

# a fine **FACTA**



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# From the Fine Arts Council

## Message from the Editor

Renee Dowling



As many of you know, the fine arts are the key to open many locked doors. In this issue of *A Fine Facta*, you will read about how fine arts teachers across the province have unlocked doors and have led their students through those doors to help others in our

local, provincial and global communities. I know it sounds cliché, but the arts do make a difference, and as fine arts educators, we are privy to daily examples of how the arts brighten the world.

In one article, you will read about teachers in Lethbridge who are using art to help children living in prisons in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Children of incarcerated parents are forced to live in prisons because there is no one else to care for them. Lethbridge student artists sold their art through Kids' Art for a Cause to raise money to help these Bolivian children to attend school. If you want to get involved or to create a Kids' Art for a Cause project of your own, you must read this article.

Another article features students in Medicine Hat who created art to revive a tired old hospital wing in the children's ward. The wing is for children who are seriously and often terminally ill. Their project has also been accepted by Kids' Art for a Cause, and now they will be able to sell their art and raise funds for the Children's Wish Foundation.

You will read a letter from a graduating drama student in Medicine Hat to her classmates and her teacher that expresses how drama, her classmates and her teacher have unlocked the doors for her and have helped her grow as a person.

You will also learn how a teacher in Edmonton has integrated her travels from Ghana into her music classroom, opening the doors to a new world for many students through music, costumes and photography.

If you are interested in research, this issue includes articles about fine arts curricula and results from a survey of Alberta's fine arts teachers. We are trying to unlock the mystery of our current but ancient arts curricula and trying to figure out how to move forward in this time of change and uncertainty.







Another research-based article will answer the question, What on earth is music therapy?

Even though you are aware of the impact of the arts on your students, I encourage you to continue to be an advocate for the arts and arts students and to keep on believing that what you do is important, even in these times of turmoil in our province.

Thank you to all of you who continue to contribute to and read our publication. We would love to hear from you. Do you find the articles and ideas helpful? Have you tried any of the ideas in your classroom? What ideas could you share with other readers?

Finally, thank you to all of you who are unlocking doors and helping our students go through those doors to change their own lives and the lives of others. Keep up the great work!

*Renee Dowling teaches Grade 1 at River Heights Elementary School in Medicine Hat. She is participating in her school district's technology committee and is also taking online art courses. She creates art using acrylic paint, mixed media, watercolour, photography and, occasionally, sculpting. She also loves art journaling, dancing, music and kayaking. Visit her blog Renee Loves Art at <http://reneelovesart.blogspot.ca>. You can contact her at [renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca](mailto:renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca).*



# *Conference 2015: An Arts Getaway in the Mountains*

Renee Dowling

The Fine Arts Council works diligently each year to bring you high-quality fine arts professional development. For the past two years, the council's annual conference was held in Canmore.

Here are some sights from Conference 2015, held October 22–24.



From the Fine Arts Council



*With the hustle and bustle of the new school year, teachers often feel overwhelmed. What better way to overcome the stress than gazing upon a peaceful fall mountain view?*



*The local squirrel teased and called teachers to go outside and take in the mountain sights.*

*(opposite page) Canmore is the perfect place for fine arts teachers to immerse themselves in a community filled with artists and art.*



From the Fine Arts Council



*Artist and educator Chester Lees taught teachers about the history of Chinese brushstroke painting and told them about her intense training.*

*Chester Lees showed teachers how a Grade 3 class painted on Chinese newspapers.*



*Teachers found their Zen through brushstroke painting.*



*Teachers left feeling inspired, relaxed and very pleased with their final results.*



*Chinese brushstroke painting allows artists to represent many things with just a few strokes.*



From the Fine Arts Council



*WP Puppet Theatre taught teachers about the history of Bunraku puppet theatre. The teachers created puppets using inexpensive and readily available materials and then performed a readers theatre.*



From the Fine Arts Council

*WP Puppet Theatre showed teachers how to create shadow puppets using simple supplies and textures and then how to manipulate the puppets in interesting ways.*





From the Fine Arts Council



Teachers learned step by step how to paint a watercolour landscape using a quarter, oil pastels, small pieces of paper and watercolour paint.

Artist and teacher Tamara Martin Spady, author of *The Hairy Fellows: A Rabbit's Guide to Drawing*, believes that students need to be taught art literacy.





# Conference 2016

## Journey with the Fine Arts: Creating Your Story

October 20–22, 2016  
Delta Lodge, Kananaskis

The annual Fine Arts Council conference will be held in beautiful Kananaskis, October 20–22. This year we have another great lineup of presenters in all subject areas. As well, we look forward to hearing stories and songs from our keynote speaker, Jeff Stockton, an award-winning recording artist and accomplished Celtic harp musician, storyteller and speaker.

**Join us in Kananaskis!**

## Call for Nominations

At the Fine Arts Council's annual general meeting, to be held during the conference, there will be a call for nominations for the following executive positions:

- Secretary
- Art representative
- Drama representative
- Music representative (one-year term)
- Generalist





## What Is Curriculum?

*Curriculum* has a variety of meanings, beginning with the overwhelming definition that curriculum is everything that happens at school. More narrowly, *curriculum* can also describe the program of studies, mandated by the appropriate governing bodies, that students are required to learn. Even more narrowly, *curriculum* can refer to the lesson plans and information delivered in a particular classroom on a particular day. However, more often, the term *curriculum* has a larger moral and political element, including a quasi definition of how society sees itself.

Curricula have been created variously by different individuals or groups on the basis of different beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the purposes of schooling (Franklin 2008). Smith, Stanley and Shores (1957) suggest that curriculum is about social control, believing that the essence of curriculum is to induct young people into society. They explain that the “people of every society are confronted by the problem of inducting the immature members into their culture, that is, into the ways of the group” (p 3).

*Curriculum* has also come to mean what teachers intend children to learn in school and what children do, in fact, learn in school, inside and outside the classroom, whether intended or not. Any definition of *curriculum* acknowledges the difference between what the curriculum should be, as it is mandated by government, and what actually occurs in schools.

## Why Is Curriculum Important?

*Curriculum* can be defined narrowly in terms of a lesson plan, unit plan or year plan. It can also cover what the government intends for children to learn.

Labaree (1999) defines four kinds of curricula:

- *Rhetorical curriculum*—the recommendations of politicians, as well as influential groups and individuals
- *Formal curriculum*—often a distillation of the rhetorical curriculum into the government-mandated curriculum
- *Curriculum-in-use*—the actual content that is implemented in the classroom
- *Received curriculum*—the actual learning by children

The differences between these curricula are due to the mediating factors, including the “interplay between political parties, the influence of powerful individuals and groups, the availability of financial resources, the force of popular pressure, and the influence of class, religion, and race” (Franklin 2008, 152).

Levin (2010) suggests that the development of curriculum by governments involves questions of politics as determined by public values. Young and Levin (2002, 20) state, “A vision of the good school is intimately connected with a vision of the good society and the good life.” An important element of curriculum is the question of which knowledge is of most worth. One side of this debate argues for the traditional academic disciplines as the principal organizing elements of the curriculum. This side suggests that the



curriculum of the past has worked well and will continue to work well. The other side argues for a more fluid and responsive curriculum that may more accurately reflect society and student interests.

Curriculum is often seen as a mechanism of cultural reproduction and social control. As Kulnieks, Longboat and Young (2011, 368) state, “If you want to make societal change, education must be at the core.” For society’s marginalized groups, curriculum can be seen as preserving the patterns of class authority and advantage that exist in a culture from generation to generation. Battiste (2011, 308) indicates,

The current challenge is not so much finding receptivity to inclusion of the syntheses among curriculum specialists, but the challenge of ensuring that receptivity to inclusive, diverse education is appropriately and ethically achieved and that the educators become aware of the difficult systemic challenges for overcoming Eurocentrism, culturalism, racism, and intolerance.

Curriculum development, therefore, is fraught with challenges, as curriculum itself is political in nature, reflecting societal norms and societal diversity. What should be taught to the next generation of citizens is of great importance to many. Curriculum development basically involves the selection, organization, realization and evaluation of educational content. Wraga (2008, 155) suggests that curriculum “is concerned with identifying the knowledge and abilities considered most worthy for students to learn.” In terms of who might be involved in curriculum reform, Wraga suggests that

participants in the curriculum development process range from teachers, administrators, parents, other community members and even students on the building and district levels, to government agencies or ministries, university faculty members, elected and appointed officials, private foundations, test publishers and special interest lobbyists on the state and national levels. (p 154)

## Fine Arts Curriculum

As contentious as curriculum in general is, the fine arts curriculum may be even more so. A number of factors come into play.

The first is the above-mentioned political and societal pressure to make sure the curriculum reflects what is good in society, typically followed by a conversation about the nature of fine arts education and whether the fine arts

should be considered “good.” There is a constant comparison of the relative values of the subject areas. In Alberta, this has resulted in the creation of the subsets of core curriculum and options. The core subjects are (arguably) those that are considered very important, while the options may be seen as less crucial. That is, the province has indicated that in order to create a good society, some subjects *must* be taught, whereas others, such as the fine arts, *may* be taught.

Few would disagree that the arts have value in society, but often circumstances dictate weighing the arts against other subjects. In 1958, the *National Defense Education Act* was passed in the United States. Flynn (1995, 53) quotes the act: “The Congress hereby finds and declares that the security of the Nation requires the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women.” She explains that the Eisenhower administration “saw Russians surpassing Americans in knowledge of science and mathematics and abilities to bring new technologies to the marketplace” (p 53), a knee-jerk reaction to the Russians launching Sputnik in 1957. Curriculum developers responded with a swing back to “the basics” (science and math), as American (and, to a lesser degree, Canadian) stakeholders felt that Russian students were at a scholastic advantage. The arts came under siege as school districts compared the relative merits of individual subjects. Since the arts would not help put a man on the moon, they were deemed less important.

However, the arts hold great significance to fine arts teachers. It is they who can see the effects of the arts on children. Thompson, Bresler and Costantino (2010, 423) state that the arts “cultivate the mind and the spirit, address utilitarian goals in the interest of industrial production, and provide children with emotional outlets and means of self-expression.” Vallance (2010, 46) explains that “one of the strongest arguments for art education has, for a number of decades, been that at its best it teaches children to express themselves—and the ideas in their culture—in creative new ways that could not have been fully anticipated.”

Even though the arts are seen as valuable, the fundamental nature of fine arts education in schools is perennially disputed. It is primarily the consistent advocacy of fine arts educators, based on their own experiences of seeing the value of the arts, that continues to keep fine arts education alive in schools.



## Conclusion

*Curriculum* can refer to everything that happens at school, the program of studies that has been mandated for students or even a specific lesson plan. Curriculum is a mirror reflecting how society sees itself. Fine arts education is complex in that it is part of what society would like the next generation to know, but fine arts educators, nevertheless, must constantly defend its reason for existence. The ongoing dispute about the value of the arts manifests itself in the Alberta fine arts programs of study, which are significantly older than the programs of study for core subjects. It would seem that the former provincial government did not place as much value on the arts as on the subjects that would help put a man on the moon.

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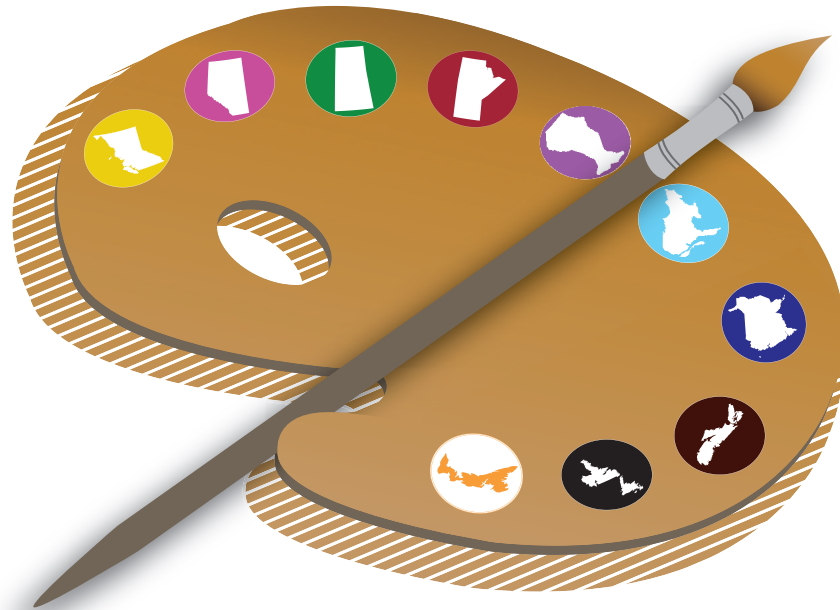
*John C Poulsen is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge. He is the Fine Arts Council's University of Lethbridge representative.*

*Andreas D Berko holds an MEd from the University of Lethbridge and is currently a technology mentorship teacher and music specialist in the Calgary Catholic School District. He is the Fine Arts Council's webmaster.*



# *Fine Arts in Context: The State of the Arts Curricula of the Canadian Provinces*

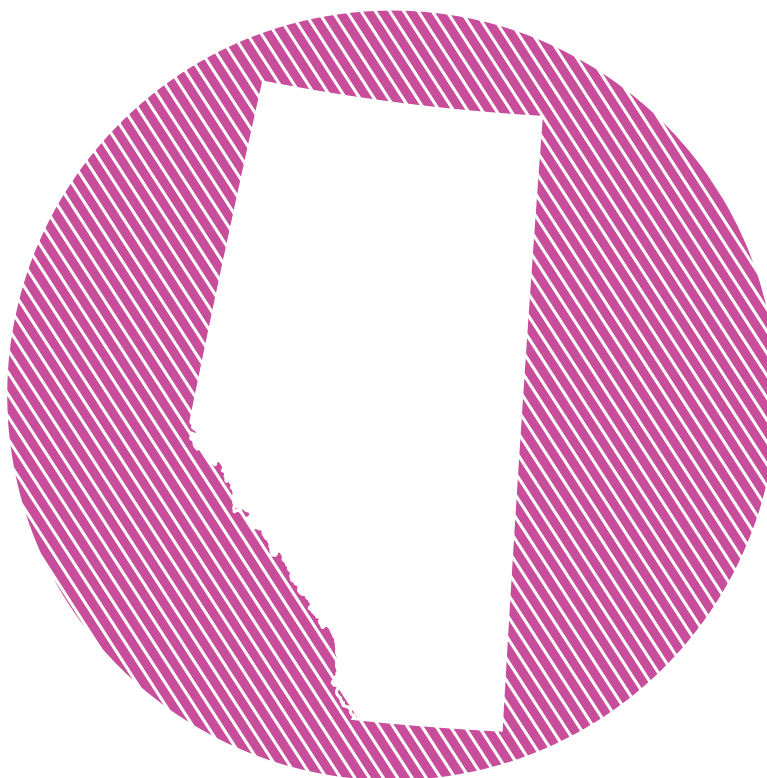
John C Poulsen and  
Andreas D Berko



This article is a companion piece to another article in this journal on a 2014 survey of the opinions of Alberta fine arts teachers with regard to the existing fine arts curriculum and the possibility of a new fine arts curriculum (Poulsen and Berko 2016). In this article, we will examine how the Alberta fine arts programs of study are situated with regard to fine arts curricula in other Canadian provinces. That is, this article examines the results of the survey of fine arts teachers in the context of Canadian fine arts curricula. We will examine provincial fine arts curriculum outcomes, the date each curriculum was released, and

whether the subjects are required or optional courses. This overview will put Alberta fine arts teachers' opinions into perspective by comparing their ideas to the Canadian context. We will begin by looking at the Alberta curriculum and then move from province to province, from east to west.

The premise of this examination is that, for some children, the arts are the most important part of their education. For specific students, it is vital that they have opportunities to regularly self-express through art, dance, drama or music. The importance of the arts to all children is generally agreed upon but, as we will see, not all children in Canada have equal access to arts education.



## Alberta

The Alberta fine arts curricula include art, drama and music, each in individual programs at various levels.<sup>1</sup>

At the elementary level, music seems to be required. The curriculum states that “music education should begin at an early age and should continue to encourage creative expression through performance, listening and composition” (Alberta Education 1989, A1). The *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12* (Alberta Education 2015) indicates that music and art together should constitute 10 per cent of the overall curriculum in elementary, but the exact proportion is left to the discretion of local school administrations or jurisdictions. The elementary drama curriculum clearly states that “drama is an optional program designed to be used either as a separate subject or integrated with other subjects” (Alberta Education 1985, C1).

The *Guide to Education* indicates that fine arts instructional minutes are optional at the junior high level, stating that “time may vary” (Alberta Education 2015, 43). Students in senior high school are required to complete a minimum of 100 credits in order to earn a high school diploma, with 10 of those credits coming

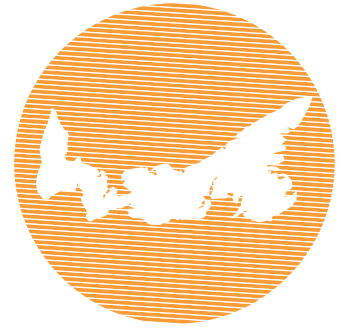
from a variety of optional courses, including the fine arts (p 91). One credit in high school is expected to equal 25 hours of instruction, although courses may be completed in less or more time, under certain circumstances (p 48).

The junior high fine arts curricula were published in the 1980s: art in 1984, music in 1988 and drama in 1989. These courses are not required but are offered in many schools. The high school fine arts curricula were created in the 1980s and '90s: art in 1986, drama in 1989, choral in 1991 and general music in 1994.

In Alberta, dance is not a provincially mandated subject and, therefore, has no provincially prescribed curriculum. Alberta allows locally developed curricula, and dance has become a successful subject in some schools, mainly high schools in the larger urban centres.

The Alberta Education website includes the *K–12 Arts Education Curriculum Consultation Report* from 2009. This is an impressive document that suggests a direction for the fine arts, but it is not a provincially mandated curriculum.

Regarding fine arts curriculum renewal, a number of documents on the Alberta Education website relate to how French and First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) themes might influence the new curriculum.



## Atlantic Provinces

In 2001 the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF) published the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum*, for all the Atlantic provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island). The document is “intended as a framework for dance, drama, music, and visual arts education programs in the Atlantic provinces” (p 1). Further, the document states that “the Atlantic Canada arts education curricula are shaped by a vision of enabling and encouraging students to engage in the creative, expressive, and responsive processes of the arts throughout their lives” (p v).

The document provides curriculum outcomes for what students are to achieve by the end of Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 in dance, drama, music and visual arts. However, the document does not outline how that is to occur. For example, no minimum required number of minutes per week is stated. Further, this document does not seem to have been adopted by the provinces. Each province seems to have its own required curriculum.

## Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador has curriculum outcomes for only music and visual art.<sup>2</sup>

The province’s *Primary Art Curriculum Guide* states, “This curriculum describes learning experiences for Kindergarten to Grade 3 that cumulatively provide opportunities for learners to develop knowledge, skills, and attributes they need to express their ideas, understandings, and feelings through art” (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2009a, 3). The guide does not indicate a minimum number of instructional minutes; rather, it states,

This art curriculum is defined in terms of outcomes. The identification of outcomes clarifies for students, teachers, parents, and administrators the specific expectations of what students should know, be able to do, and value as a result of their learning in art. (p 4)

The province has relatively new curricula for Grade 7 art (2012), Grade 8 art (2014) and Grade 9 art (2014). Within these curricula is a cinematic arts unit that allows for exploration in drama and dance. A curriculum for high school art exists in a 2002 draft document.

The province’s elementary music curriculum is from 2005. The guide suggests that there are no minimum number of minutes required, but “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” (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2005, 4). It explains that “Key Stage Curriculum Outcomes (KSCOs) are statements that describe what students are expected to know and be able to do at the end of grades 3 and 6, 9, and 12 as a result of their cumulative learning experiences in music education” (p 14).

The intermediate music curriculum (Grades 7–9) is from 2009. The curriculum states that “music is an essential part of the intermediate curriculum and provides experiences that are relevant, meaningful and enjoyable to the adolescent learner” (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2009b, 2). As in the elementary music curriculum, there are required outcomes but no indication is given for how often the subject should be taught.

The high school music curriculum includes ensemble performance (1996), experiencing music (2015) and applied music (1996). It seems that at this level music is an option.

## New Brunswick

Although the New Brunswick curriculum mentions the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum* (APEF 2001), in the actual curriculum that arts educators in New Brunswick are to teach, only music and visual arts are mandated by the provincial government.<sup>3</sup>

The kindergarten to Grade 5 music education curriculum is a long document of 196 pages (New Brunswick Department of Education 2004). Appendix B discusses creative movement and dance education. It seems that movement and dance are to be taught as a subset of music education. The junior high music education curriculum seems to be in the process of being updated, with Grade 8 having been completed in 2009. The guidelines for high school music electives (Grades 11 and 12) were last revised in 2002.

The kindergarten to Grade 8 visual arts curriculum was created in 1995 and has had no apparent updates. As with the other curricula, the document “outlines the outcomes for Visual Arts for Grades K–8. It identifies the skills, attitudes, knowledge and understandings that students must demonstrate at the end of Grades 2, 5 and 8” (New Brunswick Department of Education 1995, 3). Therefore, without indicating how much time students are to spend each day or week on music and visual arts, this curriculum indicates that students are to achieve competency at certain levels. The visual arts curriculum for Grades 9 and 10 was implemented in 2009.



## Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia has music curriculum for primary to Grade 6 that contains “general curriculum outcomes” and “key-stage curriculum outcomes for the end of grade 3 and grade 6, and specific curriculum outcomes for grades primary–6” (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2002, 1). The Nova Scotia government requires outcomes but does not indicate specifically how they are to come about.

A 2008 high school music curriculum exists for Advanced Music 11 and Advanced Music 12. These courses are optional and may require audition:

Because the course requires a high level of self-motivation and the ability to work independently, students who enrol in these courses must have already demonstrated these abilities. An application process that involves prospective students, music teacher, and guidance staff is outlined in Appendix A. (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2008, 2)

The visual arts curriculum for students up to Grade 6 is from 2000 and, like the music curriculum, is based on outcomes:

This curriculum is defined in terms of outcomes.

The identification of outcomes clarifies for students, teachers, parents, and administrators specific expectations of what students should know, be able to do, and value as a result of their learning in visual arts. (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2000, 3)

Nova Scotia also has a nonrequired Dance 11 curriculum and optional curricula for Drama 10 and 11, all created in 1999. All the curriculum documents are extensive and include suggested units and a glossary.<sup>4</sup>

## Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island has a curriculum for music education in the elementary grades that was published in 2002 (Prince Edward Island Department of Education 2002). Students are expected to attain key stage curriculum outcomes by the end of Grades 3 and 6: “These Key Stage Outcomes serve as benchmarks to help students and teachers reach the General Curriculum Outcome” (p 28).

The intermediate and senior high school band curriculum is from 1997 and appears to be optional.

A visual arts curriculum for Grades 7–9 from 2009 appears to be optional. A senior high course, Visual Arts 401A, was created in 2009. This is an optional course.<sup>5</sup>





## Quebec

Quebec's education program for preschool and elementary education expresses the importance of dance, drama, music and visual arts: "These subjects enable students to express their own reality and vision of the world and they help them to communicate their inner images through the creation and interpretation of artistic productions" (Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation 2001, 206). The curriculum requires that at least two of the arts education subjects are available at all elementary schools in the province. Arts education in the elementary grades requires that "the same two arts subjects [be] included in a students' timetable every year throughout elementary school" (p 206).

At the secondary level, students are to continue with the arts, but it seems that they must select a single subject: "Students therefore continue the learning they have begun in elementary school, but in a specific subject, which they must choose from among the arts subjects offered in their school" (Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation 2004, 331).

Dates of the curricula are not readily available on the website, but it seems that they were mandated in about 2002.<sup>6</sup>

## Ontario

Ontario's fine arts curriculum for Grades 1–8 defines which disciplines are included in arts education in the statement that students can "empathize with the characters in a dance work, a drama, a song, or a visual art work, and can imagine what it would be like to be in the same situation as these people" (Ontario Ministry of Education 2009, 4). The curriculum includes



outcomes for dance, drama, music and visual arts and acknowledges that the arts have their own rigour:

All of the arts disciplines are distinct, each with its own body of knowledge, and with its own concepts, forms, styles, conventions, techniques, and modes of inquiry, but these disciplines are also linked in various ways and they enrich and are enriched by each other and by other subjects. (p 5)

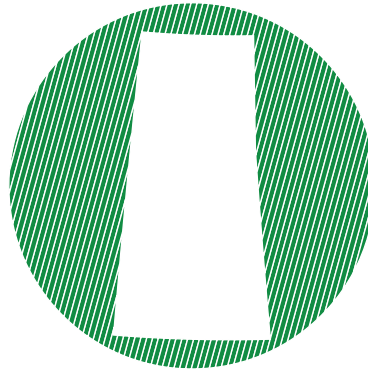
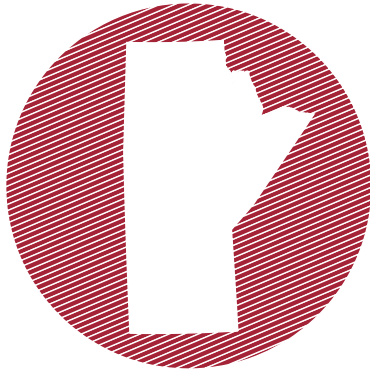
Though there are no specifics provided for instructional minutes, the document states,

The *overall expectations* describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each grade. . . .

The *specific expectations* describe the expected knowledge and skills in greater detail. . . .

Taken together, the overall and specific expectations represent the mandated curriculum. (p 11)

Ontario's 2010 fine arts curricula for Grades 9–12 state that "experiences in the arts—dance, drama, media arts, music, and the visual arts—play a valuable role in the education of all students" (Ontario Ministry of Education 2010a, 3; 2010b, 3). To obtain a secondary school diploma, students need at least one credit in the arts. At this level, the fine arts curriculum includes media arts, specifying that "the technologies and processes used and adapted to create media art may be traditional, including, but not limited to, photography, film, photocopy art, analog and electro-acoustic sound, classical animation, and video/television" (Ontario Ministry of Education 2010a, 89). Integrated arts courses in secondary school integrate two or more of the arts so that students can explore the interrelationship between the arts and personal development. Students respond to creative challenges using elements, principles, materials, and techniques from various arts disciplines, including dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts.<sup>7</sup>



## Manitoba

Manitoba Education’s website for K–12 arts education states,

The Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts curriculum frameworks and implementation resources are intended to support, promote and inspire the growth of all students as artistic learners as they journey towards becoming creative, artistically literate adults and citizens who will truly enrich their own lives and the lives of future communities. ([www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/))

Arts education is not only mandatory but the government also provides recommended time allotments. The website says,

The number and choice of Arts subject areas offered in a school will depend upon local context. Recommended time allotments are 10% of instructional time in Grades 1–6 and 8% of instructional time in Grades 7 and 8.

The curricula for Grades 9–12 dance, drama, music and visual arts were revised in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

## Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan values the arts and states, “In arts education, students learn how the arts can provide a voice and means to make a difference in their personal lives and in peer, family, and community interactions” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education 2011, 3). The aim of K–12 arts education in Saskatchewan is “to enable students to understand and value arts expressions throughout life” (p 6). This aim describes the main outcome for students and the primary reason for including arts education in the core curriculum for all students.

Saskatchewan even mandates, in its 2011 curriculum, that K–9 teachers are to spend 50 minutes per week on each of dance, drama, music and visual art. The curriculum states, “Arts education is a Required Area of Study in Saskatchewan’s Core Curriculum. The provincial requirement for Elementary Level Arts Education is 200 minutes of instruction per week for the entire school year” (p 1).

Arts education is not required at the high school level. Specific high school arts education curricula were created in the 1990s—drama and band in 1993, visual art in 1996, and dance and choral in 1997.<sup>9</sup>

## British Columbia

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2010, 5) states, in its *Arts Education Kindergarten to Grade 7 Overview*, that the fine arts are required study for K–7 students:

Arts education is an integral part of the educational growth of all students. From Kindergarten through Grade 7, all four arts education subjects—Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts—are required areas of study. The Prescribed Learning Outcomes for all four arts education subjects are therefore required at every grade level.

The document goes on to explain why the arts are important, stating,

People participate in the arts for a variety of reasons:

- to learn and play
- to communicate
- to honour rites of passage
- to define, strengthen, and preserve culture and heritage
- to nurture the emotional, social, intellectual, physical, and spiritual self. (p 5)

The ministry-authorized fine arts courses at the Grades 8–12 levels include dance, drama, music and visual art. British Columbia mandates that all four of the fine arts are required areas of study through Grade 6. In Grades 7–10, students are required to choose one or more of the fine arts areas of study at each grade level. The Grades 8–10 curriculum is from 1995.

British Columbia requires that Grades 10–12 students complete a minimum of four credits in either the fine arts or the applied skills subject areas. The applied skills subject areas include carpentry, home economics and business education. Therefore, arts education is not required at the high school level. The basic dance, drama, music and visual art curricula are from 1995, with a 2004 supplement. There have been some updates, such as dance (performance and choreography in 1997) and music (choral music and instrumental music in 2002).<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

The fine arts curricula from all the provinces maintain that arts education is important for children. Each of the arts (dance, drama, music and visual art) has its own rigour and literacy that are unique, evocative, powerful and profound.

For some children, the arts are the most important part of their education. Some children can perform equally well in all the arts, but others have unique dispositions that skew them to a particular art form. In some provinces, there is not curriculum support for all of the arts. From a curriculum standpoint, this means reduced educational opportunities for students.

Clearly, students in Canadian provinces are not being given equal access to artistic forms of expression through arts education. For some children, the arts could give profound meaning to their lives, but sometimes those subjects are just not available in Canadian schools.

## Notes

1. Alberta's fine arts curricula are available at <https://education.alberta.ca/programs-of-study/>.

2. Newfoundland and Labrador's fine arts curricula are available at [www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/guides/).

3. New Brunswick's fine arts curricula are available at [www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/k12/content/anglophone\\_sector/curriculum\\_anglophone.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/k12/content/anglophone_sector/curriculum_anglophone.html).

4. Nova Scotia's fine arts curricula are available at <https://sapps.ednet.ns.ca/Cart/index.php>.

5. Prince Edward Island's fine arts curricula are available at [www.gov.pe.ca/eecd/index.php3?number=1051669&lang=E](http://www.gov.pe.ca/eecd/index.php3?number=1051669&lang=E).

6. Quebec's fine arts curricula are available at [www1.education.gouv.qc.ca/sections/programmeFormation/index\\_en.asp](http://www1.education.gouv.qc.ca/sections/programmeFormation/index_en.asp).

7. Ontario's fine arts curricula are available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html).

8. Manitoba's fine arts curricula are available at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/arts/).

9. Saskatchewan's fine arts curricula are available at [www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca](http://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca).

10. British Columbia's fine arts curricula are available at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/subject.php?lang=en&subject=Arts\\_Education](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/subject.php?lang=en&subject=Arts_Education).

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*John C Poulsen is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge. He is the Fine Arts Council's University of Lethbridge representative.*

*Andreas D Berko holds an MEd from the University of Lethbridge and is currently a technology mentorship teacher and music specialist in the Calgary Catholic School District. He is the Fine Arts Council's webmaster.*



# *Fine Arts Curriculum Survey 2014: An Examination*

John C Poulsen and Andreas D Berko

This article examines the results from a 2014 fine arts curriculum survey sent out to fine arts teachers in Alberta. The survey was commissioned by the Fine Arts Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association. The questions should not be seen as an indication that curriculum reform may or may not take place. That is, the survey and the opinions expressed do not reflect government policy or decisions.

## **Methodology**

Fine arts teachers in Alberta were surveyed in the fall of 2014 using an online survey generated with SurveyMonkey. The survey was open for approximately three months, starting in September and ending in December. Participants were asked to respond to a series of general questions about their experience with the Alberta fine arts programs of study and then were given questions specific to their own teaching experience. The questions were based on a previous survey administered by the Fine Arts Council in 2003. The 2014 survey consisted of a demographics section and a section on teachers' general feelings about their professional development and school facilities. Opinions were also gathered on the features of the fine arts curriculum as it exists now and how it might look in the future.

## **Results**

A total of 286 Alberta fine arts teachers started the survey, and 281 completed it to the end. The respondents were from schools of a variety of sizes and from all four grade divisions. The respondents taught art (112), dance (20), drama (59) and music (136). These 327 teaching assignments reflect that some teachers taught more than one fine arts subject. Forty-three teachers indicated that they were elementary generalists, 74 were elementary specialists, 123 taught junior high or middle school, and 101 taught senior high. The 341 responses suggest that some teachers taught in more than one grade division. Most respondents had either a fine arts major (49 per cent) or an education degree in the fine arts (52 per cent). Important to note is that 16 teachers (6 per cent) indicated that they had no training for teaching in their fine arts area, and 39 teachers (14 per cent) had only some training. The vast majority of the respondents (81 per cent) felt that they had received adequate training for their current or most recent teaching assignments; however, 42 teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had engaged in adequate training.

Responses to the question of adequate professional development and support were almost equally divided. Almost half of the respondents (49 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that they had had adequate professional development and support for their current fine arts

teaching assignment. Important to note is that 42 per cent felt that they had not received adequate professional development and support. Forty-eight respondents (17 per cent) had graduate degrees in their specific fine arts disciplines, and 26 (9 per cent) had graduate degrees in other disciplines.

Teachers were asked to respond to questions about the quality of facilities for the fine arts in their schools, regardless of their reported discipline areas. Over half reported that their music facilities were excellent, just over half found their visual arts facilities excellent, less than half reported excellent drama facilities, and approximately one-third indicated that their dance facilities were excellent.

Overwhelmingly, teachers indicated the need for the fine arts curriculum to contain guidelines for essential equipment (90 per cent), minimum facilities (90 per cent) and maximum student numbers (74 per cent).

A discussion that often comes up in Alberta regarding fine arts curricula is how to make the fine arts more accessible to a larger number of students while taking the burden off schools with regard to finding specialist teachers for each subject area. Question 9 from the survey asked teachers whether they agreed or disagreed that there should be a single subject called fine arts, which would be taught by a single instructor, and at which grade levels, if any, they felt that this would be most appropriate. Overwhelmingly, teachers indicated that they disagreed with this scenario at all grade levels, but increasingly so for the upper grades. For example, 60 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with having a single fine arts subject at the K-3 level, and 89 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the creation of this type of course at the Grades 10-12 level.

Teachers were then asked to reinforce their responses to question 9 by answering whether they felt that Alberta should continue to offer separate fine arts courses for each discipline area, to which they responded in the affirmative, especially for the upper grades.

Question 11 asked teachers to indicate whether dance should be offered as a specific curriculum area, similar to music, art and drama. Currently, dance in Alberta's elementary classrooms is offered as part of the physical education program of study and also as a movement component of the music program. Most secondary dance programs are based on locally

developed courses (LDCs). Sixty-six per cent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that dance should be a recognized fine arts subject, and 21 per cent were undecided.

Following question 11, teachers were asked about their past experiences in each area of the fine arts. Teachers were first asked to identify the arts areas they were familiar with and then to complete a series of questions specific to each discipline.

### Visual Arts

A range of experience levels were reported by teachers of visual arts, with 34 per cent having taught visual arts for less than five years. Interestingly, one respondent reported having been a visual arts educator for more than 30 years.

Approximately 50 per cent of the visual arts teachers felt that the Alberta art program of studies was easy to understand; however, less than half (47 per cent) indicated that it was easy to implement. Although their comments indicated some frustration with the current curriculum, it is clear that the art educators were passionate about how art could develop their students:

- “[Art] is at times one of the only areas that helps to promote original creative thought.”
- “We are helping to develop strong, independent and creative citizens.”
- “Art is what it is to be human.”
- “[Art] promotes engagement, creativity, beauty, and controversy.”

When asked if the current art curriculum was important to them when creating lesson plans, more than half indicated that it was (elementary—50 per cent, junior high—54 per cent, high school—61 per cent).

Elementary art teachers were asked to judge the strength of the current curriculum. The majority (60 per cent) indicated that the curriculum had weak areas requiring some revision, 21 per cent indicated that it was strong, and 19 per cent felt that the curriculum was weak and in need of substantial revision. Junior high art teachers felt similarly, with 56 per cent indicating that the curriculum had weak areas requiring some revision, 29 per cent indicating that it was strong, and 16 per cent stating that the curriculum was weak and needed substantial revision. Nearly half of high school art teachers (49 per cent) indicated that the curriculum

had weak areas requiring some revision, 39 per cent indicated that it was strong, and 12 per cent stated that the curriculum was weak and needed substantial revision.

Most comments about the current curriculum were of the same flavour as the following:

- “It would be lovely to have the program updated without sacrificing the range of programs encouraged.”
- “Considering when it was written, [the current curriculum] contains enough flexibility to involve technology but more support in this area would be good.”
- “The current program is strong enough to provide a guide for non-specialists and beginning teachers and enough breadth to allow for creativity for master teachers.”

Following are examples of comments that were more critical of the current program, with stronger suggestions for improvement:

Regarding creating a new art curriculum, it seems that most art educators would be pleased if other, stronger curricula were used, in addition to the current curriculum. A concern regarding curriculum redevelopment may be that there is a range of opinions about the current curriculum—for example, descriptions of the curriculum range from “wordy and meaningless” to “Let’s keep a good thing going” and “It is a sound curriculum and has valid learning outcomes which as currently written are flexible and able to be taught in many different ways with different facilities [and] numbers of students.”

Table 1 summarizes teachers’ perceptions of the current visual arts curricula. The percentage is followed by the actual number of respondents in parentheses.

## Dance

Table 1: *Respondents’ Perceptions of the Current Elementary, Junior High and Senior High Visual Arts Programs of Study in Alberta*

Perception	Elementary art	Junior high art	Senior high art
... is very weak	19% (13)	16% (10)	12% (6)
... has weak areas	60% (42)	56% (35)	49% (24)
... is strong	21% (15)	29% (18)	39% (19)
Totals	70	63	49

Since Alberta does not have a stand-alone dance curriculum, teachers were not able to respond about their experience having taught a mandated dance program of study. Forty-six teachers indicated that they currently taught dance in some form, in a school, at some level. This contradicts the responses to the earlier question asking teachers what their current teaching assignment included, where only 20 teachers indicated that they taught dance. This discrepancy could be explained by teachers teaching dance within other subjects, such as music.

These teachers were largely new to teaching dance, with 47 per cent having taught dance for less than five years. Interestingly, two teachers indicated that they had taught dance for more than 26 years, and one had taught dance for more than 30 years.

What is clear from the comments is the passion the dance teachers had for their subject:

- “[Dance] teaches kinesthetic learners and challenges others to learn how to move their bodies fluidly and artistically.”
- “[Dance] teaches cooperation, empathy, and uses the whole body to engage in learning.”
- “Dance is valuable for building relationships and community—working together toward a goal—generosity, acceptance, cooperation (preparing for a group performance, working on group compositions in class, self and peer feedback).”

It was assumed that dance teachers were using some sort of curriculum to deliver instruction, so they were asked to comment, in a fashion similar to the visual arts teachers, on their current or most preferred curriculum choice. Secondary dance teachers created or were provided with an LDC that had been implemented by their school district to meet a gap in the Alberta program of studies. Dance is offered in the music and physical education programs, and many teachers, especially at the elementary level, use existing government-mandated curricula as part of other program areas.

Dance teachers were asked if they felt that it was important for a stand-alone dance curriculum to exist. Most agreed or strongly agreed that this was important, but the responses seemed to be split along elementary and secondary lines.

There were 15 responses from teachers of elementary dance. It seems that dance can be an important part of elementary music and physical education curricula, but the majority of respondents desired a dedicated elementary dance curriculum. A sizable minority found the existing curricula acceptable, but there was a split between music and physical education in this, as well. Comments from respondents clarified this divide:

- “Dance should be part of music, not phys ed. Many outcomes in music involve dance and movement.”
- “I use dance in the Orff Schulwerk approach in my music classes.”
- “I use movement to reinforce the music curriculum.”
- “Should be more inclusion in music and less focus in P.E.”
- “Movement and body awareness is limited in the phys ed program of studies.”

However, other respondents had different opinions. For example, one commented, “I use the Phys. Ed. Curr to teach. There is opportunity to expose students to all forms of dance from all places.” Another commented, “Dance can be covered in P.E. at the elementary level.” It seems that there are opportunities to teach dance within the existing curriculum, and many teachers have found a satisfying way to teach dance at the elementary level in the current context. Nevertheless, there seems to be a music versus physical education divide among teachers who teach dance at the elementary level.

This divide can be put into perspective by examining responses to the question about using the current elementary dance program of studies when creating lessons. When respondents were asked if the current curriculum was important in creating lessons, 54 per cent indicated that it wasn't, and 23 per cent were undecided. The fact that only 23 per cent agreed that the current curriculum was valuable suggests displeasure with the current programs of study with regard to elementary dance.

There were 11 responses to junior high dance questions and 12 responses to high school dance questions. It may be possible that some respondents taught both junior high and high school dance. Secondary dance is in a unique situation. It seems that there were no respondents who were music teachers who integrated dance at the secondary level. Physical education has what many consider to be adequate curriculum for dance, but the majority of respondents to this survey used LDCs.

Most respondents supported a fine-arts-based, pan-Alberta dance curriculum, as indicated by the following comments:

- “I believe all of it [LDC curriculum] is important to develop a well-rounded dance student. It is important that students are exposed to a variety of types of dance.”
- “I really love the Dance program of studies because I feel that it is basic enough for a beginner teacher to successfully implement, and open enough for an experienced teacher to really provide her students with a well-rounded program.”
- “Please do not integrate Dance with other fine arts. It is such a rich program that students really enjoy. It needs to stay a standalone class with a specialized teacher.”
- “I appreciate the flexibility and choice regarding the forms of dance that I choose to teach. Teachers can teach from their strengths and utilize their experience.”

The divide between elementary and secondary teachers becomes more clear when examining which curriculum was being used. Only one secondary school respondent indicated that he or she was using the secondary physical education curriculum, and two indicated that they were using the drama curriculum. The others—the majority—were using LDCs.

Perhaps the most telling divide between elementary and secondary was in the use of the curriculum. When asked if the current curriculum was important in creating lessons, 54 per cent of senior high and 55 per cent of junior high dance teachers indicated that, yes, it was valuable. While many secondary dance teachers were still unhappy with their curriculum, it seems that the secondary dance LDC was more popular than the existing elementary music and physical education curricula (with regard to dance).

The divide can also clearly be seen in the fact that no high school teachers and only two (18 per cent) of the junior high teachers felt that their current dance curricula were weak and required substantial revision, whereas six (46 per cent) of the elementary teachers felt that their dance curriculum was weak. No elementary dance teachers felt that their curriculum was strong, whereas 27 per cent of the junior high teachers and 45 per cent of the senior high teachers felt that their curricula were strong. This suggests that, regarding the secondary dance curriculum, LDCs should be used as a basis of the new curriculum. For elementary dance, it seems that it may be best to primarily use curriculum from other provinces.



Table 2 summarizes teachers' perceptions of the current dance curricula.

Table 2: *Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Elementary, Junior High and Senior High Dance Programs of Study in Alberta*

Perception	Elementary dance	Junior high dance	Senior high dance
... is very weak	46% (6)	18% (2)	0% (0)
... has weak areas	54% (7)	55% (6)	55% (6)
... is strong	0% (0)	27% (3)	45% (5)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

## Drama

Sixty-five teachers responded to the questions about drama. Twenty-two (34 per cent) of the teachers had taught drama for less than five years, and 14 (22 per cent) had taught for between five and ten years. The majority indicated that they found the current drama curriculum easy to understand (79 per cent) and easy to implement (67 per cent). Interestingly, the majority of respondents (63 per cent) felt that drama should become a mandatory subject at the elementary level, with 46 per cent agreeing strongly. The comments regarding the nature of drama in elementary school indicate how strongly the drama teachers felt about the importance of their subject:

- “We know kids engage better with material if they can be creative with it, they retain it longer and make deeper connections.”
- “In Drama students are required to be thinkers and to think creatively. They must learn to work with others constructively by listening and responding to a variety of personalities.”
- “Drama also provides students with lessons for being comfortable presenting your ideas and creations to others, a skill they will need to have throughout their lives no matter what area they choose to be in.”
- “Elementary Drama is amazing. My students show a huge change by the end of the year.”

When asked about the importance of the current curriculum to elementary drama teachers, the majority responded positively (58 per cent). A large minority (21 per cent) indicated that they did not find the current elementary drama curriculum useful, and another 21 per cent were undecided. This suggests that the current elementary program of studies was seen by the majority of respondents as valuable.

Of the 35 junior high drama teachers who responded to the survey, 25 (71 per cent) felt that the current program of studies was important when planning. The following comments give a stronger sense of their opinions:

- “The fundamentals of what need to be learned are strong.”
- “I use the concentric circle model and tier all my classes. This is a brilliant model to work from.”
- “The understanding that drama is a holistic program and interconnected.”
- “The technical component can be reduced (not removed) but reduced to a more age appropriate system.”

Of the 22 high school drama teachers who responded, 77 per cent indicated that the current curriculum was valuable to them when planning. The following comments provide a sense of the prevalent attitude:

- “Stop mucking with things because you feel they are out of date. The fine arts have always been ahead of their time.”
- “I appreciate how even though it is an old document it has so much room for how one puts the pieces together.”
- “The resources are greatly outdated.”
- “It works, leave it be.”

There seems to be a split between elementary/junior high drama teachers and senior high drama teachers. Fourteen (58 per cent) of the elementary teachers and 19 (54 per cent) of the junior high teachers felt that the current curriculum was weak and required some revision. Only nine (41 per cent) of the high school teachers felt the same way. High school drama teachers seemed to be the most pleased with the current curriculum, with 12 teachers (55 per cent) indicating that the current curriculum was strong. Therefore, if one wished to respect the wishes of drama teachers when creating the new programs of study for drama, one would be wise to build on the current program for senior high drama, but elementary and junior high probably should bring in the existing provincial curriculum only as a basis.

Table 3 summarizes teachers' perceptions of the current drama curricula.

Table 3: *Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Elementary, Junior High and Senior High Drama Programs of Study in Alberta*

Perception	Elementary drama	Junior high drama	Senior high drama
... is very weak	13% (3)	6% (2)	5% (1)
... has weak areas	58% (14)	54% (19)	41% (9)
... is strong	29% (7)	40% (14)	55% (12)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>22</b>

## Music

Of the 122 respondents to the music-related questions, 24 (20 per cent) had taught music for less than 5 years, 22 (18 per cent) had taught music for 6–10 years, and another 22 (18 per cent) had taught music for 21–25 years. A large majority (81 per cent) indicated that the current music curriculum was easy to understand, and 63 per cent felt that it was easy to implement.

The comments indicate that the music teachers were passionate and knowledgeable about their discipline:

- “Music is the medium through which we unite, with which we bond and discover our traditions, our current social trends, and it gives students an opportunity to further develop our experience of life as humans on earth. It is vital to all cultures, all peoples on this planet.”
- “The Program of Studies has not been updated since 1989. It needs to be rewritten and aligned with the new Cross-Curricular Competencies.”
- “Students are engaged in their learning in choir class. That engagement continues way beyond the choir class into other school activities and beyond school.”

Of the 79 respondents who taught elementary music, 61 (77 per cent) indicated that they found the current curriculum valuable when planning. A sampling of the comments indicates the range of opinions:

- “It must be clearly understood that I teach in a Francophone setting and use the programme as developed by Soeur Thérèse Potvin, Annie Breault and other important contributors to this sequential programme.”
- “There is nothing wrong with [the current curriculum]. Just update [it] to relate to current technology.”
- “We must keep the elements of music and Kodály sequence to adequately teach the complex nature of music.”
- “Its outdated look, its lack of present-day material should be addressed, as well as the importance of providing high-quality music specialists and programmes for all students.”
- “I disagree with how specific methods of teaching are emphasized such as Orff and Kodály.”

Regarding the current elementary music program of studies, the majority (57 per cent) of elementary music teachers indicated that they felt that the current program was weak, as seen in Table 4. A sizable minority (33 per cent) indicated that the program was strong. This suggests that the new elementary program of study should have other curricula as its basis, with the current program of study as a reference.

There were 57 junior high music teachers who responded to the question about how important the

Table 4: *Respondents’ Perceptions of the Current Elementary Music Program of Studies in Alberta*

Perception	Elementary music
... is very weak	10% (8)
... has weak areas	57% (45)
... is strong	33% (26)
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>

current curriculum was to them in planning. Of those teachers, 31 (54 per cent) indicated that the program was important, and 14 (25 per cent) indicated that it was not important. Junior high music teachers submitted comments such as the following:

- “Instrumental music has been taught using the same concepts for hundreds of years and should not be lost.”
- “[The curriculum] needs modernization. Technology?”
- “[The curriculum] is very vague and does not leave much clarity for what exactly should be learned at each level.”
- “I think with some revision the features of the program of study could remain the same.”

Respondents mentioned Texas, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia as having good music curricula from which they drew teaching ideas.

Junior high music teachers seemed most satisfied with the current instrumental program of studies. As seen in Table 5, only six (12 per cent) of the respondents indicated that the current program was very weak, 44 per cent indicated that the instrumental program was strong, and another 44 per cent indicated that it had weak areas. Only 10 (36 per cent) of the choral teachers and 10 (38 per cent) of the general music teachers felt that their current programs were strong. The same numbers—10 (36 per cent) of the choral teachers and 10 (38 per cent) of the general music teachers—felt that their curricula were weak and needed some revision. A minority, eight (29 per cent) in choral and six (23 per cent) in general music, felt that the current curricula were very weak and needed substantial revision. This suggests that the entities revising the choral and general music curricula should be looking at curricula from outside of the province, whereas the current Alberta junior high instrumental curriculum is perceived as being stronger and could be the basis for the next instrumental program of studies.

Of the 38 senior high music teachers who responded, 26 (68 per cent) indicated that the current curriculum was important when planning. Their comments indicate support for the curriculum:

Table 5: *Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Junior High Choral, Instrumental and General Music Programs of Study in Alberta*

Perception	Junior high choral	Junior high instrumental	Junior high general
... is very weak	29% (8)	12% (6)	23% (6)
... has weak areas	36% (10)	44% (23)	38% (10)
... is strong	36% (10)	44% (23)	38% (10)
Totals	28	52	26

- “I am a very strong believer in the current curriculum. I know that it has been around for a long time. However, as a classically trained musician, I believe that the foundations of real fundamentals such as music reading, individual and ensemble performance skills, developing ear training and musicianship are there.”
- “All of it should be retained and have specialists teaching the subject.”
- “There is too much to be taught in the little time allowed in the time table.”

Strong current senior high music curricula from Texas, California, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan were mentioned by teachers.

The current programs of study for high school choral, instrumental and general music were perceived as being strong and, therefore, should form the basis of the next program. As seen in Table 6, of the 25 senior high choral respondents, 20 (80 per cent) indicated that the program was strong. Twenty-one (68 per cent) of the 31 instrumental teachers and 8 (53 per cent) of the 15 general music teachers also felt that the current curriculum was strong. These numbers suggest that curriculum revision should focus on the current senior high programs of study as the basis for updates.

Table 6: *Respondents' Perceptions of the Current Senior High Choral, Instrumental and General Music Programs of Study in Alberta*

Perception	Senior high choral	Senior high instrumental	Senior high general
... is very weak	4% (1)	13% (4)	13% (2)
... has weak areas	16% (4)	19% (6)	33% (5)
... is strong	80% (20)	68% (21)	53% (8)
Totals	25	31	15

## Discussion

One area of concern not specifically included in the survey but apparent in the respondents' comments was the need for trained and passionate specialists in the fine arts. Comments such as the following were common:

- “Teach elementary students music literacy! Hire specialists!”
- “Please do not have teachers from other disciplines interpreting what is needed in the Choral music classroom. The teachers are the wealth of information.”
- “[Music should be] taught only by music specialists.”

Another important idea mentioned in the comments was that specialists must be part of the curriculum redevelopment team:

- “If they are planning a new Program of Studies they certainly better have Theatre specialists (teachers that is) on the development team.”
- “People who are writing the new curriculum must be teachers who have first-hand experience with teaching band at the high school level.”

Strong fine arts curricula and resources from other areas were often mentioned as potentially being of benefit to curriculum redevelopment in Alberta. Following are some of the resources that were mentioned:

- Visual arts—Olivia Gude (University of Illinois at Chicago); the National Art Education Association (NAEA); the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum; curriculum documents from Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland; resources from the Calgary Board of Education and Edmonton Catholic Schools
- Dance—LDCs from the Calgary Catholic School District, Edmonton Public Schools and the Calgary Board of Education; Orff Schulwerk
- Drama—curriculum documents from British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario; International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum
- Music—Orff Schulwerk, Kodály and Dalcroze; curriculum documents from Texas, California, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and British Columbia

## Conclusion

Perhaps the strongest message fine arts teachers expressed was a sense of passion for their work. Every day they saw clear evidence of the value of the arts.

The second strongest message is best encapsulated by the following comments: “No one ever listens and we

## Feature Articles

have been doing surveys and requesting changes since 1986” and “We have been told the program was changing so many times and nothing ever happened so why talk about it?” Fine arts teachers seemed frustrated by the lack of movement in curriculum revision and wanted action on new curriculum in the near future. Further, they wanted to be intimately involved. They felt that the depth of understanding required to create new curriculum could come only from those who were engaged in teaching the fine arts on a daily basis.

Healthy and sustainable fine arts education is vital for a dynamic and energetic Alberta. The 281 fine arts teachers who completed the Fine Arts Council survey were all passionate about their subject and dedicated to fine arts education. Arguably, the reason the arts are as healthy as they are in Alberta is the passion of these teachers who regularly fight for the continuation of their subjects. Teachers feel that fine arts curriculum reform has been ignored for too long and, more important, that the government must include fine arts teachers in the revision process.

## Note

This article was made possible in part by a grant from the Fine Arts Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

*John C Poulsen is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge. He is the Fine Arts Council's University of Lethbridge representative.*

*Andreas D Berko holds an MEd from the University of Lethbridge and is currently a technology mentorship teacher and music specialist in the Calgary Catholic School District. He is the Fine Arts Council's webmaster.*



# For the Classroom

## *Fine Arts in the 21st Century: Resources for the Classroom*

Renee Dowling

### FAC Specialist Blogs

FAC members have created blogs for each fine arts specialty.



**Art**

<http://art-fac.blogspot.ca>



**Drama**

<http://facdrama.blogspot.ca>



**Dance**

<http://albertadancespecialists.blogspot.ca>



**Generalist**

<http://generalistfac.blogspot.ca>



**Music**

<http://atamusicteacher.blogspot.ca>

The blog for music teachers was created by Boyd Davies, who is new to our council. You can also join his Facebook group. He is hoping to get feedback from FAC members. Check out the blog and let him know what you like about it and what you would like to see.

### Apps

#### Procreate

<http://procreate.si>

Sabine Wiseman, a professional illustrator, highly recommends the Procreate app. It can be used as a quick and accurate all-round app for sketching, drawing and painting. The brushes (more than 100) are customizable, and you can work in layers. The quality is terrific. Wiseman works in A4 format, and the quality is high enough to deliver the product to her clients, including magazine and book publishers. No scanner, Photoshop or Illustrator is needed. Wiseman also recommends ArtRage ([www.artrage.com](http://www.artrage.com)) and Autodesk SketchBook ([www.sketchbook.com](http://www.sketchbook.com)) as alternatives.

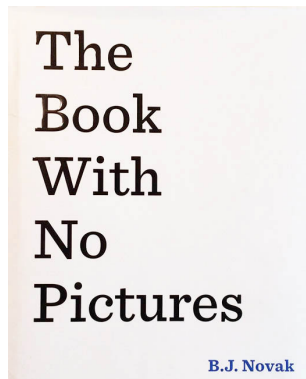
#### Art Set

<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/art-set/id469918702?mt=8>

For a few dollars, the Art Set app can be used for drawing and painting. It is great for students and teachers. The app includes crayons, oil pastels, oil and acrylic paint, pencil crayons, markers, pens and a variety of blending tools. It was recommended by Tamara Martin Spady, author of *The Hairy Fellows: A Rabbit's Guide to Drawing* and a presenter at the FAC's 2015 annual conference. She uses the app to demonstrate drawing skills, to help students think creatively and critically, and to teach problem solving and visual literacy. She also uses it with the Animated-Literacy approach.

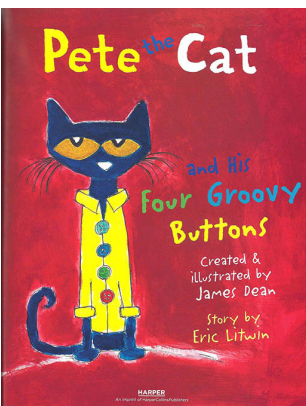
## Books

***The Book with No Pictures,***  
by BJ Novak  
Dial, 2014



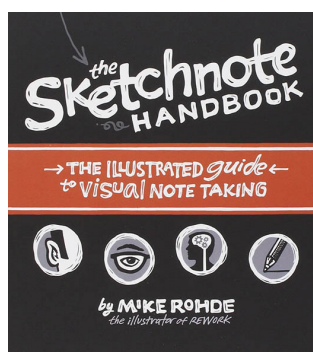
*The Book with No Pictures* is a really silly book that could be used for fun warm-up voice exercises for drama or readers theatre.

***Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons,***  
by Eric Litwin and James Dean  
HarperCollins, 2012



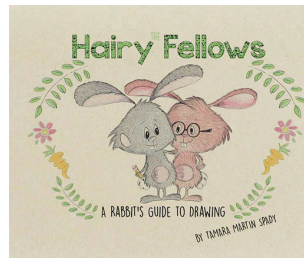
*Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons* is a groovy story that students can use for choral speech, music or drama. It could also be integrated into Grade 1 math.

***The Sketchnote Handbook: The Illustrated Guide to Visual Note Taking,***  
by Mike Rohde  
Peachpit, 2012



*The Sketchnote Handbook: The Illustrated Guide to Visual Note Taking* could be useful for integrating drawing into core subjects

***The Hairy Fellows: A Rabbit's Guide to Drawing,***  
by Tamara Martin Spady, 2015



Tamara Martin Spady, a presenter at the FAC's 2015 annual conference, believes that students need to be taught how to draw. *The Hairy Fellows: A Rabbit's Guide to Drawing* breaks down drawing into simple steps. She argues, "Teach them to draw, teach them how to follow instructions, and you will increase students' directional, spatial, and positional vocabulary."

***The Most Magnificent Thing,***  
by Ashley Spires  
Kids Can Press, 2014



*The Most Magnificent Thing* is a book about dreaming up ideas and persevering to make those ideas reality.

## Video

**Shadow Puppets**  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeyBPWGa1zE&nohtml5=False](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeyBPWGa1zE&nohtml5=False)



WP Puppet Theatre conducted some amazing puppet workshops at the FAC annual conference in 2015. This video shows the results of the puppet theatre's work with students to create a shadow puppet story.

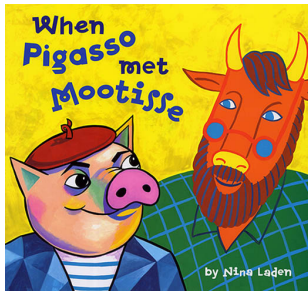


## Video Read-Alouds

### **When Pigasso Met Mootisse,**

by Nina Laden

[www.schooltube.com/video/1ccb0daedca0425fa980/When%20Pigasso%20Met%20Mootisse/](http://www.schooltube.com/video/1ccb0daedca0425fa980/When%20Pigasso%20Met%20Mootisse/)



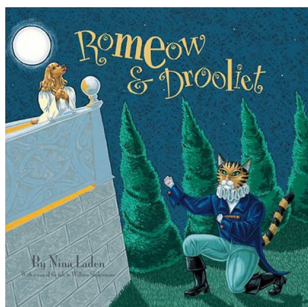
In this video, *When Pigasso Met Mootisse* is read by Eric Close. The video description says, “What begins as a neighborly overture between a painterly pig and an artsy cow escalates into a monumental modern art

mess! Before you can say paint-by-numbers, the two artists are calling each other names and building a fence between them. But it turns . . . .”

### **Romeow and Drooliet,**

by Nina Laden

[www.schooltube.com/video/4ca34efd1b7847d98443/Romeow%20&%20Drooliet](http://www.schooltube.com/video/4ca34efd1b7847d98443/Romeow%20&%20Drooliet)

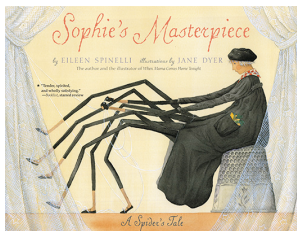


*Romeow and Drooliet* is read by Haylie Duff. The video description says, “Romeow the cat and Drooliet the dog are two star-crossed lovers who met by chance, marry in secret, and are kept apart by a snarling rottweiler, appalled owners, and the animal control warden.”

### **Sophie's Masterpiece,**

by Eileen Spinelli and Jane Dyer

[www.schooltube.com/video/b3c65ff50c3d439a8a05/Sophie's%20Masterpiece](http://www.schooltube.com/video/b3c65ff50c3d439a8a05/Sophie's%20Masterpiece)



*Sophie's Masterpiece* is read by C C H Pounder. The video description says, “Sophie's no ordinary house spider. She's an artist; and every web she spins is more wondrous than

before. But don't mention that to the guests at Beekman's Boardinghouse, because they don't like spiders.”

## Websites

### **Musings from the Studio**

<https://lindacotestudio.wordpress.com>



Linda Cote was one of the artists who taught printmaking (monoprints, relief and collagraph) to art teachers at the FAC's 2014 annual conference.

Her *Musings from the Studio* website includes posts on printmaking fun with children, the prints teachers created at Conference 2014 and ideas for creating prints with fingerprints and acrylic paint.

### **Alberta Foundation for the Arts**

[www.affta.ab.ca](http://www.affta.ab.ca)



Check out the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Resources for Educators section and the Art Collection.

### **Theatre Alberta**

[www.theatrealberta.com](http://www.theatrealberta.com)



Check out Theatre Alberta's library ([www.theatrealberta.com/library/](http://www.theatrealberta.com/library/)), which provides access to more than 20,000 scripts and theatre reference materials. (Free mail service is provided for members who reside outside of the Edmonton region.)

Other services available to members include free classified ad postings, access to e-scripts by local playwrights, free advertising on the Theatre Alberta Playbill, access to workshops in the Rocky Mountain Series and the Hometown Series, and subscriptions to Theatre Alberta publications.

### **Artsonia**

[www.artsonia.com](http://www.artsonia.com)



Artsonia offers a huge collection of almost 6,000 art lesson plans. You can also

share your own lessons, and post and sell your students' art. This could be a creative way to fundraise. You can search and browse student art by skill level, curriculum, topic or media.

# *Creating a Better World: Helping Children in Bolivia Through Kids' Art for a Cause*

Heather Willms

While the pen may be mightier than the sword, a paintbrush can become pretty powerful in the hands of a child. Last year my Grade 5 class participated in Kids' Art for a Cause ([www.kidsartforacause.ca](http://www.kidsartforacause.ca)), and the experience had a powerful impact on our school year.

Kids' Art for a Cause (KAFAC) is the heart- and brainchild of Grant Bertamini, an elementary teacher in Lethbridge. Bertamini wanted his students to feel that they could have an impact on the world for good even though they were "just kids." KAFAC was the result. It is a nonprofit website that sells children's artwork to raise funds for a cause children are concerned about. All the money generated through the sale of the artwork goes directly to the charity chosen by the children.

The cause chosen in my classroom was children living in prisons in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Children of incarcerated parents are forced to live in prisons along with their parents because there is no one else to care for them. Through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada, we raised money for those children to be picked up in the morning, to attend school, to be fed and to be returned to the prison at the end of the day.

We began by looking at Bolivian artwork and then practised our watercolour skills and got ready to create purchase-worthy art.

In preparation for the project, I read to the class Deborah Ellis's *I Am a Taxi* (Groundwood, 2006), the story of a child living in a prison in Bolivia with his parents, who were falsely arrested. As we read, we had more and more questions about the children and their lives in prison. The students decided that the best way to find out more was to write Deborah Ellis, and so our amazing journey began.

We found out that Ellis had written the story about the exact prison we were sending money to. She answered many of our questions, encouraged and complimented the students for their role in changing the world, and tucked in a cheque to contribute to the





## For the Classroom



cause. Our local newspaper and TV station were invited to our classroom, and they were captivated by the way the students spoke passionately about the difference their artwork was making in the lives of children “just like them.” A parent of former students at our school read the article and stopped by with another cheque for the children of Bolivia.

The artwork the students created was thoughtful and representative of the cause. Food, books and broken chains were prominent in the artwork, representing the freedom that education and nutrition bring.

Once the pieces were painted on watercolour paper and outlined in fine black pen, we added broken prison bars to the artwork to represent the change that education and our funding would bring.

We waited with anticipation for our designated month to sell our artwork. We watched the website (sometimes checking several times a day) as our pieces went up for sale, and we celebrated when all 22 pieces sold within five days. Each piece sold for \$10 each, raising \$220. With additional donations, we raised \$570 for children living in a Bolivian prison. Of course, we had to check to see how many bolivianos that would convert to, and we decided that it would buy a lot of rice, school supplies and textbooks.

Besides being a great art lesson, this project helped me see a passion in my students that we do not often see as educators. When they heard that the laws were changing and that children might have to go to foster care rather than stay with their parents in the prisons, my students were shocked and dismayed. They were ready to take on the Bolivian government through letter writing, going to the press and protesting. Their feelings about injustice and their desire to help taught me many things over this two-month project.

Did we do Kids’ Art for a Cause again this year in my classroom? Yes, we did, and our artwork raised money for babies living in poverty in Nicaragua. I encouraged my students to help schoolchildren their own age, but their response was that if they helped the babies, then those babies would grow up to be healthy schoolchildren. Who can argue with that?

*Heather Willms is a Grade 5 teacher at Lakeview Elementary School in Lethbridge. She is the visual arts representative for the South Alberta Regional of the FAC and can be reached at [hlwillms@telus.net](mailto:hlwillms@telus.net).*



# Teaching the Unexpected: Making a Difference Through Art

Michelle Warmink and Karen Olechowski



As teachers, we pride ourselves on carefully planning to create meaningful, engaging opportunities for learning for our students. Sometimes, however, we are given a gift—an unexpected, authentic opportunity we are meant to grab hold of and follow its lead.

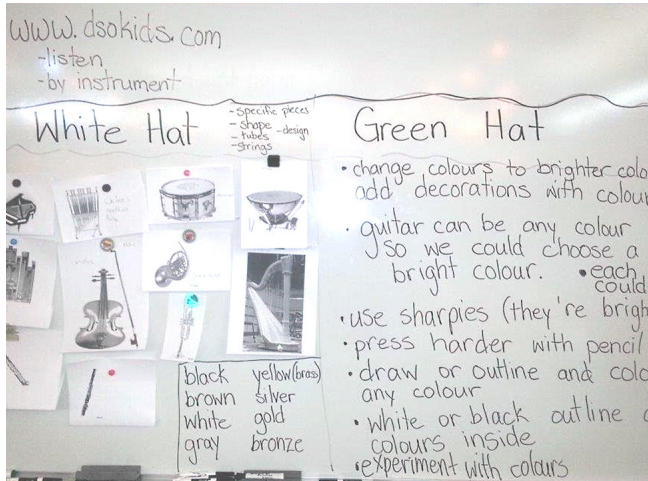
Our journey began when the Medicine Hat and District Health Foundation approached us with a favour to ask. A local radio station was sponsoring the transformation of an important room on the pediatrics floor of the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital. The room was very plain, and it was decided that it should be decorated for the children who must spend time there. The theme for the room was to be music related, and the foundation wanted our Grade 3 students to participate. We were asked to have each student draw a picture of an instrument; these pictures would then be sent away to be made into wallpaper for the room. When it was finished, we would all visit the hospital to see it.

Our hearts leapt with the excitement of it all! Little did the hospital know that as part of the social studies curriculum, we were immersed in our “Be the Change” theme, learning what it means to create change in our roles as global citizens.

Our students were over the moon when we explained the project. Their empathy was incredibly touching as we discussed sick children and the importance of having something interesting and different to look at. Many children relayed stories about their own or others’ experiences. As we talked, the excitement seemed to explode in the room. Watching our young students grasp the authentic feeling of giving back to their community, particularly to children just like them, was very emotional.







We began by having the students use the computer to explore different types of instruments and their contrasting sounds. Just one month earlier, the students had developed their knowledge of instruments when we were studying sound as part of our science curriculum. They listened to a variety of instruments, learning about sound vibrations, and then built their own instruments. Their learning was showcased in a performance in which they played their instruments. From their experience of building, playing and listening to instruments, the students had some idea of which instruments made sounds that made them feel happy. Using this background knowledge, the students chose their favourite instruments.

We used Edward de Bono's (1999) concept of six thinking hats to think about the process. After printing pictures of their chosen instruments, the students used their white hats (facts and figures) to describe what the instruments usually looked like. Knowing that the instruments should be colourful and uplifting for the sick children, they then used their green hats (creative thinking) to talk about how they could alter the traditional appearance of the instruments in their drawings. This conversation involved statements such as "We should change colours to brighter colours," "Each part of the instrument could be a different colour" and "I think we should draw or outline different colours inside."

Later that day, our music teacher, Elizabeth Kruger, spent time talking with the students about different types of music and how they make people feel. Again, a connection was made, and the students were vibrant with energy.

As the project unfolded, we decided to connect our knowledge to the art curriculum in a deeper way. Each day we explored the work of a famous artist—first, Seurat; then, Monet; and, finally, van Gogh.

For the first draft of their drawings, students first drew and then used primary colours to create a pointillism portrait, in the style of Seurat. On the second day, after learning about Monet's techniques, they created a second draft, using oil pastels to blend and create light. By the third day, they were eagerly anticipating which artist they would be fashioning their instrument drawings after that day. After learning that van Gogh used swirls in his work, the students used crayons to create a similar effect.

We would describe this time with our students as moments rather than as lessons—moments of fascination, dedication, empathy and pride. Without a doubt, our students were engaged in a most authentic process.

Finally, we finished the portrait process by having the children pick the artist they most enjoyed representing and use that style for the final piece of artwork to be submitted for the hospital wallpaper. Once again, the students drew their instruments, using the technique of their choice. We then created a gallery of the students' work. They were beaming with pride as they saw their drawings displayed proudly in the hallway.

Although our art project had come to a close, interest and excitement about how we were able to make a change in the world overflowed in our classroom. We wanted the students to express their thinking about the process in writing. We asked the following questions:

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Using your blue hat [control of thinking] and red hat [emotions], what colours would make you feel happy if you were sick? Why? What type of music, instrument or song would lift your spirits if you were feeling sick? Be sure to use capitals, punctuation and descriptive words.

Reading the students' responses confirmed for us that they understood the process of learning and felt deeply about what they had experienced. One student said, "My favourite thing to listen to when I'm sick would just be to listen to my mom sing because she makes me feel better and happy to hear her voice." Another said, "I would like to make the room green and red because it stands out. I would want it to be loud instruments because it would make me not think of the pain."

As we awaited the arrival of the wallpaper and the completion of this incredibly special room, we decided to extend our learning by expanding our knowledge of

global citizenship throughout the world. Kids' Art for a Cause (KAFAC) is a nonprofit organization that aims to raise funds for various organizations throughout the world. Through KAFAC, children learn about an issue and then create artwork to be sold on the website ([www.kidsartforacause.ca](http://www.kidsartforacause.ca)). All of the proceeds from these sales are then donated directly to a chosen registered charity. Our students researched organizations and then chose the Children's Wish Foundation. Their instrument portraits from our gallery were then sold on the KAFAC website. We can't wait to see the impact this meaningful contribution will have on our growing global citizens.

Finally, we are practising a song to sing when we visit the hospital for the unveiling of the treasured room. It is titled "Make a Difference." As we listen to our students sing, we notice the light of understanding on their faces as they recite the lyrics they have lived. Choosing to teach the unexpected has allowed us the privilege of seeing authenticity through the eyes of a child.

## Reference

de Bono, E. 1999. *Six Thinking Hats*. Rev ed. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

*Michelle Warmink and Karen Olechowski team-teach Grade 3 at River Heights Elementary School in Medicine Hat. The focus at River Heights is student-centred, integrated learning that encourages children to become active learners. Critical- and creative-thinking skills are emphasized in an environment that promotes the integration of learning and student independence.*





# *The Ghana Project: A Model for Cultural Immersion and Curricular Connections*

Jennifer McFarlane

Global awareness is emphasized repeatedly in Alberta's K-12 social studies program of studies (Alberta Education 2005). Teachers must find ways to provide learning opportunities that help students to "value the diversity, respect the dignity and support the equality of all human beings" and to "demonstrate a global consciousness with respect to humanity and world issues" (p 2). This is not a simple task.

Travelling the world is one way to develop global awareness and an understanding of different ways of life. But for teachers who have not themselves been immersed in multiple cultures, exposing students to rich cultural experiences can be a challenge. Learning the music of other cultures allows students and teachers to reach multiple goals. Through studying and engaging in music, students can be exposed to new cultures, new ways of life and new ways of being musical. Instructional units focusing on cultural music can be used to achieve learning outcomes from the social studies curriculum. What's more, these units of study can be used across multiple grades at the same time.

In 2013 I spent seven weeks travelling Ghana, studying music with several local teachers, and collecting artifacts and cultural experiences. On my return to Canada, I began working on a unit that would present Ghanaian culture and music in an engaging way, and reach multiple learning goals in both music and social





studies in the process. In this article, I share my experience of planning and implementing this unit as a model for how music and social studies outcomes can be connected and presented.

That school year my teaching assignment consisted of Division I music and junior high band. I decided to pair each of my junior high classes with a Grade 1 class for performances that included drumming, singing and dancing, complete with traditional clothing and instruments. I chose three pieces I had learned in Ghana, and I brought all the instruments I had gathered on my travels. For the performance, we borrowed cultural clothing from the University of Alberta's West African drumming program.

The unit spanned several weeks and incorporated numerous learning outcomes, such as rhythm and beat studies from the Grade 1 music curriculum (Alberta Education 1989), instrument playing and performing skills from the junior high instrumental music curriculum (Alberta Education 1988), and many aspects from the K-12 social studies curriculum (Alberta Education 2005), including global awareness, diversity and cultural expression. Students learned about Ghanaian culture, and valuable connections were made to their own culture as we discussed music, dress, instrumentation, celebrations, societal roles and cultural norms. The students had much to share about cultural learning, and they had a blast learning the music. We received great feedback from parents and staff.

In developing the unit, I was intentional in identifying the curricular outcomes in both the social studies and the music programs of study. The next step in this focused approach was to interpret each outcome as assessment evidence. The learning outcomes and assessments became the lens through which the instructional activities were viewed.

One challenge of bringing a rich cultural experience to the classroom is making the culture tangible for students. I was fortunate to have travelled to Ghana and had many cultural artifacts to share. When I shared musical instruments, jewellery, clothing, children's books, kente cloth, videos and photographs, I could tell by my students' faces that these items brought the stories to life. The use of authentic artifacts is an important part of creating a cultural experience.

Another challenge in developing the unit was how to modify the music and the dances, making them

accessible to young musicians and dancers, while maintaining the integrity of the original pieces. I chose my modifications with care, and I was sure to explain to my students what I had changed and why. I also showed them video footage of the original pieces so that they could have a good understanding of what they were like in their original contexts. A discussion with students about why and how the pieces were changed was followed by a rich discussion about the ethics of altering someone else's music. We covered big questions such as, Is it all right to change the instrumentation of a non-Western piece to include Western instruments? Is it OK to notate a song that is traditionally taught aurally? and, Is it OK to simplify or alter aspects of the piece to make it easier to play for young musicians or musicians not of that culture? Most students concluded that as long as the piece is still recognizable as the original and the changes are respectful—maintaining the intent and cultural integrity of the original piece—it is OK to modify music and dances. Through these discussions, students learned respect for other cultures.

As experienced teachers well know, the success of any instructional activity depends on the enthusiasm of the students—particularly with junior high students. In the West African drumming unit, I explained that in Ghana there is no such thing as a drummer who can't dance, or a dancer who can't sing. In the spirit of the culture, everyone learns all of the parts. The junior high classes began their dancing lesson with all the blinds closed and with a promise that they would only have to try the dance once. Both the students and I were pleasantly surprised at how much fun those lessons were, and when the time came to select performance roles, more boys than girls wanted to dance. Delightfully, it was the athletic boys who were the keenest on dancing. When they learned that a few older students would be needed to help the little ones dance on stage, they were enthusiastic. This role allowed them to combine their athletic, musical and leadership talents.

The assessment evidence from this unit on West African drumming gave every indication that students had developed a broader global consciousness. At all grade levels, they were able to articulate something they had learned about Ghanaian culture, as well as to make comparisons with Canadian culture. Through students' experiencing and participating in Ghanaian music, the beliefs, customs, practices and ways of life of a culture

beyond their own came to life, and with that came a better understanding of and appreciation for other cultures. The unit allowed students to achieve many of the values and attitudes of the social studies curriculum and concepts from the music curriculum. It addressed ten outcomes from the elementary music curriculum (including concepts in rhythm, melody, form and movement), and from the junior high band curriculum, it addressed all five of the overarching concepts of playing, listening, reading, valuing and performing. From the social studies end, it covered a wide palette of topics under global citizenship, including valuing diversity and respect for other cultures. This unit also encouraged students to be risk takers, ethical citizens and engaged thinkers.

Actively experiencing music from an unfamiliar culture was the key to this rich learning experience. In her article on creating virtual field experiences, Sarah Bartolome (2009) discusses the important steps to consider when replicating a project like this in your own school. She discusses C Victor Fung's (1995) five parameters of music experience: context, sight, sound, mental action and physical action. A complete cultural music encounter will engage all five at once.

While sound, mental action and physical action are easily met through learning a piece of music, context and sight are often harder to provide. To this end, artifacts are key. Artifacts can be anything that adds sight and context to a lesson, including videos, pictures, recordings, interviews, stories and physical items that engage students' interest and understanding. Bartolome (2009) suggests that artifacts can be provided in several ways. You can collect them on your travels, like I did in Ghana. You can invite a local musician to your classroom to teach a song to your students. Or you can simply begin with a folk song that you already know and augment it with your own research.

The most important thing is that students are engaged in all five parameters. They must hear the

music in its original form, and see and understand the context that it comes from. They must have the opportunity to participate in the music themselves, and engage in questions and discussion about the culture. If these criteria can be met, then students will have a cross-curricular cultural experience that is more rich and engaging than either the music outcomes or the social studies outcomes could provide on their own. Studying music is a window into another culture, and when presented with context and insight, music can make culture come alive.

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*Jennifer McFarlane has been with Edmonton Public Schools for seven years and has taught music from kindergarten to Grade 9. She moonlights as a singer and percussionist with her band White Hot Lizard, and is completing a master's degree in elementary education at the University of Alberta, with a focus on bringing cultural music into the music room. She currently teaches at Aldergrove School in Edmonton and can be contacted at [jennifer.mcfarlane@epsb.ca](mailto:jennifer.mcfarlane@epsb.ca).*

# Ceramics: Narrative Masks

Shannon Roy

## Objective

Using the techniques presented below, create a mask that represents a childhood story.

## Materials

- Clay or some form of sculpting medium
- Plastic bags or paper towels
- Sculpting tools
- Pencil and paper
- Acrylic paint
- Gloss medium
- Access to a kiln

## Vocabulary

- Slip
- Symbols
- Symbolism
- Kiln

## Process

- Locate or think of your favourite children's book, nursery rhyme or children's poem.
- Make a list of symbols that could represent significant characters or moments in the story. For example, if you chose *The Wizard of Oz*, you could list the following symbols: witch, Yellow Brick Road, Good Witch, Toto, Dorothy, ruby slippers, Tin Man, Scarecrow, Lion, lollipops, poppies, Emerald City and tornado. Draw two or three sketches of mask designs that illustrate your children's story. Each sketch should take up at least half a page. Note: You do not have to create a mask showing the face of a character in the book, but your viewers should be able to see symbols from your story in your mask. Try to integrate the symbols naturally into your mask.
- Choose your best design, and create one mask out of clay using that design.
- Use the slab (pancake) method to begin the mask. Once you have created a three-centimetre pancake from your clay, take a bunch of plastic bags or paper towels and ball them up. Place your slab on the ball to round it into a 3-D mask shape.
- Be sure to use slip (a glue-like liquid mixture) to attach features such as the nose, brow bone and cheekbones.
- Hollow out the eyes using clay tools, or create an area to paint eyes on later.
- Add decorative items and symbols, ensuring that you use slip to attach any clay pieces to your mask.
- Paint your mask using acrylic paint after it has been fired. You may wish to add a coat of gloss over the mask to give it a shiny look.







## Assessment

See the rubric below.

Narrative Mask Rubric				
	4	3	2	1
Planning	All sketches are highly detailed; extremely useful and appropriate choices; highly varied	Most sketches have some detail; appropriate choices; some variety	Sketches have limited detail; some choices lacking in variety	Sketches completed simply; repetitive
Design	High degree of detail; challenging forms; extensive variety of textures and details	Good degree of detail; somewhat challenging forms; some variety of textures and details	Adequate degree of detail; basic forms; limited variety of textures and details	Limited detail; simplistic forms; lacks variety of textures and details
Creativity	Extremely creative ideas for image, use of clay, forms and added details	Interesting ideas for image, use of clay, forms and added details	Straightforward ideas for image, use of clay, forms and added details	Limited ideas for image, use of clay, forms and added details
Finishing	Extremely skilled and detailed finish and application of paint and other materials	Skilled and somewhat detailed finish and application of paint and other materials	Adequate finish and application of paint and other materials	Awkward finish and application of paint and other materials



# *Bunraku: Japan's Elegant and Traditional Puppet Theatre*

Wendy Passmore-Godfrey

## What Is Bunraku?

In the late 1560s, a strange musical instrument evolved in Japan. It resembled a mandolin, with a long neck and three strings. It came to be called a shamisen.

By the Edo period (c 1600s), the shamisen had been integrated with puppetry and narrative storytelling, and the art of the puppet theatre of Japan had been born. It was originally called *ningyo-joruri*, which means “puppets and storytelling.” The current name, Bunraku, was adopted in 1872 after puppeteer Uemura Bunrakuken, a man who was instrumental in keeping the art form alive.

Bunraku is described as the art of threes. Performances blend the talents of narrators, who provide all the dialogue, description and sound effects; shamisen players; and puppeteers.

For more information, see Barbara C Adachi's (1985) book *Backstage at Bunraku: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Japan's Traditional Puppet Theatre*.

## The Puppets and Puppeteers

Bunraku puppets are 3.5–4.5 feet tall and weigh 10–50 pounds. One puppet usually requires three

puppeteers. The puppeteers work together in harmony of mind and body, although they do not rehearse together at any length.

The master puppeteer (*omo-zukai*) works the head and the right hand. The puppet's left hand is moved by the *hidari-zukai*, who is also responsible for all the props and hands them to the chief puppeteer. The legs are moved by an apprentice (*ashi-zukai*).

Being a Bunraku puppeteer is a lifetime job or vocation. Young people learn by watching and listening, although now there is a Bunraku school that teaches the basics. Ten years is the accepted length of time for a junior to train on the legs, and then he is promoted to the left hand. Before taking on the legs of a main character, he may have spent many years manipulating the simpler minor characters. Puppeteers usually specialize in either male or female characters.

## The Narrator

On the wing stage, the narrator (*tayu*) performs the play, including providing narration and the voices of the puppets, as well as expressing the puppets' emotions and personalities.

## The Shamisen Player

The shamisen player sits beside the narrator and adds musical punctuation (emotions, tension) to the narration. What does it take to be a shamisen player? *Kokura*—heart. For more information about the shamisen player, go to [www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/](http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/).

## Manipulating the Puppet

- The main goal is to channel energy, thought, voice and so on through the puppet to the audience.
- Imagine how a person would move, or perform the action yourself, and copy it using the puppet (within the puppet's limitations—for example, rod puppets have no knees, so kneeling is tricky).
- Make sure the puppet makes eye contact with the audience.
- Keep your puppet at the same height throughout the performance. Don't sink down, and don't lean on the stage.
- Practise basic gestures (*futi*). Try to keep the movements simple and clear. Establish the ground. Try gestures for the following:

yes	thinking	scratching
no	sneezing	limping
breathing	waving	gasping
walking	sleeping	shivering

- Figure out how the puppet should move to show various feelings (*hara*). The best way is to imagine a situation when those feelings would occur. Students could be allowed to say a few words or make a sound effect. Try expressing the following feelings:

worry	exhaustion	joy
confusion	shyness	surprise
pride	curiosity	stubbornness
impatience	anger	cheerfulness
- Present two puppets at once and carry on a conversation. Think about entering the stage in an interesting way, speaking loudly enough. Remember the following:
  - When one puppet moves, the other is still.
  - When one puppet talks, the other listens.
  - The puppeteers should hold the puppets in opposite arms so that they can easily face each other.
- Express thoughts and feelings through action, if possible, rather than through dialogue or narration.
- Don't rush, and don't forget to concentrate and practise. WP Puppet Theatre has a Bunraku Puppets on the Go crate, which is available to schools across Alberta for a very reasonably priced three-week rental. For more information, go to <http://wppuppet.com/puppets-on-the-go/>.

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Wendy Passmore-Godfrey is the artistic and founding director of WP Puppet Theatre (<http://wppuppet.com>).



# *It's More Than Just Music: Using Music Therapy Strategies in the Classroom*

Adrienne Brodeur

A child suffering from severe burns reaches to play a drum, which focuses his attention away from the pain of stretching his arm as part of his physical therapy.

A patient diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease sings "You Are My Sunshine," with adapted lyrics incorporating the names of her husband, children and grandchildren to stimulate memory and maintain positive social interactions.

A group of teenagers considered to be youth at risk create and perform a song using GarageBand to practise personal control, develop creative self-expression and promote meaningful social interaction.

A small group of preschoolers with speech and language delays sing an echo song with target sounds recommended by a speech-language pathologist.

A veteran diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) uses songwriting as an emotional outlet to support self-disclosure, which is a process essential to recovery.

These are just a few examples of music therapy in action. In music therapy, music is used with an intentional approach through singing, instrument play, improvising, composing and movement. On its website, the Canadian Association for Music Therapy (CAMT) defines *music therapy* as

the skillful use of music and musical elements by an accredited music therapist to promote, maintain, and restore mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Music has nonverbal, creative, structural, and emotional qualities. These are used in the therapeutic relationship to facilitate contact,



interaction, self-awareness, learning, self-expression, communication, and personal development. ([www.musictherapy.ca/en/information/music-therapy.html](http://www.musictherapy.ca/en/information/music-therapy.html))

Music therapists work with people of various ages and abilities in institutional, community and private practice settings, just as other health professionals do. Music skills are not a requirement for receiving music therapy. While being conscious of the elements of music, music therapists interpret clients' responses to the music. Is the client responding to the tone of the cello, the rock rhythm, the lyrics or simply the melody line? Does a particular song bring back a good memory that is helping the client to willingly express current feelings of abandonment? Our training enables us to choose and adapt music experiences that match clients' interests, needs and abilities.

Research supports the connection between music and speech (Cohen 1994); motor behaviour (Sandberg, Hansen and Puckett 2013); memory for academic material (Colwell and Murlless 2002); language acquisition (Kennedy 2005); and the overall ability of preferred music to enhance mood, attention and behaviour in order to optimize a student's ability to learn and interact (Montello and Coons 1998).

Integrating music-assisted learning techniques can provide an enriching experience for many. Music activities can address the visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile senses in a multisensory format that supports all learners. A song about handwashing, with sequencing pictures, can help a student become independent, and the music cues can then gradually be faded out. Songs can be used as a practice tool to help students who speak too quickly and who are, therefore, difficult to understand. An iPod with preferred music can block noise in the hallway for a teenager diagnosed with autism who is having difficulty with transitions between class periods.

Although music therapy sessions are designed specifically for an individual or a group, general strategies can be used to motivate and support learning, whether in an inclusive or a special education class. Music can be used as a memory aid to support students who are having difficulty with working memory. The working memory is the function that allows us to hold information in mind while working with it. It is needed for storing information in the long-term memory.

The following strategies can be used with students:

- Chant or rap to recall letter formation, spelling rules or personal information (phone number, address, birthdate and so on).
- Use song storybooks with pictures for sequential memory.
- Fill in the blanks in song lyrics paired with pictures to increase vocabulary.
- Provide song lyrics as a lead-in for a writing activity with *wh-* questions to assess comprehension and recall.

## Suggested Websites

### Canadian Association for Music Therapy (CAMT)

[www.musictherapy.ca](http://www.musictherapy.ca)

### Music Therapy Association for Alberta (MTAA)

[www.mtaa.ca](http://www.mtaa.ca)

### American Music Therapy Association (AMTA)

[www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org)

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*Adrienne Brodeur is a music therapist with Edmonton Public Schools. She has a BEd and an early childhood diploma from the University of Alberta. She continued her education at Florida State University, where she earned a bachelor of music degree in music therapy. She is an accredited music therapist (MTA) through the Canadian Association for Music Therapy and a board-certified music therapist (MT-BC) through the Certification Board for Music Therapists in the United States.*

# Reflection

## *Thank You, Mr Grafton*

Miki Cullihall

*Drama student Miki Cullihall participated in a drama production at Medicine Hat High School called The Wedding Singer. Afterward, she reflected on the impact drama has had on her life. Here is her letter to her classmates and her drama teacher, R F Grafton.*

Dear Drama Classmates and Mr Grafton,

Last night was the last show of *The Wedding Singer* and, sadly, my last show. It was really sad realizing that theatre is pretty much over for me, seeing as graduation is coming soon. I'm going to miss every single one of you guys. I'm so glad I got to have my last show with all of you amazing, funny and talented people.

I am so thankful for the love and support I have felt from everyone, including R F Grafton. I want to thank you because you have always been there for me since Grade 9. Whether I was feeling down about myself or when my house burned down, you were always there to support me and help me through whatever was going on. I thank you so much for that because you really have helped me to open my shell and feel good about myself for accomplishing these amazing shows.

Even when a show didn't turn out so well, it was still a great experience to learn from and enjoy. I'm going to miss drama so much, and I will never forget how amazing my high school experience has been because of drama.

Thank you to the whole cast of *The Wedding Singer*, and the casts of my past shows *Big Fish*, *Village of Idiots*, *Land of the Dead* and *Dancing Solo*, for being such an important part of my life. I will never forget you and my experiences in drama.

Miki Cullihall



# Beyond the Classroom

## *Artstrek: Summer Theatre School for Teens*

Debbie MacLeod

**@WilltheBard** Bro, can you make Artstrek never end? #LikeADreamComeTrue

—From the 2015 Artstrek Twitter Wall<sup>1</sup>

Theatre Alberta's Artstrek program grew out of the first Olds Drama Seminar run by the provincial government in 1960. The drama seminar evolved into the Drumheller Summer Drama School in 1965 when it moved to the town's new vocational school. It remained in Drumheller until 1981. For the next 10-15 years, efforts were made to accommodate northern Alberta students by locating the program first at Fairview College (north of Grande Prairie) and then at Lakeland College in Vermilion.

In the early 1980s, interest developed in changing the focus of the program from performance to process, incorporating team-teaching methodologies and linking the curriculum directly to the text. The renewed programming model inspired a name change and, in 1982, the name Artstrek was adopted to embody the journey undertaken for each play studied.

Theatre Alberta came on board as a cosponsor of Artstrek when it partnered with Lakeland College in 1997. The program found its current home at Red Deer College in 1997, and Artstrek will celebrate its 20th year of partnership with RDC this summer. In reply to the tweet above, we say, "**@Bro** Artstrek: 55 years and counting . . ."

**@Artstrek** Open yourself to the world and the world will open itself to you!

—From the 2015 Artstrek Twitter Wall

Each summer Artstrek features a different play of study based on a three-year cycle of musical theatre, contemporary drama and classical drama. Last year, we invited Alberta teens to step into the world of Shakespeare's beloved comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and we were delighted when more than 300 students who were passionate about theatre and enthusiastic about learning accepted our call. Participants ranged in age from 13 to 18 years old, and they soon embraced the challenges and opportunities of working on a play featuring sprites and fairies, magical spells, and Elizabethan English.

**@Artstrek** How does Artstrek get this electric energy? It's magical.

—From the 2015 Artstrek Twitter Wall

At Artstrek, the world of the play is studied through acting, voice, movement, directing, design, sound and music, and creation and collaboration. A team of educators and theatre professionals is assembled to develop and instruct a challenging curriculum centred on the script. Five pairs of instructors use stage time and studio instruction to focus on learning, exploration and the process of theatre, not merely the rehearsal of

## Beyond the Classroom

lines and the blocking of scenes. Our instructors bring an extensive practical and academic base of knowledge to the program, and they directly connect the emerging young artists to the theatre scene in Alberta.

**@Artstrek** Thank you. Simply thank you. #artstrek #growth #intensive

—From the 2015 Artstrek Twitter Wall

Many educators will already be familiar with Theatre Alberta's Artstrek, since student applications to the program must be accompanied by a referral from an adult. This is not a talent-based program; auditions are not required. Instead, we request that someone who can speak to the student's passion for theatre and commitment to learning act as a referrer.

We promote the participation of both urban and rural students from across Alberta, and although the program is heavily subsidized through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, we recognize that some families may need financial assistance. Theatre Alberta is a registered charity; we offer limited partial scholarships, as well as suggestions for alternative funding sources (see [www.theatrealberta.com/fees/](http://www.theatrealberta.com/fees/)).

Each weeklong exploration culminates in a sharing activity for parents and other invited audience members, including sponsors and educators.

**@TheatreAlberta** #Artstrek has changed my life! @Artstrek I feel so at home and I love it!

—From the 2015 Artstrek Twitter Wall

If you know of students who would benefit from attendance at Artstrek, please suggest that they visit our website at [www.theatrealberta.com/artstrek/](http://www.theatrealberta.com/artstrek/). If you have questions, or would like additional information (including brochures) to share with your drama class, please contact Theatre Alberta at [artstrek@theatrealberta.com](mailto:artstrek@theatrealberta.com). Applications open online in April of each year.

In the program evaluations, we consistently receive feedback that Artstrek has been a life-changing experience. Today, the final word comes from a reflection shared on the 2015 Twitter Wall:

**@Shakespeare** To be or not to be, that is the question. Today I chose to be! Be extravagant, be outgoing, be unbelievable!

—From the 2015 Artstrek Twitter Wall

## Note

1. All quotations below were posted anonymously on the 2015 Artstrek Twitter Wall. Students were encouraged to share daily observations about the play of study—Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

*Debbie MacLeod is the communications and marketing coordinator for Theatre Alberta in Edmonton. Theatre Alberta is dedicated to the growth and development of the Alberta theatre community and all its constituencies. It works to engage and foster meaningful relationships and partnerships between the professional, emerging, amateur and educational theatre communities.*

# Submitting to *A Fine Facta*

Add the goal of being published to your teacher professional growth plan and submit something to *A Fine Facta*! Submissions may include the following:

- Practical classroom tips, lesson plans and rubrics
- Resource reviews
- Movie and book reviews
- Personal reflections on classroom experiences
- Stories and poems by teachers, students and student teachers
- Student artwork
- A project or lesson that had an impact on students, the school or the community

Please include a short (three- to five-sentence) biography and your address so that a copy of the issue in which your work appears can be sent to you.

Submit signed permission forms for student work or photographs of students, as well as permission to use any photos that are not yours.

E-mail submissions to Renee Dowling at [renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca](mailto:renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca).

**Upcoming submission deadline: November 30, 2016, and February 28, 2017**

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## *Permission to Print Photograph/Student Work*

Your child has submitted a piece of work or appears in a photograph that we would like to print in the next issue of *A Fine Facta*. *A Fine Facta* is a journal that goes to teachers across Alberta who are members of the Fine Arts Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

By signing below, I give permission for my child's work or photograph to be considered for publication in an upcoming issue of *A Fine Facta*. This permission form will be forwarded to the journal editor.

Parent/guardian name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Student name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ School location \_\_\_\_\_

### Notes to teachers:

- Send the student work/photograph and the permission form to the editor of *A Fine Facta*, Renee Dowling, 7130 Highway 523, Cypress County AB T1B 0L3, e-mail [renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca](mailto:renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca).
- Work may be submitted electronically to [renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca](mailto:renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca).



# Fine Arts Council Executive 2015/16

**President**

David Fettes  
Bus 403-777-7980  
dwfettes@cbe.ab.ca

**President-Elect**

Naomi McQuaid  
Bus 403-500-2083  
naomi.mcquaid@cssd.ab.ca

**Past President**

Gayla Worden  
Bus 403-948-3939  
gworden@rockyview.ab.ca

**Secretary**

Diane O'Rourke  
Bus 403-500-2072  
diane.orourke@cssd.ab.ca

**Treasurer**

Mike Wheeler  
mike.wheeler@wrsd.ca

**Art Representative**

Shannon Roy  
Bus 403-777-7430  
slpanchuk@cbe.ab.ca

**Dance Representative**

Stacy Richards  
Bus 403-817-4000  
sdrichards@cbe.ab.ca

**Drama Representative**

Dawn Marshall  
Bus 780-352-2295  
marshallda@wrps.ab.ca

**Music Representative**

Boyd Davies  
Bus 403-552-3828  
davies.fb@gmail.com

**Generalist**

Julie Herman  
Bus 403-777-6920  
jrherman@cbe.ab.ca

**Journal Editor**

Renee Dowling  
Bus 403-527-3730  
renee.dowling@sd76.ab.ca

**2015 Conference Director**

David Fettes  
Bus 403-777-7980  
dwfettes@cbe.ab.ca

**Webmaster**

Andreas Berko  
Bus 403-500-2075  
andreas.berko@cssd.ab.ca

**University of Alberta Representative**

Kathy Robinson  
Bus 780-492-0924  
kr10@ualberta.ca

**University of Calgary Representative**

TBA

**University of Lethbridge Representative**

John Poulsen  
Bus 403-329-2051  
john.poulsen@uleth.ca

**Alberta Education Representative**

Louise Condra  
Bus 780-644-2960  
louise.condra@gov.ab.ca

**PEC Liaison**

Greg Jeffery  
Bus 780-998-2216  
greg.jeffery@teachers.ab.ca

**ATA Staff Advisor**

Dan Grassick  
Bus 780-447-9487 or  
1-800-232-7208  
dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca

**REGIONAL PRESIDENTS****Calgary and Area**

Gaye McVean  
gdmcvean@telusplanet.net

**Edmonton and Area**

Lisa Whitson  
Bus 780-459-4405  
lisa.whitson@spschools.org

**Fort McMurray**

TBA

**South Alberta**

Erin George-Samuel  
Bus 403-328-5153  
egeorge.samuel@gmail.com

Heather Willms

Bus 403-328-5454  
hlwillms@telus.net



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Barnett House  
11010 142 Street NW  
Edmonton AB T5N 2R1