



A Chapter of Carl Orff Canada

January 28, 2022

On behalf of the signatory organizations, we are following up on the [letter](#) sent to your attention on January 10, 2022. This letter provided current peer-reviewed research to inform decisions surrounding music in our schools as students returned to in-person learning this month. However, the Back to School plan was released by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development four days later banning singing and wind instrument playing in all Nova Scotia schools. This is an unwarranted and damaging policy for students.

We have received no official response from the Premier's Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres of Education or Nova Scotia Teachers Union representatives who received the letter. This lack of response and decision to ban wind instrument playing and singing in Nova Scotia public schools indicates a disregard for the following:

Peer reviewed science supports a safe return to in-person wind playing and singing in schools.

The decision to ban singing and wind instrument playing suggests that the growing body of peer-reviewed research presented in our letter was disregarded in favour of out-dated anecdotal evidence. Music is the only subject that has had to go to such lengths to be given the same consideration as other subjects.

Safe singing and playing practices have been successfully implemented in our schools for more than a year.

There has been no reported COVID-19 spread linked to school music: a testament to the effectiveness of research-based mitigation measures, responsible educators, and committed students who adopted these measures when singing and playing were permitted. In sharp contrast, physical education activities and sports continue to proceed unmasked despite many reports of COVID-19 spread during sporting activities.

Music is essential for students' physical, mental and social-emotional well-being.

The role of music making, specifically wind instrument playing and singing, in student well-being is at least equal to that of other academic pursuits and athletics. On Wednesday, January 26, Premier Houston emphasized the importance of arts and culture for youth mental health. We expect that importance to be reflected in school policy.

Students have returned to in-person learning because the benefits of in-school learning for student well-being outweigh the risks associated with the Omicron variant. This increased risk is present in all activities, not just wind playing and singing. Concerns regarding the Omicron variant should not be applied only to the music classroom.

Singing and wind instrument playing are embedded in Nova Scotia's music curricula.

While extracurricular clubs and activities are able to continue "if deemed essential to the well-being of the children", core **curricular** music outcomes cannot be achieved under this province-wide policy. The cumulative nature of applied music learning cannot be understated, nor can the long term damage currently being inflicted on the music learning of a generation of students.

The continued inequitable treatment of music throughout the pandemic is eroding programs that have taken generations to build. The resulting gaps in student learning will require extensive remediation. Music learning is curricular, it is essential in every sense of the word.

Once again, we ask that you recognize the critical role of music education in our public education system and reinstate wind instrument playing and singing in our schools.

We look forward to your response,

Sincerely,



Hope Gendron
Nova Scotia Band Association, Executive Director



Tim Callahan-Cross
Nova Scotia Choral Federation, Executive Director

On behalf of the following national and provincial organizations:

Choral Canada
Canadian Band Association
Kodaly Society of Canada
Carl Orff Canada
Nova Scotia Band Association
Nova Scotia Choral Federation
Nova Scotia Music Education Council
Kodaly Society of Nova Scotia
Orff Nova Scotia