

Should music teaching be offered in all HWDSB elementary schools? Should there be concern about the varied musical opportunities available within HWDSB?

This year there has been renewed concern about the teaching of music in schools across Canada. It has been noted how the amount of music education has been falling, while articles have appeared about how school programs had started a life long interest in and passion for music. There has even been a Coalition for Music Education in Canada formed with a web site at www.coalitionformusiced.ca.

The Collective Agreements signed with elementary teachers across the province agreed to 200 minutes of preparation time for all teachers. This provides boards with the opportunity to hire specialist teachers once more (librarians, physical education , and music) to cover for teachers while they are doing preparation. Elementary music teachers in all schools could once more be a possibility.

In 2000 there was a report on the state of music in elementary schools in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. It reported on the availability of music by cluster. It found k to 5 schools where there were staff who had limited or no music background, "and the limited music programs offered made it difficult for students to demonstrate the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum". The percentage of schools in this situation varied, from 15% Mountain East, 20% Mountain West, 28% County West, 32% City East, 20% City West, to 60% County East. Although most clusters provided instrumental music programs in grades 7 and 8, only 25% of schools in City East offered these programs, and there were none in County East (Stoney Creek). So in summary the degree of a student's exposure to music in school depended on what school a student attended, with the least opportunities in schools in the eastern part of the district.

At the last Committee of the Whole, in answer to a request from myself, the Human Resources department reported that there are 69 teachers with music qualifications who work for HWDSB. There are 44 part or full-time teaching assignments in music while there are a 100 elementary schools.

From these figures, it would seem that the state of music teaching, as described in the 2000 report, has not changed substantially.

The decisions about expanding the elementary music program will be made in the next 2 years.