided a foundation for the narrative accounts in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, which are written from the perspective of Grace, Cole, and Denise. Clandinin (2013) explained that

[t]he term *narrative account*, or perhaps *narrative accounting*, allows us to give an account, an accounting, a representation of the unfolding of lives of both participants and researchers, at least as they became visible in those times and places where our stories intersected and were shared. (p. 132)

Each narrative begins in the participant's own voice, sharing critical experiences or plotlines in their stories. I am reminded by Clandinin (2006) that "[w]hat is included here is a partial story, as all stories are partial, and it has been both carefully composed and selected" (p. 48). The narrative accounts are not intended to encapsulate the entirety of the participants' professional lives; rather, they are a gateway through which their experiences are examined and considered in a larger theoretical and social context. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) noted:

We are, in narrative inquiry, constructing narratives at several levels. At one level it is the personal narratives and the jointly shared and constructed narratives that are told in the research writing, but narrative researchers are compelled to move beyond the telling of the lived story to tell the research story. (p. 10)

The research story is subsequently told from my perspective as narrative inquirer, teacher, and music educator in relationship with my participants. In this way, the theoretical literature is embedded alongside the experiences of the participants. By staying focused on the ontology of experience, I privileged the lives and experiences of these teachers and put their work in conversation with the theoretical literature rather than making them animate the theory.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GRACE: SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

The familiar strains of *O Canada* and a cheerful set of morning announcements signal the start of the formal school day at Poplar Ridge Community School. For Grace, however, the day began over an hour ago when she hit the ground running after dropping off her two young children at their care provider. She is a blur of energy, enthusiasm, and efficiency, using every spare moment to organize choir songs for the new term, collect visual art materials for lessons later that day, put away tables left out from the week before, and touch base with several teachers regarding students and their forgotten band instruments. A teacher planner sits prominently on her desk, filled with thoughts of rehearsal schedules, art activities, and special events in the school landscape, offering just a hint of the fast paced and diverse nature of Grace's teaching assignment.

The classroom quietly waits to be filled with the sounds of students, their instruments, and the community they create through participation in band. While it is primarily a band and music space, it accommodates many activities so it could just as easily be called a multi-purpose room. Stacked outside the door are several tables used to transform the space from one of music making to one meant for visual art. One corner of the room holds art supplies, a sink for easy clean-up, and cupboards with various brushes and paper. Its adjoining wall is lined with wooden shelves that house elementary percussion instruments, separated into specific bins for tambourines, triangles, and shakers. Resting against another wall is a rack of instrument stands that are used regularly for band periods. Larger percussion equipment is tucked neatly in the far corner, away from little hands that find it intriguing to tap the bass drum, hit the cymbal, or bang the congas. Every element of the room is designed for a specific activity and denotes a purposeful piece of curriculum.

Grace stands welcoming at her door, greeting the Grade Seven and Eight students who have arrived for the morning's first class. Today is a band morning at Poplar Ridge, which means the first two periods will be spent reviewing scales, practicing method book songs, and rehearsing concert tunes. Every Monday and Thursday this particular group of second and third year players come together to create music, leaving behind

their homeroom class and other subject areas to do so. Collectively, they are the Senior Band, but it has been challenging to create a sense of unity, identity, and purpose in this ensemble. Grace has struggled with building self-confidence in their playing ability, and motivating the desire to reinforce their work in school with individual practice at home. Perhaps this is a reflection of their differing grade levels, or the fact that they are pulled from several different classrooms. It may also speak to the larger issue that participating in band has yet to become part of the school culture, still working on the perimeter of curriculum and student life. Most staff members are tremendously supportive of the program. There was some initial tension, however, over the pull-out model with one teacher who perceived preferential treatment in band scheduling and class composition. Grace continues to work at shaping her colleagues' understanding about her role as an itinerant band teacher.

One by one the students trickle in, some simply delayed by classroom announcements and attendance, while others are tardy due to impromptu hallway conversations with friends. As each player enters, Grace makes a point of asking about their weekend and the status of their pretzel fundraising for the upcoming band trip. "What's new, hot, and happening in your life?" is a common question for the students. These brief interactions set a tone of warmth, encouragement, and humour for the next 45 minutes of rehearsal time. An awareness of routine is evident as students immediately begin to assemble their materials: chair, music stand, band instrument, and method book. Only one student has left her instrument at home, bringing the class size to twelve players. Before long the group is ready to play and start the formal curriculum outlined on the white board at the front of the room:

- ❶ Concert Bb Major Scale – *tenuto* ("du"), *accent* ("toh"), *staccato* ("dit")
- ❷ *Accent on Achievement* Book 2 - #30 The Thunderer
- ❸ Sheet Music:
  - ~ *Overlords*
  - ~ *Train Heading West*
  - ~ *African Festival*

Grace brings out her own trumpet to demonstrate the different articulations that they will play in the warm-up exercise. She emphasizes the importance of air speed for playing with good tone, and precision in using the correct syllable to start the note. As the students work on building their repertoire of articulations, Grace asks students to describe how they would play a staccato note. “Is it smooth and connected like this?” she asks, gliding back and forth in a quick waltz step. “Or would I jump from one to the next?” She executes a goofy little hop to illustrate her meaning. The students all agree that the second style is a better fit for the short and detached style of staccato, which they incorporate into the scale a second time. As the rehearsal progresses, the notes on the page come to life with the air, energy, and hard work of the group. Today’s class is productive and fast-paced, quickly moving through the routine of scales and rhythm reminders in the method book.

Before long it is time to dive head first into the new sheet music that will become their concert and music festival repertoire. Months earlier, Grace selected this music to match the instrumentation, personality, and ability level of the performers at both Poplar Ridge and Crestview Community Schools. *Overlords*, *Train Heading West*, and *African Festival* are a blend of fun and programmatic storylines, technical training, and world rhythms. Senior band students from both schools have already played one joint concert in December, and will meet again for music festival and year end performances. Still early in the sight reading stage, Grace tells the group that they’re just getting a taste of what these songs will sound like. “Adding all of the percussion will really make *Overlords* hip and happening.” The remainder of the class is spent breaking down each piece into small and manageable sections, with some students sizzling their rhythm while others air-band along on their instrument. Certain instrumental sections (flute, clarinet, trumpet, bass line) are asked to perform alone or in conjunction with other instruments to hear how the melody and harmony parts are arranged. When it is time to put together the opening, the trumpets are invited to play with more strength and power. “It’s like a whisper now, but you’re the melody here. You need to play it so loud that your cat moves away from you.” They discuss possible meanings for the title, *Overlords*, with Grace playfully asking if this is a song about sad clowns, ballerina girls, or the season of Spring. The students share their ideas about who or what they think this song is

about. “Overlords are rulers,” one said. “They’re the people in charge.” Another student explains that he imagines a battle being fought, with the bass line cast as evil villains.

While the class white board speaks only of formal curriculum found in technical exercises and concert repertoire, children in Grace’s class learn much more about the art of music making and curriculum making that happens in the midst of rehearsal. Time is spent to establish an atmosphere of comfort, sharing and good humour. Children are welcomed by name, and invited to pick up an instrument and take part in the community of music learners. They are encouraged to bring their vivid imagination to study and analyze the lines on the page, and the composer’s intent. Grace shares her love of music and gives her students a model of musicianship, infusing good tone, technique, and tuning into her frequent demonstrations. She weaves her upbeat and cheerful personality into the lesson, while also monitoring how fast or slow the tempo of instruction should be. Concepts are broken down into logical components, with individual pieces of the score being explored before being placed back into the puzzle at large. The room itself has temporarily left behind its identity as a space for painting, acting, and dancing as for now it can only be called the Band Room. Grace’s professional identity has shifted in conjunction with the physical transformation of her teaching space. Its walls hear only music and conversations along the way that help shape final performances for an outside audience.

As rehearsal winds to a close, the next group of musicians pile into the classroom. They are the Beginner Band: eager, uncoordinated with their instrument cases, and motivated in their first year of instrumental instruction. Their class is the last period of band instruction that Grace will teach at Poplar Ridge until Thursday later that week. In the meantime, she will split her attention between her elementary arts education classes and the band students at Crestview Community School. With the Senior Band leaving rehearsal to re-join the rest of their homerooms, Grace wonders if they will remember the progress that they made today or if it will be forgotten in the rush of school life that divides their time together. It has been an up and down ride so far in her first year at these two schools. Depending on the day, small breakthroughs could be dashed by lacklustre attitudes, or suffer from forgotten instruments and a lack of practicing. Other times, like today, could be a completely different story with students showing focus, drive, and a willingness to learn.

Grace wonders why attitude can vary so much from day to day. What can she as their teacher do to prepare them for their upcoming performances and band tour? I know it's not just a matter of playing, she thought, but a matter of instilling the desire to fully commit. Being part of the band is about assuming ownership for your part, and adding it to the rest of the ensemble. How can I help them see that? (Interim research text from field notes, January 2014)

### **Passion and Personality: Dynamics of an Itinerant Band Teacher**

In thinking about Grace's narrative as a "storied life composition" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), different storylines have led up to this moment in her life as an itinerant band teacher. "These stories, these narratives of experience, are both personal – reflecting a person's life history – and social – reflecting the milieu, the context in which teachers live" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 2). Grace began her storyline as a band teacher in part due to the positive relationship she had with her band teachers as a student: "Mr. Randall seemed to love his job. I always wanted to become a teacher because he loved his job. He made me laugh and had a lot of fun with us. As opposed to our classroom teachers – they didn't always seem to have so much fun" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). She shared that it was something that she knew she always wanted to do, working with students to become musicians. Passion for music and connection with students are recurring threads in Grace's story to live by.

After teaching band for five years at a junior high school in a small Western Canadian city, Grace made the move with her young family to join her current school division. The position was noticeably different: teaching in two schools rather than one, spending more time teaching in subjects other than band, and devoting less curricular time to her specialty. Elementary music, dance, drama, and visual art were added to her list of responsibilities, widening the age range of her students to encompass Kindergarten to Grade Eight. Currently in her eighth year of teaching, and first year at Poplar Ridge and Crestview Community Schools, Grace's narrative as a teacher is rooted in the relationship that she co-composes with her students. She instills a similar sense of fun, collaboration, and enjoyment from her experience as a band student and shares it with children in her classrooms.

During my week of observing these interactions and travelling with Grace in her work in an itinerant program, I witnessed her chipper greetings, humorous one-liners, and collaborative ways in which she involved students in curriculum making. Each student was recognized as an individual and as a contributing member to their shared story as an ensemble. It speaks to a passion for teaching and a commitment to giving the students a reason to continue with music making, particularly as their time together may only happen once or twice a week. She revealed that it can be a struggle to maintain momentum in learning, as students are swept back into a school routine that does not involve band and their attention is diverted from their work in the ensemble. Out of sight, out of mind...entering, exiting, and re-entering the school landscape on a weekly basis can take its toll on an itinerant teacher's professional identity. Grace explained how this division of time and attention demands an overall vision for the story of band and a personal commitment to making it work:

It's hard work and if you didn't have passion you wouldn't do it. You'd burn out and then you don't really do your job. There are a lot of things that you have to do, and you have to have time for. If you didn't have passion, you wouldn't make time for it, and you wouldn't do them. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Working with different groups of learners in two community schools, Grace's stories demonstrated distinct differences in the stories that she told about Crestview and Poplar Ridge. Context became as important as content in the curriculum that she co-composed with her students in her role as itinerant teacher:

For me they're not the same at all right now. One group is way more pumped and so it's easier because I kind of feed off of them. The other group is not so pumped at all, so I have to be way more positive, and way more encouraging, and way more, "yeah, you're doing it!" They don't think they can do it yet. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Grace's words sent me back to consider Schwab's (1970) curriculum commonplaces: teacher, subject matter, milieu, and learner. When the milieu and identity of the learners change, how does this influence the identity of the teacher and subject matter? Does each itinerant teacher have a separate storyline for their work in different schools, or are they branches from a larger narrative of itinerancy? Bateson (1995) reminded me that "life is not

made up of separate pieces” (p. 108) so I am more inclined to consider that they are just separate threads in the overall construction of teacher identity. I am uncertain, however, what impact this brings to the learners themselves in itinerant band programs. It seems fairly reasonable that every student in the class would have a different story of being in band, as they might in any subject area. They are individuals after all, pulled from various backgrounds with differing stories to live by, stages of development, and understanding of experience. As this research study focused on the professional identity of itinerant band teachers, I am left with unanswered questions for students who belong to these programs. How is student identity shaped by participation in itinerant band programs? Is it constructed differently than students who have a band teacher based in a single school? Do they feel less connected to their teacher because they do not see each other on a daily basis? What tensions do they experience from their participation in an itinerant band program? All of these wonders are left open at the conclusion of this inquiry, with the potential for framing future graduate work. Perhaps this will add one more piece to the research puzzle of understanding identity in itinerant band programs.

### **Building Relationships with Children: Role of Contact Time in Itinerant Programs**

Re-reading and re-examining Grace’s narrative account at Poplar Ridge Community School, I am drawn to the multiple ways in which relationship is constructed within her program. At our initial conversation, she described her experience of being new to her position, and how that has directed the plotline of building relationships with her students:

I would describe it as changing and definitely growing because I’m new at both my schools so I’m just getting to know them. I don’t have students from two years ago here that I’ve taught and they’re familiar with you. I’m still kind of new, but I still have some kids that walk up to me all the time and hug me. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Band programs unfold over time, often extended over a period of several years as students grow from beginner, intermediate, and senior musicians. At each stage of musicianship, time is spent getting to know students’ stories to live by, their challenges and successes in music making, and opportunities to collaboratively shape

curriculum. Creating connections through curriculum making and personal relationships may take longer when the teacher is only physically in the building several times a week.

Throughout this process, the identity of teacher intermittently shifts from conductor, to musician, to social worker, to disciplinarian, and friend. Being new to these schools and its students, Grace observed that she was in the initial stages of building meaningful and caring relationships. She admitted that it could be difficult to show that she cared when her attention was divided in so many ways, the absence of time leading to problems in student engagement and discipline:

I have a few kids that have shut down at Crestview, and I'm positive that they just don't think that I care. In a way, how can I show you that I care when I hardly see you. I understand both ways, I don't really know what the answer is. They're shutting down and not doing anything, and I feel like I don't have time to deal with this, which basically means I'm telling them that I don't care. In a way I do care, but I don't care, because how can I show them that I do. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

She was uncertain how to repair these relationships, or how to re-engage the small number of students who have interpreted her absence from the school landscape as a lack of caring. Grace explained that while she cares about the students themselves and about the curriculum that she wanted to share with them, she could empathize with their position of seeing her as a temporary character in the story of school. Grace's story of itinerancy has been viewed alternatively as one of disinterest and lack of time. The few students who have storied Grace as a teacher who does not care, have subsequently adopted negative attitudes toward their instrument and participation in band. She remained unsure where to go next in mending these relationships, realizing that they have the potential to spill over into the opinions and behaviours of other students in the class.

This disruption in the teacher-student relationship underscores the fluid and diverse relationships that are formed within an itinerant band program. Relationships rely on time to develop, share or repair connections between teacher and learner, while an itinerant position may not always offer the luxury of contact time. Relationship-building may appear as a bumping point in the narrative of itinerant band teachers. In some cases it can be a smooth path to getting to know students and creating a curriculum of community with them. This

easiness and collaborative rapport was evident in Grace's exchanges with her senior band students at Poplar Ridge, reflecting a positive perception of her teacher identity as someone who is present and cares. Conversely, other storylines may develop that interrupt this path, challenging her storyline as a caring and trustworthy teacher. Uncertainty and self-doubt slowly creep into Grace's teacher professional identity, leaving her at a crossroads of where to go next in shaping curriculum and repairing relationships damaged by itinerancy. I will return to the unresolved thread of time and continuity when I examine sources of tension in Grace's story as an itinerant teacher later in this chapter.

### ***Train Heading West: Multiplicity of Time and Place***

Leaving behind for a moment the unraveled threads of relationship, I want to spend some time exploring how the curriculum that Grace constructed with her students varied as she shifted from one school to the next. Her story of teaching at Poplar Ridge Community School shared some similarity but many differences with her storyline as the band teacher at Crestview Community School. The two buildings were separated by mere blocks, but her experience in them was vastly different. Three mornings a week were spent teaching band at Crestview, amounting to two fifty minute periods with each group and some additional pull-out time. The rest of Grace's teaching schedule was spent at Poplar Ridge, working in a variety of ways with students from Kindergarten to Grade Eight. She taught visual art, dance, drama, and music to these students, some of whom were also members in the band. In her own words, Grace described how instructional time played out differently at Crestview than at Poplar Ridge:

When I go in there I feel like it's go, go, go to get the music done, and you don't have time to chat and chat and chat. Also, something cool might have happened at your other school, but it's not really what you talk about there. And yet some things have happened at Crestview and I didn't really know about it. Like when the Roughriders came, they were all talking about the Roughriders coming and I wasn't there for that. So I missed out on that. We have to have a context. The school is really good most of the time when they have stuff they don't schedule it during a band time which you appreciate, but at the same time then you miss it and we don't get to share it together. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

As her time spent with students at Crestview was more condensed than at Poplar Ridge, Grace found that her time there was primarily focused on developing curriculum and building musical skills. Opportunities to discuss or share in school events were limited due to lack of time; Grace experienced feelings of pressure to get everything accomplished in the two weekly rehearsals. While Grace appreciated that her colleagues and administrators at Crestview made a conscious effort to schedule special events outside of her band time, she also understood that she was not able to partake in all aspects of school life. It perpetuated the belief that her identity as a band teacher remained on the edge of the communal landscape at Crestview. Consequently, the curriculum that Grace shared with her students here was different than the curriculum she constructed with her students at Poplar Ridge. She felt that she had more time to build relationships with students outside of band at Poplar Ridge because she interacted with them in other settings such as arts education and recess supervision. Whereas, Grace believed that because she worked in two schools, a lack of time at Crestview meant that she had to focus on developing musical skills and thus, she created a dynamic and fast-paced learning environment.

The multiple plotlines of curriculum in Grace's narrative as an itinerant band teacher also find resonance in the music that she conducted in the classroom. *Train Heading West (and other outdoor scenes)* by Timothy Broege was one piece that her Senior Band will perform this term. It is an exceptional example of programmatic music, inviting the composer to tell a story that directly relates to the musical elements in the piece. It is broken up into three movements (Prairie Ritual; Rain on the Mountain; Train Heading West), each with its own unique style and character. At times, the journey west is smooth and joyous, while other times it is punctuated by moments of conflict and isolation. Various characters appear on the prairie landscape, with a sense of restlessness and constant activity in the foreground. The piece ends with the sound of a train whistle trailing off into the distance, moving westward into new and undiscovered lands. Grace's story to live by could also be described in these same terms. Her professional identity has been segmented into three recognizable sections: Band Teacher at Crestview Community School; Band and Arts Education Teacher at Poplar Ridge Community School; and Conductor for the Beginner and Senior Bands at both schools. Each role demanded an individualized approach to developing relationships and curriculum alongside her students. At times focused on

building that connection, she also felt pressure to push on to learn the next piece of the musical puzzle. Time was scarce and fleeting; perpetual motion is an underlying current as Grace transitions from one learning landscape to the next. The future was unknown but bright, with Grace moving forward in her journey of developing relationships and curriculum alongside students.

### **Composing Curriculum alongside Children: Contrapuntal Lines in an Itinerant Program**

Grace's story to live by allows us to see how relationships influence the identity of an itinerant band teacher. Clandinin (2006) further explored how relationships contribute to the overall curriculum making that goes on within the classroom and inside the lives of children and teachers:

From within these relationships, we began to understand how curriculum could be seen as a curriculum of lives, teachers' lives and children's lives. Thinking in this way, of course, made the composition of life identities, what we understand narratively as stories to live by, central in the process of curriculum making. (p. 49-50)

I recognize that the story to live by of an itinerant band teacher is lived alongside the lives of their students. Curriculum making is composed in conjunction with one another, inside and outside of classroom spaces. Teachers' identities are shaped by how they are storied by their students, and children see themselves as learners in relation to their teacher. They too can shift and travel in learning alongside their teacher, influenced by the shifting rhythms of instruction and identity in the itinerant program. How an itinerant teacher understands and constructs their identity can impact how individual students construct their own stories to live by based on their band experience. It is the interaction and involvement that takes place within these transitory yet powerful experiences that constitute opportunities for life writing for both teacher and student.

Connections made during these moments of curriculum making are shaped by the time and effort that each individual (teacher or student) offers. Grace reflected on her experience of curriculum making within the confines of instructional time while teaching in an itinerant band program:

We would know each other better if we saw each other twice as much, for sure. You'd get to know them quicker, and you'd be more a part of their everyday not just two mornings a week, which is what I teach them. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

While time is often dictated by an itinerant teacher's schedule, my research also encountered alternate opportunities for curriculum making alongside students. Extra-curricular activities are a phenomenon that can be quite common in the lives of many itinerant band teachers. Conducting choirs, leading jazz bands, running provincial honour groups, supervising student-initiated ensembles, or assisting with school musical productions are just some of these special projects. They enable some teachers to connect with their students who they would see on a limited basis otherwise. Grace explained her perception of why these curricular moments outside of the bell schedule are so important:

I think that it shows that you care and you get to see the kids in a different light. You realize something else about them. You sometimes get to see their parents when they pick them up. I think it's a great thing. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Her positive feelings toward extra-curricular activities revealed an understanding the curriculum does not always take place within the classroom, or within school hours.

Caring is a notion that appeared throughout Grace's story to live by as an itinerant band teacher. She saw that her band teachers cared for her while she played in school ensembles, and eventually followed their path as a music educator. She endeavoured to show her students that she cared with her teaching style and commitment to working with students beyond curricular schedules. She was concerned when some students perceived her itinerancy as a lack of caring because she was not present enough to show that she did care. Noddings (1995) expounded on the importance of care within the curriculum, calling for it to be placed at the heart of our work with students. As a researcher and a fellow teacher, I think that the idea of caring is integral to teacher identity. It is embedded in the work that we do with our students, for our students, and by ourselves when we reflect on our role as professionals.

Itinerant band teachers show that they care in a variety of ways, not exclusively in their involvement in extra-curricular projects. My conversations with Grace reminded me that not all itinerant band teachers seek these experiences. They are called extra-curricular for a reason because they are additional to the expected duties of a teacher. Travelling between schools can take a physical and emotional toll, with recess or lunch breaks offering moments for itinerant teachers to reflect, connect with colleagues, or prepare for the rest of the teaching day:

It's like a culture. Lots of teachers do not want the kids in their room during recess, and they do not want kids for extra time. Whereas I find that when kids are there, you develop a relationship when they're fooling around on the piano. You can say, "Why don't you pull out your clarinet so we can work on this part." It's almost like you have to start that culture in Grade Six. You can't start it later on down the road. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Hearing Grace's sentiments about value she found in working with students outside of class caused me to remember earlier accounts of band tutoring ("squeak, squawk, splat") and jam sessions in my own narrative as an itinerant band teacher. These curriculum-making experiences took place in the in-between moments of the school day. Grace reminded me that these encounters are not positive for all itinerant teachers, perhaps contributing to feelings of tension or a desire for silence and break from the rigours of teaching band. An itinerant position offers little in the way of time to leave the classroom in favour of the staff room to build collegial ties. Our discussion led me to contemplate whether I spend too much time in my own classroom, choosing contact time with students in favour of being part of the staff community. I imagine this peril is one that other itinerant teachers have faced as well, balancing time between students and developing relationships with professional peers.

### **Putting it all Together: Establishing Community through Performance**

Reflecting on community within the storied lives of band teachers, I next consider how curriculum shaped within itinerant programs may appear on the wider school landscape. Stories of itinerant band are at times isolated to individual rehearsal spaces with limited presence outside those doors. Perhaps magnified by

the multiple places in which itinerant programs can unfold, this isolation may reflect certain notes in the identity of a band teacher. A commitment to creating curriculum before, after, and during school hours can sometimes result in a separation from the rest of the school community. It can also be attributed to how music programs have been storied in the grand narrative of school, ornamental and insignificant in the hierarchy of curriculum (Eisner, 2004). I see in my own teacher narrative both occasions for itinerant band stories to be muted by self-insulation and disregard.

One notable exception to these silenced stories, breaking open curriculum in band to the larger school community, can be found in the school concerts and performances scattered throughout the year. These school-wide events emerge as opportunities for authentic sharing and celebration of music curriculum in the band program. Exploring connections between curriculum and community, I revisit how public performances and modelling of musicianship appear in Grace's school stories. Breaking up the monotony of indoor recesses and frigid January temperatures, classes at Poplar Ridge Community School were invited to spend a warm and interactive morning of music with the local symphonic chamber group. Captivating the attention of the audience, the concert began with symphony musicians entering the gymnasium, playing instruments in the manner of strolling minstrels. The theme for the concert was the elements of music, performing songs on a variety of woodwind, brass, and string instruments. Symphony players gave brief but informative descriptions about their instruments and the songs they played, calling upon student volunteers to help conduct the group. Students were encouraged to ask and answer questions throughout, and some could be seen clapping or conducting along while the rest listened quietly to the performance. Around the room, children were introduced for the first time to classical excerpts such as Brahms' *Hungarian Dances*, Debussy's *Golliwog's Cake Walk*, and Bach's *Brandenburg Concerti*. Love of music and the benefits of practice were represented by the talented musicians in this chamber group. Building on this theme of elements of music, the principal of Poplar Ridge incorporated the element of dynamics into the students' applause, building from soft clapping to roaring applause. She shared with the school that one of her former students was a member of this artistic ensemble,

lending a sense of community and connection for both the students and the players. (Interim research text from field notes, January 2014)

In the days that followed, I observed several ways in which Grace used this concert as a curriculum-making opportunity. She led class discussions with younger students about the instruments of the orchestra, making connections with the instruments that they heard earlier that week. With the older band students at Poplar Ridge, Grace asked them to complete a concert review about their personal highlights and memories of the classical repertoire. Together they recounted the different performance numbers and discussed the elements of music that the musicians spoke about. She challenged them to think about how the symphony members demonstrated performance skills and reflected the benefits of individual practice. In doing so, she gave her students the language of performance, creating curriculum from real life events and using it to inspire her young musicians.

Particularly meaningful in this public concert is that Grace and her band students were in the midst of preparing for their own performance at local and regional musical festivals. It was something that had been in the works since the beginning of the year, with students at both schools participating in fundraising campaigns to raise enough funds for the trip. I asked Grace why these trips were so important to the curriculum and identity making in her itinerant band program. She related it to putting all of the pieces of the puzzle together, establishing a community of learners through performance:

When the students only perform in such a small group, it's great to be able to perform in a large group, and get a critique as a large group. Also, they have that experience of the band trip before they get to high school, which is an incentive to join band when they get to high school. It can be an incentive to take band later on, not to mention team building. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Students gain the experience of performing outside their smaller circle of limited instrumentation. They are able to see potential in developing their individual skills when it is added to the collective effort of the ensemble. As a teacher, Grace explained that she found the most joy in teaching during these performances because they celebrate the growth that the students have made throughout the year:

when you have everything together and you remember back to when they couldn't play a single note of it and it comes together. Sometimes it's amazing what the kids say when they finally put it together with percussion because a lot of the kids do stuff outside of school here. Like they're a trombone player but they meet with me to play percussion during a workshop time. The actual band doesn't even get to hear them. At Poplar Ridge, we have one percussionist, but at Crestview I have it all worked out with five kids. When she [the one percussionist from Poplar Ridge] gets together with them [the rest of the section], she says, "Holy Cow! This is really, really cool." That's the coolest part. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

In these moments of revelation, curriculum making appeared as a collective effort. All of the students and their teacher worked together to achieve a common goal.

Concerts are the most common form of celebrating musical learning in itinerant band programs. They are also evidence of the culminating effort that takes place throughout the school year. Pulling together students from multiple schools to create a combined ensemble was something that Grace scaffolded from the beginning of the year. She introduced the concept of full band rehearsals, when students from both schools come together, with conversations about who they would be playing beside and what to expect from their joint practices:

Before we meet, I give a pre-talk and I tell them about what it's going to be like, and what to expect, and who else is going to be joining us. All of the low brass is pretty much at the other school. So when we get together we're going to have this instead of Mrs. T. playing that part on the piano. I'll say things like, "So and so is really nice, and you're going to like them." I just talk about it like that I guess. . . We get together for one concert, and then we get together for a trip, and then we're going to get together for our final concert. So I feel like by the end of the year, the kids should know each other pretty well. If you continue doing that, then they just become closer. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Team building became part of the curriculum that Grace composed alongside her students. She attended to their concerns about playing alongside players they didn't know, and supported their development toward the creation of a single performing group. Curriculum appeared in subtle rehearsal moments and the culminating

performance dates that reflected their hard work as an ensemble. The framework for curriculum in itinerant band programs was storied as one of shared experience with intersecting storylines of student musicians and their conductor. Grace's story to live by in an itinerant program allowed us to see beyond the typical narrative of a teacher working with students from a single school, shaping curriculum in a single space. It allowed us to imagine in the way of Greene (1995) about "the felt possibility of looking beyond the boundary where the backyard ends or the road narrows, diminishing out of sight" (p. 26).

### **Unresolved Chords: Tension and Team Building on the Professional Knowledge Landscape**

Grace lived her story as an itinerant band teacher on a professional knowledge landscape, a space where personal and professional plotlines intersect (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Crossing boundaries between in- and out-of-classroom places (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999), Grace moved from the private world of rehearsal spaces to the public places of the staff room, hallway, main office, and gymnasium. Travelling across the landscape demanded a shift from professional freedom, found in in-classroom spaces, to the more tenuous and uncertain environment of out-of-classroom places. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) described these public out-of-classroom spaces as "filled with knowledge funneled into the school system for the purpose of altering teachers' and children's lives" (p. 2). Over time, she experienced tensions that remained like unresolved chords in her musical narrative. They are unresolved because they continued to bump against her understanding of itinerant band programs and the curriculum shaped within them.

One such unresolved chord was the way in which Grace's story as an itinerant band teacher bumped against the plotlines of her colleagues. She experienced mixed-reactions from teachers at both schools when she began her itinerant position at Crestview and Poplar Ridge Community Schools:

I took over from a friend at Crestview, so I felt really welcome there right off the bat at the start of the year. They were very excited that they knew the band teacher who was coming, even to some extent some of the kids. . . The staff there has been really great and I feel like I know everyone really well. They knew me before I knew their names and stuff. At Poplar Ridge, I would say it took a little bit longer just because, I honestly don't know why, but it took me longer to develop relationships. I think

maybe my predecessor has something to do with that. I'm doing arts and band, and before there was just a band person and a music person. People were like, "what exactly are you teaching here?" (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Grace began her story at Crestview on a positive note, met with warm and welcoming feelings from the staff community. There was a shared comfort and familiarity as her husband had just taught there in the band program. Out-of-classroom places were more unknown and less inviting at Poplar Ridge. This was the first time that the band teacher there had also taught arts education classes. It was a different plotline than had been previously lived out at the school, creating hesitation in forming collegial ties. Some staff were unsure of how Grace's story as teacher would play out on the school landscape.

Early in September, initial uncertainty in understanding Grace's story to live by developed into a conflicting storyline (Clandinin et al., 2006), which is a story line that cannot be sustained. In our conversations together, she retold an experience in which her professional knowledge as a band teacher was at odds with how band was storied by one particular colleague at Poplar Ridge. As a middle years' teacher, one whose students took part in band classes, she told Grace that the band program received special treatment within the school landscape. Storying band in a privileged persona, she felt that itinerant teachers benefited from preferential scheduling. She positioned their role as one of preferred luxury because they were able to pull out students in small numbers while she worked with full classes of nearly thirty students. Pull-out classes were viewed as a significant disruption to her class routine as a homeroom teacher:

It happened on the first day of school, and so that's a whole different ball game. The irony of it all is that the kids totally know it, and totally pick up on it. A student actually came and didn't have her clarinet, so I asked if she could go up to her room and check for it. Let's not freak out about it yet because I doubt it's stolen, it's probably just misplaced. She said, "No, no. I can't go up there because I'll get in trouble. I can't go look for my instrument." I just thought well that in my mind says it all there. If a kid is too afraid to go up to her room to get her clarinet for band class, that seems a little ridiculous in my mind. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explained that within the private spaces of the classroom, “free from scrutiny, teachers are free to live stories of practice” (p. 2), these spaces are the in-classroom spaces. Grace had previously lived her story in the safety of in-classroom spaces, but these places were now threatened by conflicting stories with other teaching professionals. In addition to the confusion it lent to her teacher identity, this conflicting plotline was one that students recognized and adjusted their behaviour in response. It bothered Grace that a student felt uncomfortable to look for her instrument, the main tool with which she participated in band class, because she was reluctant to disrupt the rhythms of her homeroom teacher. She noted that the attitude of this colleague had come to impact the curriculum that she composed with her students at Poplar Ridge. Grace wondered if the response would have been different if she was a full time staff member.

The tension that Grace spoke of when recounting this story sparked my interest into how other colleagues have responded to the band program. I wondered if other teachers had followed a similar path of dislike for the pull-out model, or if they had adopted a different attitude towards her role as an itinerant band teacher. She told a completely different side of the professional knowledge landscape while describing encouragement and support she had received from the rest of her teaching colleagues:

Six out of seven teachers are exactly like that, talking about music makes you smarter, music makes you better at math, or I played this instrument, or I play that instrument. It totally makes a big difference. One of the teachers at Crestview played in the concert last year, she played her clarinet. In a collegial teaching sort of way, I’d never tell a science teacher that I think what you’re doing is pure garbage. I don’t think you teach it well. I don’t think it’s necessary for you to teach this. It’s not really my place to do things like that. I think it’s a professionalism thing. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Grace felt supported by these teachers who storied band in a positive light for their students. Music was valued for its positive place in their lives and the lives of their students, recognizing the curriculum making that she created within rehearsal spaces. It was significant that one teacher shared her ability as a musician with the school, demonstrating a willingness to play alongside students at a public performance. Her professional knowledge felt accepted within these stories, bolstering her life writing as an itinerant band teacher. She

thought that it was not her place as a colleague to comment on the value of other teachers' work, labelling it as an issue of professionalism. She perceived being part of the professional knowledge landscape as a matter of flexibility and team-work:

If you're accommodating, then chances are they will be accommodating for you too. If you try to be extra nice to them and email them about stuff that is happening, they will do the same. It's all about being flexible and working together. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Moments when this level of professional courtesy and accommodation were not reciprocated became bumping points in Grace's story to live by. They threatened to override positive memories of interacting with teachers in out-of-classroom spaces on the professional knowledge landscape.

Tensions also surfaced within Grace's story as an itinerant band teacher in classroom spaces. She identified discipline and continuity as significant issues in teaching in two schools:

Discipline is one of the biggest challenges of teaching in more than one school. It's hard to follow through with consequences when you only see them twice a week and you have to leave right away for your next school. I don't know how else to do it. How do you deal with it? (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

As previously discussed in Grace's reflection of being storied as uncaring teacher, we see that itinerancy weighed heavily on her ability to follow through with issues of disconnection and discipline. Seeing students on a limited basis, and being physically absent from school life during the rest of the week, developed into conflicting plotlines within the band room. Grace revealed that she sometimes felt the pull of two schools could prevent her from following through in her relationship with reluctant students. In her previous position as a teacher in one school, she felt she had more time to work alongside teachers and administrators to construct additional supports for children who chose not to participate fully. She experienced tension from a lack of time that prevented students' stories of misbehaviour from being attended to by her, the student, and the school's administration:

Being in a large and busy community school, our administration is often really busy dealing with parents, community meetings, and other school business downtown. You can't just send them down to the office when they are already dealing with something important. It's all about having the time. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

The narrative commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) have been used as a framework to unpack Grace's narrative of attending to professional tensions. Time is a significant piece of this plotline. School administrators were storied as busy people who may be otherwise occupied with challenging issues, leaving them little time to assist with settling classroom disruptions. Grace felt her time to phone parents, create alternate assignments for struggling students, or follow-up with homeroom teachers was compromised by the hectic schedule of travelling between schools. Place materialized as a contributing factor to these unresolved chords of tension because Grace travelled between two schools in her role as itinerant teacher. Her absence on the school landscape was noted by students and sometimes perceived as a lack of caring. Socially, Grace felt isolated to deal with resolving incidents of tension. She storied her administrators as busy people who were often occupied with other school commitments, which added to her feelings of helplessness. She highlighted continuity and following through with consequences as the most challenging aspects of being an itinerant teacher.

As Grace made sense of her varied storylines, she revisited her place in and out of school places. She considered the identity making that happened during social interactions with students and staff. She recounted stories that spoke of curriculum making that she composed alongside students, and disruptions to this learning that occurred when her itinerancy contributed to conflicting stories. Ball and Cohen (1999) reminded us that "teaching occurs in the particulars – particular students interacting with particular teachers over particular ideas in particular circumstances" (p. 10). Grace's stories that illustrate her personal and professional identity "invite us to come to know the world and our place in it. Whether narratives of history or the imagination, stories call us to consider, what we know, how we know, and what and whom we care about" (Witherell & Nodding, 1991, p. 13). Narratively inquiring into Grace's story as an itinerant band teacher

reveals an educative possibility for restorying the school landscape. It leads us to consider how we have shared her feelings of joy, isolation, and uncertainty in and out of classroom places. It inspires us to cast ourselves in the role of busy teacher, supportive professional, and misunderstood student, questioning how we would attend to the same tensions and bumping points. Placing my story to live by alongside Grace's, I ask myself if I have been a teacher too busy to wrap up loose ends from my dealings with students or colleagues, rushing too quickly from one task to the next. I wonder if I have supported my fellow teachers in their work as professionals, or if I was consumed by my own curricular work with students. I believe that in both cases my story to live by would echo the same reverberations as those found within our conversations and my classroom observations. Grace's narrative as an itinerant band teacher opens spaces for future stories of personal practical knowledge, inviting us to travel inward, outward, backward, and forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Her story remains active and ongoing, open to change and reflection. As researcher, I leave her narrative with a question that Grace asked students during my time travelling alongside her: "Should we go slower? Let's go slower."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COLE: REHEARSING THE PARTS

“Where does the time go?” Cole thought to himself. “Before you know it, it will be music festival.” It was already Thursday, and each rehearsal, school day, and rehearsal week seemed to go faster than the next. Although it was the heart of winter, and his bands has recently performed their round of holiday concerts, Cole was already thinking ahead to the next major milestone in the year. The local music festival in April beckoned as an opportunity for his students to share the hard work they had put into their ensembles, and gain valuable feedback from experienced band adjudicators. Despite the fact that he was in four schools, and taught more than 240 elementary band students, Cole was still excited about bringing his bands to perform at the music festival. It was a learning experience that was different from their school performances for family and friends. He could recall his own experience playing at music festivals as a student, understanding its unique blend of performance pressure and school pride. It could be stressful playing for veteran judges, but also motivating to share the work of his rural band program and learn tips for improving their ensemble. Seeing his own students twice a week, sometimes less if the schedule was disrupted by a Professional Development day or school field trip, could add stress to the mix of performance prep and rehearsal routines. This year he was satisfied that he had picked the right balance of repertoire for his different groups, manageable within the amount of rehearsal time they had, but still challenging enough that students were motivated to practice.

Today is a full day at Ashford Park School, a school in which Cole teaches two days a week. With the highest band enrollment, he is assigned twice as much time in this building, and receives most of his teacher preparation time here. This means that Cole can unpack his materials for an entire day, and join his fellow teaching staff at recess and lunch breaks to chat and share their stories from the field. He would not have to rush off to the next school, and set-up shop again for the afternoon classes. His room here is a space shared with the school’s elementary music teacher, who works part-time but only at Ashford Park. It is a room filled with percussion instruments, filing cabinets, stand racks, and two teacher desks. Along the front of the room, an

array of Orff instruments (primarily xylophones and their metal cousins, metallophones) sit beneath the white board. They had been moved from their normal storage place on the adjacent stage to make room for African drums that would arrive soon. A large storage cabinet stands beside a teacher's desk that is overflowing with auxiliary percussion equipment and music resources. All of these items belong to his music colleague with whom he shares the space, sometimes infringing on Cole's ability to make his own stamp on the room. Artifacts of the band experience could, however, be found in the instrument fingering chart posters that line the wall, and the large percussion instruments that are housed in the back corner of the room. Empty band cases are scattered across the carpet, left by Grade Seven students who had assembled their instruments and are now seated in their chairs, waiting to start class.

“Okay everyone! Let's begin with some rhythm cards. Put your instruments in a safe place across your lap so you can count and clap.” The students are well-versed in this opening routine of clapping different rhythms on the flash cards that Cole held in front of them. Each card is separated by a short break, with Cole counting a measure of silence in between. “Come on guys. Don't be zombies!” He encouraged the group by explaining, “When you put some energy behind it, you seem to be more engaged and keep time better.” The students begin to sound less and less like robots, and more in tune with keeping the beat steady and together. Before long, the rhythm exercise ends, and the class moves on to complete a playing assessment from the previous class. Concert Ab Major Scale has been the warm-up scale for the past month of rehearsals, and it is the skill designated for evaluation. Cole structures the assessment phase to give students a strong chance for success in correct fingering and pitch. The entire class plays the scale in long, slow tones, with their teacher reminding them about the fingering for the tricky 7<sup>th</sup> note of the scale. They play it a second time at a faster tempo, playing the scale as written in half and quarter notes. Finally it is time for the remaining few students to perform their version of the scale as a formal assessment, while their class mates sit quietly in their seats. Cole delivers constructive feedback after each performance, commenting on fingering choice, embouchure formation, air speed, and articulation. He asks each child about specific areas they could improve on, and they provide a variety of answers such as steady rhythms, less mouthpiece, more air support, and tonguing instead of slurring.

It is evident that the language of music has been demonstrated, shared, and applied within their band lessons. The rehearsal ends with some sight reading of their next concert piece, *Song for Friends*, which challenges their ability to play with good tone, listen to the moving lines within, and balance the contrasting melodic and harmonic lines.

Closely following on the heels of the Grade Seven class, Grade Six students arrive for their turn to play instruments and refine their music reading skills. There is an energetic and bubbly vibe to this group, made even more so by the school's power outage that happened over the lunch hour. With only partial power being restored, Cole begins the class with half the room shadowed in darkness. Only the front bank of overhead lights is working, but it doesn't seem to break his stride or disrupt the concentration of the students. Handing out February practice records, Cole chats with the class about their recent field trip to the winter festival. The students are excited to share their favourite moments of the day, recounting highlights of ice climbing, kick sledding, ice sliding, and taffy pulling. He demonstrates a genuine interest in their stories, and listens to their experiences outside of the school landscape. The class soon transitions to their method book, playing songs about snake charmers and the Hawaiian hula. Both are tunes that the students recognize and enjoy playing as a group. They too must attend to the task of assessment, with students seeming willing and confident to play for one another. Cole sets the tone for the activity by telling everyone, "Good luck. Relax. Everyone else is nice and quiet. You can start whenever you're ready." When the final student plays her rendition of the Snake Charmer, the class erupts into applause, ending the lesson on a high note.

Before Cole knows it, it is the last recess break, and time for a serious conversation. Earlier that week, one of his Grade Eight trumpet players arrived at class with a note from home. She explained to Cole that she was thinking about quitting band, and that her parents supported her decision. Emily had experienced some difficulty playing her trumpet when her braces arrived, and had expressed some feelings about being discouraged with her ability to play the trumpet. Nevertheless, Cole was still surprised that it had reached this point. Emily was a top musician in the brass section, receiving 20 out of 20 on her previous playing assignment. Despite this fact, Cole saw that her confidence was an underlying issue. He shared with Emily that he was

taken aback by her decision because she always played the lead 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet parts, and was fully capable of handling the wide range they required. She was a leader in the brass section, but perhaps she was unsure of her place in the ensemble. Cole gently reminded Emily of her success on her last playing assignment, saying that she is perhaps playing better than she herself thinks. He asked if she would re-consider staying with her instrument until the end of the year, and finish out the term with her peers. Emily quietly listened to what her teacher had to say, and promised that she would think about it and let him know on Thursday. Cole was left wondering what else he could do to help her see that she was a valuable member of the band.

Today's conversation picks up where it left off on Monday. Emily shyly enters the band room, lingering briefly in the hallway with some friends. She tells Cole that she thought about it over the week, and that she decided to stay in band until the end of the year. She explains that she just forgot to bring her instrument today. Cole is visibly happy and relieved with Emily's decision. "You just made my day," he exclaims. Losing someone from the program is always difficult, often feeling like a personal blow to his identity as a teacher. While Emily's story of band would carry on, Cole worried that other students might have similar feelings of not being good enough or disconnection from the ensemble. This experience opens his eyes to competing storylines of belonging and engagement in his program. Cultivating relationships and maintaining those ties while travelling between four schools can be one of the most difficult tasks of his position as an itinerant band teacher.

The following day is one of transition and unresolved tension for Cole. It is the end of the week, with Friday arriving in a blur of movement and music making. Morning classes are held at James Powell School, the only building well outside the comfortable five minute driving radius as the rest. Cole knows that he has to really watch the clock in order to make it over to Anderson School for the afternoon. Shortly before the lunch bell rings, Cole asks the Grade Eight students to put away their instruments and return to their homeroom class. This is his transition time, a 15 minute block built into his schedule on travel days. It is designed for him to wrap up his work at James Powell School and prepare for the cross-town move to Anderson School. Cole quickly gathers his computer, teacher planner, and conductor's scores, placing them in his travelling storage cart. This kit is invaluable for staying organized for his work in four schools. It holds his instrument repair

tools, conductor's baton, music that his bands will be working on during the term, small percussion items and mallets to play them, as well as other miscellaneous items such as reeds and valve oil. Without it, Cole would be left unprepared for his daily commute between schools, and the curriculum that he shapes within them.

Winter has thrown a wrench into a smooth commute, with its cold weather, slippery roads, and congested traffic. Cole drags his travel cart through the snowy path to his cold car, parked down the street from the school. He shares a parking spot with another part-time staff member at James Powell, but today is not his day for it. Most of the time it's not a problem, but it can be somewhat annoying when the weather dips down into temperatures below 40 degrees Celsius. Hurriedly, Cole loaded everything into the trunk and the back seat while letting his vehicle warm-up for a few minutes. He is sitting behind the wheel, eating a sandwich, when the school's lunch bell rings. The rest of the teaching staff would now be transitioning to the noon break, filled with conversation, coffee, and collegial rapport. This wasn't the first time that Cole had missed out on such interaction within this particular staff community. It was his second year at James Powell, the only new school that had been added to his teaching assignment the year before. Every Tuesday and Friday, he spent half the day in a shared working space, building relationships with students and overseeing their musical development. While he had made some inroads with students, getting to know the staff was another matter. Cole still felt a bit like the odd man out. He had initially tried to socialize at recess breaks, and made an effort to eat his lunch in the staff room before jetting over to his next school. These endeavours were met with a coldness that stemmed from an apparent cliquish behaviour amongst the staff. Dead end conversations and sitting alone did little to compel Cole to enter the staff room for the few minutes he had to spare. Instead he often chose to eat his lunch at his desk or while he was driving across the river to begin the teaching day again with his afternoon students.

Cole makes the twenty minute commute across town to Anderson Elementary School, with thoughts of afternoon plans and rehearsal ideas running through his head. He arrives at his classroom, which shares its walls with the before and after school program. Toys and art supplies line the counters of the room, with a large playhouse resting at the back. Chairs and stands sit off to the side, waiting for band students to return and infuse a musical dialogue to the empty space. Cole unpacks his teaching supplies and quickly gets things set up for the

next class: scores, laptop, planner, and percussion stick bag are all unearthed from the storage cart for use in the afternoon's lessons. The lunch bell rings, and it's off to the races! The first classes of the afternoon are the Grade Six and Seven bands, who spend their time warming-up with rhythm flashcards, reviewing method book material, and working on sheet music. Both groups are excited to see Cole and play their instruments, getting right down to work and remaining focused on learning new musical concepts. These two periods echo the lessons that Cole shared yesterday with his students at Ashford School, using the same patterns, routines, and repertoire to engage the students in curriculum making. While it is new material for the students, it is the fourth time that he has taught these lessons this week. *Eagle Summit March*, *Snake Charmer*, and *Song for Friends* have received a lot of air time. Although the content of the learning has stayed the same, the context and characters involved have changed. Each experience is unique and worthwhile to Cole for these reasons.

Friday afternoon is almost over, except for last period with the Grade Eight class. Cole is excited to work with these students again. They are a funny, gregarious, and small group, but he hasn't been able to see them a lot lately. Many band classes have been cancelled over the last month, with their homeroom wrapped up in a large-scale arts project. Cole realizes that it is a great opportunity for the kids, but is worried about how many classes they have missed since Christmas. It is particularly bothersome because with only two periods a week, it can't be that hard to avoid cancelling band classes. Cole wonders about the message that this sends to students. Why is it always our class that is disrupted? Will they stop caring and become disconnected from the program? I don't know if we'll ever catch up with all this time lost. They're already so far behind, not because of ability but because of time.

The students are late arriving, and Cole debates if he should track them down from their class. A few more minutes pass and finally one student arrives. Poking her head in the doorway, she asks, "Mr. E, are we doing anything important today? Our group is supposed to finish our dance today and this is the last time we can practice before we perform it for the class. Can we stay and work on it?" These words bother Cole because they imply that their work is less important than the project the students are working on. He tries not to convey this frustration, but instead says, "I'm sorry Kayla, but we've missed too many classes to add another to the list.

Can you go tell everyone that we have band right now?” Kayla runs to find her class, some of whom are in their classroom while the rest practice their dance on the stage. One by one the students file into the room, chatting about the dances and graffiti mural they were just working on. Cole gathers their attention over the din of conversation, “Okay everyone, time to get down to business.” He leads them through the paces of their music routine, re-introducing students to the rhythms of the class, and re-acquainting them with curriculum making that had temporarily been derailed by lost instructional time. (Interim research text from field notes, February 2014)

### **Maestro on Wheels: Bridging the Divide between Schools**

Moving back and forth along the school landscape, Cole’s narrative describes the inward and outward journey of his experience as an itinerant band teacher. He reflects on moments of travelling, sharing spaces, building connections with staff and students, and dealing with disruptions to curriculum making. Carr (1986) theorized that looking at individual parts of the narrative converge to create a wider vantage point: “The meaning of the whole is discernible, if at all only from the perspective of one of its parts; and yet its part is understandable, if at all, only as belonging to the whole” (p. 77). These experiences reveal bumping points and highlights along the path of Cole’s narrative. As its author, he lives, tells, retells, and relives stories over time (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). He lives a storied life on a shifting ground of itinerancy and perpetual motion (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), exiting and entering school life throughout the day. At this point in his story to live by, Cole stories himself as a maestro on wheels, travelling between four schools and working to bridge the gap between diverse school milieux:

The things that stand out for me are the constant rush to get packed up and do what you need to do before you go to the next school . . . often times I wouldn’t get a chance to eat lunch. I’d have to rush down there, and I would be walking into the school when the first bell rang. It’s really difficult to get prepared and set up for everything when you are rushing into the school and you’re meeting the kids in the classroom at the same time you’re getting into the classroom. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Retelling his stories allow us to gather identity themes within Cole's professional life as an itinerant band teacher. Ritchie and Wilson (2000) suggested that the "process of naming and reading their world gives teachers access to the power of reflection and reinterpretation" (p. 23). This opens possibilities for further discussion around identity making and curriculum making within itinerant music programs, shaping future stories based on this dialogue. Exploring Cole's experience as a music student illustrates how he began naming and reading the world of education.

Cole's teacher professional knowledge evolved over time, rooted in his experience as a student in a small rural band program where musical creativity was encouraged:

I started band in Grade Six. I had a very, very good band teacher. He was an old Englishman, who was very good at what he did, and very encouraging. He let me explore a lot on my instrument on my own. He was very supportive of that. I kind of knew when I started band in Grade Six that was what I wanted to do and it always kind of stuck with me. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

A love of music and curiosity to explore is embedded in Cole's understanding of how curriculum is shaped in band. As a child, his elementary band teacher travelled between neighbouring communities and encouraged Cole's interest in learning more about his instrument. He recalls an instant spark of recognition that teaching band could become a significant plotline in his life.

Cole's storyline as a band student influenced his approach to composing stories as a band teacher. He identifies organization and patience as key factors in teaching within an itinerant program:

You have to be a fairly organized person in terms of planning and what's going on because you have 240 kids to take care of, or teach, and know their names and assess them. You have four schools where you have administration that you have to be working for, and four different school schedules. You have to be an organized person to be able to do it and do it well. You have to have a lot of patience. It can be really stressful at times and really trying at times. It can really burn you out, but you just keep plugging away. Other than that, it's interesting. It has two sides to it. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Cole stories himself as a busy person, managing a hectic schedule of working in different buildings and negotiating the landscape of four different school communities. Attending to students' needs is at the forefront, and is closely tied to curriculum and assessment making. This brings to mind the advice of Greene (1995) that "individual identity takes form in the context of relationship and dialogue; our concern must be to create the kinds of contexts that nurture – for all children – the sense of worthiness and agency" (p. 41). Cole's personal and practical knowledge is grounded in establishing relationships and nurturing children's identity as valuable contributors to curriculum making and music making.

In and out of classrooms, "the nested and interconnected milieus" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 29) become a narrative thread within Cole's story to live by. He describes how each context of his experience relates to his work as conductor and cheerleader for the band program:

Each environment can be kind of different. There are some school environments where band is kind of a big deal. Most of the students are in the band program and very little are not in the program. They really like the band program – they like being there and have fun in it. Whereas other schools you really struggle to motivate them to be in band and keep that going, and make sure that the retention stays high while keeping some form of quality in the program. Instead of playing simple, little easy tunes without them learning the fundamentals. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

While each student and ensemble has their unique sense of identity making in band, it is the experience of teaching in four different environments that influences Cole's life writing. In some schools, it is a smooth path to developing musical skills because students have constructed positive plotline in band. Conversely, he has also experienced tension as his story to live by as a band teacher bumps against a negative storying of music making. His identity sits at the convergence of these school stories:

Sometimes it can be really difficult. It all stems back to having that positive relationship where you can joke with them, and laugh with them, but at the same time you can work really hard with them and give them lots of positive reinforcement in terms of feedback when they're working on certain parts.

(Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Cole perceives it as a balancing act of promoting musical learning and building relationships that will endure when the fun has worn off and student motivation has waned.

### ***Song for Friends: Interaction in the Band Experience***

Inquiring into Cole's narrative as an itinerant band teacher, my unpacking and retelling of his stories are rooted in a Deweyan (1938) understanding of experience attending to continuity, situation, and interaction. I find resonance with his teaching that experience is at the heart of living and learning. These narratives of experience are composed of temporal, relational, and contextual elements. As Dewey (1938) explained:

We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future.

(p. 49)

Presently, Cole's story in my retelling has focused on the temporal aspect of his experience, but it has not attended to the relational or spatial components. I will now shift the attention to how the relational aspect of curriculum making has contributed to Cole's narrative as an itinerant band teacher.

Within the previous narrative of Cole's work in and out of classroom places, strong relationships are at the core of his work with students. Music is the subject matter, but curriculum is also shaped around their learning in a collaborative group. Students are encouraged to play for one another as individuals in moments of assessment making, and are applauded for their efforts. Cole works at establishing an environment in which trust and risk taking are present, removing barriers for a complete immersion in the experience of music making. The title, *Song for Friends*, is an apt description for the collaboration and team work that is put into bringing the score to life. Individual lines of melody and harmony are rehearsed separately, allowing time for students to hear how the separate lines of counterpoint interact and react to one another. He demonstrates what these parts might sound like together, using piano accompaniment and professional recordings to engage the class in active listening. Once this concept has been introduced, it is time to return to active playing of instruments. Students are excited to join in the music making, sometimes cheering when their section is asked to play. As teacher and conductor of these sessions, Cole directs the interplay of rehearsal and shaping of curriculum.

In the midst of rehearsal, Cole purposefully works to build a sense of unison and focus amongst the ensemble. This focus can be tested when asked to move beyond the safety of a single school space to combine students from four schools for joint rehearsals:

It's very stressful, very stressful because not necessarily every school is at the same level. It was worse when I would do joint concerts to join all four schools together to create combined bands instead of separate bands. You had to really, really push to get the kids to the same skill level so that they would sound good together. Getting them together for joint rehearsals, you're working with 80 kids at a time in the same room, and they're not familiar with each other so there is that chaos time. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Chaos can emerge in these moments of performance preparation and large group curriculum making. As the relational knowledge of the musicians is tested, the element of community can also be stretched thin. This relational knowledge was clarified by Hollingsworth (1994), who described it as “the concept of knowing through relationship, or relational knowing, [and] involves both the recall of prior knowledge and the reflection on what knowledge is perceived or present in social and political settings” (p. 77-78). It can become a source of tension for the teacher who must lead this unfamiliar group through its work as a single unit. It can also confuse or distract students who are removed from their routine and role within a more localized experience with band. Cole relays that he finds it easier to attend to student relationships within a smaller context of individual bands. Rather than uniting all four groups for a single mass concert, ensembles now perform concerts for their own school community:

Now it's not so bad. Each school does what they can do. You push them so that you can get everything out of them, but it's not as stressful because you're doing a concert in your own school and not joining with other kids. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

This represents a shift in Cole's personal practical knowledge as he learns the rhythms of the band experience, restorying how itinerant band programs share curriculum making with an outside audience.

Curriculum making in a social context has led me to an inquiry of interaction in assessment making. I think back to how this inextricable tangle of relationships was described by Huber et al. (2011), noting that “curriculum making is interwoven with assessment making as well as with their identity making” (p. 69). Assessment making is pulled into a public forum in Cole’s classrooms. Assessment is not isolated to individual homework assignments or written tests that only the teacher and student know the outcome. Rather, it is perceived as a communal endeavour that is filled with individual contributions of the student musicians. Working with specific instrument groups, Cole provides relevant and moment-to-moment feedback about their work. He comments on areas of musicianship that can be developed further, and then asks the students to apply this learning in a subsequent run-through. These encounters are extracted and then put back into the context of the entire group’s music making. Here is how Cole describes assessment within his itinerant program:

There is a lot of ongoing assessment that I do during class. Are kids prepared for class? Are they showing up with their instruments? I mark down when they come without instruments or supplies. I do playing tests throughout the year. Generally I try to do it once a month, unless there is a big concert time coming up, and then we really want to devote that time to concerts. We do theory at the beginning of the year, after Christmas, and then we do it in little pockets throughout the year. It’s done all the time all over the place. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

He labels assessment making as an ongoing and omnipresent storyline within the band experience. It relates to student participation and whether or not an instrument is brought to class. He explains that formal playing assessments are sometimes put aside when concert demands become more pressing.

Cole’s narrative reveals that students are equal participants in each other’s assessment making. They observe and listen to individual playing tests that take place in the open spaces of the rehearsal room. At times they applaud the efforts of a peer, recognizing when particular strides have been made. Cole scaffolds these experiences by building up to them, practicing it as a daily warm-up or technical drill so that students are well acquainted with the designated assessment piece. He shapes the rehearsal experience around success of students, both as an ensemble and individual musicians. As a group, they learn about technical demands such as

correct fingering, pitch, and rhythm. As individuals, they reveal where they are at in this curriculum making, informing Cole about how he might direct future learning. For their teacher, it can be a particularly meaningful to hear and reflect on these moments of assessment:

When you think back to when the kids first started Grade Six, with the kids not knowing anything about their instruments, listening to the progress that they've made throughout the year. It's really fulfilling to see and hear that progress. Also when they're working on certain pieces, when you get to that moment where everything just sounds amazing together, you are so proud of your students and how they sound.

(Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Cole pauses on the positive experience of these moments to sustain his work in multiple schools, explaining that it can be too easy to get derailed by the rigours of an itinerant program:

Sometimes it can be really hard because you get bogged down, but you have to think back to those moments and really be positive about the outcomes of what your band are. Keep working and striving to make the band sound as good as that for another time. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Within these stories of assessment, curriculum is adjusted and identity formed. I return to the words of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who expanded my understanding of interaction: "people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in social context" (p. 2). Assessment making and curriculum making cannot fully be understood when placed in isolation from one another. In the same manner, Cole's school story cannot be fully discovered without identifying students as important characters in the narrative. Stories of itinerant band are composed alongside one another, always in relation and always evolving.

### **At the Podium: Connecting Outside the Work**

Curriculum making, assessment making, and identity making criss-cross the narratives of Cole's school story. Sifting through his stories for experiences around curriculum and assessment, I am drawn to examine more deeply the ways in which relationships are sustained in an itinerant band program. For Cole, conversation and connection is a conscious part of building relationships with students:

You make an effort to talk to them before and after class to find out what's going on in their lives. I find it's more important to develop those relationships because then your students can relate to you better and having some form of relationship there make them closer to you and your program. It helps them want to be there, and let them know that you care. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

In his narrative account, Cole shows that he cares for his students' experiences outside of school. He asks them about their class trip to the winter festival, encouraging them to share highlights of the day. Rather than feeling pressured to get to the "curriculum as plan" (Aoki, 1993), or specific objectives from the provincial curriculum guide, he makes space and time for getting to know his students on a personal level. Reaching beyond the podium, curriculum is more than just notes on a page or songs to be learned. It is experienced with an understanding that curriculum as a "course of life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992).

The narrative of band is imperceptibly linked with the story of its teacher and students. Students connect one with the other, and make decisions about participation based on their relationship with the teacher. Positive experiences build strong programs, both in number of students but also the level of commitment that is shared by its players. Discussing the importance of relationship as an itinerant band program, Cole highlights the importance of connection for motivation and identity work:

You're not there very often. Not seeing them very often, it's especially hard to form any relationship. Often times it can pose challenges for respect just in general. You're almost in that realm of feeling like a substitute teacher. It's the lack of seeing them all the time that really makes it difficult. It can pose challenges especially when the first or second report cards come out, and you've hardly seen them.

(Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Time, or lack thereof, is seen as a barrier to establishing new ties between teacher and children in the band program. Storylines from within and beyond school often take supremacy over establishing these links, as curriculum making and assessment making are mandated on a semester basis. Report card comments and critiques are due in the first three months of school, even if there are only a handful of rehearsals on which to

base these marks. Cole's comments reveal that it can be difficult to make these professional decisions when still in the early stages of getting to know all 240 of his students.

The notion of feeling like a substitute teacher, someone who appears on a limited basis and lacks the benefit of time to develop rich relationships, is one that occurs throughout our discussion around connection. Digging below the surface of teaching in multiple schools, Cole questions how his experience as a "sometimes teacher" is different from that of a homeroom teacher. "It's almost like the substitute teacher kind of mind because you're not their regular teacher so why should they give you as much respect as everyone else?" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). Thinking about my own experience of working in multiple schools, I can relate to feeling as if I was a guest teacher in my own classroom. These feelings can be triggered by comments from students ("What's your name again?") or from staff ("Who are you subbing for today?"). Both of these queries are ones that I experienced while teaching in two, three, and four schools. It can have a lasting impact on both your own practical professional knowledge and the attitude of the students within the program:

It can really drive your own personal morale down. You're working really hard. You're trying to get everything done to get these kids where they need to be, or where you want them to be, and just that lack of respect because you're not around very often, it slows the rest of the class down. There are those other kids that are really trying, and are working hard, but other kids just mess around. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Not being in the building all the time may contribute to these feelings of rootlessness and lack of respect. Some students develop instant connections with their teacher, itinerant or otherwise, while others do not. In both cases, there is a ripple effect to how identity and curriculum are shaped.

While most of Cole's narrative focused on positive accounts of relationships and rapport with students, there are always instances where the opposite is also true. Band is not a compulsory subject like math or science, and it depends on student enrollment for its existence in a school. In the business of education, students equal funding. If there are not enough band students in any one school, a reduction in instructional time or the

eventual end of a program could be the consequence. This creates a conundrum for itinerant band teachers who negotiate the tightrope of student retention and discipline:

It can be hard to follow through with them [consequences] but then it also becomes an issue because band isn't mandatory in our schools. You walk a very fine line for retention and discipline and classroom management. It can be really hard to balance that sometimes. You want to have a good environment, a respectful environment, be encouraging, but when kids act up you have to do something about it. You don't want to have to necessarily lose them in the enrollment of your program.

(Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Making sense of this experience asks for narrative coherence (Carr, 1986) between Cole's professional story as an educator and external expectations of retention and classroom management. Finding this balance "is a constant task, sometimes a struggle, and when it succeeds is an achievement" (Carr, 1986, p. 96). Cole feels some tension over how to respond to issues of discipline. He understands that in some cases following through with a student who misbehaves on a serious or continuous basis may result in losing that student from the program. He is conflicted over how to weigh these demands because band is a program that students can opt-in and opt-out of. If some students ask to leave, or are asked to leave, how will this impact the remaining students and their desire to stick with the program?

Emily's plotline as a reluctant participant in band demonstrates that is not always a student who breaks the rules that is at risk for falling through the cracks or exiting a program. She was storied as a capable musician, a leader in the band. While she had previously mentioned some difficulty with playing the trumpet with new braces, Cole did not hear or see any sign that she was thinking about dropping band. Their discussion around her contribution to the ensemble, and clarification around her perception of ability, speaks to the importance of contact time for initiating relationships and also maintaining them. Emily was in her third year of playing in the school band, but she had started to feel disconnected from her instrument, teacher, and experience of music making. While she eventually decided to stay with her friends to finish out the year, it was a bumping point in Cole's story to live by.

This plotline serves as a notable contrast to the smooth dynamics of regular rehearsals and shared assessment making. It uncovers a conversation that happens when there is a disconnection rather than connection with the conductor behind the podium. Telling stories can take the storyteller to a vulnerable place. Greene (1995) challenges me to see the characters in their stories as humans rather than flat or fixed figures in the plotline. In doing so, I will endeavour to see their stories as big:

To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take and the uncertainties they face. (p. 10)

It is a strong reminder that I must treat the process of collecting and retelling these narratives with the utmost care and respect as I lay open their stories for unpacking and inquiry of the overall experience.

### ***Don't Throw Your Junk in my Backyard: Sharing a Teaching Space***

Sharing a teaching space may also add to an itinerant teacher's feeling of being in a state of flux. Being a part-time staff member often means sharing a classroom with another teacher or program. This spatial element of itinerancy is unlike the experience of a homeroom teacher who often resides in a single classroom with sole ownership over the walls and design of the overall space. In each of his four schools, Cole's teaching space is used for elementary music classes or as a before and after school room:

Sometimes it's good if the other teacher is courteous or if there is another program that runs in that room. They clean up after themselves and make sure that all their stuff is put away. They make sure to leave lots of space for me and my program as well. Other times you deal with room issues where they have so much stuff that you really don't feel like you're part of that room. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Feeling part of the school landscape strikes at the heart of why the politics of sharing a teaching space can result in tension. Not having a classroom of one's own can propagate this idea of being on the outside looking in at the school community: "You just don't feel like that is part of your area. You don't really feel like you belong

there. I don't know if it would have an impact on how I would teach" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). Add this to the challenge of getting to know so many students in such a short amount of time, and the experience of being a nomad or wanderer begins to affect an itinerant teacher's personal practical knowledge.

If there is a lack of space for curriculum making, or if that space has been left in disarray after another program's use, it can add to an already condensed set-up time. Travel time is short, and considerable set-up already happens in between classes to restore it to a position ready for band classes. Having enough physical space for curriculum making is also important when considering the amount of equipment necessary for a band program: music stands, stacks of chairs, large instruments such as the tuba or baritone saxophone as well as percussion equipment that are permanently stored in the room. The teacher who shares a room with the band teacher may be equally annoyed with the amount of equipment that clutters up the space. As the old camp song tells us, "Don't throw your junk in my backyard, my backyard's full." Being a courteous colleague goes a long way to relieving the pressure of close quarters, and signifies respect for the other person and respect for the program.

### **Dynamics of a Staff Room: Stories from the Road**

Shifting from within classroom spaces to the larger school landscape, Cole's story to live by is clearly marked by his relationship with colleagues. Often travelling over the lunch hour when many of these connections are solidified and strengthened, he understands that he is not there all the time to establish a strong presence on staff. This experience appears as a bumping point in his story:

At times it's difficult. I know last year in particular I had a change of schools and went from being in all four of my schools for four years, to in my fifth year of teaching staying in three of them and changing my fourth one to a new one. I found the change rather difficult because in the fourth new school the staff was very tight knit and they weren't very sociable towards newer people. So I felt like, and sort of still don't feel like, I'm part of that staff. They keep in their own little cliques and don't really venture outside of that. So often times I would go into the staff room and try to sit amongst them and they would go to sit in a different area. Or you try and sit with them and they wouldn't talk to you. Or you try to

carry on conversation and it was really a dead end so you'd just go back to your room to eat lunch by yourself and go on to your next school as quickly as you could. Even when it comes to staff parties and stuff it is a little bit difficult to want to go because there's not any real set amount of staff you know really well that you're going to want to go there and socialize with. You kind of always feel like the odd man out. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Outsider, other, out of the loop. All of these describe Cole's experience of walking into the cool and unwelcoming staff environment, standing at the border of the school community.

When I read through the words of his narrative, I am missing an overall sense of belonging. Kaufman (1974) explained how this innate need for belonging is present in all of us, striking at the core of identity formation and inner balance:

The need for a secure, self-affirming identity that provides both continuity and meaning to the paths we travel lies at the core of each of us. Identity is a sense of self, of who one is and who one is not, and of where one belongs. It is a sense of inner centeredness and valuing. (p. 568)

As an itinerant teacher, one who is new to the staff at James Powell School, Cole's story of the staff community would be told differently from another colleague's vantage point. While he or she may feel fully at home in the school community, it is not a story of welcome that Cole tells. Eating lunch alone or leaving the school right away to travel to the next location is significant for how it affects his itinerant narrative. His story at James Powell is one of being the odd man out, of not belonging.

Thinking about Cole's narrative of being on the borders of a school community pulls me back to the writing of Anzaldua (1987). She offered insight into the meaning of identity in the face of uncertainty, survival, and feeling like a stranger at home. Anzaldua referenced a traditional Mexican saying that I think applies to the itinerant life in a musical context as well: "*Dime con quien andas y te dire quien eres* - Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are" (p. 84). The absence or temporary quality of having collegial ties can have a profound impact on the story to live by of an itinerant band teacher. It influences the plotline of band in each school, and Cole's place within it. It shapes his personal practical knowledge and his willingness to leave

the safety of his classroom for the uncertainty of out-of-classroom spaces. The school where he feels most at home is perhaps not coincidentally Ashford Park. He spends full days here and is able to join the staff in a lunch break filled with conversation and relationship building. It is difficult to make friends and form relationships when time and space get in the way:

For lunch time, with the exception of one school that I am at for full days, the other schools there is travel time that is built into my schedule. So my lunch hour starts 15 minutes before everyone else's lunch to allow that, so I generally go into the staff room and eat by myself. By the time the bell rings for the rest of the staff to come in at lunch time, that's when I'm packing up and going to the next school. It's difficult to form any sort of relationship with those staff members. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

### ***Rubato: Loss of Instructional Time***

These are the stories that Cole tells about his experience as an itinerant band teacher fitting into the school community. What does this mean for how his itinerant band program is storied in the grand narrative of school? Is it appreciated and recognized for its curriculum making possibilities, or will there also be sense of isolation and disregard for the subject matter of band? Cole explains that he has felt both sides to this equation. He has felt supported by colleagues and administration for their willingness to accommodate extra rehearsals, fund school supplies, or be flexible in scheduling:

It can be things as simple as asking for busing to be covered for music festival so that it's not a constant struggle to ask to help cover busing costs. Or asking for certain supplies. In the past, schools would be responsible for filling the need for music stands in the classroom. Sometimes it's been a fight to get enough of those in the class for each of your students. I had one principal who I would ask and she said we'd make it work. The next day, they'd have the supplies ordered. Or things like when you're preparing for music festivals, like sending out an email if we can do a joint rehearsal during this time, and teachers are willing to give up their class time or willing to give up the gym for the morning when you rehearse with your multiple schools. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

These instances speak of ways in which fellow teachers and principals can contribute to a teacher feeling valued and supported in their work. It is important for the life writing of an itinerant band teacher.

Scheduling is one piece of the puzzle that bumps against Cole's plotline of routine and curriculum making with his students. Classes are sometimes cancelled for a variety of reasons, which can have a dramatic effect on the learning of students who receive two periods of band each week. Cole perceives that this sends a message not only to him, but also to the students themselves:

Lots of times I think they deem that band is less important than core subjects. It's really easy for them to think well it's just band, I'm sure he won't mind having his class cut. That's not the reality. Our program is just as important as the rest, and we have things that we need to do as well, and prepare for performances. Festivals and all sorts of things. It's easier for them to do that because it's the "it's just band" mentality. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

He is bothered by the notion of "it's just band," which indicates an inferior status in the hierarchy of curriculum. Eisner (2005) expressed how curriculum is a value-laden endeavour: the allocation of time, teaching space, and the loss of both reveal where value is given and taken away. Students notice when time is continually robbed from the same subjects, which impacts their own perception of how curriculum is storied.

This idea of "robbed time" draws my attention to the Italian musical term *rubato*. When music is played with *rubato*, there is a push and pull of tempo, resulting in a variability of the overall character. Applying this same technique to instructional time, there appears to be an imbalance of power in the push and pull of instructional time. Cole details how one group of students at Anderson School have been particularly exposed to lost curriculum making in band due to scheduling conflicts:

I am getting to that point in one of my schools. I realize they have an important thing going on there – they received grant money – but it is starting to take away from my class time. I've seen my students probably less than 50% of the time that I should have for the month of January. It's coming down to the time where I need to say, you need to call it quits and move your days around because I have a program too that needs to be worried about. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

His conception of flexibility in time is that accommodations should be made by both the homeroom teacher and specialist teacher, with genuine efforts to make it work for everyone. It is when this communication breaks down and routines are continually disrupted that it turns from a conversation point to a bumping point.

Cole worries how losing so much instructional time shapes the minds of the children, sending a message of unimportance and triviality about their curriculum making:

I would say that it just gives them the idea that band is less important than things like assemblies or projects or whatever. They're more important than band class. You see that back in some of them too when some of them ask if they cannot come to band so that they can work on a project that's due. It can be really disheartening at times when that's what is coming back to you. (Transcript from research, 2014)

Losing half of their rehearsal time devalues their work together, with students prioritizing other school projects above their participation in band. It fragments an itinerant teacher's school story as professional obligations are brushed aside as unimportant. Moreover, Cole notes that it breaks apart connections that he worked so hard to build between student and teacher, student and instrument, student and student:

That relationship is really important, and of course if you're not there or your class time is always being interrupted, that's going to affect the ability to have that positive relationship with them. Plus it's breaking routine, so you're not making good progress on the songs. If you're not making good progress on the songs, they get really frustrated and then they're not happy with band. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

The big picture of curriculum making is coloured when the scarce resource of time is made scarcer.

Narratively understanding Cole's experience as an itinerant band teacher, his story to live by sits at a cross-roads where band stories and the more dominant story of school collide. Within the classroom, contrapuntal lines of conversation and collaboration buoy the rigours of his teaching position. Curriculum making is composed alongside children as they bring their experience and excitement for music making to the rehearsal space. Assessment mingles with these moments of curriculum making, inviting students to collaborate

and celebrate. His teacher professional identity continues to evolve amidst daily encounters on the school landscape. Some interactions are positive while others hold more power to dent or disrupt his life writing as an itinerant teacher. Outside of classroom places are storied as unfamiliar and potentially vulnerable spaces for someone who enters and exits the school landscape on a frequent basis. Belonging and respect rise to the surface of these interactions, with perhaps more questions than answers about how teacher identity is shaped within an itinerant band program.

Narrative inquiry is not a distant or abstract form of research. In travelling alongside Cole in his professional capacity, I recognize that I cannot put aside my own experience as an itinerant band teacher or our personal connection as friends. More than likely, I am drawn to certain stories in which I find resonance to my own experience of curriculum making in band. Feeling unimportant within the larger school story and negotiating the dance of relationship building are storylines in Cole's narrative that closely speak to my own story to live by. In the context of this research, I walk away from our time together with a renewed

way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

Through Cole's experiences, it is possible to see where we might fit into a similar school story. Would it be the teacher that feels like an outsider in the staff room? Or the colleague who cancels classes because he/she thought it wouldn't be a big deal? This informs our decisions in the future, allowing us to be more attentive to relationships and potential sources of tension. It is easy to become wrapped up in our own world as teachers, but it is important to consider the community as a whole. I share Cole's stories, retelling them and inquiring into the temporal, spatial and relational qualities, to create open spaces for dialogue and future school stories.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DENISE: BRINGING LIFE TO THE SCORE

It is 3:55pm when Denise pulls her car into the staff parking lot at Cavendish Composite School. While many of her teaching colleagues are winding down for the day or preparing for tomorrow's lessons, she is just gearing up for the busiest part of the week. It is Monday night, and zone band rehearsals for Parkland Area Band are about to begin. It is a continuation of Denise's teaching day as an itinerant band teacher in four rural schools. Band students from across the area are transported by school bus to Cavendish for these weekly large group rehearsals, a curricular time for music making scheduled outside the traditional school timetable. A significant time commitment by students, they will spend the evening engaged in playing their instrument, working on homework, or socializing with friends before the bus returns to take them home. It will be after 9pm before the last student, and their teacher, arrive home. Denise spent the day leading up to zone band with small groups of band students at Canyon Heights and Albright Composite Schools. Now it is time to pull together the musical puzzle pieces that are scattered and sown across seven schools.

As Denise walks down the school's main hallway, she passes children gathered around electronic devices listening to music or playing videogames, while others finish their homework. These students go to Cavendish School and have been waiting patiently for the rest of the band to arrive. Denise tells everyone the buses will arrive momentarily, and asks the set-up crew to begin their work. While she unpacks her conductor's bag and prepares for rehearsal, the team gets to work in transforming the room from an enclosed space to a viable rehearsal place. The band room at Cavendish is on the stage, attached to the gymnasium. There is a collapsible wall that separates their music making from physical education classes in the school. While not soundproof, the wall does block out some sounds from both programs during the day. Tonight the wall is unnecessary as the zone band will take over both spaces.

Along the band room's walls are evidence of the band's participation in local, regional, and national music festivals. There are plaques, certificates, and group photos that are displayed as important mementos of

their collective experience. A quilt proudly hangs beside the stage wall, with individual squares decorated by alumni and students at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Parkland Area Band. Some squares are decorated with the name of local schools, while others have musical symbols and art work. Still others are like signatures in a yearbook with names of individual musicians declaring their place in the multi-school program. These artifacts celebrate the role of community, kinship, and music in the lives of the band community, while also creating a familial atmosphere to the rehearsal space. Since 1999, students from seven local schools have attended weekly zone band rehearsals as well as small group rehearsals twice in a six day instructional cycle. Not all students in the photographs are part of Denise's itinerant assignment in four schools. Students at three of the local schools work with a different teacher for small group lessons, while also joining zone band for festival and concert performances. Together they form the Parkland Advanced and Parkland Senior Bands.

Students gradually begin to fill the band room, some climbing onto the stage from the gymnasium, while others calmly enter through the stage doors. The Advanced Band is the first group of the night, comprised of students in Grades Six through Eight. Their energy is palpable, as they chatter with friends that they only see at these weekly rehearsals. At the front of the room, there is a motto written on the whiteboard, guiding students in their work together and as individual musicians at home: *Progress not Perfection*. Working in and out of four classrooms, Denise understands the importance of student ownership during and in between their meetings. It is part of the continuum of learning, establishing a routine with regular independent practice within an atmosphere of collaboration and encouragement. While she follows a pull-out model, she continues to establish the band program as a valued, timetabled, curricular program rather than an extra-curricular activity.

Throughout their 90 minute rehearsal, Denise leads the Advanced Band through conversation, collaboration, and curriculum making. The collective goal tonight is to prepare the group for an upcoming music festival trip later in the month. After running through a short warm-up, Denise shares her thoughts on why these performances are meaningful: "Our trip is a musical report card. We will play our songs and then the adjudicator will give us ideas of how to do things differently, or tell us what he/she liked. The good news is that after all of our hard work at the festival, we will play laser tag to burn off some energy. The bad news is that

our bus will come to pick us up at 6:30AM and will drop us off at 7PM at night. We're in for a long day." Students groan at the early pick-up time, but good naturedly return to work at fine tuning their performance songs. Sitting side by side, it is difficult to tell which students know each other from outside of the band, and who in their first, second, or third year playing in the group. They are spread out across the room like a patchwork quilt of individual players, representing seven different schools, and three different grades. It is in these moments of complete immersion and commitment to the ensemble that an identity for the Parkland Area Band is shaped, and an eighth school is created from the players and the existence of the band program.

"I'm loving the energy here tonight. I think we really made some great progress," Denise tells the Advanced Band. This closes their time together, with a quick transition to the weekly Senior Band rehearsal. Members of this ensemble are high school students who recently completed semester finals. Many of the senior students are enrolled in other challenging classes such as Chemistry, Physics, and Calculus, making it difficult to regularly attend band classes in the month leading up to finals. This can be stressful for their conductor who is trying to prepare for concert performances, while also interrupting rehearsal flow as some of the most experienced players are missing. Tonight, all of that is in the past, and the group's attention is focused on fine tuning their most difficult pieces. *The Fisher who Died in his Bed*, *When the Stars Begin to Fall*, *Danzas Cubanas*, and *Yorkshire Ballade* are songs that Denise selected for the Senior Band to play this term, excited by the musical challenges they hold.

The time has come to put the pieces of the musical puzzle together, with students bringing their contribution to the curriculum making process. No longer hollow notes on the page, the joint rehearsal brings life to the score and fashions a collaborative interpretation of the composer's work. Denise's role in these moments is one of overseer or facilitator for curriculum in action. She surveys how it comes to life, understands that it is not instantaneous, and takes note of rough patches that will need more tending in future small group rehearsals. Unconsciously she begins to make plans for the week's lessons.

Denise leaves the rehearsal energized from the dynamic atmosphere of the evening, but weary from the long day of teaching. This is not just a case of the Monday blues, but a realization that teaching in a rural

itinerant band program is vastly different than the normal experience of other teachers. It is now almost thirteen hours since she left her house to drive to her first school, a day filled with very little time to catch her breath or connect with anyone outside of the band room. Although she loves working with students and composing curriculum alongside them, the daily grind of working in and out of multiple school landscapes has taken its toll. Over the years, relationships with students, parents, and the outside community have sustained Denise's professional identity, but the physical and emotional side of being an itinerant teacher has always hovered in the background. It has been a fifteen year run of travelling between two or more schools in one day, eating lunch alone, coordinating individualized curriculum plans for hundreds of students, and still feeling adjacent to the dominant story of school. For Denise, this manifested itself in the form of isolation from colleagues, alienation from the flexibility required for teaching in a pull-out program, and recognition of the personal time commitments to establish a musical presence in the various school communities. She sits at a crossroads in her teacher identity, questioning whether to continue her work as an itinerant band teacher or pursue opportunities beyond the safe places of her band classrooms. Denise's doubts stem less from a belief that music education is marginalized, although her work in four schools indicates that it does not merit full time employment in one school, and more from a disregard of her professional talents as an educator. She is unsure if the future will be a continuation of her story as a band teacher, or whether it will involve a change to other positions in the school landscape. Denise wonders if a move to administration or teaching something other than band in one school will be her next step. Change is not a negative prospect. She views it as an opportunity for revitalization and new possibilities for life writing. Is this it? Has the time arrived for a shift of professional identity? As Denise drives home along the dark stretch of highway, she contemplates what the next chapter of her teaching career will be and how her future story will unfold. (Interim research text from field notes, February 2014)

### **“Progress not Perfection” – Student Ownership of Learning**

Storied lives are rooted in “the institutions within which we work, the social narratives of which we are a part, and the landscape on which we live” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 62). Always evolving and flowing with the tide of its surroundings, teacher stories develop over the course of a lifetime. Denise's story begins in a

place of wonder, curiosity, and motivation for music to be part of her life, setting a career path in motion that would culminate in the role of music educator. What are the bumping points and positive encounters along the way that have brought Denise to her personal and professional cross-roads? How have institutions, people, and landscape in her life story influenced the ways in which she shapes curriculum alongside students, reflects on the role of identity in an itinerant band program, and questions her place in the school community? These wonders are the starting point to explore Denise's chapter as an itinerant band teacher living in the midst of shifting school landscapes.

Growing up in a large Western Canadian city, Denise began her study of the piano at age five. She was soon ready and willing to tackle another musical challenge. Community bands appeared as the immediate answer to cultivate her inquiring mind and learn skills of instrumental musicianship in an ensemble setting. At the age of ten, Denise had already had several years of musical training when she joined the school band program. She describes herself as a precocious young musician who would frequently play in school groups with older and more experienced students. Her experience of playing in both school and community ensembles offered a dichotomy of teaching styles, one that was more driven toward success while the other focused on teamwork and encouragement:

My elementary and junior high director was very collaborative, very encouraging. He encouraged proficiency but it was more in an encouraging way. The community band director, the marching band director, was sort of an old band master. He was much more regimented, more the dictator. . . It was a really well known community band and we performed for large scale public performances (like we performed for the Queen and performed for Princess Diana), so the level of performance was high. I think that is what really drove my passion is that I wanted to be in that high calibre performance.

(Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Thinking back on her story as a student musician, Denise recognizes that she has combined both of these teaching styles in her own practice. She is collaborative and coaching, strong-minded and serious about learning goals for the students in her bands. She is driven to convey passion and purpose through music.

Selecting a monthly motto to advance students' learning is one indicator of how Denise stories herself as a curriculum maker. Each particular phrase or quotation that is chosen is based on the pulse or mood of the students. She is responsive and reflective on the individual and collective needs of the group, reinforcing specific targets or aspects of the band experience in a positive way. During my time of observing Denise's daily rhythms as an itinerant band teacher, the overall atmosphere is one of rejuvenation and the realization that musical festival time is just around the corner. Winter holidays and school final exams are in the recent past, which provides an opportunity to re-focus attention and gather momentum in ensemble dynamics. "Progress not perfection" is the monthly mantra that Denise shares with all of her students, opening minds to the possibility that they can make mistakes while still developing their skills as musicians:

If I can tell that they're not getting the results or not responding to the skill or the learning then I know that they're not reinforcing it outside the classroom. Then I have to remind them: keep a routine, keep it moving, one new thing a day. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

There is no right or wrong in these moments of curriculum making. Wrong notes become avenues to reinforce listening skills and learn correct fingerings, playing with an unbalanced sound in the band acts as a conversation starter to talk about the pyramid of sound and playing in tune.

The motto "Progress not perfection" reveals an understanding that students must assume ownership for their development and participation in the Parkland Area Band. Denise connects with students once or twice a week, with the potential for a long stretch of time in between each rehearsal. She understands that contact time and the continuum of learning is an important component of the rural band experience, choosing to travel every lunch hour instead of spending full days in any one school. Denise describes this scheduling format in terms of a military philosophy, "one is none, two is one," offering a back-up in case of time lost to holidays, professional development days, or field trips. This allows each group to have two lessons spread out across the six day school rotation, rather than having it compressed into a single day. Although it demands more travel and less downtime throughout the day, Denise follows this model because it establishes band as a priority throughout the week:

For the most part I would say that being itinerant, no matter how diligent we are as band directors to set up learning schedules or routines, we're not physically in that building. Out of sight, out of mind for the kids until they physically see you. They can plan for it, to try to make it part of their lives until you're there. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

She knows that she will not see her students on a daily basis; thus, independence and commitment are values that emerge as pivotal lessons in the curriculum she shapes alongside students. Hanging on the wall in Denise's classroom at Albright Composite School, there is a sign that reads "The Band Director is the conscience of the ensemble, not the disciplinarian." This quotation speaks volumes to how Denise stories herself as conductor, teacher, cheerleader, and colleague. She encourages students to take the lead in continuing their learning outside of school time, while she provides them with the framework and musical foundation upon which their curriculum making is based.

Denise's narrative opens a dialogue about how pull-out band programs impact the lives of the students who participate in them, shaping their identity as learners. Choosing to join the band means a choice to leave a regularly timetabled class to learn how to play an instrument. Curriculum continues in their absence, while the curriculum of band happens on a parallel front. As a result, students are expected to take responsibility to catch up on missed work in other courses. From her perspective as the teacher that is coordinating a pull-out model, Denise explains that it is not a simple matter for students to participate in band. Often it may lead to tension over too much missed class time or students feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work that is required to stay on top of both classes:

I do find that they have demands academically. I can't pull them out too much, or it's this constant juggling and balancing to keep this a positive learning space, to keep it moving but not be too demanding of them. If I pull them out too much I don't see them. That happens with the senior kids before Christmas, a couple week in January I don't see my Grade 12's and 11's because they're preparing for their semester exams. It is a real juggling act of balancing and keeping it something that they want to be part of. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

While Denise is travelling between multiple buildings, students in an itinerant band program also travel across the school landscape through their participation in the ensemble. They develop dual storylines of learning, one within a traditional classroom and one within a pull-out band program. It can be a challenge for stabilizing the identity of the program and that of its teacher to maintain a positive learning space while not demanding too much from other academic commitments.

Denise understands that flexibility is fundamental for allowing a pull-out model to work. It asks students, homeroom teachers, and herself as band teacher to adapt to the give and take of instructional time. What happens when the balancing act is not successful? Flexibility and independence are demands that cannot always be met, leading to the eventual exit of some students from the program:

I would say that for the most part the kids make it work. The ones who survive the program, it's the kids and the parents who negotiate with the other teachers to make it work. I would say that it takes a huge amount of parent involvement or a huge amount of student independence to balance that. I would say that otherwise they suffer and may not continue in the program. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Survival is a stark description for the process of students' participation in an itinerant band program. Keeping track of the different rehearsal days within the six day rotation, managing missed class time during those rehearsals, and staying engaged in the days between are part of this struggle. Denise identifies independent working skills and parental support as factors that work toward student retention. Survival and support are not just plotlines for students in itinerant band programs. I will return to this narrative thread while discussing bumping points in Denise's school story as a music educator.

### **Skills Concert: Musicianship and Assessment**

Making sense of her experience as a curriculum maker, Denise tells stories that reveal her approach to assessment making along the landscape of multiple schools. My role as narrative inquirer is to unpack these stories for artifacts and clues to understanding the itinerant experience. As Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) suggested, "narratively inquiring into our teaching practices situates teachers and teacher educators in the

known and familiar, while it asks us to make the known and familiar strange and open to new possibility” (p. 33). Reading into Denise’s narrative, curriculum and assessment are closely tied by the bonds of relationship. Assessment is a continual process of connecting with students, understanding where they are in their place of learning, and offering advice that will further their development as musicians. Students and teacher are active participants in this process of authentic immersion and conscious engagement with subject matter (Dewey, 1934). While assessment may seem a daunting, formal, or indefinable prospect, Denise approaches assessment making as a collaborative and fluid endeavour:

I guess it goes toward the philosophy of the motto of the month, “progress not perfection.” As educators we have one of those intangible things that we’re assessing that progress but it’s not something that you can put your hands on. You’re constantly dialoguing about that progress, getting the kids to articulate and verbalize and think about what’s changed from the time they played it this time to the time they played it that time. Where are they going next? (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Denise perceives a strong connection between curriculum and assessment. On the walls of her classroom at Albright Composite School, there is another sign that is a physical representation of this belief: “Rehearsal vs. Practice: Rehearsal uncovers what needs to be practiced. Practice is an individual effort that fixes the problems.” Rehearsal is a collective experience where a to-do list for individual practice is drafted. Students take these suggestions back as homework, tasked with analyzing them and applying them to specific elements of their playing. The cycle is perpetuated when these efforts are brought back to the group to continue curriculum making and assessment making within the ensemble.

Dialogue is identified as a conduit for future school stories. Denise’s stories express an understanding that “people live stories, in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories such as these, lived and told, educate the self and others” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 415). I observed how she encouraged children to share their stories to live by as students, farm kids, athletes, and musicians to their curriculum making in a band class. Working with the Advanced Brass group at Cavendish School, Denise led a discussion on how to extend their range to high notes:

We haven't learned it until we can do it four times in a row. Is there anything that you do in your outside lives that you have to practice in order to get better? [students give examples of steer riding, baseball, and playing the piano] Can you apply that same learning to how we produce different sounds? Can you think about what your lips and air do differently when you play two different notes? (Field notes, February 2014)

Stories of experience are used to connect the curriculum making within the classroom to the curriculum making that takes place outside of school. Hard work and perseverance are virtues that appear in multiple places, one of which is learning how to become a better musician. Denise demonstrates that her personal practical knowledge reserves a place of honour for students in curriculum making.

In the same manner that Denise is in a state of perpetual motion as an itinerant band teacher, so too is the assessment making that takes place within the program. At times, Denise is energized by the constant tide of assessment and adjustment. She tells students that "we want to keep our brain like a moist sponge. When it is dry it doesn't absorb much. We want to keep soaking up the learning so that we can play our music together with proficiency." (Field notes, February 2014) There is a dynamism that she projects from behind the podium, one that is unique in the dominant story of school. Written exams and homework are the exception rather than the norm. Instead, students are invited to share their learning in impromptu demonstrations or as pre-selected songs to perform. Working with a beginner group of woodwind students, Denise encourages students to explore their instrument and discover patterns of fingering and notation. They are asked to find several different ways to play each note, using help from peers who play the same instrument and a fingering chart as resources:

I'm going to give you some time to practice your chromatic scale. Use your time wisely. You may be called upon to demonstrate the chromatic scale. Remember that speed is not a factor, the goal is an even tempo and expanding our range. Once you pick a tempo, stick with it. (Field notes, February 2014)

In these informal moments of curriculum making and assessment making, students sit in the driver's seat of their personal learning. Figuratively, their journey as musicians unfolds in unison with Denise's gradual

evolution of her professional story as educator. The spirit of experimentation and collaboration carries on from Denise's narrative as a band student to her current practice as a band teacher.

While informal assessment making occurs on a minute to minute basis in her band classrooms, formal assessment opportunities also dot the landscape of Denise's itinerant program. She does not label these experiences as assessments or tests; rather, she has calls them a "skills concert." It resembles my experience of piano master classes in my university days. Then and now, students select songs that they have been working on and perform them for an audience that includes their teacher and classmates. The purpose is not to attain a numerical mark, although that may also be part of the process. The intention is for students to show that they have gone home and mastered a song on their own, and receive constructive comments that relate to this practice. Denise explained her resistance to calling these more formal moments of assessment making as a playing test:

I hate the word test because then they don't play as expressively as they do if I call it a skills concert.

They're just playing for their classmates. If I say test, it's almost as if I have put on a mute or a cork in their instrument and they can't play as well. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Her story to live by as an assessment maker is one that carefully considers the impact of place, space, and interpersonal dynamics. She demonstrates an awareness of performance anxiety and how to alleviate it in a communal environment of a shared experience.

During a skills concert, Denise listens for specific elements of music such as tone development, musicality, phrasing, and articulation. She also considers the full picture of the performance, taking into account other elements of a student's learning. The difficult task of quantifying these performances is done with a four point system that Denise admits is a reflection of her understanding of assessment and the need to educate the whole child:

I would say on an assessment level I am probably easier, because I have recognized the other elements in their life, in their day, in their learning, where they've started. One band director might hear a student and say on a point scale that was a 2 out of 4. I mean it's just a number system. I might say it's a 4.

You wanted to play it for me, you chose the song, you worked on it, and you've progressed past where you've started. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Choice and effort are incorporated in the final evaluation of a skills concert. Her experience as a band teacher for nearly two decades has evolved into an assessment approach that is student-driven, and punctuated by constructive evaluation that enriches their journey as musicians.

Denise stories herself as a competent and in-tune professional with regards to assessment making. She responds to the individual efforts of students and connects it to the collective experience of curriculum making within the ensemble. In the safe place of four rehearsal spaces, her teacher identity appears as confident, decisive, and progressive. Outside of these walls, however, tension enters Denise's story of assessment making and teacher identity. She is uncomfortable with how her personal practical knowledge is disregarded by the larger school landscape. She perceives a

great barrier wall for us as music educators to be seen as leaders, or viable curriculum instructors or developers outside of music. . . In fact we have more individualized instruction and individualized learning plans for each musician. We assess on a minute to minute basis. We are doing independent learning, we're doing small group instruction, we're doing large group instruction. We're doing continual learning rather than rote learning, inquiry. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

A conflicting plotline emerges as Denise struggles to make sense of her school story and attain coherence between multiple storylines (Carr, 1986). Feeling like "just a band teacher" is at odds with her experience as a strong, confident, capable leader within the context of her itinerant program. Innate human needs for belonging, recognition, and self-actualization are not being attended to in these instances. It continues as a bumping point in Denise's story to live by, drawing her closer to a personal and professional crossroads.

### ***The Fisher who Died in His Bed: Alignment of Curriculum and Connection***

Experiences and interaction with individuals and groups have shaped Denise's identity along the way, impacting her decisions as a curriculum maker and professional on the school landscape. She stories her role as an itinerant band teacher as one of a chameleon and jack (or Jill) of all trades:

An itinerant band teacher wears multiple hats. I don't see myself as just a teacher. I see myself as a teacher, I see myself as a counsellor. I guess all teachers are like that, but because I'm travelling I am not in a physical space to direct certain students to program administrators or to direct them to school counsellors for a problem to be solved. I might have to deal with it right there and then, and then move on. . . There is a huge amount of extra time and energy that goes into this job. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Her story to live by speaks of both independence for students, but also independence within the school community. Denise handles classroom disruptions by herself because she feels that they must be dealt with swiftly and locally. Sending students out of the classroom to visit administrators or counsellors take away from the immediacy and context of the issue. It speaks of a professional isolation that situates her identity as an itinerant band teacher as one that is parallel to the school community.

Denise's story to live by is shaped by a series of situations and personal encounters that take place in the educational world in which she lives. Retelling her stories make me think of Dewey (1938) who espoused education as life and life as experience:

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or event, the subject talked about being also a part of the situation . . . The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had. (pp. 43–44)

Teaching in multiple schools is the lens through which Denise's story to live by is lived and told; it has many facets and is relational in its scope. An itinerant environment precipitates different reactions than ones that occur in a stable setting. Denise makes decisions about discipline, curriculum, and assessment within this positioning as an itinerant band teacher. Loughran (2002) described this constant demand of decision making and filtering contextual cues as a flow of experience. He explained that these "demands of practice can be viewed as overcrowding and inhibiting factors or as possibilities for learning that may be grasped in different

ways” (p. 37). It shapes the ways in which Denise interacts with students and staff members, instilling a sense of relational knowledge (Hollingsworth, 1994). She sees her place in school and is alternately content (in classroom spaces, working with students) and unfulfilled (out of classroom places, negotiating the school landscape) based on this knowledge.

Denise’s narrative as an itinerant teacher, while at times storied as separate from the rest of the school, intersects with the storylines of her students. They too must make sense of different puzzle pieces of relationship and curriculum that are present in an itinerant program:

When you said you don’t understand your part that may be because your experience in band is different than the students in band at Cavendish. They have all of the other instrument parts, whereas you just hear the clarinet and saxophone part. The challenge is to convince you that you understand your piece of the puzzle so that when we come together for the large rehearsal, you’ll just slide them together. If you find the right piece and it fits together, we just build the musical composition piece by piece. You just have to know your part and participate it during class. (Field notes, February 2014)

While we heard earlier how Denise interacts with students in a large full band rehearsal, she is now storied as the leader of a small group lesson. There are two students in this class, an intimate and individualized setting in which music making takes place. It allows for personal connections and conversations, with student and teacher stories overlapping. She understands that the relational aspect and social dynamics are large factors in shaping curriculum opportunities in band:

Ultimately every student has some reason for choosing a path in learning. One student who is quite computer savvy may choose to do more computer courses because that’s where they’re comfortable.

For band kids, it’s mostly social, connecting. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Denise recounts how one senior band student chose to extend his learning from the music world and fuse it with his experience from the carpentry world. He designed, built, and fine-tuned a wooden replica of a piano that actually played. This student was inspired by the spirit of inquiry that Denise brought to her role as curriculum

maker, taking shape in alternate forms of understanding. She is proud to speak of his talents and creativity as an artist and musician.

Challenges may also surface while teaching and playing within such a specific and small group setting. It requires a completely different mindset to work with several students than it does to work with a large ensemble of fifty players. Within a large group rehearsal, every part of the score can be brought to life and heard in conjunction with one another. It is a full immersion of music making with each player contributing to the overall composition of the curriculum. Within a small group setting, Denise puts down her conductor's baton and picks up an instrument to fill in the gaps:

I have to incorporate myself into that learning with the kids because I might have a class of one clarinet player and one saxophone player. For a Grade Six band student, they don't see or hear the big picture, so they're learning completely independently. Whereas in another school in an urban setting there might be 10 alto saxophone and 10 clarinets, and they can hear the whole piece coming together. As a teacher I am an active teacher, I'm not just conducting or verbalizing the instructions. I'm playing with them, teaching them, guiding them through it. It's more hands on. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

She recognizes that in these moments of curriculum making, she moves beyond the typical role of conductor; waving a baton for two students is less useful than sharing the big picture of the music. Denise enters the performance space armed with a battery of instruments: flute, trumpet, clarinet, and piano. All are used to model, demonstrate, guide, and teach the students how individual musical lines fit with the rest of the ensemble. She positions herself as fellow musician, learning and playing alongside her students. Picking up a trumpet, she tells her senior students, "Let's challenge ourselves to play two octaves on Concert F. It'll be a challenge for me too." (Field notes, February 2014) Each lesson throughout the week hosts a different numbers of students with varying instrumentation, a setting that demands adaptability from both the teacher and students as they engage in curriculum making.

Narrative inquiry is relational work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In my position as researcher, I feel privileged to enter Denise's classroom and collaborate with her in the midst of ongoing curriculum and story.

One moment that stands out in my mind as a serendipitous alignment of curriculum and connection took place in a rehearsal with Grade Eleven and Twelve students at Cavendish Composite School. It happened mid-way through class, when the group decided to tackle the tricky third movement of *The Fisher who Died in His Bed* by John Herberman. This piece is a suite based on a ballad to the East Coast fisherman Jim Jones, written in four contrasting movements. While the group had briefly looked at other parts of the *The Fisher...* at zone band rehearsal, they had not touched the boisterous third movement, entitled “Celebration.” Denise recognized that this song would require team work and intense concentration for the technical demands of this rollicking Newfoundland gigue. She put down her conducting baton, and picked up a clarinet, telling the students, “I’ll come and sit over here by you so it doesn’t feel like I’ve been voted off the island.” (Field notes, February 2014) She joins the small group of five students, creating the atmosphere of a chamber group rehearsal. Everyone is a contributory member as interlocking parts and rhythmic patterns are passed around the room. Denise’s role in this moment is one of facilitator or guide as she draws attention to patterns in each student’s part. She performs alongside the solo clarinet player, filling in the lower clarinet part, while her student performs the more complicated line. Instead of remaining at her conductor’s stand, Denise integrates herself in the same row as her students. This is music making for the sheer joy and engagement of picking up an instrument and playing together. Learning this challenging and fun song motivates the students to practice and push their technical skills. She asks the students, “Do you want the good news or bad news first? The good news is we made it through, the bad news is that it is quite a bit faster. Shall we try it?” (Field notes, February 2014) The use of the plural pronoun implies that Denise and the students are collaboratively composing curriculum. The decision to play this piece is influenced by the musical ability and maturity of its players, with the performance shaped by the students’ reactions to the symbols on the page and their ability to interpret them. The trumpets play in two part harmony, balancing the lower voice of the trombone, and acting in counterpoint to the flute and clarinet melodies. Each of these students has reached the goal of playing as an independent musician.

As a band teacher I have experienced moments in my career in which music takes over the space, inhabiting both myself and my students. It is in these moments that goosebumps appear, sometimes happening

in the midst of a song or at the end when there is an eerie silence. The students reveal that they feel the same undercurrents by saying, “Can we do that again?” or “Wow, that was cool!” Denise’s experience of playing alongside her students resonates with me; collaboration and connection are at its core. In these moments the pressure or tension from outside of the rehearsal space is forgotten, and the real reason for having picked up an instrument or conductor’s baton is remembered. I asked Denise how she holds on to these moments and finds joy in her professional story as an itinerant band teacher. For her, it always comes back to the music and the process of putting together a performance product:

I would say that the most joy happens when I fill the folders with all of the parts of the repertoire that was chosen, that they’re just notes on a page at the beginning of the year. I might know the score and have taught it before, but they’re still just notes. There is no sound to it, there is no shape to it, there is no story to that music. At the end of the year when we do our big concert, that music has come alive, it’s more than just notes on a page. You can think back to all of those funny rehearsal moments, the process of the struggles, and the process of putting those parts together whatever learning level. Suddenly it is a product, it’s something from nothing. It is a process, and it’s not just read it, write it, examine it, and it’s done. It’s building, building, building, building. It’s the same reward as growing a garden. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Putting together the pieces of *The Fisher who Died in His Bed* exemplifies how the process of working together can lead to a product that is enriching and enlivening for all of its participants. Curriculum is alive and tended with care and attention by its makers.

### **The Eighth School: Establishing a Culture of Community in Band**

Artifacts of belonging appear throughout Denise’s narrative as an itinerant band teacher. Music folders are emblazoned with Parkland Area Band in gold lettering, group photographs and festival certificates hang along the walls at Cavendish Composite, and an anniversary quilt proudly celebrates the history of the band program. These items are cultivated with thought and care. She explains her intention behind these choices: “Hopefully the kids see it, those who travel here from other schools, that they should feel

that this is their home too even though it's not their home school. It's their band home school" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). While the students who play in the zone band come from seven different schools, Denise tries to establish the strongest identity for the program in the space where they come together for curriculum making. It is in this place that an eighth school is formed:

Our band program is the eighth school. This exists with the parents, because we've had parents play in our groups, the students, the community who comes to support it and come to the concerts and come out and fundraised for us. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

In a rural school division, it is not uncommon for students to participate in school events that focus on regional competition and school pride. The Parkland Band program is different as it connects students from across the area, building interpersonal and collaborative skills:

When I see kids interact, they don't say, "I'm from this school," but they're the Senior Band or Advanced Band. It is a real identity piece for them. They know as they get their uniform on. You can see by having our group photos on the wall, the kids look up and say, "I'm going to be in that group next year. I want to be in that group because you get a band vest." That's important. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Artifacts represent the construction of identity: students as musicians, Denise as conductor, and the band program as a community of learners. Students story themselves as members of the Beginner Band, Advanced Band, or Senior Band when they enter the rehearsal hall. Students socialize in their section, seated beside players who are not from their home school, having conversation about music and their experiences from the outside world. They temporarily leave behind an allegiance to specific schools and contribute to the identity of an eighth school.

Inquiring into how identity is constructed in Denise's story, I revisit the words of McCarthy (2007) who explained that "meanings inherent in such experiences are entangled not only with the music making itself but also with the human relationships invested in the activity and the dialectic that sustains them" (p. 5). I think about how student identity is impacted by teacher identity and the program's identity. The itinerant nature of

the program certainly influences these narratives, as well as the relationships and environment that are nurtured within it. So too does the personality and style of the teacher and learners. Denise leans toward a collaborative and inquiry-based approach, leading conversations with a sense of humour and an understanding of how to cultivate a sense of belonging:

It's really interesting to see students in the school outside of the band room because they're different. They're completely different. Students have said to me that when I come to the band room I can just sigh. I can be myself and relax, or be silly, or be the oddball, whatever it is. That is absolutely cool. The kids know that they can laugh at me and I won't be offended. The other day in rehearsal, I was wearing my tall boots and the plastic heel fell off. I had my shoes on the chair and the plastic heel fell off. My seniors just started laughing. There is that comfort, and laughing at silliness is welcome. It's okay. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Denise establishes a safe, carefully constructed in-classroom environment that builds personal connections throughout the curriculum making process. Students are encouraged to be themselves, and laugh at funny moments even if it is at the expense of their teacher. They feel comfortable to explore other facets of their identity that are left unattended by the remaining aspects of their school story:

It gives them a change, or a different approach. It also gives them another place to exist. . . Band gives them something to belong to. Band gives them a connection, gives them a space to expand their world outside of their small town. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

### **Off the Podium and into the Community: Animating the Score**

Branching out into the community and developing lifelong connections through music are plotlines that Denise considers particularly meaningful in her story to live by. She is proud to have started the Parkland Band program from the ground up, nurturing a love of music making with students in Grades Five to Twelve. At the ten year anniversary of the program, she initiated a reunion that invited present and former members to celebrate the community that they have built together. The anniversary quilt is a reminder of this event that celebrated

how music has contributed to their collective identity. Speaking about her experience as an itinerant band teacher, Denise recalls the people she has met and the impact that they have had on her life writing:

I think the most significant, the thing that is most meaningful to me, throughout the fifteen years, is the connection that I've had to the families is amazing, absolutely amazing. Those are the things that are the most meaningful to me. Teaching generations of kids in the same family, families that have three or four kids and I've taught them all, the parents have played in my bands and that community aspect of the program. One particular family that I'm thinking of, the father played in my band and played with his kids the whole time of about ten years. He was dealing with a very significant brain tumour and cancer and he was there for his kids, music was the connection to his kids. Then when his time came and he passed away, I played at his funeral. The family asked me to do that. These sound like negative examples, but they're so significant and so impacting that it's the music and the band program that become part of those life moments. We had one of our band students pass away in a terrible accident and the family asked the senior band to perform at the funeral. Sad stories but hugely impacting to the meaning and connection to community. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Music and community are connections that bring coherence to Denise's story to live by as an itinerant band teacher. She feels supported by her students and their families, inviting them to participate in the identity making that takes place within her program. Denise explains that she does her best to make connections as much as possible, whether it is bringing the band to play at local skating carnivals, parades, church services, and pep rallies. It speaks to the nestedness of school stories (Clandinin et al., 2006) as curriculum is perceived as a course of lives. It takes place in and out of school places, with an intermingling of life stories and shared experience.

Animating the score is another way in which curriculum is brought to life in Denise's narrative. Growing up in a community marching band, she gained an understanding that learning is not restricted to a classroom, that it can happen anywhere. Travelling around the world, she benefitted from curricular travel, and

viewed it as a positive experience. Denise understands how travel outside of the school landscape can bring the notes on the page to life:

My philosophy towards band tour is to put curriculum into a real life scenario. I'm not a believer to go on tour to just a festival and that's it. I want them to perform to use their music in a way that is going to contribute back to society. So we perform in areas where they don't have the opportunity for music. We've travelled and performed in a rehabilitation hospital where people are there for years. The impact on those kids, to see what they're doing with music to those people in their lives, is huge. Performing for schools for kids who don't have the opportunity to take band or music, it makes their world larger. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Denise structures the band program around opportunities to expand the notion of curriculum and where it takes place. She brings learning out of the classroom and into the community, allowing students to witness the power of music that can enliven an audience. It represents a conscious choice in her professional identity as a curriculum maker to build these moments into their travel to “collaboratively create more educative spaces” (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009, p. 142).

### **On the Move: Bumping Points on the Professional Path**

Widening ripples of the band program add to stories of curriculum making and identity making, overlapping with Denise's story to live by. The waters of an itinerant band program are not always calm, often made cloudy by tension and self-doubt. The shallow depths of in-classroom places are sometimes at odds with the perilous depths of out-of-classroom places. Denise worries about the fate of teachers who professionally are cast adrift in an itinerant band program:

There is a risk of losing some very talented teachers because they don't have anything to connect to outside of their program. As professionals, there are two lines of it, and it has to meld. Programs and curriculum should be allowed to be successful and thrive but not be detached from the rest of the school system. That is sort of where the itinerant program comes in. It's thriving, but it is just on the periphery of school identity too. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Our conversation about isolation and detachment from the larger school community leads me to consider how stories to live by of itinerant teachers may become fragmented or cut short over time. Clandinin et al. (2009a) suggested that as teachers' stories to live by shift with the changing school landscape, professional identity is uprooted and becomes less connected to the place of school:

[T]eachers' stories to live by; that is, who they are and are becoming as teachers, can shift ever so slightly on these rapidly changing landscapes to become stories to leave by, stories teachers begin to tell themselves when they can no longer live out their personal practical knowledge in their stories to live by and that then allow them to leave teaching. (p. 146)

I wonder if it would still be considered a story to leave by if you do not leave the educational world entirely, but simply exit the role as an itinerant teacher. I ask this question because after a decade of teaching band in multiple schools, I accepted a position as music educator in one school. Would this be considered a story to leave by or just a shift in my story to live by? It is not without a sense of irony that in the same month I opened the next chapter of my story to live by, I also entered a graduate program in which I would focus on identity and curriculum making in itinerant band programs.

Denise's stories show that as her professional journey continues to evolve, she experiences multiple bumping points that threaten to capsize her story to live by. The fast tempo and shifting places of her itinerant school story are felt as impediments to developing similar strong ties with colleagues to the ones she shares with students and their families. "Making visits in the staff room, having casual conversations, that's important, which is for the most part what I'm missing. It's a sacrifice that we make as professionals" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). She notes that while other teachers develop collegial cohesion as they carpool to their rural schools, her time on the highway is solitary. Denise worries about other teachers whose work takes place on the periphery of school, revealing her own discomfort of teaching in a program that runs parallel to the dominant school story:

I've established a routine and the program is not new, but depending on the school that I am in, they might have something in their mind that takes precedence. No matter what decision is made, that

program will not be disrupted even though the band program exists at the same time. This is kind of that professional, collegial working situation, even though this other program or other opportunity in school has not made wise decisions in their planning or organizing and they supersede what's going on with the band. I've had those kinds of conflicts. There is that flexibility element. You're superseding what I want to do and I am here to teach today. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

She feels her professional capacity is limited by conflicting plotlines that hinder her work with students. This may involve instances of band classes being cancelled for other school events or rehearsal spaces being overtaken for drama productions or athletic competitions.

While Denise views flexibility as an essential requirement for teaching within a pull-out program, she would prefer not to be the person that is constantly making accommodations. "I would like to be able to be not so flexible because I see that in some of my colleagues. There seems to be a hierarchy in curriculum" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). In the hierarchy of which she speaks, Denise positions the itinerant band program at the bottom. It is not a reflection of her own personal practical knowledge; rather, a statement of her experience of developing curriculum, working with students, and negotiating the school landscape in several communities:

You get to a point in your career where you constantly, constantly have to be flexible, the adjustor, the accommodating one, the cheerleader, and you just can't do this much longer. There are days like that, and I think that lots of band directors go that journey. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

Confronting the tensions between the personal and the professional in her life, Denise realizes that as someone who is passionate about music education and the curriculum making that takes place within its context, she is travelling closer and closer towards a shift in her story to live by.

Stories can often take us to unexpected places with unimagined experiences, ones that even an author is unaware of until the plot unfolds naturally. Storied lives are also ever-evolving and surprising to the people who live them. A dominant thread in the fluctuating narrative is a sense of self or identity. Looking at the storied lives of itinerant band teachers, it invites a sense of plurality as the teaching and learning takes place in

multiple settings. Denise's story to live by shifts from one that is content to work inside classroom spaces to shape curriculum and assessment with children to one that questions her place in the story of school. "Change, apparently, is not a parade that can be watched as it passes" (Geertz, 1995, p. 4). As she becomes more in tune with her teacher professional identity, she seeks more opportunities to share her knowledge with others. Being pigeonholed as "just a band teacher" leads her to think back on her journey to reach this current point of reflection and deliberation. I ask Denise about the danger of giving too much of one's self to her professional life, and she says that it is a genuine risk of teaching within an itinerant program:

I think initially because the program and the music were so important to me, being able to do something from grass roots and build it, I was willing to make that sacrifice. All of us professionals have travel journeys, and I've travelled that journey, so probably right now I'm seeking more stability in one location. That might not be for everybody. I'm a person of change, so I like to see what's next, but there might be a band director for whom this would be ideal. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

She recognizes that an itinerant life offers flexibility and a constant buzz of activity. It is a rhythm of professional life that is now more fatiguing than energizing. Denise's narrative, set for fifteen years along the shifting landscape of itinerancy, details a personal sacrifice in time and energy to live her professional story as an itinerant band teacher. She describes it as a daily challenge to sustain a positive sense of professional identity while travelling in and out of school landscapes.

Geertz (1995) wrote that one "could contrast then and now, before and after, describe what life used to be like, what it has since become" (p. 1). Reflecting on her work alongside children in multiple school places, Denise recognizes the need for a stopping point in terms of giving too much of herself. "I could have burnt out in a huge way, sooner than maybe I'm going to" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). She positively stories curriculum making opportunities in her itinerant position, and considers relationship building as an integral component in her story to live by. She appreciates the connection to her students and their families, a community that has bolstered her journeys across the school landscapes. As her teacher practical knowledge

advances, she shifts her vantage point to one that is open to change, ready to shift her story again in order to live the next chapter in her story:

I want to use my years of teaching, developing a program, being a leader, and I want to put that to use in a single school. I could teach music, or I could teach fine arts, or I could teach whatever. I'm interested in leadership. I'm interested in having more of an influence in the culture of a single school, putting my practice of what I've done with the band program in a single school. (Transcript from research interview, 2014)

In Denise's story, change is a plotline of optimism and opportunity, tension and travelling. Through change, she now seeks stability in her story to live by. She also seeks belonging and acknowledgement for her role as an educator. As Clandinin et al. (2009a) suggested, "while much has changed, change will continue" (p. 142). Denise's story is bright with the possibility of future stories, stories that are relived and retold in light of her experience as an itinerant band teacher. She notes that "ultimately students are seeking a place in their life to find where they're going, and who their connections are" (Transcript from research interview, 2014). The same could be said for their teachers.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *CODA: FINAL REFLECTIONS ON ITINERANCY AND IDENTITY*

Narrative inquiry is the methodology through which I investigated the storied professional experiences of Grace, Cole, and Denise. I set out to lay their stories alongside my own in dialogue about teacher identity and how it is constructed in itinerant band programs. Recognizing the relational nature of this research, I listened to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who argued that narrative inquirers

must become fully involved, must "fall in love" with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscapes on which they all live. (p. 81)

Immersing myself in their stories and travelling alongside in school routines, I endeavoured to see their lives up close as individuals while also thinking about how they fit in the system as a whole. My innate curiosity in people's stories led me to consider how pieces of professional identity were scattered across diverse school landscapes. The resulting narrative inquiry focused on the following research puzzles: *How is teacher identity constructed in itinerant band programs? What tensions emerge as music educators negotiate the landscape of multiple schools? How is curriculum scaffolded by the band community in multiple schools? How are possibilities for curriculum making understood within the framework of itinerancy?*

Throughout this journey, I wondered how travelling across the landscape of multiple schools influenced their role as curriculum makers and sparked tension in their practical personal knowledge. Clandinin and Murphy (2009) wrote "the experiences of participants and researchers frame the entire research process, from situating the researcher within the research puzzle, to living in the field, to composing field and research texts" (p. 601). My experience as an itinerant band teacher placed me in the metaphoric parade (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998), but this time I entered as researcher rather than conductor. The role of researcher forced me to pay attention to the rhythms, routines, and relationships in school life that are often ignored in the minutiae of daily interactions.

## **Revisiting Teacher Identity: Connections to Itinerancy**

Inquiring into who itinerant band teachers are in the place of school, a plurality of experience was reflected in the ongoing process of identity construction. Denise, Cole, and Grace defined their work alongside students and staff in a variety of ways: conductor, counsellor, facilitator, disciplinarian, colleague, and outsider. I could use the same words to describe my narrative as an itinerant teacher. The construction of professional identity is a transitory process, with itinerant band teachers shifting between multiple teaching spaces and variable school landscapes:

At any point in time, we might catch a glimpse of one position, only for a moment, before it shifts and we glimpse another position. Over the course of our lives, our repertoire of positions and contexts undergoes revisions, as new positions and contexts are added, existing positions and contexts are reshaped, and obsolete positions and contexts are released. (Bernard, 2005, p. 5)

Looking at the early stages of their careers, I observed that these years were spent gathering practical knowledge as educators and building band programs to reflect their teaching philosophies. Grace focused on creating strong interpersonal connections, Cole established thoughtful routines that smoothed transitions, and Denise created a culture of learning that extended beyond the classroom and into the community. As their practice as itinerant band teachers grew, they expressed concern over not having a strong daily presence in the lives of their students. From their vantage points, it had the potential to lead to gaps in curriculum, lack of continuity, and feelings of disengagement.

Contrapuntal lines of time, place, and relationship continued to intersect with one another, some moving in relative harmony, while others created bumping points that influenced perceptions of personal practical knowledge. The plotline of feeling like a substitute teacher or visitor within their own classroom and school community resonated with a similar story from my narrative beginnings. I understood what it felt like to be a nameless or faceless character in the dominant story of school. These experiences suggest a professional distance that itinerant teachers face when travelling between schools, with little time to socialize or connect with colleagues. Students are similarly challenged to connect with teachers that they do not see on a daily basis. It

may lead to further tension over engagement and respect for an itinerant teacher's role as curriculum maker. These experiences hint at how itinerant band programs and their teachers are storied within the wider school story.

The shifting framework of itinerancy compounds the variable nature of teacher identity. Itinerant band teachers experience temporary shifts in self as they make sense of the fluid and changing world around them. Inquiring into their stories, Denise, Grace, and Cole alternatively felt supported and isolated from fellow teaching staff and the "main text" (Donoghue, 1983) of school. They told stories that revealed passion for music and a willingness to adapt to the changing social dynamics of teaching in several schools. Relationships became the glue that held their itinerant programs together. All three spoke of powerful experiences in curriculum making, building connections with students, and collaborating in collective music making. These moments were expressed as highlights in their stories, energized by the dynamic and shared rhythms of the music program. Reflecting on my own stories of itinerancy, positive memories of impromptu jam sessions, student-directed learning, and humorous classroom exchanges remain in the forefront. As my teacher professional identity evolved, so too did the identity of the learners in the program. Dewey (1928/1954) described the fusion of individual and collective meaning making as a conjoint experience. Like the musical term, *con anima*, the participatory nature of band ensembles encourages artistic expression and conscious engagement with curriculum. Connections are formed, community relations are established, and curriculum is composed in collaborative ways. These are the building blocks that shape teacher identity in itinerant band programs.

### **Waves of Dissonance in the School Landscape: Time, Place, and Space**

The band community takes place within the larger school community, reflecting different perspectives on curriculum and identity making. There are multiple composers of curriculum within itinerant band programs. Students, teacher, parents, and other staff members add to this structure with their contribution to the rituals of band. Affected by perpetual motion in their professional lives, Denise, Grace, and Cole told stories about passion, enthusiasm, disengagement, and isolation. As their stories to live by shifted into uncertain territory, they spoke of diverse experiences that took place in-and out-of classroom places (Clandinin &

Connelly, 1995). Looking into classroom spaces for curriculum making opportunities, collaboration and inquiry were cast as positive plotlines in their school narratives. Classrooms may be a "teacher's dwelling place" (Aoki, 2012, p. 43), while the spaces beyond them can interfere with professional knowledge and personal sense of belonging. Spending a significant amount of time outside of this protected place, travelling teachers spend their professional lives trying to navigate the bumping points and parallel paths of this uncharted territory. Gathering artifacts and conversation about the storied existence of three itinerant band teachers, I paid attention to tensions over curriculum hierarchy, loss of instructional time and place, and collegial isolation are plotlines that exist in these school "borderlands" (Anzaldua, 1987). Being attentive to these spaces allowed for a re-examination of how time, place, and social relationships are negotiated in the school landscape.

Addressing the temporal element of professional lives, participants shared a general viewpoint that time was a scarce resource in itinerant band programs. Grace worried about instilling a sense of purpose and identity for the program in twice weekly meetings. While some strides were being made, they would often be derailed with too many days in between, as students slid back into the rhythms of their daily school routine. She experienced concern over having enough time to attend to discipline issues, and being perceived as a teacher who is uncaring due to time constraints. Cole's narrative described rising tensions over lost class time, with students in one particular class missing a large number of classes and subsequently falling behind their counterparts at other schools. While he respected the importance of their large-scale arts project, Cole had grown tired of his class being viewed as expendable in the curriculum hierarchy. Denise experienced similar tension over establishing structure and routine, feeling compromised as other school programs asked for more flexibility than she was now prepared to give. Time was in short supply. Working in two or three schools every day, Denise struggled to sustain her personal identity amidst a hectic and transitory teaching schedule.

In- and out-of classroom places appeared as a narrative thread with both positive and negative recollections in the school stories of Grace, Cole, and Denise. Like them, I have witnessed a release of self-consciousness in classroom spaces. Rehearsal rooms offered a sense of familiarity and comfort, except when confronted with the absence of a place to call your own. Cole's place in four schools was deeply affected by his

role as an itinerant band teacher. He shared four different teaching spaces, each with their own plotline of how band is made to feel welcome in the curricular landscape. At times he felt pushed to the sideline, feeling like his work took a back seat to the other programs that shared the space. The staff room appeared as an artifact of identity, with contrasting moments of collegial bonding at Ashford Park and professional isolation at James Powell School. Grace's identity was shaped by the implications of physical space and professional place in her schools. She wore several hats in her teaching life, shaping curriculum with students in the subjects of band and arts education. Transforming instructional spaces throughout the day had the potential to interfere with precious contact time with students. The pull-out model also brought about bumping points in her story to live by. Grace worked to establish a strong sense of identity for the band program in schools, yet there was some resistance to acknowledging its place in the mainstream culture of the school community. Denise's narrative also verbalized unhappiness about place, although more specifically her position in the school landscape as a music educator. She felt restricted to being thought of as "just a band teacher," which conflicted with a desire to share her practical and personal knowledge with a wider community. At a crossroads of professional identity, Denise wondered if it was time to change her story as an itinerant band teacher.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) recognized that "the specificity of location is crucial" (p. 480). I would add that having an established place in terms of professional identity is equally important. I was called to pay attention to the juxtaposition of joyful music making that happens in band rooms based on my narrative as an itinerant band teacher. One year in particular grabs my attention because it was a troubling time in my teaching career in which I did not have a permanent rehearsal space to call my own. As our school population grew, the first space that was converted to another homeroom was the band room. Indicative of its inferior status, the band program at École Coldstream School bounced throughout the year from the art room, to the elementary music room, and various storage spaces in between before finally landing on the school stage. "What is a teacher without a classroom?" was a question that I asked when thinking about the ways that curriculum and identity has unfolded in my story to live by. In conversation with the work of Schwab (1973), "there are still students and subject matter to be taught, but in the absence of a designated learning space, I felt more of a gypsy

than educator” (Class Journal Entry, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012). While I had always taught in multiple schools, this was the first time that I did not have a designated teaching space to call my own.

I considered myself a failure for not standing up to school administration and demanding to keep my classroom. Instead, I accepted the situation with relatively little protest, but a good deal of resentment based on my perception that band was classified as a low-status subject (Paechter & Head, 1996). If my program (and by extension, myself) did not merit a teaching space, how much respect would it receive from administration, parents, and the children/youth themselves? Tensions surfaced as my story to live by, which regarded music as an important part of school curriculum and the focus of my professional career, bumped against the overcrowded story of our school (Clandinin et al., 2009b). At the time, I felt more like a babysitter than an authentic form of my teaching self. My understanding of what it meant to be a teacher was to be fully engaged and present in the rehearsal experience, focused on leading students to a greater understanding of the material and one another. Looking back and reflecting on this experience, however, enables me to understand these “tensions in a more relational way, that is, tensions that live between people, events, or things, and are a way of creating a between space, a space which can exist in educative ways” (Clandinin et al., 2009b, p. 82). While I did not feel inspired or successful while living this story, I can observe positive aspects that influenced my identity as a teacher while retelling it:

In some ways the year without a home meant that I had to be even more dynamic and passionate for music if my students were to have any chance of enjoying their time in Band. I really developed a strong rapport with this particular group of kids, and enjoyed my time with them. That being said, I would not go back there and repeat the experience of being a *truly* itinerant Band teacher. (Class Journal Entry, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

Revisiting my narratives for plotlines of dissonance, I look forward to reliving my stories more in-tune with professional identity and open to “new imaginings of the ideal and the possible” (Barone, 2001, p. 736) along the school landscape.

## **Living Curriculum: Connections to Future Stories**

I am reminded by Pinnegar (as cited in Clandinin et al., 2006) to "hold open both the beginning and endings of the narratives presented (p. 179). Now in the final stages of this musical inquiry, I still wonder about identity making in schools. In particular, how does curriculum making in an itinerant band program shape student identity? How do they connect with their teacher and subject matter in this context? While children and youth are not the focus of this research, they are at the centre of our work in schools. Inquiring into teacher identity gives us a better of understanding of how we open spaces for children/youth to develop their own sense of self in curriculum. Stories of teachers' and children's lived experience cast both as "holders and makers of knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 1).

Greene (1995) argued that "individual identity takes form in the context of relationship and dialogue; our concern must be to create the kinds of contexts that nurture – for all children – the sense of worthiness and agency" (p. 41). From this collection of teacher stories, the band room is depicted as a safe place for children and their teachers to extend feelings of self-worth and belonging. Grace infused humour into her work as itinerant band teacher and arts educator, motivating children to take part in a pull-out program that celebrated learning milestones along the way. Cole encouraged students to connect with one another and still remain focused on their collective goals, looking ahead to group performances and trips to the music festival. Denise offered students from seven rural schools the opportunity to create an eighth school, creating a unified community of learners with their ensemble. The culture of band (Morrison, 2001) is characterized as dynamic, diverse, and interactive. It had a living, breathing identity that is partially constructed by teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu (Schwab, 1973). In the case of itinerant programs, it takes place in multiple settings on the school landscape. Students are immersed in musicking (Small, 1998) and curriculum making alongside their teacher. As stories are composed in unison, curriculum making represents "teachers' and students' lives together" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). It is wrapped up with assessment making and identity making, with school stories intersecting with personal experience (Huber et al., 2011). Individual identities dance with the collective identity of the group as curriculum-as-lived is brought to life (Aoki, 2012) in an ensemble experience.

Through our conversations, we storied itinerant band teachers as reflective, dynamic, and very human in reacting to tension filled moments. Over time and across places, they shared experiences in curriculum making of lives. Beside the participants, I told my school stories as an itinerant band teacher. By telling these stories, we made sense of our professional lives. Teacher knowledge was complicated when spread across multiple schools, eliciting emotional responses and a daily balancing act of staying in tune with shifting landscapes. When balance became impossible, tensions emerged as our beliefs about curriculum and our role in it was challenged. These tensions compelled us to question what worked and what didn't. We unconsciously shifted our practices based on these experiences, pushing us forward into an evolution of teacher identity. Along the way there were bumping points that required attention and personal and social issues that needed tending. Ultimately, we were asked "to move back and forth" (Greene, 1995, p. 11) between professional and personal narratives in understanding the construction of teacher identity in itinerant band programs. As our stories revealed, "more has changed, and more disjointedly, than one at first imagines" (Geertz, 2005, p. 4).

Forward-looking stories (Clandinin et al., 2006) can be lived and told based on these experiences, shaping curriculum and lives with changed perspectives on temporality, sociality, and place. Curriculum making happens in different places, with relational dynamics and milieu contributing greatly to the experience of both teacher and learner. Conversations about itinerancy add to the larger dialogue about teacher professional knowledge, inquiring into why and how we shape curriculum alongside children. As I imagine new ways of living stories of identity and curriculum, the notion of world travel returns (Lugones, 1987). When we allow ourselves to "shift from being one person to being a different person" (p. 11), the world is made larger. In the context of schools, world travelling opens the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) and offers "new lenses through which to look out at and interpret the educative acts that keep human beings and their cultures alive" (Greene, 1995, p. 18).

### **Teaching and Travelling in Tune: Narrative Inquiry**

Listening to the stories of my participants, we collaboratively composed research texts and discussed plotlines within them. Narrative threads began to emerge: shaping teacher identity through musical

relationships, living curriculum as community, and waves of dissonance in the school landscape. As I attended to these issues, I thought about how I would respond to necessary research questions such as “‘So what?’ and ‘Who cares?’”(Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 600). On a personal level, I am left inextricably changed by the experience of researching the storied lives of itinerant band teachers. It allowed me to see how my perspectives on curriculum making have been shaped by my experience of teaching in multiple schools. Establishing connections with students and staff became an integral component of my professional work, supplanting “curriculum as plan” (Aoki, 1993) for a curriculum of lives. I think back to moments of tension, understanding that these were primarily experiences in which I felt a lack of place or identity in the dominant school story. Looking forward, I have a greater sense of how the curriculum of music intersects with the curriculum of community. I have shifted to a place in which I am eager to put theory and beliefs into practice, returning to my classroom to relive my story as a band teacher. I am left with a renewed sense of wonder about how identity making and curriculum making continues to shift in the context of band programs. While I no longer cross in and out of the school landscape on a daily basis, I recognize that other colleagues in my school and professional community still do. Itinerancy is not limited to band programs; rather, it is an experience shared by speech pathologists, school counsellors, arts education teachers, language teachers, and Resource specialists. The inquiry experience allowed me to see more clearly the faces and stories of these colleagues who work in multiple schools. Ever curious, I wonder how their experience of itinerancy has shaped teacher professional identity and curriculum making.

Considering the “so what” factor of teacher identity in itinerant band programs, I believe there are transferable learnings that can be taken from the stories of Grace, Cole, Denise, and myself as a narrative inquirer. Lifted from these narratives of experience, practical and personal knowledge is told from a position of other. Stories of itinerant band teachers are not often heard, as demonstrated by the general absence of research on itinerancy in instrumental education and its impact on identity. Listening to their voices, it draws attention to plotlines of isolation and interaction within itinerancy. It offers insight into how curriculum making can be positively shaped and negatively damaged by the positioning of band in the school community. Students and

teachers are entangled in an indiscernible web of identity and curriculum. When one struggles or succeeds, the other feels its effect. Inquiring into the storied existence of itinerant band teachers opens channels of dialogue about how the arts are often marginalized, and how the nature of itinerant programs perpetuate its existence on the periphery of school. The “borderlands” described by Anzaldua (1987) reflect the ways in which itinerant band programs are positioned in the grand narrative – separate, unpredictable, and subject to the attitudes of mainstream schooling. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) reminded us of the importance of “naming the struggle of living in the borderlands and acknowledging both the emergence of possibilities and the violence that accompany the emergence of subtly different but nonetheless conflicting ontological and epistemological stances” (p. 61). The full school story cannot be told without acknowledging the work of all teachers, including ones who travel back and forth across several landscapes.

Lugones (1987) continues to inspire the creation of future school stories, ones told from multiple perspectives with openness to transformation. She suggested that travelling to someone’s world is a way of identifying with them ... because by traveling to their world we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. Only when we have travelled to each other’s worlds are we fully subjects to each other. (p.17)

It is this form of world travelling that places us in the car alongside itinerant band teachers, allowing us to perceive how their work in multiple schools shapes professional identity. It leaves the traveller with a wider definition of what it means to be a teacher and greater sense for curriculum making opportunities:

Aware, then, on some level of the integrity and coherence of another, we are called upon to use our imaginations to enter into that world, to discover how it looks and feels from the vantage point of the person whose world it is. That doesn’t mean we approve it or even necessarily appreciate it. It does mean that we extend our experience sufficiently to grasp it as a human possibility. (Greene, 1995, p.4)

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