

# THE FRAGMENTED JOURNEY OF BECOMING/BEING A TEACHER: A POETIC *CURRERE* ON TEACHER WELLNESS

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Being well and staying well at work and at home is an important aspect for teachers. The *Leadership Quality Standards* set out by the government of the Province of Alberta Canada identify that, in order to foster effective relationships, educational leaders must “demonstrat[e] a commitment to the health and well-being of all teachers, staff and students” (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). In connection to health and wellness learning, as a capstone reflective assignment to finish their teacher education program, students are asked to write a letter to their future selves about their own health and wellness journey. Rather than focusing on the statistics of teachers who leave the profession in the first two years or even five years, this exercise is an opportunity to identify factors of health and wellness that may hinder one’s success on that wellness journey. *Currere* offers a methodology to address the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical components of reflecting (Pinar, 2012). Using this framework, I poetically represent my own teacherly wellness as an example of what has been, what is, and what is to come in consideration of the fragmented wellness journey of becoming/being a teacher and looking ahead to my future self.

(Editor’s note: This author regularly uses an old-fashioned typewriter when composing poetry and chose the font used below deliberately to denote this writing method. As such, the chosen font has been retained to honor the author’s embodied *currere* experience.)

In my one room school set up in my parents’ basement  
my students are plentiful  
brothers, cousins,  
cats and dogs  
a piano, a record player, an adding machine  
even a pottery wheel, several easels  
teaching tools  
at 4 years old, I was on my way!  
decades later  
working in finance  
studying fine arts at night  
in the summer  
and on my days off  
One day developing black and white film in the campus darkroom  
I found myself contemplating,  
questioning  
How to fix living pay cheque to pay cheque?

I am the epitome of the social determinants of health (NCCIH,  
2021)  
poverty, employment, working conditions, education and  
literacy, social status  
social support networks, housing, physical environments  
geographic location, access to health services  
food security, early child development, gender, culture  
and language

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How could I make my passions a full-time gig?  
 How to pick a Teacher Education program?  
     by finding the shortest one  
 Well, I guess I will choose a francophone program.  
     16 months to become a teacher  
     with a baby encouraging me to succeed  
         inspiration and motivation  
             wellness on the horizon

My first year of teaching  
     awarded a full-time contract  
 And then I received a letter: a teacher filed a grievance for the  
 position  
     This is not the way to start out the teaching career yet, the  
     resolution, my temporary job turns into permanent  
     Devastation. Surprise.

A High School teacher stuck in the middle years.  
 A Fine Arts and Core French teacher thrust into elementary French  
 Immersion  
     I just wanted a temporary job  
     I just wanted to go back to my cabin in the woods  
         when the school year was over  
             and stay home with my son.

First pay cheque.  
     Is this bi-weekly? Semi-monthly?  
         This can't be monthly??  
     not enough for rent, daycare, student loans  
 Not enough.

Note to self: Will need to get a credit card for food and other  
 necessities.

I went to a provincial workshop to learn how to identify health  
 and wellness challenges with coworkers  
     I diagnosed myself  
     I am affected  
 The anxiety is real  
     nausea, heartburn, indigestion, fatigue, and the list goes on  
 How can I change this? Can I get a transfer?  
 Transfer request submitted.

They transferred me to All-Day Kindergarten  
 I should quit and find a High School job

It took 4 years in this career, but I found my place!  
 A High School teaching my passions  
     4-day school week  
     Work-life-balance  
     And just when things are going well  
         dreaded declining enrolment  
         the pink slips go out

Where should I go next?  
     Change is an opportunity.  
     A new five-year plan  
     I accepted a principal job on the prairies  
         Rural education.

If you want to develop your subject area expertise, find a one room school!

Every subject.  
Every grade.

"Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can be"(Pierson, 2013, n.p.).

I let my 9-year-old quit school.  
He has decided to teach himself

Parents play a role in the health of our kids (DASH, 2021)  
I am my son's champion  
Change is again an opportunity

Heart-Mind well-being (DLCPE, 2014)  
Finding a balance between educating both our mind and our heart  
I should get a PhD

Make a list:  
100 jobs with a bac en éducation...  
with an interdisciplinary masters

What can I do with a love of  
teaching  
researching  
writing  
helping people on their wellness path?

Multiple choice:  
 Academic Librarian?  
 Educational psychologist?  
 Post-secondary Prof?  
 All of the above.

On my path to wellness  
life work  
seeking harmony of my own health pillars (JCSH, n.d.)  
ameliorating social determinants  
a fragmented wellness journey  
with a fragmented career path

During show and tell  
my grade 3 learner asks,  
"Are you a cat lady?"  
each cat takes a turn to meet her on video chat  
"I am working on it?" I reply.  
retirement dreams  
in 20, 19, 18, ...

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