



The Ontario Music Educators' Association

Ontario
Election 2018

June 7
Music Education Fact Sheet

This June, the people of Ontario will elect a new government, and Arts Education must be part of any election discussion. The Ontario Music Educators Association, a non-partisan organization advocating on behalf of students and teachers of music, continues to work to ensure three important core values:

1. Every student in Ontario's publicly funded school system has the right to a quality music education.
2. Music in our schools must be taught by qualified, specialist music teachers.
3. To ensure viability and sustainability, Music programs must be supported by sufficient, targeted funding.

1: Rights of the Student to an Authentic Music Education

Only 46 % of elementary schools in Ontario report having a specialist music teacher, significantly less in rural schools, at just 34% (People for Education: *Arts Education Report, 2018*). Regardless of where they live or how much money their parents make, children have the right to a full, well-rounded education, which includes a rigorous, mandated music curriculum.

Education in the arts is essential to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth and well-being. (The Arts: Ontario curriculum document – revised 2009).

Potential Issues for your local Candidates

- Are you aware that industry and government have identified creative and critical thinking as vital to learning and productivity in the 21st century, and that music clearly supports these skills.
- How are you going to ENSURE that every child in Ontario gets the full benefit of the Ontario Music Curriculum?
- What plans do you have that will provide for our children's involvement in authentic and engaging music programs in their schools?

2: The Importance of having Musically Literate Teachers to support our students.

At present, there is NO requirement that elementary school teachers who teach our children music have any recognized music qualification whatsoever. The Ontario curriculum includes rigorous learning expectations for music, and only teachers with expertise in that language can effectively deliver this curriculum. Current legislation does not require that teachers have even a minimal musical knowledge; further, legislation regarding hiring practice, part of Ontario Bill 114, makes it difficult for schools to hire a qualified teacher for an open music position.

Potential Issues for your local Candidates

- We wouldn't ask someone who speaks only English to deliver the French curriculum. What will you do to make sure that only confident, qualified, music teachers will teach music to our children?
- Why is it that teachers with extensive music training are unrecognized and unprotected by legislation and collective agreements? How will your party address this?
- How will your party amend hiring practice to allow open music positions to be filled by qualified music teachers?

3: The necessity of targeting sufficient resources to music education

In the past, Program Enhancement Grants (2006 – 2013) were used to support arts education. These funds are no longer targeted for Music, Drama, Dance, and Fine Art funding. Because of this, Arts budgets have suffered: fully 50% of Ontario elementary schools have a yearly budget of less than \$1000 for all four Arts strands, and this figure is even more of an issue in rural schools and schools in economically disadvantaged areas (People for Education: *Arts Education Report, 2018*). In addition, unintended consequences of facility funding policies have led to the actual and potential closure of dedicated music classrooms in schools.

Recently, the Ministry of Education announced a program to provide some support for musical instrument repairs, and the OMEA supports this. However, specified funds are not sufficient to solve either the overall problem or issues of inequity.

Potential Questions for your local Candidates:

- How will you fix the broken funding models to ensure that music, and other valuable programs, receive sufficient and sustained funding?
- Will your party advocate for the importance of dedicated spaces for Arts and Music in our schools?
- How will your party ensure that funding for balanced and equitable access to the arts is available to Ontario schools?
- What will you do to hold boards accountable, ensuring that funds aimed at supporting music education are used as intended?

How to Use this Guide:

Please consider asking your local candidates these, and similar questions, during the election.

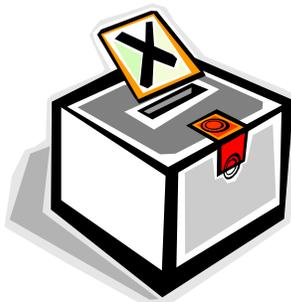
Adapt the questions to the concerns and challenges of your community.

In addition, ask your sitting Member of Provincial Parliament about Music education. In most ridings, Fridays are constituency days, when members are available to talk to their constituents. Here's where to find your local constituency office:

http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/members/member_addresses.do?AddType=CONT&locale=en

Watch your local media for public appearances and debates that will be taking place. When possible, try to attend with a friend or two. It's much easier to speak up when you have a friendly face or two with you for support.

The future of Music Education in Ontario is our responsibility. We need to ensure that those in Government are held accountable for the decisions that will shape our children's educational future.



Reference: People for Education: *Arts Education Report, 2018* (<https://peopleforeducation.ca/report/arts-education-2018>)