



GRADUATE TEACHER CONFERENCES

By: Professor Bernadette Walker-Gibbs

The 2019 Graduate teacher conferences saw over 1000 graduates across 440 plus schools across Victoria come together and talk about their professional practice, well-being and professional identity. As part of the conference we asked Graduates to think of a metaphor about their identity as a teacher of what their metaphor for teaching is. The complexity and colour of the metaphors resonated across all the regions. The notion of teaching being like a roller coaster and ‘dory’ – just keep swimming abounded. Some others were:

- being too exhausted to think of metaphor
- two steps forward, one step back
- bloody hard work
- full of surprises
- like umpiring
- a happiness shroud
- like having 20 tabs open in my brain all the time
- like being stranded in the desert in a full scuba outfit
- like running a race blindfolded
- like...The Wedding Singer
- One of the metaphors that caught our attention and resonated was from the conference in Mildura where a graduate shared that:

My teaching career is a Japanese pottery bowl repaired with Kintsugi. We looked this up and found that Kintsugi “means, literally, ‘to join with gold’. In Zen aesthetics, the broken pieces of an accidentally-smashed pot should be carefully picked up, reassembled and then glued together with lacquer inflected with a very luxuriant gold powder. There should be no attempt to disguise the damage, the point is to render the fault-lines beautiful and strong. The precious veins of gold are there to emphasise that breaks have a philosophically-rich merit all of their own” (<https://www.theschooloflife.com/thebookoflife/kintsugi/>).

The idea that the journey is important and is not to be ‘unseen’ but celebrated and remembered and become part of the story is similar to that of the story of the graduate. The journey is complicated and at times seems too hard but there are many supports and ways to pull the ‘gold’ threads together and help you. There will be a time where you can look back and see the strength you had all along.