



Ontario Art Education Association



Ontario Music Educators' Association



Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators

Dear Minister of Education:

We are writing to call upon the Ministry of Education to formally change from a focus on the promotion of **STEM to STEAM** - acknowledging the problem-solving, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking inherent in arts education.

Challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced and demonstrated the need for both creative and critical thinking as we move to make changes to recover from this ordeal, while dealing with new and still unforeseen challenges. The government of Ontario has made a strong economy a backbone of their policy. For this to become a reality, now and into the future, the Ministry of Education needs to update and adapt from a focus on the promotion of STEM to STEAM on official websites, documents, policies and support through funding, professional development, etc. A priority for this government, and a necessity in this time of economic recovery, is a creative workforce with the ability to pivot and adapt.

In 2018, Vivek Wadhwa, technology entrepreneur and adjunct professor at the Carnegie Mellon University Engineering at Silicon Valley and a director of research at the Center for Entrepreneurship and Research Commercialization at Duke, wrote that “tackling today’s biggest social and technological challenges requires (individuals to have) the ability to think critically about their human context, which is something that humanities graduates happen to be best trained to do.” In other words, engineering and scientific knowledge is important and valued, but a grounding in the arts is essential for innovation and creativity within the sector and to re-imagine our economy as we recreate it. Building on this explanation, a January 15, 2020 Forbes article by Bernard Marr found that “by integrating arts to a child’s education, it creates a person more ready to meet the ingenuity demands of our economy” and “many employers, educators, and parents believe STEAM helps fill in a gap left by STEM of key skills/attributes children need to thrive.”

As we move further into the 21st Century, we continue to acknowledge that critical and creative thinking, problem solving, collaboration and perseverance are essential to success in the economy and society. These skills are at the heart of the Arts; indeed, they are a vital part of the Provincial Arts curriculum. We need to move from an exclusive promotion of STEM on Ministry websites, documents and resources, to STEAM. The Arts are essential for innovation and ingenuity.

Ontario must not lose its place as a recognized leader in education across Canada and internationally. Therefore it needs to fully embrace STEAM as a rigorous, holistic and encompassing educational pedagogy and methodology for developing a healthy, prosperous, and productive citizenry.

Michèle Kleinschuck,
President
oea4teachers@gmail.com
[Ontario Art Education Association](#)

Carolyn Lewis,
President
president@omea.on.ca
[Ontario Music Educators' Association](#)

Matthew Sheahan,
President
president@code.on.ca
[Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators](#)