

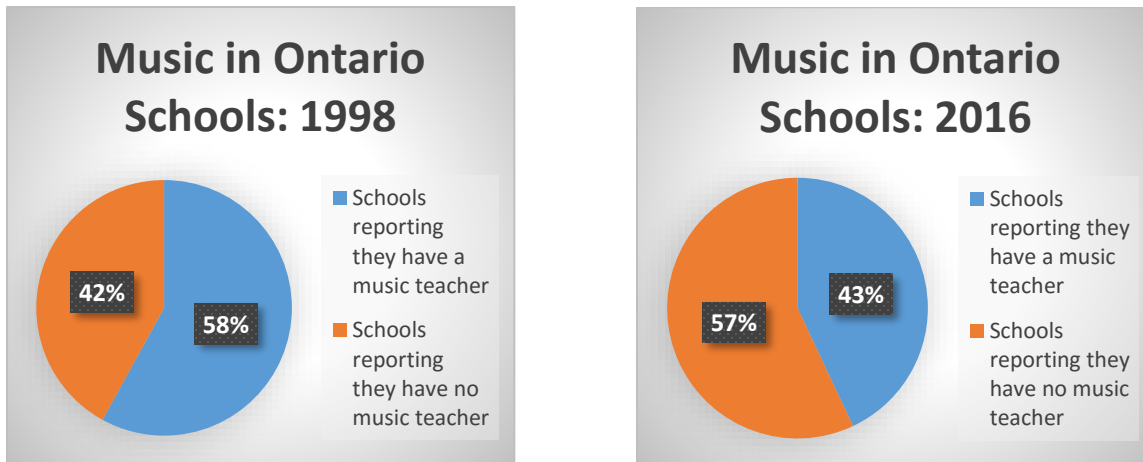


Disturbing Trends: Recent Data on Music Education in Ontario

An Ontario Music Educators' Association Response to the *2016 People for Education Annual Report*.

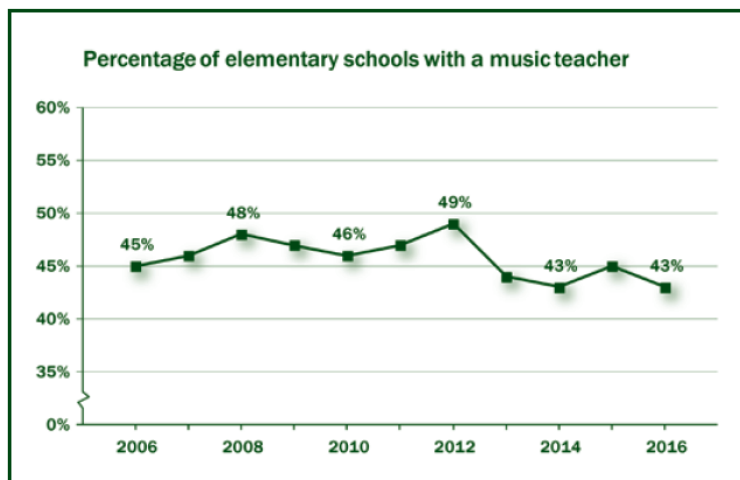
In their most recent survey of Ontario Elementary Schools, [People for Education](#) highlighted a number of concerning facts regarding Music Education in our public schools. There are two areas of particular concern to the Ontario Music Educators' Association: The steady and marked decline of identified music teachers in Ontario elementary schools; and the clear divide in accessibility to music programs between rural and urban schools.

In 1998, 58% of Ontario schools reported having a designated music teacher. In itself, this is not an encouraging number: 42% of schools had no identified music teacher, and of those identified as a "music teacher", there is no standard of qualification in place. However, the 2016 People for Education Survey results indicate the situation has declined even further since that time, now showing a dismal 57% of schools with no identified music teacher.



Year by year statistics paint an equally concerning picture for music education in Ontario, indicating a steady erosion in support for the arts.

Figure 4





There are several factors that have influenced the decline of music programming in Ontario. Often, music education is a victim of unintended consequences. Well-intended policies and legislation designed to help with challenges in other areas of education have impacted negatively on music offerings. For example: the very valuable focus on Literacy and Math has often pulled resources and time away from the Arts; practices intended to protect the legitimate rights of occasional teachers have made it difficult to find qualified music teachers; reasonable space provisions attached to grants for students and school buildings threaten the closure of some music rooms. None of these programs were intended to deprive Ontario students of quality instruction in their Ontario music curriculum, but the data indicates that this is what is happening.

Another area of growing concern for music in Ontario is the widening divide between urban and small town/rural schools. Students in an urban centre are three times more likely to see a music teacher in their schools when compared with their country counterparts. The results become even more striking when looking at small rural schools with a largely “bused in” population. These schools outside of Ontario’s major cities struggle with the same issues as those in the larger centres, with the additional pressures of declining enrollment, rising transportation costs, and economic challenges. The result is a growing inequality of accessibility to education in music and the Arts for these rural children.

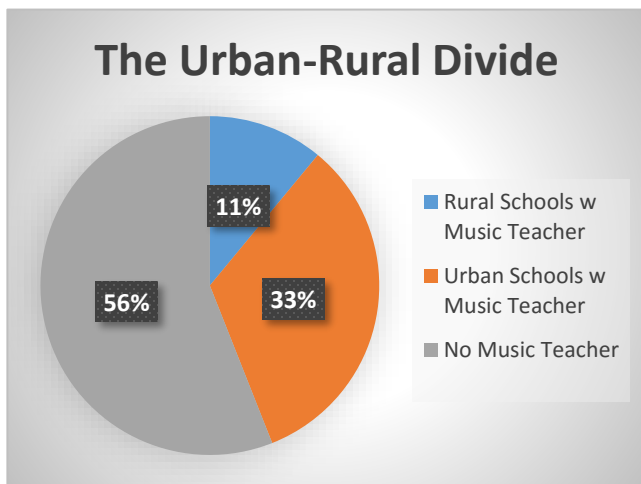
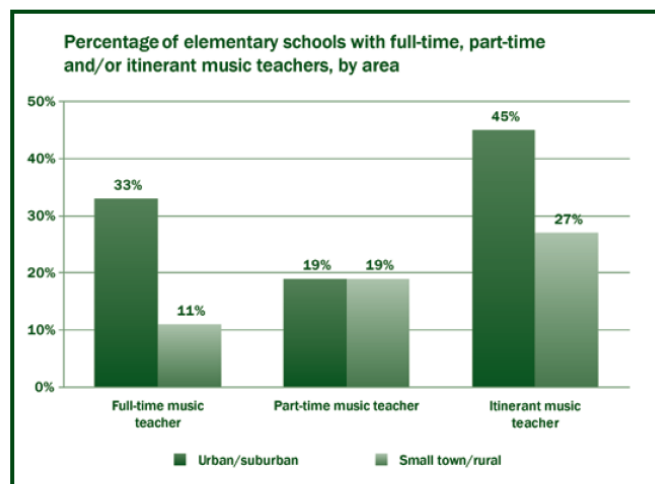


Figure 5



The Ontario Music Educators’ Association has raised all of the concerns mentioned above, and many more, with the Ontario Government, the Ontario College of Teachers, Principals’ Associations, Teachers’ Federations, and the Education Quality and Accountability Office. Access to quality music programming for our children is a goal to which we believe all parties in the province can agree. In *Achieving Excellence, A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, we find the government’s commitment to “Promote the value of the arts, including the visual and performing arts, in developing critical and creative thinking skills that support success in school and in life.” **We call upon the Ministry of Education to convene a roundtable for all stakeholders with the goal of implementing a solution that works for all involved, especially for the children of Ontario.**