



**coalition for  
music education  
in BC**

### **A Vision for Music Education in British Columbia**

Music education is vital to helping students become well-rounded, educated citizens and to creating culturally rich communities throughout our province.

A school music education program is:

- Comprehensive
- Sequential
- Experiential
- Offered for a provincially mandated length of time each week
- Taught by a trained music specialist
- Available to every K-12 student
- Treated and valued as a mandated subject in its own right
- Responsive to and reflective of the school community
- A collaborative partner within the larger community

\*Presented by the Coalition for Music Education in BC. The CMEBC is an organization made up of parents, students, educators, and community members who support school music programs. Our mission is to affirm and promote public school music education in British Columbia.

## **ELABORATIONS**

### **A school music education program is...**

#### **Comprehensive**

A comprehensive music education program represents the many ways music is experienced and practiced in our multimusical world. As students grow from grades K-12, it provides them with increasingly fulfilling ways of thinking about, talking about, and making music. It asks us to embrace diversity in genre, style, technique, and origin, while also maintaining a strong connection to the history of music as well as the musical culture surrounding us. Through age-appropriate methods and content, a comprehensive music education reflects the needs and interests of all students. It teaches an awareness of music's place in our lives and society, and considers the many musical roles that exist in our culture and workforce.

#### **Sequential**

Like all education, music education is sequential with particular skills and understandings mastered before learning new ones. From simple to complex, concrete to abstract, and basic to advanced, students engage in material that is age appropriate and skill appropriate. As music connects us to others and engages us to make music in groups, as well as individually, the sequential aspect of music education is paramount to allowing students to work with others, and advance their individual musicianship. When students of a similar education level, from different schools, come together to make music, they have the opportunity to succeed when they have benefitted from a sequential music program at their respective schools.

#### **Experiential**

Music is most deeply learned and understood through a hands-on, participatory approach. The act of *making music* by singing, playing an instrument, or composing allows students to transfer concrete, learned skills to abstract thoughts and ideas. Beyond simply learning by doing, experiential learning also includes the practices of observation and reflection. Students should have the opportunity to experience music in different ways, including collaborating with and observing others, individual practice and experimentation, and attendance at live musical performances,

#### **Offered for a provincially mandated length of time each week**

Learning music takes time. In order to provide a comprehensive music education for students, the time to do so must be allocated. Policies for minimum instructional time per week need to be put in place by the Ministry of Education, rather than leaving these important decisions to school districts to make for themselves. The lack of a central policy in BC has resulted in vast differences and inequities in music education offerings from one district to another, and often, from one school to another within the same district. In the absence of a provincial policy, at the very least, school districts should determine whether their current music education programs are in compliance with the BC curriculum. In too many schools across BC, music programs do not comply with the curriculum, and in some cases, music is not taught at all. Acknowledging where

music programs are failing and taking action to fix the situation is a necessary step to comply with the curriculum and to offer students the musical education they are entitled to.

### **Taught by a trained music specialist**

A quality school music program requires the expertise and experience of a trained Music Specialist. Being a Music Specialist requires the teacher to hold a Bachelor of Music degree with BC Ministry of Education approved music education program methods courses and teacher certification, or a Bachelor of Music Education degree, or a Bachelor of Education degree in Music, or an equivalent level of training through an approved music teacher education program leading to teacher certification. Music Specialists should have a high level of proficiency on their major instrument/voice, coursework in conducting, piano, choral, instrumental, and elementary music methods and pedagogy, as well as instruction in brass, woodwind, percussion, and string instruments. Music Specialists should be certified to teach music for grades K-12, and all schools should be required to have all music classes taught by a Music Specialist.

### **Available to every K-12 student**

Every school in BC, elementary through secondary, should have music classes available to every student. The opportunity to participate in music should not be limited by timetable restrictions, other courses, or by programming decisions made by school administrators. In order to be compliant with the provincially mandated curriculum, music must be accessible to every student.

### **Treated and valued as a mandated subject in its own right**

Music education is paramount to a rounded student and healthy young person. When music is treated and valued as a mandated subject in its own right, it contributes greatly to the overall wellbeing and success of students. This success is not limited to the intramusical benefits of music education, but has wide reaching effects, impacting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the student. From learning to master details through repetition, to the art of self discipline, music education creates productive and valuable citizens. When treated and valued as a mandated subject, students will receive sufficient minutes of music education, the quality of instruction and delivery will increase, and the overall education of students is improved.

### **Responsive to and reflective of the school community**

Music is a unifier. It is a means of expression and communication that brings people together, while embracing diversity. Diversity within in our school communities is something to be celebrated. As we know, one size does not fit all, and the same is true in our music programs. Approaching music education in a way that meets the needs of our students and reflects the uniqueness of each school community helps music play a central role in a school's culture. Music programs should reflect school plans, goals, and aspirations. They should connect to and celebrate the culture and lifestyle of different students. Through a mixture of traditional and innovative approaches and content, music can be a powerful contributor to school communities.

### **A collaborative partner within the larger community**

In addition to serving the school community, a music program should play a special role in the community at large. By reflecting community values, and celebrating community traditions and events, music programs help to strengthen communities and educate students on how to be active citizens. Teachers and students should reflect upon and discuss what their music program's place is within their community and how they can contribute to a community's culture and identity. Truth and Reconciliation also requires our active involvement and consideration about the unique role that music can play in this process. Collaboration is also essential between different school music programs as well as with community organizations that can enhance students' music education experience. Finding ways to get involved, and reach out into the community through special events, music festivals, partnerships, professional development, or other special projects can deepen the experience for students, teachers, parents, and community members, and help illustrate the central role that music can play in our communities.