

Section 1: Introduction

Background and Rationale

Music is an important part of the human experience. It is a universal language, a tangible means of communication for all humans. Music, with its unique body of knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking, is worth knowing. It is a means of understanding ourselves and others in a way not possible in other disciplines. The ability to perform, listen to, and create music with understanding is a highly desirable and important part of the human experience for every member of society.

Music provides an outlet for creativity and self expression. It engages our imaginations and allows us to explore our own identities. The development of musical potential, along with linguistic, physical, and others, exists in every individual and is one of the basic tenets of education. The K-12 music program provides the opportunity for students to develop this potential.

K-6 Music Program

The K-6 music curriculum is based on the *Foundation for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Education Curriculum* which provides the framework for music education and reflects current research theories and classroom practice. The document includes the Essential Graduation Learnings, General Curriculum Outcomes, and Key Stage Curriculum Outcomes for arts education in the Atlantic Provinces.

Primary Music

Music in the primary grades provides experiences that are meaningful and enjoyable to the child and develops a greater love for, understanding of, and sensitivity to music. Music is an essential part of the primary curriculum because it promotes growth in the three major areas of learning: the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor. Rhythm and metre, melody/pitch, harmony, form, expression (dynamics, tempo, articulation, tone colours, notations) and contexts are explored through direct experiences - singing, speaking, playing instruments, moving, listening, hand signing, notating, reading, writing, deriving, analyzing, improvising, composing, evaluating, and responding.

The music program is learner-based and flexible, matching the teaching process to the child's natural learning process. The primary music program sequences the discovery of musical concepts and musical skills.

Elementary Music

The elementary program continues to provide students with musical experiences that further develop the musicality innate in each child. The elementary program follows a pedagogical sequence of hearing, singing, playing, moving, deriving, writing, and creating to build upon skills and knowledge acquired in the primary grades. Cognitive and psychomotor skills are developed through musical literacy, movement, and the creation and performance of their own works and the works of others. In addition to playing classroom instruments, students study the recorder and explore the use of music technology.

Repertoire is expanded and includes songs and works from their own and other cultures, works of recognized masters, and contemporary compositions. Students analyze, interpret, reflect and respond to their own works and the work of others, and make connections in local and global contexts.

Choral experiences are an integral part of the elementary music program. Students study choral repertoire and the technical aspects of good choral singing in a choral setting. Choral experiences are to be offered along with the classroom program but are not to replace the allocated time for the core classroom music program.

Instrumental skills may be further developed through a band or string program. The decision to introduce band and/or string programs is a district and school prerogative. Beginning grade levels may vary. Band and string classes are an extension of the classroom music program and provide reinforcement and application of musical concepts. However, at no time are band and string classes to replace the classroom music program. Further information on instrumental programs may be found in *Instrumental Music: An Administrative and Curricular Guide*.

Aesthetic Growth

Musical understanding is defined as the ability to think and act musically with personal meaning (Montgomery, 2002).

While skills, knowledge and concepts constitute the essential components of the music program, it is for aesthetic growth that such content is needed. Musical experiences include both the cognitive and affective domains. Music education provides opportunities for direct experiences with music and its expressive qualities. Music appeals directly to our feelings. It demands a personal response and helps us discover dimensions of beauty. Children should be encouraged to realize and express their feelings through musical experiences and to discover the beauty and expressive qualities inherent in music.

Through performing, listening, and creating, students perceive what is happening and form understandings of musical concepts, as well as feelings and emotions. Their response is personal; the opportunity for heightened aesthetic experience is the result of these experiences.

Contexts for Learning and Teaching

Organizers

Six organizers are present at all levels of the primary/elementary music curriculum. They are:

- Rhythm and Metre
- Melody/Pitch
- Harmony
- Form
- Expression
- Contexts

In order for students to develop musical understandings, all six organizers must be linked together in an ongoing process of musical development.

Students study music of various forms, genres, time periods, and of particular composers, nations and cultures, through skill-based activities such as listening, playing, singing, moving, reading, writing, creating, responding and analyzing.

They develop an understanding of the elements and styles of music, and make connections to the broader contexts of music and culture. Through increasing knowledge and understanding, students develop their ability to value music in a variety of contexts, and respond critically to the expressive qualities of music.

Individual and Ensemble Experience

Music is a performing art. One of the most efficient and effective ways for students to learn about music is to experience it through the performance of their own created musical works and the works of others.

The group experience, through the classroom setting and/or ensembles and groups, is central to music education and allows for a fusion of theoretical aspects and practice. Learning outcomes are often realized with others. Students develop individual musicianship skills, acquire an understanding of musical concepts, obtain knowledge about music, analyze, reflect, interpret and develop musical independence while becoming aware of what is required for effective performance with others.

Balance

There must be a balance between creating and reflection, both of *their own musical works* and the *works of others*. Creative and critical thinking combined with thoughtful reflection enables learners to make connections to prior learning. When learners see the relevancy and authenticity of their learning experiences, they value the experiences more.

Process and Product

Within the arts are two distinct types of activity - process and product. In creating, performing and responding to musical works, students are challenged to understand their work in relation to others, build on strengths, and consider new directions.

Opportunities for reflection and self assessment allow students time to examine the many steps of the process and consider the choices and decisions they have made in the creation/performance of their work. In this way, process is afforded equal, if not more, importance than product. Learning experiences in music must recognize that

- the creative process does not always result in a final product
- changes in understanding and direction can occur throughout the creative process
- students need opportunities to discuss and reflect upon their work
- making connections between their own and other cultural forms around them is a vital part of the process

Key Features of the Music Curriculum

Outcomes define the curriculum.

The identification of outcomes defines for students, teachers, parents and administrators, specific expectations of what students should be able to do and value as a result of learning in music.

The curriculum provides opportunities for assessing student achievement.

The curriculum provides reference points for teachers to inform their instructional practice as they monitor students' progress. Assessment involves not only the final product, but the process of performing, listening/responding to, and creating music. As a continuous, collaborative, comprehensive process, assessment can be a powerful tool to enhance students' learning.

The musical development of all students is nurtured.

The curriculum recognizes that students learn and develop at different rates and in different ways. The curriculum provides for a range of learning styles, instructional strategies, and resources. Learning strategies may be adapted to meet the needs of individual students and provide ongoing opportunities for all students to engage in new learning based on their previous successes.

Through music education, students develop aesthetic awareness and judgement by using and creating forms of expression that communicate ideas, perceptions, and feelings. Music activities enable students to learn and express themselves as performers, listeners, and creators.

The presence of music in every culture is affirmed.

Musical expression is an integral part of all societies, not a stand-alone, independent enterprise. Music, along with the other arts, allows a culture to define its identity and communicate that identity to others. Works of artistic expression are able to bypass human reason and languages and appeal to us at an emotional level. Musical works are more deeply understood and fully appreciated within the context of the culture of the people who produce them. Learning about music in a global perspective provides the basis for valuing the differences among people. International understanding is a key starting point to valuing the diversity within our own culture.

The curriculum provides a framework for making connections with other subject areas.

The curriculum recognizes the importance of students working in and through music. When students learn in music, they develop specific skills and understandings necessary for self expression. As they gain confidence in these skills, they are able to learn through music. They discover ways to apply their skills in other subject areas, making cross-curricular connections, solving problems, and using musical modes of expression to demonstrate their learning.

The importance of student participation in all aspects of learning is emphasized.

Students engage in a range of experiences and interactions designed to help them use processes associated with performing, creating, expressing and responding to works in music, both their own musical works and those of others.

The curriculum emphasizes the personal, social, and cultural contexts of learning, and the power that creating has within these contexts. Students are encouraged to recognize the power of creativity in constructing, defining, and shaping knowledge; in developing attitudes and skills; and in extending these new learnings in social and cultural contexts.

The curriculum is designed to build awareness for career possibilities in the cultural sector.

The importance of the arts in adult life is recognized and the curriculum begins the preparation of learners to consider careers and entrepreneurial opportunities in the cultural sector.

Thrusts

The new curriculum approaches the realization of learning outcomes in a holistic way and puts an emphasis on

- the creativity of the child. Children are encouraged to invent their own ways of moving, accompaniments, speech and rhythm patterns, melodies, interpretations, dramatizations, and ways of notating
- singing as the foundation of the K-6 program
- the playing of pitched and non-pitched classroom instruments
- movement experiences as an integral part of the program
- engagement in musical experiences before the introduction of musical symbols (sound before symbol)
- the development of musical literacy
- varied musical experiences reflecting time periods, places, and communities
- reflection and response as an integral part of the process of creating and performing

Assessing and Evaluating Student Learning

Assessment and evaluation are essential components of teaching and learning in music education. Without effective assessment and evaluation, it is impossible to know whether students have learned, whether teaching has been effective, or how best to address student learning needs.

What is assessed and evaluated, how it is assessed and evaluated, and how results are communicated send clear messages to students and others about what is really valued.

To determine how well students are learning, assessment strategies must be designed to systematically gather information on the achievement of curriculum outcomes. Effective assessment must reflect the totality of the curriculum outcomes and the organizing strands. As well, assessment strategies should

- reflect that experimentation, risk taking, and creativity are valued
- enable students to discover their own interests and needs
- engage students in assessing, reflecting upon, and improving their own learning

In planning assessments, teachers should use a broad range of strategies that reflect student's diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and needs, and give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Many types of assessment strategies can be used to gather such information including, but not limited to

- formal and informal observations
- checklists
- work samples
- anecdotal records
- student/teacher conferences
- teacher-made and other tests
- student portfolios
- reflective writing
- questioning
- performance assessment
- group/individual presentations and performances
- self assessment
- peer assessment

Music teachers may work with hundreds of students in a given year. When this is the case, assessment strategies must be both realistic for the teacher and valid for the learner. Thoughtful planning is required in order that assessment of individual student learning encompasses the range of learning outcomes.

Evaluation

Evaluation involves teachers and others in analysing and reflecting upon information about student learning gathered in a variety of ways. This process requires

- developing clear criteria and guidelines for assigning marks or grades for student work
- synthesizing information from multiple sources
- using a high level of professional judgement

Reporting

Reporting on student learning should focus on the extent to which students have achieved the curriculum outcomes. Reporting involves communicating the summary and interpretation of information about student learning to various audiences who require it. Teachers have a special responsibility to explain accurately what progress students have made in their learning and to respond to parent and student inquiries about learning.