



Sunday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Dear Christine,

We thank you for sending CODE the People for Education's Arts Education draft. We very much appreciate the opportunity for input and have included our suggestions for the report, as well as some larger philosophical questions and issues that we hope to discuss with People for Education in the near future.

### **Art Education Draft Feedback**

- We encourage People for Education to adopt the Ministry of Education's approach to listing the arts in alphabetical order: Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts. This is the way in which the subjects are listed in the Ontario Arts Curriculum Document. Another resource that might be useful for People for Education to consult is the elementary timetabling document created by ARTSECO, the subject association for arts consultants in Ontario, which promotes an equitable focus on all arts subjects. Whenever, possible, the four arts should be explicitly and equitably listed to prevent the sense of some arts being privileged over others.
- Under the second bullet in "Quick Facts," we suggest the inclusion of the percentage of senior Dance and Drama classes. By not incorporating Dance and Drama, the report conveys a message that these subjects at the secondary level do not exist at the upper level, which is inaccurate.
- In the third paragraph on page 1, we suggest clarifying that the examples cited are extra-curricular ones. It would be excellent if you could include also give examples of such programs that speak to the in-school delivery of the curriculum, that are led by specialized teachers.
- We feel that it might be useful to include in the report the questions that were asked in the survey. On a related note, would it be possible to send CODE more information about the responses to your survey questions about Dance and Drama that we don't see in your document? Judith Doan and Debbie Nyman, members of CODE's Advocacy Committee, did send a list of questions to People for Education after their meeting. If you have the data for them, we would very much appreciate receiving it.
- Questions in the Survey: There is a minor grammar error under "Arts funding and school budgets." You may wish to revise the first sentence to read, "All boards can determine what they allocate to schools . . ."

### **Thoughts for Future Consideration**

## **The Emphasis on Specialization in the Arts**

Much of the emphasis in the Arts Report and in previous reports is on specialist teachers in schools. It is important to understand that Music and Visual Arts have a long history in this province with an emphasis on specialists teaching these subjects in elementary schools. Dance and Drama, while often included, have only been officially a part of the curriculum since the end of the 20th century and entered at a time when budgets were being cut. They were introduced without the same budgets for specialists and at the same time that Instructional Leaders were cut and amalgamated. Therefore there are few Dance and Drama specialists, particularly in elementary schools. CODE's focus is very much on teaching generalist teachers dance and drama integration in grades 1-6, as this is the model in many classrooms across Ontario.

The issue of integration vs. specialization in elementary teaching is one that needs to be examined and researched, and there is strong research that supports integrative teaching. Recently a statement from National Institute of Education (US) described this problem of integration vs. specialization in the seeking of information for Dance and Drama because these subjects in elementary education are often integrated rather than discrete and delivered by specialists.

CODE would be happy to discuss this issue in more depth, as well as the ways in which People for Education can collect more data on integration in schools in regards to the arts, particularly in regards to Dance and Drama. We would also be happy to send you links to research and reports in this area.

## **Equity**

We know that equity and access are two areas on which People for Education focuses. Some questions to consider for future reports:

- What budget lines do principals have for arts in the schools? How can we ensure that admin see all four arts as critical parts of the school budget beyond positive school climate and parent council funding?
- How can we advocate for clear arts budget lines in all schools for all four arts? Often integrated arts projects are folded into literacy budgets as well. How can we advocate for better funding?
- Teacher training: many pre-service candidates feel there is a lack of arts training in Dance, Drama and Visual Arts in particular. How can we advocate for equity in the arts in the Faculties of Education?

In conclusion, we appreciate all that People For Education does, and we hope that your survey on the Arts will have a positive impact on changing how the government and Boards of Education, not to mention, administrators, teachers, parents, and the general public view the arts. We sincerely hope, too, that understanding these statistics will change the funding model for all the arts in education: Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts. Only in this way will there be more equity. In school support for all of the arts – both curricular and extra-curricular, within rural schools and schools in less affluent areas—must be addressed and changed to be equitable.

We look forward to future conversations about these topics with People for Education, and thank you again for sharing the report.

Sincerely yours,

The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE)