

Introductory Paper for the ED7050 Comprehensive e-Portfolio

Krista L. Bryson

Faculty of Education, University of Prince Edward Island

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Supervisor: Dr. Sean Wiebe

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Introduction

This introductory paper accompanies my doctoral e-portfolio and reflects on the development of my scholarly identity across four core competencies: knowledge of theory, knowledge of research, professional competency, and instructional competency. Taken together, the artifacts included in this portfolio document an unfolding process of inquiry in which classroom teaching experience, professional leadership, doctoral coursework, and early scholarly writing weave together to inform my identity as a practitioner-researcher.

The portfolio includes: a theoretically informed paper examining 25 years of *Canadian Music Educator*; a published literature review developed through research assistant work on executive functioning; two professional competency artifacts documenting peer review contributions and equity-focused leadership; and two instructional competency artifacts, including a teaching dossier and a letter recognizing my work as a guest lecturer in teacher education.

More than describing a collection of work, this introductory paper serves as a narrated account of how I arrived at the present moment of my doctoral journey: the questions that brought me here, the theories that helped me make sense of them, and the scholarly direction now taking shape.

My Journey from Music Teacher to Practitioner-Researcher

My entry into doctoral study was inspired by questions that had been developing for years within my professional practice. As a secondary music educator, professional musician, curriculum collaborator, and leader within provincial and national organizations connected to music education and social justice, I found myself increasingly wrestling with issues of legitimacy, authority, creativity, and belonging in public school music programs. These questions

emerged gradually, first appearing in my exhausted efforts to make large-ensemble music education more inclusive while directing a high school wind ensemble and teaching instrumental courses designed primarily to support ensemble programming. My focus on representing diverse musical practices through repertoire and pedagogy evolved into deeper curiosity about the assumptions shaping secondary music education and the legitimacy of particular musical practices within school settings.

Serendipitously, this unsettling aligned with an opportunity in June 2015 to collaborate with Vicki Allen-Cook, arts curriculum specialist at the Department of Education and Early Years, alongside a select group of other K-12 Prince Edward Island music educators. Our primary goal was to reimagine and redesign the K-12 music education framework in Prince Edward Island schools. Working at the high school level, this resulted in revisions to the instrumental curriculum and the development of a new pathway of courses titled Popular Music Performance (PMP). I was closely involved with this work and piloted the first PMP course within the Three Oaks Senior High School music program in Fall 2020.

Stepping off the podium and releasing the grip on my baton to embrace the unfamiliar territory of popular music practices was both unsettling and energizing. I entered this new, still largely undefined, classroom structure, uncertain how the course should function, yet almost immediately struck by its capacity to reach students whose musical lives had not previously found a place within school programming. Something was working, and it sparked my curiosity not only about what I was doing pedagogically, but about better understanding the unique musical community we were building and the diverse musical practices within it.

Embracing cognitive conflict, I simultaneously held onto the slowly modernizing world of tradition and excellence in concert band, alongside a widely unfamiliar, liberatory feeling that

the traditions I worked so hard to honour did not fully account for the diverse ways students were already engaging with music outside of school. Long before I had the theoretical language to describe it, I sensed that something about the taken-for-granted norms of secondary music education—particularly the assumption that music programs should revolve primarily around large-ensemble participation—was beginning to shift.

Doctoral study surfaced the language I needed to articulate this disruption. Coursework, seminars, and ongoing conversations with faculty and colleagues provided conceptual tools that allowed me to examine patterns I had previously experienced only intuitively. This portfolio captures the beginning of this journey, showing how questions that once lived only in my classroom practice have taken shape as focused scholarly inquiry.

Understanding Practice Through Theory

Moving this work into academia required intellectual frameworks capable of helping me understand not only the tensions I was observing in practice, but how those tensions were produced and sustained within broader educational systems. Engagement with post-structural and feminist theory sharpened my understanding of education as a relational practice shaped by broader systems of power. bell hooks' (1994) writing on engaged pedagogy and education as a practice of freedom affirms that theory can emerge from lived experience and return to it in transformative ways. Her work helps me recognize that the questions taking shape in my classroom were not merely pedagogical concerns but were shaped by history, power, and cultural assumptions embedded in schooling.

Reading Michel Foucault (1977a) and Gayatri Spivak further deepened this shift. Foucault's analysis of power and normalization illustrates how particular educational traditions come to appear natural, rigorous, and legitimate through repeated institutional practice. This lens

allowed me to examine more closely how large-ensemble traditions became established as dominant structures within secondary music education, placing other musical practices firmly at the margins. Complementing hooks and Foucault, Gayatri Spivak's (1988, 2013) discussion of aesthetic education as a "double bind" offered language for the tensions I was experiencing as both a practitioner and emerging scholar; in other words, as an insider and outsider. Her work helped me think more carefully about transformation within systems that simultaneously enable and constrain it, and about the intellectual and ethical work of inhabiting a both/and position rather than collapsing complexity into easy opposition. Recognizing that positionality is fluid and situational, I can value the traditions that shaped me as a musician and music educator while critically examining their limits, and I can pursue scholarly rigour while remaining grounded in classroom practice. I now better understand this "constant tug" between two worlds as strengthening my insider-outside position.

Together, these thinkers did more than provide concepts for coursework. Reading, revisiting, and ruminating on their work began to shape how I interpret practice, understand the field of music education, and approach inquiry itself. I became increasingly interested in thinking with theory as a way to trace tensions, read institutions, and make sense of educational experience. This orientation has continued through my engagement with post-qualitative scholarship, particularly the work of Elizabeth St. Pierre (2018; 2016), whose writing challenges researchers to move beyond methodological prescription toward inquiry that is responsive, theoretically generative, and open to complexity. These ideas resonate strongly with my developing research orientation and have influenced my interest in approaches that embrace multiplicity, emergence, and interpretive experimentation in educational research.

Knowledge of Theory

Artifact 1: Theoretically-informed Paper for *Canadian Music Educator* Special Research Issue to be published in July 2026

The theoretical ideas I discussed earlier began to shape how I read the field of music education. This shift is reflected in my paper *Unfinished Tracks: Listening for Change in Canadian Secondary Music Education Through 25 Years of The Canadian Music Educator*, written in response to a call for papers for a special research issue of the *Canadian Music Educator* journal focused on advancing music teaching and learning in contemporary contexts. Dr. Wiebe and I agreed that this substantial research project would serve as the culmination of my Directed Studies 7050 course.

In this paper, which has been accepted for publication and is currently in the final stages of review, I examine the *Canadian Music Educator* journal archive as both a historical record and a discursive site where professional ideas about music education are debated, normalized, challenged, and reshaped over time. My approach draws on an entanglement of interpretive perspectives that emerged through engagement with the archive. An early influence was Nicholas Ng-A-Fook's (2014) work on narrative inquiry and contrapuntal reading of curriculum history. Contrapuntal reading places dominant narratives alongside overlooked or resistant voices so that tensions and silences remain audible rather than being smoothed into a single story. Alongside contrapuntal interpretation, Michel Foucault's (1977b) genealogical method provided an additional lens for interpreting the archive. Genealogy resists searching for neat origins or linear progress and instead traces discontinuities, tensions, and shifting practices through which particular forms of knowledge become normalized within institutions. This perspective helped me examine how the large-ensemble rehearsal model became established as a dominant structure in Canadian secondary music education, while conversations about creativity, legitimacy, student

agency, and alternative pedagogical approaches periodically challenge or complicate that dominance.

Rather than presenting a systematic review, the paper offers a selective interpretive reading that traces how conversations surface, recede, and re-emerge across twenty-five years of professional discourse. I read the journal archive chronologically and listened for recurring discussions about diverse musical practices, legitimacy, creativity, and equity, with a focus on secondary music education. I began to see more clearly how theoretical frameworks can guide the interpretation of professional discourse and educational practice. *Unfinished Tracks* demonstrates my growing ability to apply theoretical frameworks not only as lenses for reflection, but as analytic tools for examining the assumptions and conversations shaping music education.

Knowledge of Research

Developing as a Researcher: From Practice-Based Inquiry to Scholarly Research

As the PMP program continued to take shape and solidify its place as an essential part of the Three Oaks Senior High music program, I began engaging in what I now recognize as intuitively driven research practices in an effort to better understand what was working so well and what could be improved, further developed, or expanded. Much of this inquiry emerged through daily classroom observation and interaction with students. I frequently noted key moments, questions, and insights during rehearsals and collaborative work, and I accumulated hours of video footage documenting both successes and challenges as they unfolded in real time.

In addition to these observations, I gathered structured course feedback at the end of each semester. Students were invited to reflect on aspects of the course that most supported their musicianship and to suggest activities, topics, or assignments they believed would be relevant

and engaging. After several years of offering the program, I began asking graduating students in the PMP621 class to reflect on their progress through the prerequisite courses and to propose a learning sequence for the PMP421 and PMP521 courses that would better lead to a senior (grade 12 level) course focused on artistic development. Their reflections consistently emphasized the importance of building foundational knowledge and musical skills early so that the final course could focus more intentionally on developing artistry with increased independence. Equally striking across these reflections was the consistent emphasis students placed on collaboration with peers and the strong sense of belonging that emerged through these musical relationships—an insight that would later become central to how I began thinking about participation and legitimacy within school music programs.

During this period, I also found myself grappling with a growing philosophical tension between my traditional large-ensemble teaching practice and the emerging culture of the PMP classroom. I had moved so far both philosophically and pedagogically away from my wind ensemble background that I often felt shaken with cognitive conflict: attempting to maintain a meaningful and rigorous concert band program aligned with expectations of success in that field, while simultaneously witnessing students in the PMP classroom come alive in entirely different ways as musicians. After repeatedly witnessing moments like one in which a quiet male student, nearly invisible in the third clarinet section of the wind ensemble, suddenly became a star in the PMP classroom—singing and accompanying himself on piano with one of the most beautiful voices I had ever heard—I realized that I had been fundamentally changed as a teacher. I knew I needed to better understand what was happening in this space and how these insights might be shared with others who might be open to exploring similar programming.

These burning questions eventually became so intense that I decided to return to university and pursue a PhD in Educational Studies, formalizing my trajectory toward becoming a practitioner-researcher. Bringing my lived experience and intuitive research habits into an academic setting initially felt like my greatest challenge. Anticipating this transition, I enrolled in a master's-level Introduction to Research Methods course in the summer of 2023, taught by Dr. Sean Wiebe, who would later become my doctoral supervisor, recognizing that developing a deeper understanding of research approaches, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks would be essential to preparing for doctoral work. This experience strengthened my readiness for doctoral study by helping me better understand how research in educational studies is conceptualized and conducted.

During the first year of the PhD program, my understanding of research expanded significantly through focused study of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, each addressed through dedicated coursework while also appearing throughout seminars and independent study. The quantitative research methods course initially felt the furthest removed from my lived experience as a teacher and musician, presenting a steep but valuable learning curve. Through this course, I practiced statistical analysis techniques, including teaching classmates how to apply a specific inferential statistical method, collaborating with a peer to enter and analyze survey data in SPSS, and designing a survey instrument to explore a specific construct. We gathered data, analyzed results, drew conclusions, and presented our findings in a properly formatted research paper and presentation. This experience significantly deepened my understanding of both the possibilities and limitations of quantitative inquiry and strengthened my ability to engage critically with academic literature.

The study I designed examined students' perceptions of self-confidence in relation to participation in the PMP program. While the project served primarily as a learning exercise in the course, it revealed promising avenues for developing a refined, ethically sound research study in the future. Although my current interests lean more toward qualitative and theoretical approaches, the knowledge gained in this course has broadened my methodological awareness and positioned me to participate in a wider range of research conversations.

Artifact 2: Published Literature Review

The artifact included to support the Knowledge of Research competency is a literature review published in the *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, co-written with Synthia MacEachern, Dr. Terri Jackson, and Dr. Cinthya Guzman as part of a multi-year research project exploring executive functioning supports for neurodivergent individuals. The project focuses on developing and implementing workshops designed to support educators, parents, and community members who work with neurodivergent learners.

This publication represents my first experience navigating the peer-review process. The process required carefully reviewing feedback, revising and refining the manuscript, and adhering closely to the journal's formatting and submission guidelines. The guidance provided by Aurra Startup, editor of CJNSE, and her editorial team was both supportive and instructive, helping me build confidence in the scholarly revision process. This experience also prepared me to participate as a peer reviewer for the Canadian Music Educator special research issue.

Professional Competencies

Artifact 3: Letter from Dr. Francine Morin and Dr. Beryl Peters on Peer Review Feedback

In the call for abstracts for the CME Special Research issue, co-editors Dr. Francine Morin and Dr. Beryl Peters indicated that contributors invited to submit full manuscripts might

also be asked to participate in the peer-review process. As part of this process, I was invited to review two manuscript submissions. The editors provided a structured review template and guidance on how to approach the evaluation.

The first manuscript presented significant challenges in several areas, including organization, clarity, and alignment with the journal's scholarly expectations. Drawing on my years of teaching experience, I worked to strike a balance between offering clear, constructive critique while still recognizing the potential in the author's ideas. Dr. Morin and Dr. Peters later noted their appreciation for the way my review balanced critical feedback with encouragement and constructive direction, and they subsequently invited me to review a second manuscript. Interestingly, the second submission presented a different set of challenges entirely, requiring a different diagnostic approach. I found the process energizing as I combined my teacher identity with emerging research skills to carefully analyze and respond in ways that felt intellectually stimulating and professionally meaningful. The artifact included in this section is a letter from Dr. Morin and Dr. Peters acknowledging my contribution to this process.

Artifact 4: Letter from Andrea Garland on involvement with DEEL Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

A second artifact included in this section is a letter from Andrea Garland, Social Emotional Learning consultant with the PEI Department of Education and Early Years (DEEL). My work with Andrea Garland and her colleague, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant, Debbie Langston, began through participation in the development and implementation of the PRISM anti-racism training initiative for educators and school administrators across Prince Edward Island. Now in its fourth year, I continue to support this work directly by facilitating a

Google Classroom of resources and ongoing professional learning opportunities in collaboration with Andrea and Debbie.

More recently, I was invited by Andrea and Debbie to serve as a teacher representative on a provincial advisory committee that brings together stakeholders from the Public Schools Branch, the PEI Teachers' Federation, the University of Prince Edward Island Faculty of Education, and community organizations representing marginalized groups, including PEERS Alliance, the Immigrant and Refugee Services Association of PEI, and the Black Cultural Society. While I initially questioned what perspective I might bring as a middle-class settler educator, Andrea and Debbie emphasized the value of my role in connecting classroom practice with broader systemic conversations.

Recognizing my own privilege remains central to my work, alongside a commitment to deepen my understanding of systemic oppression and its impact on education. I recognize that the responsibility for addressing inequity should not fall solely on marginalized communities. Rather, those who hold institutional privilege must be willing to do the work of challenging systems, purposefully collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and respectfully amplifying marginalized voices. Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern has sharpened this awareness by emphasizing that marginalized groups are often unheard within dominant systems of power. My responsibility is not to speak for others, but to help create conditions in which their voices can be recognized. Seeking meaningful and respectful collaboration with diverse perspectives shapes my curriculum work and classroom practice, and guides my emerging research, informing how I understand the possibilities of secondary music education grounded in equity, agency, belonging, and a broader understanding of legitimate musical practice.

Instructional Competencies

Artifact 5: Teaching Dossier, UPEI Music Department (Sessional Instructor)

This tension between working within established traditions while questioning their limits also shaped my experience as a sessional instructor in the UPEI Music Department from Fall 2023 through Winter 2025. Considering the philosophical and pedagogical unfolding I've described throughout this paper, the opportunity to teach within a post-secondary music education program rooted primarily in art music traditions presented both a professional milestone and a meaningful challenge. In the attached teaching dossier, I focus primarily on my work teaching Percussion Techniques during the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters. I provide a detailed overview of my teaching philosophy and reflect on insights that emerged from the experience.

Artifact 6: Letter from Ardith Haley on Guest Lecturing at Acadia University

In addition to the teaching dossier, I include a letter from Ardith Haley, adjunct professor at Acadia University and a long-time mentor in my career as a music educator. Ardith has long balanced a deep commitment to the wind ensemble tradition with a heart-centred approach to music education, emphasizing both musical excellence and the importance of breaking down barriers that limit student participation. As my own teaching evolved away from traditional wind ensemble practices, I initially felt uncertain about how colleagues rooted in that tradition might respond. Ardith embraced the transformation wholeheartedly, quickly recognizing the impact that the PMP program was having on students, the school community, and my teaching, and invited me to deliver a guest lecture to a cohort of secondary music education students in January 2025.

The session titled *From Band Room to Music Room* featured an overview of how I implemented PMP alongside the longstanding concert band program, including reflections on the challenges and successes I faced along the way, as well as performance footage featuring powerful student testimonials. Feedback from Ardith and her students further confirmed my interest in engaging with educators—and future educators—about the possibilities that emerge when we expand our understanding of music teaching. This invitation led to a second guest lecture with Paul Hutten’s master’s in music education cohort at Acadia in July 2025 and a virtual visit with Ardith’s new secondary education cohort in February 2026. Reading Ardith’s description of my work as a practitioner-researcher is particularly meaningful. Her recognition of my ability to communicate complex ideas clearly reflects a strength that sits at the heart of my continued doctoral work.

Conclusion

As I reflect on the artifacts assembled within this portfolio, I see more clearly that the questions guiding my doctoral work developed gradually through the entanglement of classroom experience, curriculum work, professional leadership, and scholarly reading and writing. This portfolio documents that unfolding. It traces how a practitioner, unsettled by the limits of taken-for-granted assumptions in secondary music education, began to seek language, theory, and method capable of making sense of what practice was revealing. I also see recurring commitments that now feel foundational to my identity as a practitioner-researcher: a belief that educational practice must be critically examined rather than merely inherited, a commitment to equity and belonging, and a growing understanding that theory and practice work best when they are deeply intertwined.

This brings me to the present moment. I no longer understand the Popular Music Performance program itself as the sole focus of my inquiry. What now feels most urgent is the larger question it has helped bring into view: what happens when school music broadens its understanding of what counts as legitimate musical practice? What becomes possible for participation, creativity, and belonging when the range of musical practices recognized within secondary music education begins to expand? How does participation in this program impact students far beyond musical understanding? These are the questions in the room for me now. They are the questions I am carrying forward into my dissertation work.

In that sense, this portfolio marks an arrival; a moment of greater clarity about the kind of scholar I am becoming, the commitments that ground my work, and the burning questions I am now prepared to pursue with greater depth, care, and theoretical intention.

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