



Concern and Hope.

An Ontario Music Educators' Association Response to the *2018 People for Education Arts Report*.



The most recent survey of Ontario Elementary Schools conducted by [People for Education](#) emphasizes continuing deficits and inequities in the music education offered to the children of Ontario, while at the same time offering at least a glimmer of hope that better things may be on the horizon.

For example, while the percentage of schools indicating they have a qualified music teacher delivering the music program is up slightly from 41 % to 46 %, these figures still indicate that less than half of Ontario students will see a qualified music teacher in elementary school. To put that in context, **almost 750,000 students will not have a meaningful experience in music in their classroom.** Of even greater concern: Fully 40 % of Ontario students have no music instruction at all in their school day, qualified or unqualified. In other words, 1,600 elementary schools report no access at all to music instruction

For the first time, the P4E report includes **concerns over music education at the high school level** as well. In the past, virtually all high school students would have access to a music specialist throughout their high school career. The report indicates that over 50,000 high school students will not have access to a music class in grade 11 or 12, virtually eliminating for those students the possibility of moving on to a music-related program at college or university.

1,600

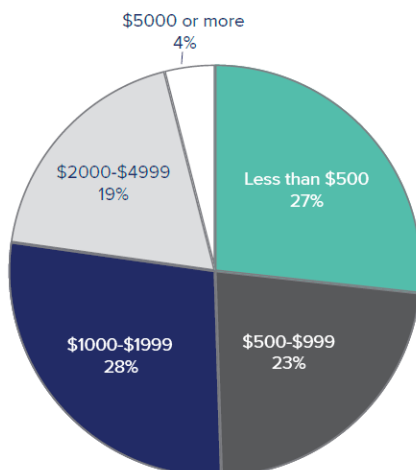
Elementary Schools with no scheduled Music Instruction



50,000

Senior High School Students with no access to music class

Figure 1: Arts budgets in elementary schools



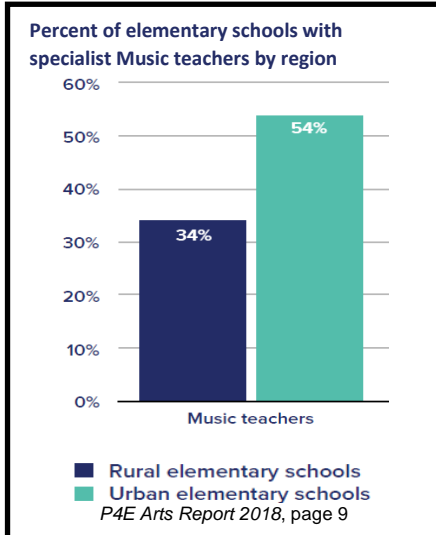
School budget figures also indicate peril for music and the arts. In Ontario elementary schools fully half of them have an overall arts budget of less than \$500. That's \$500 dollars to cover not just music, but drama, visual arts, and dance as well. Without funding to cover the resources needed to support a quality music education, these schools fall further behind.

There is also a clear correlation between funding and dedicated music rooms. Those at the top tiers of funding have, on average, over three times as many spaces dedicated to music and arts instruction. Without dedicated space, the wonderfully messy, noisy, and creative musical experience of students is significantly diminished.



“Students in small and rural schools, in schools with higher levels of poverty, and in schools with lower levels of parental education, are less likely to have access to learning opportunities in the arts.”

P4E Arts Report, 2018



Rural schools face several challenges. Urban schools, on average, are three times more likely to have a significant arts budget. Figures show that teachers responsible for music in rural schools are significantly less qualified, largely because there is no insistence in Ontario that music be taught by teachers with specific qualifications in teaching music. In addition, 53% of rural schools report having no dedicated space for arts instruction. Considering deficits in funding, teacher qualification, and space allocation, it comes as no surprise that 66% of rural schools report having no qualified music teacher. This urban-rural divide was explored in detail in the 2016 P4E report, *The Geography of Opportunity*. The concerns over equity raised in that document continue to negatively impact Ontario students.

Inequity in access to music teaching is not limited to rural schools. The 2018 report also raises concerns over other demographic factors that impact the likelihood that a student will have a significant experience in music. The report indicates that schools from “high parental education schools” are three times as likely to have a music teacher. In fact, the effect of parental education seems to hold even in small and rural schools. Inequity is further highlighted in the connection the report draws between fundraising and music and Arts programming, with schools who report specifically raising money for the arts twice as likely to be in the top tier of school arts budgets. These continuing inequities serve to grow the gap between “have” and “have not” schools, and deny huge numbers of Ontario students a meaningful music education.

There is hope: Overall, 5% more schools reported having a dedicated music teacher. The Ministry of Education, along with business and industry, has recognized the importance of “21st Century Skills”; creative thinking, critical thinking, and collaboration are part of that skill set, and the government has publicly recognized that Music clearly supports these skills. Towards that end, the Ministry has been working with stakeholders to develop an improved strategy for arts education. In addition, the Ontario Government recently announced hopeful initiatives such as an instrument refurbishment program and a three-year budget commitment of \$21,000,000 for Arts Education. It does appear that we are moving in the right direction... but we have a long way to go to ensure that real change comes to Ontario schools.

We continue to seek:

- Equitable access to music programs for all Ontario students.
- Policies to ensure that music is taught by qualified teachers in every Ontario school;
- School and District accountability for arts spending;
- Space and resources dedicated to a meaningful school music experience.

Source: https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Arts_2018_For-web.pdf

Statistics on numbers of elementary students taken from Ontario Ministry of Education website.
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/educationFacts.html>