

THE ARTS

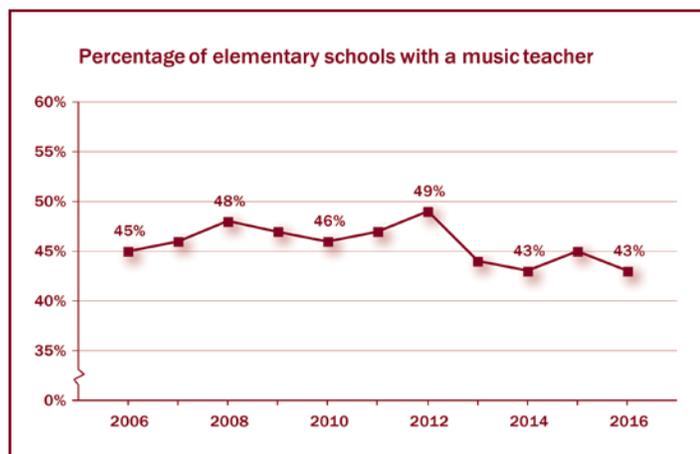
This report is an excerpt from the 2016 Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools.

Arts education plays a vital role in student engagement, achievement, and well-being.¹ Learning about and participating in the arts helps students to develop a range of competencies and skills—not just in creativity, but also in citizenship, social-emotional learning, and health.² These broad skills are key to fostering success in today's society. Given that 95% of Ontario's children attend public schools,³ the publicly funded school system is the ideal environment for them to receive formal education in the arts.

SPECIALIZED CURRICULUM MAY REQUIRE SPECIALIZED TEACHERS

Ontario's arts curriculum promotes the development of knowledge and skills in dance, drama, music, and visual arts through four core learning objectives: developing creativity, communicating, understanding culture, and making connections.⁴ Each area of the arts curriculum requires specialized knowledge. For example, in the elementary music curriculum, students are expected to learn to read and understand music by creating, interpreting, and performing it.⁵ Dance, fine arts, and drama also have extensive technical expectations over the eight years of elementary curriculum.⁶ In order to fulfill these expectations, teachers need a fairly high degree of technical understanding, which may be a challenge for a classroom teacher without a background in the arts.⁷

Figure 1



QUICK FACTS

- 43% of elementary schools have a music teacher, either full- or part-time.
- 33% of urban/suburban elementary schools have a full-time music teacher, compared to 11% in small town/rural schools.

SPECIALIST ARTS TEACHERS

The province's renewed vision for education includes a 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."⁸ Despite this commitment, there continues to be a lack of specialist teachers in music, visual arts, and drama in elementary schools.

In 2016:

- 43% of elementary schools have a music teacher, either full- or part-time, compared to 45% last year. This is the lowest percentage in 10 years (see Figure 1) and is dramatically lower than in 1998, when 58% of elementary schools had specialist music teachers.
- 38% of elementary schools report having an itinerant music teacher, compared to 39% last year.
- 15% of elementary schools with grades 7 and 8 have specialist visual arts teachers, remaining consistent with last year.
- 9% of elementary schools with grades 7 and 8 have a specialist drama teacher, unchanged in the last two years.

In their comments, a number of principals identify staffing and resource constraints as reasons for the decline in arts specialists.

We have an excellent music programme that provides specialist instruction in grades 4 through 6, and instrumental music classes to students in grades 7 and 8. Extending the specialist instruction to all grades is a goal, but a significant challenge based upon the way in which FTE is allocated.

Elementary school, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB

EQUITY AND ACCESS TO ARTS-ENRICHED LEARNING

Data from this year’s survey show that in elementary schools, geography has an impact on access to specialist arts teachers (see Figure 2). Elementary schools that report having a specialist music teacher also report greater opportunities to participate in other arts activities.

More than 80% of elementary and secondary schools report opportunities for students to participate in a performance/exhibition, learn an instrument within school hours, or work with an artist or other professional from outside of the school. These opportunities have been shown to enrich students’ experience of the arts and promote student engagement;⁹ but for elementary schools in particular, it appears that whether students have these opportunities is influenced by whether they have a specialist music teacher (see Table 1).

We have a huge instrumental music program because of a staff member who has a degree in music.

Elementary school, Upper Canada DSB

Figure 2

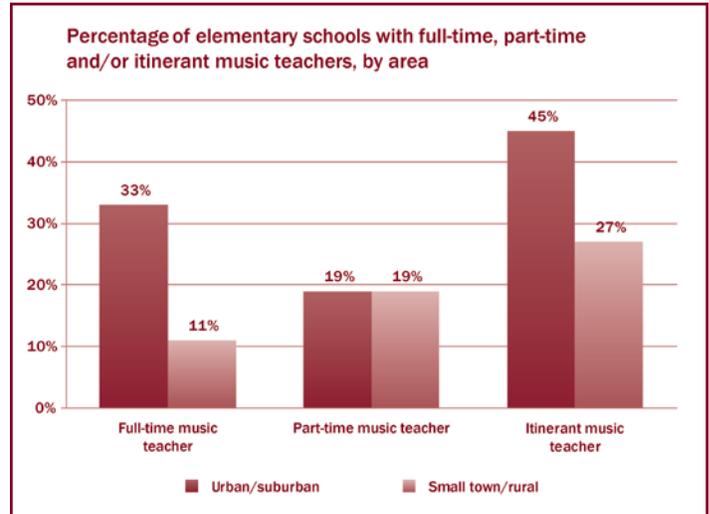


Table 1

ARTS ENRICHMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS		
	Schools with a music teacher (full- or part-time)	Schools with NO music teacher
Work with an artist or other professional from outside of the school	78%	73%
Learn an instrument within school hours	92%	72%
Participate in a performance/exhibition (e.g., play, dance, art exhibition)	95%	89%

NOTES

- 1 Upitis, R. (2011). *Engaging Students through the Arts*. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/WW_Engaging_Arts.pdf.
- 2 People for Education. (2014). *Measuring What Matters: Beyond the 3 "R's"*. In *Measuring What Matters*, People for Education. Toronto: November 8, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/measuring-what-matters/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/People-for-Education-Measuring-What-Matters-Beyond-the-3-Rs1.pdf>.
- 3 People for Education. (2014). *Public Education: Our Best Investment (Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2014)*. Toronto: People for Education. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/annual-report-2014-WEB.pdf>.
- 4 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2009). *The Ontario Curriculum (Grades 1 - 8): The Arts*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf>; Ministry of Education. (2010). *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Report in Ontario Schools*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growSuccess.pdf>.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 People for Education. (2013) *The Arts in Ontario School*. Toronto: People for Education. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/People-for-Education-report-on-the-arts-in-schools-April-2013.pdf>.
- 8 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2014). *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*. Ontario: Queen's Printer. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf>, pg. 6.
- 9 People for Education. (2013). *The Arts in Ontario School*. Retrieved from <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/People-for-Education-report-on-the-arts-in-schools-April-2013.pdf>; Upitis, R. (2011). *Engaging Students through the Arts*. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/WW_Engaging_Arts.pdf.



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