

Becoming Informed: Questions Parents Need To Ask

How strong is your school's music Program?

The strength of a music program is determined by many factors.

The information in this pamphlet reflects the views, philosophies and recommended practice espoused by expert music educators and researchers from across Canada.

Below, we provide some questions that you can ask to find out how healthy your school's program is and whether it needs improvement.

It is important to know that even the most vital program, needs and welcomes your support and advocacy.

The Teacher In your school...

Is the music program for all children and delivered by a qualified music specialist?

- The music teacher should have a degree in music, music education training and/or additional courses which qualify the teacher as a music specialist in the grades being taught.
- The music teacher's qualifications should include the ability to read music, perform, and conduct.

Scheduling Music K-8: In your School...

Are all children receiving at least 80-120 minutes of music education each week from a qualified music specialist?

- A successful music program requires a minimum 80 to 120 minutes of classroom instruction each week.
- It is important that music education be taught on a regular basis, as a separate subject.
- Music education requires regular, on-going and frequent instruction. It cannot be addressed in isolated blocks of time, occurring infrequently throughout the year.
- Music activities may be used by classroom teachers to support and enhance all learning.

Scheduling: Music 9-Graduation In your school...

Is at least one full year equivalent (one credit) of music education, or another

fine/performing art required for high school graduation?

Does the overall school timetable and philosophy encourage participation in music courses?

- Schools which place a high value on their music program find ways to facilitate student participation through creative time tabling and a sensitive option selection process.

The program In your school..

Does the music program include a wide range of activities, including singing, playing instruments, performing, listening, moving, and creating?

Is the curriculum developmental? Is there a sequence of skills, concepts and experiences from grade to grade?

Do students in secondary school have the opportunity to select from a variety of music courses for credit toward their graduation diploma?

- A good program is built on a developmental sequence of skills. It should be based on a board-wide curriculum which leads logically from grade to grade, from kindergarten to graduation.
- Children should listen to and perform music of a wide variety of forms, styles, and cultures.
- Singing should be the basis of all programs.
- Playing instruments in the primary and junior grades may include experiences with e.g. xylophones, hand percussion, drums and recorders.
- During the middle school years, students should have opportunities to study band/orchestra instruments in addition to singing.
- During secondary school the students should have opportunities to study band, string, vocal, guitar, keyboards, jazz and technology in music.
- The music teacher requires appropriate space, facilities and equipment to deliver a varied program.

Consult A Quality Music Program. Kindergarten to Graduation, for guidelines for music education in your school.

Other opportunities In your school..

Do students have opportunities to rehearse and perform in a variety of vocal or instrumental ensembles on an on-going, regular basis through-out the year?

Do students have opportunities to hear professionals perform in concert or theatre

settings?

Do students have opportunities to learn from professionals in clinics, master classes or workshop situations?

Staff Development In your school...

Are there opportunities and support for the professional development and in-service of teachers of classroom music?

- The music teacher needs to be resourced by an expert, experienced music educator.
 - Often, P.A. days and regional in-service are tailored to meet the needs of the generalist class room teacher, leaving the music teacher to fend for him/herself. Professional development opportunities should be available for the music staff as well.

The Budget

- Is there sufficient budget to ensure that texts, sheet music, equipment, instruments and supplies are adequate for program support?
- Does the music program receive its fair share of resources?
- The music teacher may teach every student in the elementary school. The budget for resources and materials should reflect this.
- The music department should be considered equally when allocation of budget for computers and other high tech equipment is determined.
- Budget for busing in some other subject areas is taken for granted. The music department should receive equal consideration for transportation to and registration in inter-school and regional festivals and competitions.
- It is against the law to photocopy sheet music. Music teachers need sufficient copies of texts and sheet music for each child in every group. The budget should allow for this.
- Often the music teacher has to organize fundraisers or charge students for materials or equipment. This leads to financial hardship for poorer schools or students.

You can make a difference!

The coalition is here to support you.