

THE ARTS

From the People for Education Annual Report
on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2011



THE ARTS

I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music, for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys of learning.

Plato

Education in the arts develops students' imaginations, increases their motivation to learn and allows them to achieve at higher levels. For many students, schools provide their first and, for some, their only experience of the arts.

Ontario has an extensive arts curriculum, but no specific funding for arts programs or specialists.

In contrast, Singapore, a jurisdiction that consistently outperforms many countries in reading, writing, math and science, is hiring more arts and music teachers and moving more teachers into single-subject specialization.¹ Finland, another high-performing country, is expanding its arts programs so that arts and crafts courses (including music, drama, visual arts and crafts) have a higher percentage of "weekly lesson hours" than math.²

MUSIC TEACHERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This year, only 47% of elementary schools report either a full- or part-time music teacher. This percentage has increased over the last eight years, but still remains below the 58% reported in 1998, when the provincial funding formula was introduced.

Some schools without specialist music teachers have itinerant music instructors, who may or may not be certified teachers, and usually teach specific programs such as band, choir or specific musical instruments. This year, 28% of elementary schools without music specialists have itinerant music instructors.

SPECIALISTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

For the most part, elementary teachers are generalists who can teach everything from math to history. However, there are technical aspects of some of the curriculum that require very specific knowledge. For example, the elementary music curriculum requires teachers to teach students to read, write, perform and compose music, understand musical notation and sing and/or play music in two or more parts. The visual arts curriculum requires that teachers have knowledge of a

QUICK FACTS FOR 2010/11

- 47% of elementary schools have a specialist music teacher, compared to 58% in 1997/98.
- 10% of elementary schools with specialist music teachers report their elementary school music teachers have no special qualifications.
- 53% of secondary schools charge fees for fine arts courses.

range of traditional two- and three-dimensional art forms, and the ability to teach visual arts using current media technologies.³ Teaching subjects such as these may be difficult for many non-specialist teachers.

People for Education and Ontario's Ministry of Education both keep track of the percentage of elementary schools with teachers who specialize in certain subjects, such as the arts or health & physical education (H&PE). But the Ministry of Education has no guidelines about the qualifications that a teacher must have in order to act as a specialist at the elementary level.

This year, People for Education asked schools about what qualifications their specialist music teachers have. Of the schools with music teachers, 52% report their teachers have taken [Additional Qualifications](#) (AQ) courses accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers, and just over one quarter report their specialist music teachers have either a music degree or some form of advanced training. However, 10% report their specialist music teacher has no special qualifications.

INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO THE ARTS

The arts are a required subject in elementary school, and students require one arts credit to graduate from high school, but there is no specific funding for the arts in Ontario schools. And because many schools rely on fees and fundraising to support the arts, there is no guarantee that all students will have access to arts programs or enrichment:

- School boards receive a Program Enhancement Grant to “provide a well-rounded education.”⁴ The Grant provides \$9,650 per school and may be used to cover the costs of things like arts, and physical or outdoor education programs. However, many boards report that this funding is instead added to their general revenue to fund core areas, such as building maintenance.
- Students in smaller schools are at a disadvantage. This year, only 28% of elementary schools in Eastern Ontario and 33% of elementary schools in Northern Ontario have specialist music teachers—both are regions where schools tend to be small. 67% of schools in the GTA have music specialists.
- 61% of elementary and secondary schools rely on fundraising to cover the costs of things like musical instruments, art supplies and other forms of arts enrichment.⁵
- 53% of secondary schools charge fees for art courses and 26% charge fees for music courses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Education in the arts helps students develop the 21st century competencies necessary for success in school and in life.

People for Education recommends

- the province provide specific and targeted funding for arts programs and specialists in elementary and secondary school,
- the province ensure the availability of professional development and support in the arts for generalist teachers, and
- the province require boards to report on their programs that are funded through the Program Enhancement Grant.

WHAT PRINCIPALS TOLD US . . .

We are quite concerned that there is no formal staff allocation for the arts in our school; specifically for instrumental music. Should one of my instrumental music teachers retire, and I experience declining enrolment in my school, I will not be in a hiring position and my instrumental music program could be wiped out completely because the position is not protected. Over time, this will devastate our instrumental music programs at the elementary level across TDSB.

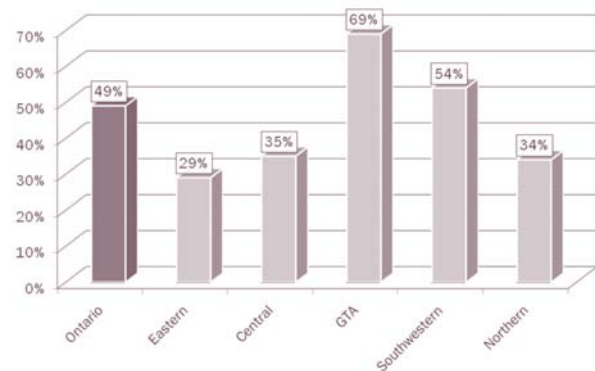
It should also be noted that a few years ago, TDSB decided that a teacher assigned to instrumental music does not need to have music qualifications. This would be the equivalent of putting a French teacher in front a classroom that doesn't speak French!

Elementary School, Toronto DSB

. . . We have a school marching band. The teacher for this band is paid for by fundraising that the band does. We have an arts portable that the parents in this community built and that our school board maintains.

Elementary School, Simcoe County DSB

Specialist music teachers in Ontario elementary schools, by region



NOTES

- 1 Ng, E. (2010, September). *Building a national education system for the 21st century: The Singapore experience*. Paper presented at the Building Blocks for Education Reform: Whole System Reform Summit, Toronto, ON. Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/bb4e/Singapore_CaseStudy2010.pdf
- 2 Lankinen, T. (2010, September). *Basic education reform in Finland: How to develop the top ranked education system?* PowerPoint slide show presented at Building Blocks for Education Reform: Whole System Reform Summit, Toronto, ON. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/bb4e/finlandEn.pdf>, page 23.
- 3 Government of Ontario. (2009). *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: The Arts*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf>
- 4 Government of Ontario. (2010). *Education funding: Technical paper 2010-11*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1011/technical10.pdf>, page 71.
- 5 People for Education. (2010). *The 2010 report on Ontario's school councils*. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Connecting-with-Community-and-Creating-Welcoming-Schools.pdf>



People for Education is a registered charity that works to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

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To read the full 2011 report, go to <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Annual-Report-on-Ontario-Schools-2011.pdf>