

Policy Guidelines for Arts Education in Canadian Schools

Developed by the National Symposium on Arts Education (NSAE), these guidelines provide direction for arts education in Canada along the following dimensions: learning in, through, and about the arts; curriculum; culture and diversity; teachers and teacher education; resources; partnerships; research, and leadership.

Overview

The arts are an integral part of our children's lives. They provide important ways of making our lives meaningful. From an early age, children naturally immerse themselves in drama, dance, music, the visual arts, literary arts, and media: to play, to learn, to communicate, to celebrate, and to find out who they are. The arts both express and engage the human spirit in profound and powerful ways. They give our children and youth a sense of the world outside themselves, uniquely touching the timelessness of history and the limitlessness of the universe while helping them celebrate community. The arts are an integral part of Canadian society.

While children are attracted to the arts from birth, they need encouragement and nurturing to maximize their potential. Arts education builds on personal, home, and community experiences and provides structured learning experiences throughout the elementary and secondary school years. The development of skills and understanding in each of the arts is one goal of K–12 arts education.

These guidelines focus on arts education in the schools, where students from kindergarten through grade 12 have opportunities for in-depth, cumulative learning in the arts, including dance, drama, literary arts, music, media arts, and visual arts. Arts education provides students with opportunities to create and present in each of the arts, opportunities to respond to the arts, opportunities to learn about the arts, and opportunities for creative and critical thinking. Arts education includes learning in, through, and about the arts and is a vital part of the school curriculum. Arts education fosters an awareness of the links between the arts and personal and diverse cultural values.

The guidelines will be successful when every student in Canada has an understanding of the role the arts play in their lives through

- equitable access to comprehensive, developmental arts programs delivered by teachers with qualifications specific to the arts and
- educationally appropriate opportunities to work with professional and community-based artists and to experience and value all of the arts within the school and community.

The recommendations in the guidelines form a coherent package; therefore, all recommendations need to be addressed.

Learning in, through, and about the Arts

Arts education includes learning in, through, and about the arts and is a vital part of the core curriculum in schools.

The NSAE recommends that

- students engage in the processes of creating, presenting, and responding, giving them a firm foundation in the practices and principles of the individual arts disciplines;
- students engage in structured arts learning experiences that value intuition and imagination while developing technical and personal skills and a commitment to high standards (learning in the arts);
- students learn to respond with critical awareness and sensitivity to their own work and the work of others through cumulative experiences in the arts (learning in the arts);
- students demonstrate, through cumulative experiences in the arts, an understanding of the value of the arts throughout history, as their heritage, in their daily lives, and in the shaping of cultural identities within local and global contexts (learning about the arts);
- the arts be infused throughout the curriculum, building upon a strong curriculum within each arts discipline (learning through the arts);
- arts education include meaningful interaction among artists, students, and teachers as well as collaborations with arts organizations in the community.

Curriculum

Curriculum planning, development, implementation, and evaluation should be a central consideration in the provision of quality arts education. Documents should be updated every 7 to 10 years.

The NSAE recommends that:

- a curriculum framework be developed for each of the arts;
- the arts curriculum be founded upon contemporary theory, research, and best practice in pedagogy and the discipline;
- the arts curriculum allow for the development of in-depth learning experiences in the individual arts, general knowledge about the arts and culture, and meaningful connections with other subject areas;
- the curriculum move from a broad experience involving several arts forms in the early and middle years towards an increasing depth of knowledge and skill in one or more during the senior years;
- The arts curriculum emphasize creative idea development, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, collaboration, and the value of social interaction to learning;
- the arts curriculum respect and support individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity;
- arts curricula clearly articulate benchmarks for assessing specific arts learning outcomes at each grade level and feature well developed strategies for authentic assessment techniques.

Culture and Diversity

Quality arts programs provide opportunities to address 1) cultural perspectives within multiculturalism and Aboriginal cultures and 2) diversity, which includes socio-economic status, ability, gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. In so doing, quality arts education programs ensure that students are able to see their own cultural and life experiences within the curriculum.

The NSAE recommends that

- arts educators model equity, tolerance, and cultural respect;
- teaching practices include attention to transculturalism, critical multiculturalism, as well as a celebration of diversity in local and global contexts;
- teaching practices address culture and diversity and be steeped in challenging inquiry-based learning where students are decision-makers;
- arts curricula address both discipline-based content and social justice issues;
- arts curriculum develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to develop an understanding of cultural traditions and innovations;
- culture and diversity permeate all aspects of teaching and learning in the arts;
- arts curricula reflect the transcultural nature of contemporary art where cultural symbols mingle, traditional forms of arts and crafts co-exist, and everyone's art forms matter.

Transculturalism recognizes individuals have cultural, national, and global identifications, as well as the commitment to function within cultures across the world.

Critical multiculturalism addresses issues of bias, stereotyping, discrimination, and racism.

Teachers and Teacher Education

For schools to provide learning in, through, and about the arts, there must be well-qualified teachers who have appropriate content and pedagogical knowledge in the arts. These are teachers who see the arts as an essential part of the curriculum with links to other disciplines and as valuable contributions to the school and broader community.

The NSAE recommends that

- arts specialists at all levels be expected to demonstrate in-depth artistic and pedagogical skills, knowledge, and understanding in the art discipline they teach and representative knowledge across the arts disciplines.
- generalist teachers be expected to demonstrate fundamental knowledge and skills in all the arts in order to teach the arts and infuse them across the curriculum;
- students receive quality education where program continuity is ensured;
- pre-service teacher education offer appropriate and substantive programs to prepare both generalist and specialist teachers in the arts;
- specialist and generalist teachers have access to and undertake continuing informal and formal professional development in the arts.

Arts specialists are teachers of art, dance, drama, and music who have both pedagogical and content knowledge in one or more of the arts and teaching qualifications from a post secondary institution.

Resources

Human, financial, and material resources must be made available if schools are to provide quality arts education.

The NSAE recommends that

- all students have access to teachers with qualifications specific to the arts throughout their school life;
- the arts be supported equitably and proportionally by all educational funding sources;
- the arts be placed in the school timetable in ways that provide equitable access for all students and in a manner that fully meets the time required for each discipline;
- schools provide appropriate facilities and materials to meet the specific needs of each arts program;
- arts programs be given the flexibility and financial support to access community resources;
- revenues generated through co-curricular arts activities be reinvested in the arts programs involved in generating the funds.

Partnerships

The specialized knowledge and skills of individuals and organizations working in different capacities with students initiate sustainable, productive relationships among the various parties in the local community and beyond.

The NSAE recommends that

- professionals working in the arts and education seek ways to work locally and globally in partnerships to achieve goals for learning in, through, and about the arts;
- artists have access to pedagogical support for their partnerships with classroom and arts teachers;
- a coalition of arts, business, and education organizations and individuals be developed to support arts education;
- businesses and non-governmental funding agencies be encouraged to enter into partnerships that support student learning in the arts in schools;
- partnerships in the arts and education be carefully structured by all parties to establish roles and expectations, clarify responsibilities, and provide for sustainability;
- examples of arts education partnerships be documented and disseminated to inform the development of future partnerships;
- partnerships promote educational practice and the achievement of learning objectives;
- parents and guardians be recognized as key partners in arts education.

Research

Sustained and innovative research programs supported by national and local interests, serve as necessary catalysts for change in arts education in Canada. Research provides the evidence to support arts education, the basis for developing educational materials and practices, and a foundation for future arts education initiatives.

The NSAE recommends that

- researchers undertake projects that produce status reports and exemplars and research that stimulates, encourages, and develops arts education in Canada;
- research in arts education be undertaken not only into and about the arts, but also *through* the arts, using both conventional and arts-based theories and methodologies;
- research in arts education in Canada be inclusive of and attend to issues unique to Canadian regional and cultural perspectives, to special populations, gender and sexuality, economic standing, and ability, among other factors;
- research in arts education be undertaken not only by academic and funded research scholars, but by teachers, community participants, artists, and the students themselves working together to provide a holistic and dynamic view of arts education, its benefits, its challenges, and its possibilities.;
- research in arts education be reported in a variety of media and forms tailored to a wide range of populations, from policy-makers, to school boards, to funding agencies, to community groups, to parents, and to the public.

Leadership

Arts education requires dynamic individuals who lead by example and are passionate about the arts. It also thrives when administrators understand the value of the arts for students and make informed decisions about arts programs.

The NSAE recommends that

- arts consultants and arts specialists be included as part of each school and/or school district's leadership resource team to support and sustain high quality arts programs;
- ministries of education provide a curriculum framework for each arts discipline;
- government and school boards support the implementation of arts curricula;
- curriculum renewal be aligned with program evaluation;
- principals demonstrate leadership by actively supporting the delivery of arts education in their schools;
- administrators at all levels be knowledgeable about and apply appropriate criteria for hiring teachers entrusted with teaching the arts;
- school and district administrators provide for the flexibility in scheduling required to ensure comprehensive arts programs;
- school administrators and arts administrators endeavor to establish partnerships that bring their organizations together in collaborative arrangements;
- arts organizations demonstrate leadership by actively supporting the delivery of comprehensive and on-going arts education in the schools.

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Participants

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If your organization or association endorses these guidelines, please let us know. We are compiling a list. Please contact Betty Hanley for notification of endorsement through a formal motion (bhanley@uvic.ca).

APPENDIX

The National Symposium on Arts Education—Background

In 1997, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) completed a Pan-Canadian Science Project. Thinking that the arts could be the next Pan-Canadian Project, the first National Symposium on Arts Education (NSAE) in Cape Breton (1997), hosted by the Canadian Music Educators Association and the Canadian Conference of the Arts, produced a strong resolution supported by artists, educators, administrators, and teacher educators to initiate a national arts education agenda. The resolution read:

Given the value of the arts for learning;

Given the ability of education in the arts to nurture qualities necessary in the workplace of the 21st century;

Given the rapidly growing work opportunities in the cultural sector;

Given the need for creative uses of and content for new technologies, which artists provide;

Given the central role of the arts in the well being of communities;

Given the ability of the arts to respond to and embrace the movement of globalization, both affirming distinct cultures and understanding others;

The participants of the National Symposium on Arts Education '97, including artists, educators, arts administrators and education administrators from across Canada, urge the Ministers of Education, through the Council of Ministers of Education, to take steps to ensure that the arts are a fundamental and sustained part of the Canadian school system for all students and in all schools, by developing a vision and common outcomes for arts education in Canada.

This resolution and the proceedings, *Connect, Combine, Communicate: Revitalizing the Arts in Canadian Schools*, were important tangible outcomes of the first symposium.

In August 1998, delegates assembled at the University of Victoria for the second National Symposium on Arts Education with the intention of taking the next steps towards achieving national recognition and support for arts education in Canada. Delegates met to consolidate gains, reassess strategy, and develop an action plan. At the conclusion of the Victoria Symposium, the NSAE decided to pursue a number of initiatives identified by participants as important at this time. The outcomes of the Victoria Symposium were a national press release, the development of a mission statement for Canadian arts education, a study of provincial curriculum documents, and the publication of the proceedings, *Leadership, Advocacy, Communication: A Vision for Arts Education in Canada*.¹ The consensus was that, to better promote the goals of the NSAE, the next symposium should focus on action planning rather than the more customary presentations.

In 1999, the organizers of the Regina Symposium held at the University of Regina, focused on action planning. After considerable discussion and sharing of ideas, the participants identified a number of tasks to be undertaken in the coming year. Among these tasks were the development of an NSAE website and the writing of a vision statement. Both goals were

¹ These proceedings are available from Lee Bartel, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON M5S 2C5 Canada (lbartel@chass.utoronto.ca).

accomplished, the first with the cooperation of Saskatchewan Education, and the second in the form of a draft vision statement.

The symposium next moved to Ottawa in July 2000 for *Sharing the Vision*, hosted by the Canadian Conference of the Arts and the University of Ottawa. This symposium addressed four main areas of discussion: how governments can support the education and culture sectors; teacher/artist partnerships in the classroom; teaching teachers in and through the arts; and keeping specialist arts teachers in our elementary schools. In addition, delegates examined the draft of the vision document. There was support for the document, but it was not ratified at this time.

In 2001, the NSAE moved to Calgary where the focus was on relationships: *Partnerships Between the Stakeholders: How Can We Dance Together without Stepping on Each Other's Toes?* The discussion was professionally facilitated, with the intention of identifying areas of common interest as well as areas of potential friction. The concrete results of this symposium were the ratification of the vision statement, *Sharing the Vision*, and the decision to draft an advocacy document to address multiple interests. Input was provided from a number of sectors. *Making the Vision Happen* was developed over 2001–2002. Both documents are available on-line as PDF files (www.artsed.ca).

The summer of 2002 saw the Symposium move to Montréal, where participants presented a variety of workshops and papers, carrying on the format established in Cape Breton. The agenda of the NSAE was presented to delegates, including the advocacy document. The consensus of the group was that the NSAE should continue its mission.

Moving the Vision Forward—Policy Guidelines for Arts Education in Canada

In December 2002, a meeting of arts educators and representatives from government agencies was held to determine the level of support for a Canadian bid to host an International Arts Education Summit in 2005. Initiated by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, such a bid would require the support of many national organizations and agencies including the Canada Council, Heritage Canada, Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA), and arts education associations. Participation would provide a unique opportunity for arts educators to demonstrate to the world that Canada has the potential to be a leader in arts education. All in attendance were enthusiastic about the possibilities, and a Coalition for Arts Education in Canada (CAEC) was proposed.

Meanwhile, the CCA had announced a policy conference focusing on arts education to be held in Halifax, November 28–29, 2003. The NSAE thought it the perfect opportunity to show leadership by developing policy guidelines for arts education in Canadian schools and thus scheduled its 7th symposium for November 26–27 to immediately precede the CCA conference. Guidelines were to be developed rather than policy to honour the provincial jurisdiction of education while addressing the need for national support and direction for arts education. The policy guidelines were presented at the CCA conference for discussion. The response was very favourable.

In developing the initial policy guidelines draft to be presented in Halifax, the writing team, six experts from universities across Canada built on the two major documents of past symposia, *Sharing the Vision* (Calgary, 2001) and *Making the Vision Happen* (2002). Representatives from the relevant national groups listed in Table 1 were invited to Halifax to respond to the draft. The number of participants was limited to make meaningful dialogue possible. After concentrated, small-group discussions and several revisions, the draft accompanying this Appendix was produced.

The next step is to seek ratification of the guidelines from national and provincial art, arts education, and education organizations and associations.

Table 1. Groups Invited to Participate in NSAE 2003

ArtsSmarts
Canada Council (CC)
Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA)
Canadian Human Resource Council (CHRC)
Canadian Music Educators' Association (CMEA)
Canadian Society for Education through Art (CSEA)
Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF)
Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC)
First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centers
Heritage Canada
Learning through the Arts (LTTA)
Métis National Council
Ministries of Culture
Ministries of Education
National Symposium on Arts Education (NSAE)
Theatre Canada
UNESCO
Universities

One of the last decisions of the NSAE was to move its dissolution and replacement by the Coalition for Arts Education in Canada. The Coalition is moving forward. The draft bylaws are available from http://educ.queensu.ca/~ofarrell/CAEC-CEAC_bylaws.doc.