

The Honourable Stephen Lecce

Minister of Education

438 University Ave, 5th Floor

Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Minister Lecce:

Students deserve equal access to all extracurricular activities. Some initiatives to safely reopen Ontario have created a huge disparity with how the performing arts, dance, drama and music, are conducted across the province. After reviewing the recently updated guidelines to the [Ministry Health, Safety and Operational Guidance for Schools](#), there is a need for clarification of the guidelines with regards to the running of all extra-curricular activities.

Following the science to maintain safety protocols is extremely important. Currently, different protocols are being implemented with students being offered limited opportunities to participate in the performing arts. There is no logical or scientific explanation for this discrepancy.

This inequity affects the safety protocols required for athletics by reducing the requirements for practices and games. Performing arts courses and extra-curriculars (events such as the *National Theatre School Ontario Dramafest*; the *Ontario Secondary School DanceFest*; the *Canadian Improv Games*; school concert bands; orchestras and choirs; dance and drama clubs, and in-school performances) are currently required to meet much more stringent COVID requirements than students involved in athletics.

Performing arts and Physical and Health Education, and their associated extra-curricular activities, must be given the same COVID safety requirements in order to meet the mental health and wellness needs of a diverse body of students. We must be offering a multitude of opportunities for students to manage stress; foster a sense of belonging; build community and a sense of purpose - this has been made even more significant by the collective trauma of the global pandemic. As such, we must address this inequity.

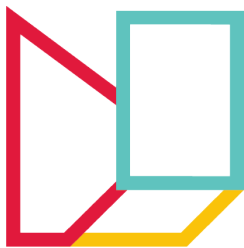
We recognize that there are different COVID-19 situations across Ontario and following science to maintain safety protocols is extremely important. However, we believe that:

- Rules and restrictions for performing arts and athletics activities should have parity,
- Rules and restrictions for dance and drama in particular should be better defined in the guidelines (there is only mention of field trips, music, and athletics)
- Rules and restrictions should be applied in a more uniform way across Ontario, which could be reinforced by Ministerial recommendations.

Considering that we are almost 20 months into the pandemic, and it seems that we will have to live with COVID-19 for a while longer, it is imperative to address these issues. For the benefit of students, we ask that the protocols for performing arts be reviewed immediately and aligned with those for athletics in Ministry recommendations and the execution of policy at the board level.

We look forward to the opportunity to discuss these issues with you directly, and hope that the ministry will provide further detailed guidance and provincial leadership.

Sincerely,



NATIONAL THEATRE SCHOOL

DRAMA FEST

ÉCOLE NATIONALE DE THÉÂTRE



ONTARIO MUSIC  
EDUCATORS'  
ASSOCIATION

