



## **Seriously Playful: A Portfolio Reflection and Creative Growth Plan**

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### **Looking Back at My Profile**

When I began this course, my creativity profile placed me in the “very creative” range, with a score of 65 on the TestMyCreativity assessment, and identified me as an ENFJ-T “Protagonist” (16Personalities, n.d.; TestMyCreativity, n.d.). Reading those results through Henry’s (2009) M.U.S.I.C. framework, I recognized real strengths in motivation, imagination, and emotional connection, alongside honest challenges: perfectionism, sensitivity to criticism, and difficulty setting realistic expectations for myself. I wrote then that, for me, creativity is “not simply about producing ideas or artwork; it is about creating meaning, fostering connection, and positively impacting others.” Returning to that profile now, at the close of my portfolio, feels like reaching the far end of a bookend. I still believe creativity is about meaning and connection, but I no longer think of myself simply as someone who is “naturally creative.” I have come to see myself as someone who becomes creative by choosing, again and again, to learn in public and to keep going.

### **The Explorations I Chose, and Why**

I was most drawn to explorations involving writing and self-reflection, partly because these are areas I am already developing in my own life and partly because, as a mother, I tend to build my learning around what I am already doing at home. I have noticed something important about myself as a learner: I am intrinsically drawn to things I am not yet good at, and I do my best work when I am allowed to drive the learning at my own pace and in my own time. When I feel pressured into a fixed learning environment, I resist it; when I am gently led and given autonomy, I flourish. This is precisely the intrinsic motivation Henry (2009) describes as the

most crucial factor in creative achievement, and naming it helped me choose explorations I would sustain.

That same pattern explains my unexpected turn toward technology. My classmates assumed I “must really like AI,” and my professor saw me sticking to what I know, but only a few years ago, I would have described myself as computer illiterate. During my PS2 practicum, I taught myself to build a website, a blog, and a digital portfolio, and I can now produce videos, books, and learning resources with AI support. I did not choose these explorations because they were comfortable; I chose them because they were not, and because I wanted to use them to help others.

### **What Surprised Me, and What I Found Difficult**

The most surprising thread in my portfolio is how much of it grew out of difficulty. A year ago, I took a poetry course I neither enjoyed nor felt good at, only because I realized I might one day have to teach poetry. Then, during a very difficult personal season marked by family conflict and court proceedings, I found myself writing poetry instinctively for hours on the notepad on my phone. With encouragement from my poetry professor, I revised that work, shared a poem publicly at the university for the first time, and eventually self-published a collection online for free. Within hours, it had over 600 views. It also drew intense anger from members of my church community, and I took it down. That experience taught me, painfully, what Henry (2009) means when he writes that courage “involves facing challenges, making mistakes, and most certainly taking risks and being different” (p. 208). Sharing creative work is an act of vulnerability, and not every audience receives your truth kindly.

That contrast came into focus during our final portfolio showcase. Where my book had once drawn anger, my classmates met the same vulnerability with generosity. One peer wrote,

“Loved the poem, did such a great job telling your story!” and another, “I love your way with words and storytelling!” A third quoted a line from my own poetry back to me, “I was raised by wolves, or rather, I was raised by men,” before adding, “Your writing reflections are very profound. Thank you for sharing.” The response that moved me most came from a classmate I had once told that I admired his vulnerability: “I admire yours in your songs and books!” These comments did not erase the earlier criticism, but they helped me understand that the problem had never been my honesty; it was the audience. In that studio moment, Henry’s (2009) idea of courage felt less like a warning and more like a promise: the risk of being seen can be met with belonging, not only rejection.

What I found genuinely problematic is the very tension my profile named at the outset: the collision between my sensitivity to criticism and my desire to create honestly. There were moments this semester when being seen felt costly, and my first instinct was to stop creating altogether. Reflecting metacognitively, I can now recognize that instinct and choose to respond to it differently. Rather than going silent, I redirected the same energy into work that could help others. Noticing how few learning resources existed for the new curriculum and drawing on my new technical skills, I began creating them and eventually turned my platform into a not-for-profit. Choosing to keep creating, in a more sustainable and outward-facing form, is the clearest evidence of growth I can point to.

### **What I Learned About Problem-Solving and Learning**

My most important problem-solving lesson came from the Shadowing exploration in *Creative Acts for Curious People* (Stein Greenberg, 2021). I shadowed a Grade 3 student I called “Ben,” who is legally blind, has cerebral palsy, and communicates with a speech device. I had been handed a long list of what Ben “could not do,” and that deficit framing shaped me before I

ever met him: I hovered, over-helped, and steered him away from a hill he was determined to climb, certain I was protecting him. The breakthrough came only when I stopped trying to control the situation, admitted to him, “You probably think I’m very stupid right now,” and let him lead me to a teacher who could explain what he was capable of. Ben did not need me to do everything for him; he needed me to see him properly. That shift, from limitation to capability, is the single most useful problem-solving move I practiced all term, and it maps directly onto Cropley et al.’s (2019) finding that effective teachers treat creativity as “essential, unexceptional and universal” rather than as a rare gift.

I also confirmed that I learn by building real things for real audiences. My portfolio includes early-reader resources such as *Crunch & Thunder’s Wild Word Ride*, a singing spelling story for Grades 1–3, and *Barron and the Muffin*, a rhyming sight-word reader, as well as *Duckie and Chick*, a graphic novel I made collaboratively with my son (“by Harrison, Mom, and AI”). Designing these required the playful, analogical thinking Henry (2009) calls imagination: combining phonics goals, rhyme, illustration, and accessibility into something a child wants to read. The “seriously playful” skill I developed most is the willingness to prototype quickly, share before I feel ready, and treat feedback as information rather than a verdict.

My classmates’ responses during our showcase confirmed that these resources connected with real readers. Their feedback included “All these books are so cute and relevant!” “I love all the books! Such an interesting way of expressing creativity!”, and, with delight, “I love everything! Great job! Especially the comics!! The books are so fun!” Hearing that the work landed, not despite being playful, but because of it, reinforced my decision to keep designing resources that children, and the teachers who serve them, would genuinely want to use.

### **Who I Am Now as a Creative Person**

Returning to the bookend, at the start of the course, I saw creativity as a trait I happened to possess. I now understand it as a practice, a daily, sometimes uncomfortable decision to imagine, to make, and to share. The encouragement I received in that workshop, “Love everything, so creative!” and “You obviously have an amazing, creative brain!” mattered to me less as praise than as evidence: when I share honestly, a community of fellow teachers can respond with recognition rather than judgment. Cropley et al. (2019) argue that a teacher’s implicit beliefs about creativity shape students as surely as explicit instruction does, which makes my own creative self-awareness a professional responsibility rather than a private hobby. The teacher I want to become models curiosity and courage, designs from capability rather than limitation, and visibly demonstrates that creativity belongs to everyone. The growth plan that follows turns that belief into goals I can pursue.

### **Creative Growth Plan**

The plan below follows a SMART structure and draws on the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s (n.d.) professional growth planning resources. It sets one personal goal, one creative goal, and one goal for my creative teaching practice, each paired with strategies and the evidence I will use to assess my growth.

| <b>Goal 1 Personal: Balance, Boundaries, and Self-Compassion</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Specific</b>                                                  | Develop sustainable creative habits that protect my well-being by managing perfectionism and separating my self-worth from other people's reactions to my work.                                    |
| <b>Measurable</b>                                                | Keep a weekly reflective journal (at least one entry per week); limit each project to two major revision cycles before I share it; practice one restorative or boundary-setting routine each week. |
| <b>Achievable</b>                                                | Builds directly on the reflective-writing habit I already maintain, using small, trackable actions rather than a sweeping change.                                                                  |

| Goal 1 Personal: Balance, Boundaries, and Self-Compassion |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Relevant</b>                                           | Responds to the perfectionism, sensitivity to criticism, and risk of burnout identified in my initial creativity profile.                                         |
| <b>Time-bound</b>                                         | Practiced weekly across the Fall 2026 term, with a written review at the end of the term.                                                                         |
| <b>Strategies</b>                                         | Reflective journaling; a “good enough” revision limit; scheduled rest; talking through setbacks with a mentor or trusted peer.                                    |
| <b>Assessment / Evidence of Growth</b>                    | A completed journal: a self-rating of stress and confidence compared from start to end of term; evidence that I shared work without exceeding my revision limits. |

| Goal 2 Creative: Creative Courage (Sharing My Work and Receiving Feedback) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Specific</b>                                                            | Build the courage to share my creative work publicly and to invite feedback on it, despite my fear of criticism.                                                                                                         |
| <b>Measurable</b>                                                          | Publish at least four new creative pieces or resources on my learning platform; invite structured feedback on at least three of them; complete one public sharing event such as a reading, showcase, or peer conference. |
| <b>Achievable</b>                                                          | Extends an existing practice: I already publish work and run an active learning platform.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Relevant</b>                                                            | Targets the “courage” element of Henry's (2009) M.U.S.I.C. framework and the central tension named in my profile.                                                                                                        |
| <b>Time-bound</b>                                                          | Completed over the next six months (by December 2026).                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Strategies</b>                                                          | Set firm posting deadlines; request feedback as one strength plus one suggestion; reframe criticism as data; begin with safer audiences before wider ones.                                                               |
| <b>Assessment / Evidence of Growth</b>                                     | A count of pieces published and shared; a feedback log; a short reflection comparing my comfort with sharing before and after.                                                                                           |

| Goal 3 Creative Practice: Inclusive, Playful Resource-Building |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Specific</b>                                                | Use creative, accessible, “seriously playful” approaches to design curriculum-aligned learning resources that foster creativity in all learners, designing from capability rather than limitation.                                                             |
| <b>Measurable</b>                                              | Create and pilot at least three new curriculum-aligned resources (such as readers, graphic novels, or spelling stories); apply at least two Creative Acts strategies in lesson design; embed accessibility and Universal Design for Learning features in each. |

| <b>Goal 3 Creative Practice: Inclusive, Playful Resource-Building</b> |                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Achievable</b>                                                     | Extends the readers and graphic novels already in my portfolio and the nonprofit platform I have built.                                                                    |
| <b>Relevant</b>                                                       | Connects to Cropley et al.'s (2019) view of creativity as universal and to the “capability, not limitation” lesson I learned while shadowing Ben.                          |
| <b>Time-bound</b>                                                     | Developed and piloted during my next practicum and the 2026–2027 school year.                                                                                              |
| <b>Strategies</b>                                                     | Co-design with students and children (as I did with my son); prototype and revise; gather feedback from teachers and learners; share resources freely through my platform. |
| <b>Assessment / Evidence of Growth</b>                                | A portfolio of completed resources; teacher and student feedback; a reflective note on how each resource fosters creativity and access.                                    |

## References

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