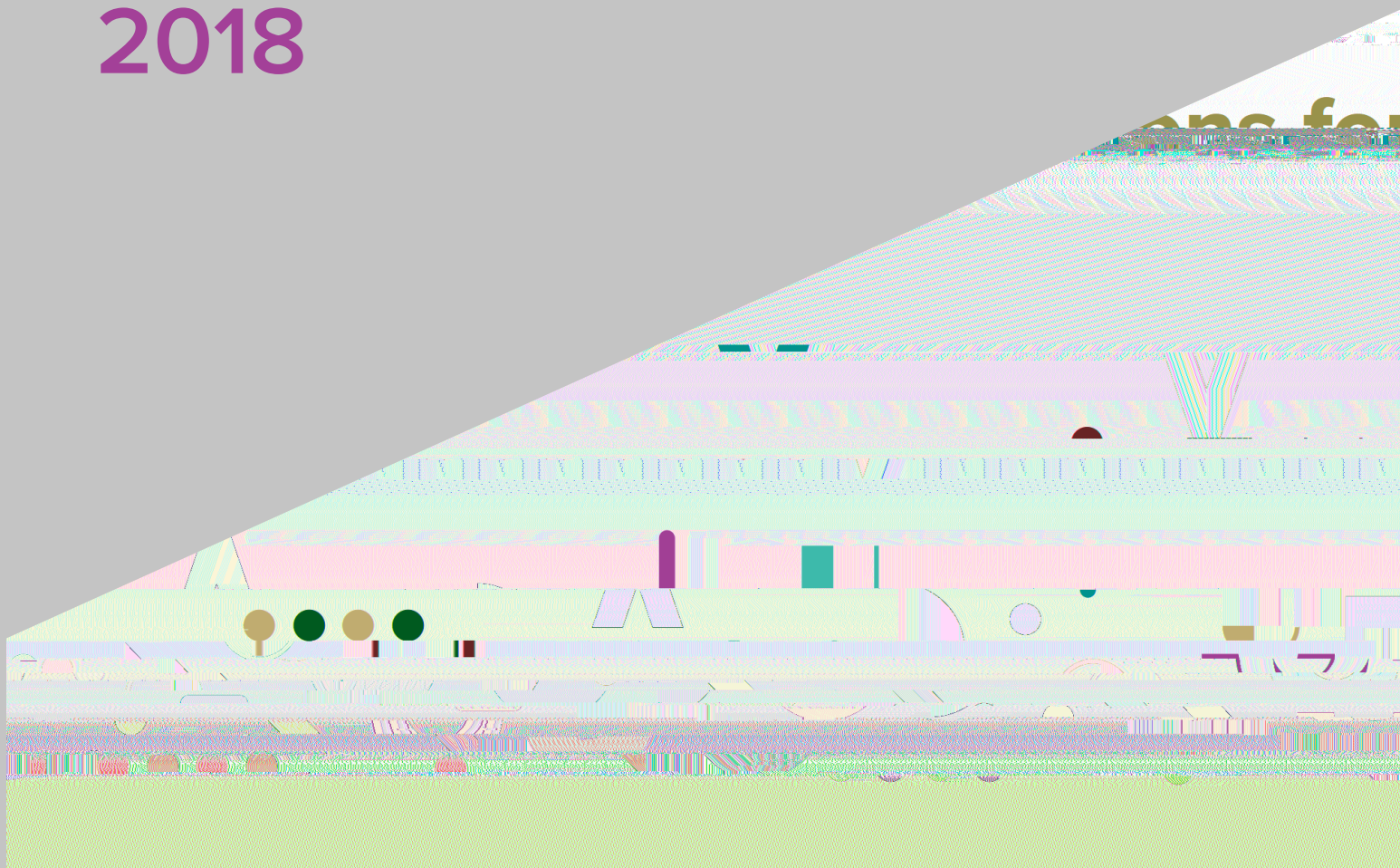




# Arts education

2018





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It is hard to understate the benefit derived from an education in the arts.

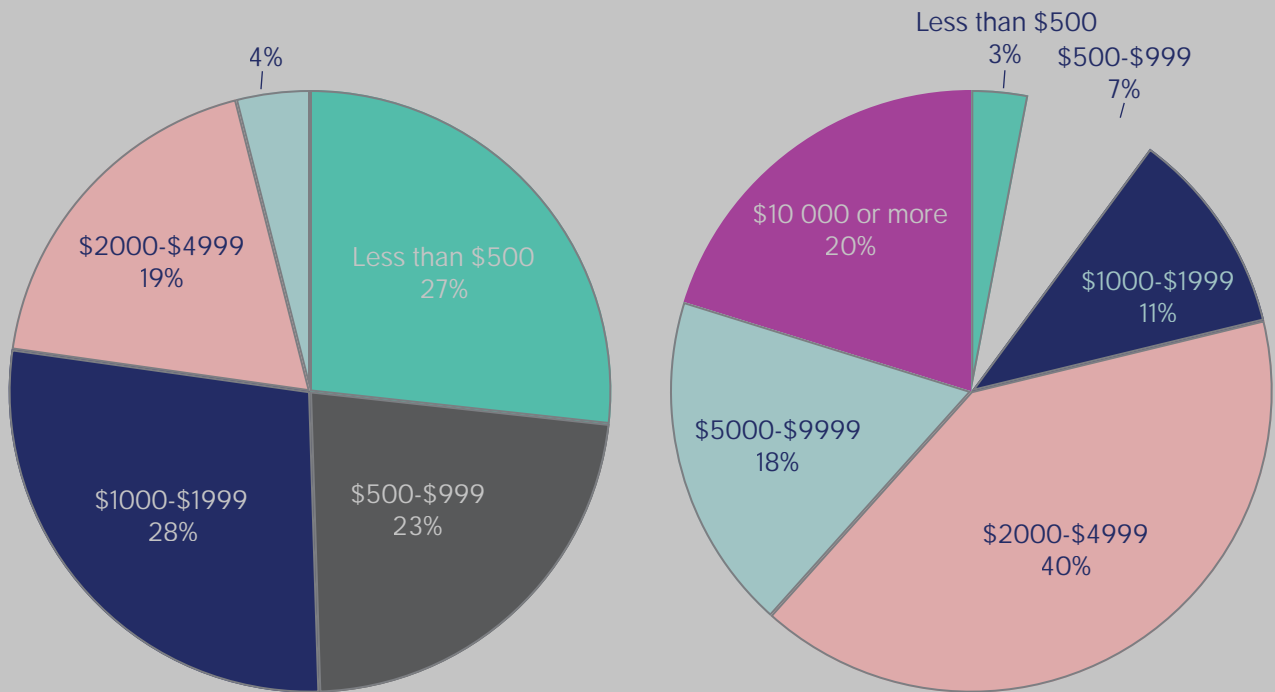
## Arts funding and school budgets

Until recently, there was no provincial funding dedicated to the arts. School boards can determine how much funding they allocate to schools for the arts. In some cases, boards allocate money for specific arts initiatives or instructional priorities. For example, some boards provide instrumental music for all students in grades 7 and 8, and will therefore provide some funding to schools for instruments. Other boards provide an instructional budget based on the amount of full-time equivalent (FTE) music specialists at each school.

In addition to board funding, schools can fundraise for things like arts excursions, visiting artists, or musical instruments. Together, the funds raised by the school and allocated by the board contribute to a school's arts budget for the year.

In 2018, People for Education asked elementary and secondary schools about their arts budget. Among elementary schools, these budgets range from under \$500 to as high as \$20,000 (see Figure 1). At the secondary level, arts budgets can reach as high as \$100,000 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Arts budgets in elementary schools    Figure 2: Arts budgets in secondary schools



## Arts budgets: Size matters

Both the data and the comments from our survey illustrate the impact of school budgets on access to resources and learning opportunities in the arts. One principal commented that "many instruments sit broken until budgetary bottom lines are determined closer to the end of the year. Even then, not all instruments can be repaired because there is not enough money." Another noted that it is "very di#

In elementary schools, the arts budget also appears to be connected with the availability of arts programming space. Elementary schools with an arts budget of \$5000 or greater have, on average, three times as many types of specialty arts rooms as those with arts budgets under \$500.

Among secondary schools, there is a correlation between higher arts budgets and the number of senior-level arts courses offered. Furthermore, secondary schools with budgets of \$2000 or more are more likely to provide arts-related opportunities than those with budgets under \$2000. Secondary schools with budgets of \$2000 or more are:

- 11% more likely to be able to display their art
- 15% more likely to see live artistic performances
- 33% more likely to learn an instrument in school hours
- 47% more likely to participate in a choir, orchestra, or band
- 63% more likely to work with an artist or professional from outside the school

## The impact of demographic factors

Socio-economic status is one of strongest predictors of academic achievement ([Davis-Kean, 2005](#); [Sirin, 2005](#)). Many international organizations track socio-economic status through proxies such as parental education, parental occupation, family income, and resources available in the home (e.g. [Hooper, Mullis, Martin, & Fishbein, 2017](#); [OECD, 2016](#)).





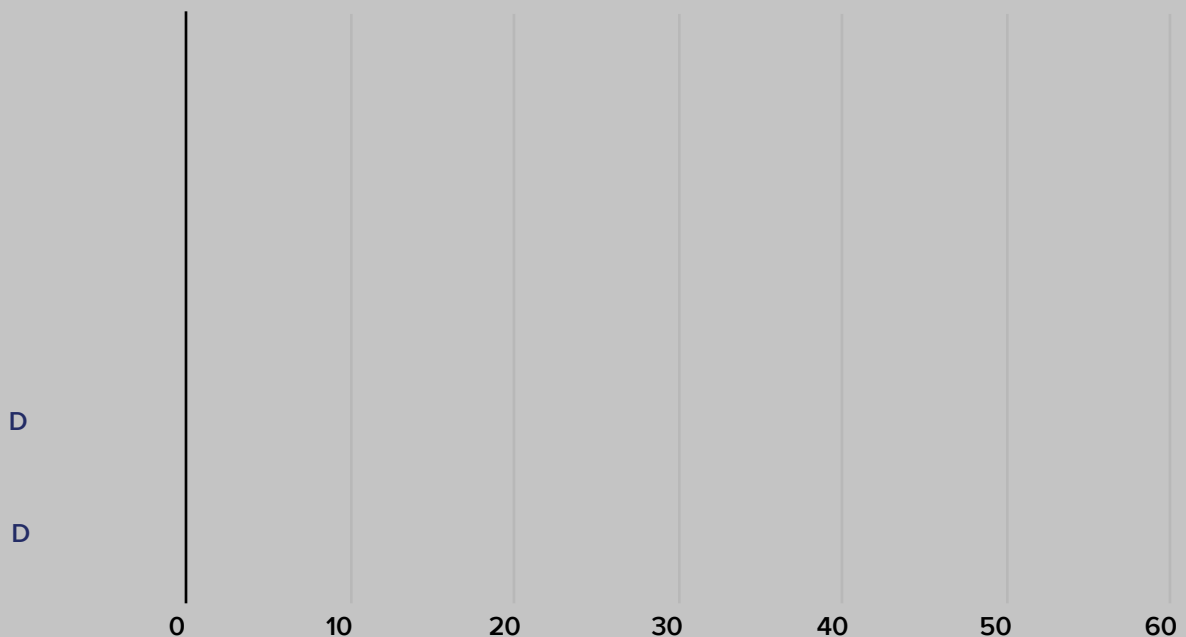
## Is there room in schools for the arts?

Learning music, drama, dance, and visual arts requires a substantial amount of space – space for instruments and supplies, space for working with different visual arts media, and space to move around. In their comments, survey respondents frequently cite a lack of specialized space as a barrier to providing arts programming. Many principals report that there is no available space because their school is “at capacity,” with one principal commenting that they “barely have storage space, let alone additional space for any learning outside of the normal classroom environment.”<sup>3</sup>

In this year’s survey, 43% of elementary schools report that they have no specialized rooms for the arts (see Figure 5). Among elementary schools that do have specialized rooms:

- 55% of schools have dedicated space for music
- 17% of schools have dedicated space for visual arts
- 14% of schools have dedicated space for drama
- 13% of schools have dedicated space for dance

Secondary schools are more likely to have specialized arts rooms. Virtually all secondary schools (98%) have at least one room designed for instruction in the arts, and 83% report three or more specialized arts rooms. Visual arts rooms are the most common, with 96% of secondary schools reporting having one. Larger schools are more likely to have more types of specialized rooms.



<sup>3</sup> This comment is from an elementary school in Brant Haldiman Norfolk Catholic DSB

## Is there room in timetables for the arts?

At the secondary level, students have access to more specialized arts programs and courses. However, several principals commented that it can be a challenge for students to fit these courses into their timetables.

This year, we asked schools if they offered arts courses in the senior grades (grades 11 and 12). Among the secondary schools participating in the survey:

- 98% of schools offer a senior Visual Arts class
- 92% of schools offer a senior Music class
- 86% of schools offer a senior Drama class
- 63% of schools offer a senior Media Arts class
- 32% of schools offer a senior Dance class
- 23% of schools offer Exploring and Creating in the Arts

These senior level courses play a pivotal role for students seeking to develop a career in the arts, and allow all students to continue developing 21st century skills throughout their secondary school experience.

## The urban-rural divide

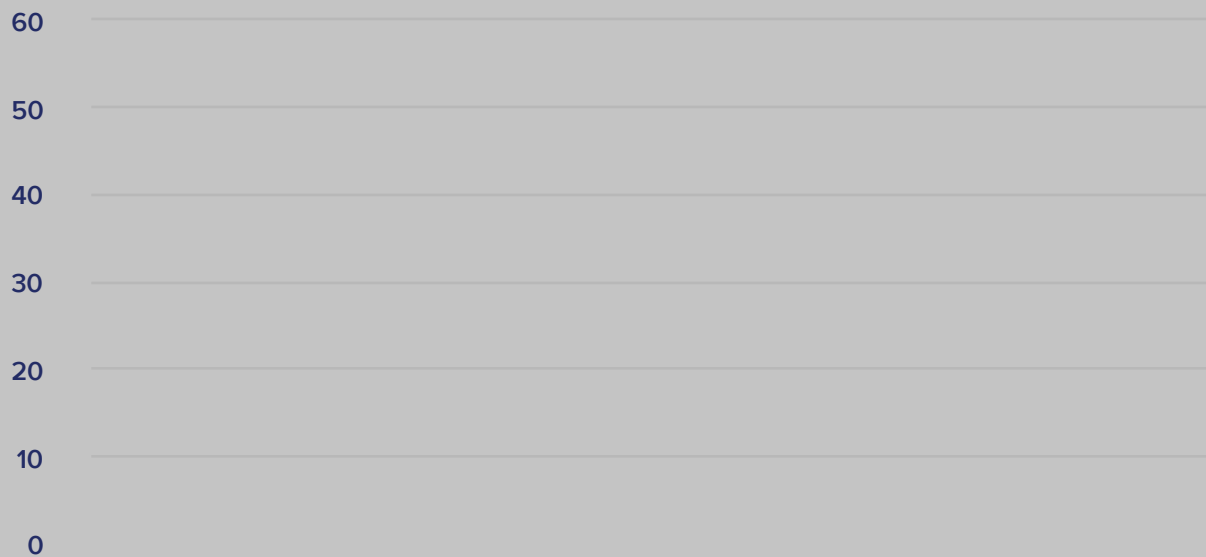
Schools in rural areas face more challenges than their urban counterparts in providing arts education. This year's survey results show a significant gap between urban and rural elementary schools in the size of their arts budgets; urban elementary schools are three times more likely to have a budget of \$5000 or more. Rural schools are also less likely to have specialist drama, visual arts, and music teachers, or specialized arts learning spaces (see Figure 6).<sup>4</sup>

While 37% of elementary schools in urban areas report that they *do not have any* specialized arts rooms, this rises to 53% of elementary schools in rural areas. This pattern holds true even after accounting for the impact of school size, although the gap is not quite as pronounced in similarly-sized schools.

The qualifications held by these educators reveal further disparities:

- Music teachers in rural elementary schools are 9% less likely than those in urban elementary schools to have advanced qualifications
- Drama teachers in rural elementary schools are 68% less likely to have advanced qualifications

This is reflected in the comments on the surveys, with one principal identifying the "recruitment of qualified teachers to come to [their] small



## Equity and the arts

The cost of arts activities and programs outside of the school day make them inaccessible to many families. This year, using data from student questionnaires completed as part of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments, we found that overall, 43% of grade three and 39% of grade six students participate in art, music, or drama activities at least once a week when they are not at school.

Unfortunately, the variation in arts resources in schools appears to exacerbate this problem. Both grade three and six students from schools with lower arts budgets were more likely to say they “never” participate in art, music, or drama activities outside of the school day.

Regional disparities in access to specialist teachers and specialized learning spaces also raise concerns about equity in arts education.

Given the significant role that arts education plays in supporting students’ learning and development, our public schools should have equitable access to the resources and programs that support learning in the arts.

## References

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