



ONTARIO MUSIC EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION

A Framework for The Return to Music Classes in 2020/2021

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We acknowledge that there may be omissions and that information will be changing throughout the coming months.
This is a living document and will be updated as advisories from the public health officials are altered to reflect the evolving situation.
The guidelines outlined in this document are current as of the latest updated date.

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A Message from the Committee...

The next few months are going to be critical for our profession. Our collective response to this ever-changing narrative may have a long-lasting impact on how teachers and students interact.

As we navigate the coming weeks and months, the OMEA COVID-19 Response Committee encourages everyone to:

- keep their mental and physical health front of mind
- use discretion when reading and sharing the myriad and often unvetted articles and studies available
- communicate often with your stake-holders and seek out the advice of educators
- be flexible and responsive rather than reactionary

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, trust that music educators will find a way to deliver the Ontario Curriculum despite the challenging times ahead.

Preamble

The OMEA COVID-19 Response Committee team was formed in May 2020, to address the impact of COVID-19 on school music programs in Ontario. The committee was charged with investigating and creating a resource with recommended procedures to help elementary & secondary teachers navigate the various teaching scenarios.

The team has researched, attended webinars, and sought out medical advice about the safe return to teaching music in the 2020/2021 school year. We also sent letters to the Ontario Ministry of Education, Ontario Minister of Health and Regional Health departments offering assistance and musical expertise when planning the return to school.

It is the hope of this committee that teachers in elementary and secondary schools in Ontario will be able to look at this document for inspiration and positivity, and that they will then be able to respond to any questions about strategies to deliver the music curriculum in their schools with viable solutions.

It is likely that a combination of delivery methods will have to be employed during the upcoming year, navigating between online and in-person teaching. Therefore, the ideas contained in this document may need to be flexible in their delivery methods.

This document has been created with no one specific return-to-school scenario in mind. One thing for certain is that education for every teacher and student, in every subject and in every school in Ontario, will look different than usual in the fall of 2020. Ontario students in the 2020-2021 school year may see several different models of instruction that will need to move seamlessly from one to another throughout the year. With that in mind, this document serves as a springboard for ideas to build upon in many scenarios.

Music Education Advocacy Statement

For as long as there have been people, there has been music. Music makes us more human and making music together makes us better people. Music making with others teaches empathy, collaboration, acceptance, and understanding. Music making is essential to the human experience.

We recognize that as educators we have a collective responsibility to acknowledge our shared history with Indigenous peoples. We offer our gratitude to Indigenous peoples for their care for and teaching of our Earth and our relations. We are committed to honouring these teachings; in solidarity, on these traditional lands, through our work in music education.

Music classrooms are safe places for students of all ages and abilities. Music classrooms allow for creation, artistic expression, exploration, and developing further insight as they explore, learn and experiment through learning music. Music is the building block of the school community, providing unique learning and engagement opportunities, while students develop interpersonal skills through developing their musicianship skills. This article from [NAfME](#) outlines music's undeniable contribution to the lives of both students and adults.

During the early months of this pandemic it was through music and the arts that people from around the world joined together in order to be part of a community and to be calmed by its effects. The idea that music and the arts have become the “antidote” for the pandemic is obvious, and that is why we absolutely need learning opportunities in these areas when students return to school because we know that some will be traumatized. These two articles articulate this need well; [“Why we need the arts more, now than ever.”](#); [“The Power of Music in a stressful pandemic”](#)

In addition to the intrinsic benefits of studying music, there is a vast range of other skills, attitudes, and ways of seeing and thinking that are supported through music education. Connections to overall academic success have been noted, and the Critical and Creative processes that are cornerstones of the Ontario arts curriculum support 21st Century skills in critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Further reading on 21st Century competencies can be found on the [Edugains website](#).

The Coalition for Music Education is a Canadian national organization with a host of resources designed to help you advocate for music in school. Their website about advocacy can be accessed [here](#).

Is Playing An Instrument Safe?

Excerpt from Amro Music shared document found [here](#).

Band Classes: While academic studies are presently underway at Colorado State University, a recent study hosted by the Vienna Philharmonic revealed “when playing an instrument they (the musicians) faced no additional risk of transmitting the novel coronavirus when performing” and that “we should not expect air exhaled by artists to reach more than 80 centimeters (2.6 feet) distance”. Additionally, the United States Army Band and West Point states “there is agreement between all of the research collected, that wind instrument playing seems to present about the same risk as normal breathing and talking.”

As many educators and musicians can attest, although the musician is blowing air into the instrument, the design of the instrument is such that the air is slowed down to produce a tone, and in doing so, the instrument retains the moisture and aerosols associated with the spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, frequently disinfecting the musical instruments in our program, ensuring students properly maintain their own equipment, and closely following the CDC’s guidelines recommended for social distancing will allow us to continue offering a quality music education to students while proactively preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Orchestra Classes: Orchestra instruments offer no additional risk of contributing to the spread of COVID-19. Performing on these instruments does not involve breathing into the instrument to create a tone and students are able to wear masks when playing. Additionally, because these instruments are sealed with a lacquer or varnish, the exterior surfaces of these instruments are non-porous and can be cleaned similar to other surfaces. Encouraging students not to share classroom supplies, implementing a structured cleaning regimen, following the CDC’s guidelines for social distancing, and utilizing appropriate cleaning solutions that are both effective and safe for the instrument’s finish, will play an active role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the orchestra classroom.

Evidence Informed Practice During COVID-19

At the time of writing in June 2020, several studies are underway to investigate the transmission of COVID-19 in musical settings. Several studies are underway to document the transmission of the virus. Two studies in the USA include one co-led by the CBDNA (College Band Directors National Association) and the National Federation of State High School Associations in the USA, and another led by a team of researchers and musicians at the University of Colorado.

Another study conducted recently at Freiburg University looked at music performance and the spread of COVID-19. They concluded that as long as physical distancing rules were in place, there was no increased risk of spreading or catching the COVID-19 virus for musicians of all kinds (through aerosol droplets or increased/heavier breathing). The study can be found [here](#). It is only available in German but a translation can be found [here](#). Administrators will be able to cite these studies to inform their decisions surrounding music in schools.

Environmental Considerations for Music Classrooms

General Safety: Performance-Based Classrooms

Concern is for the health and safety of all students & staff. It is of utmost importance that the safety conditions, as described by your local and provincial Health Departments and School Board, are being applied and adhered to by the school. Once those recommendations are met, there are some specific recommendations for music classrooms in order to ensure the continued safety of students and staff.

The Ontario Public Health department guidelines for regular cleaning of surfaces can be found [here](#).

Music Room Supplies Needed for before and after playing

- Sink with running water (soap, and paper towels)
- Hand sanitizer
- Wipes that contain one of the following bleach, isopropyl alcohol, medical virox
- Sterisol for instruments MSDS Sheet can be found [here](#) and steri-spray MSDS Sheet can be found [here](#). Investigation into other appropriate items for disinfection is ongoing.

According to the [CDC](#), COVID-19 can live on the following materials

Brass: up to 5 days

Plastic: up to 3 days

Cork: up to 2 days

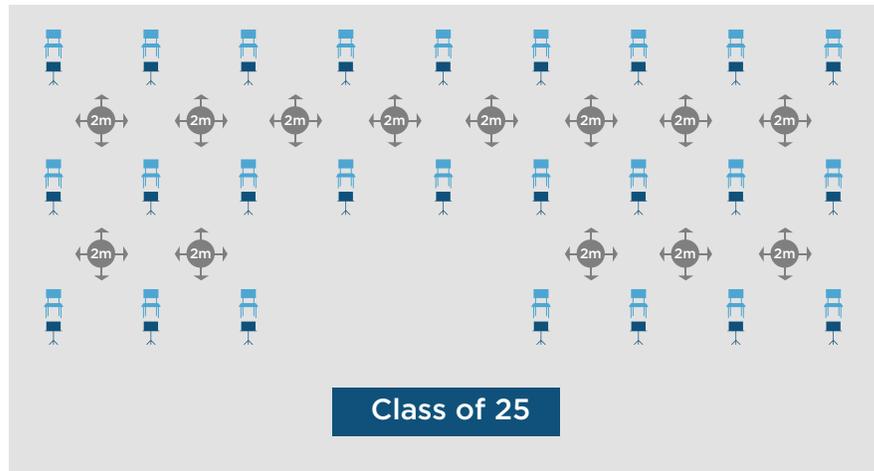
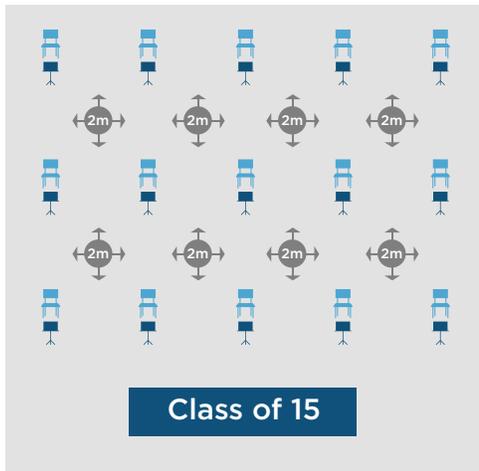
Wood: up to 4 days

Strings: up to 3 days

The generic classroom items in the music classroom (e.g. wiping down chairs, stands, equipment and surfaces etc.) will need to be sanitized on a regular basis. The procedures for these should be listed in the general school procedure manual based on the [CDC](#) guidelines.

Room Considerations

- The room should allow for physical distancing of 2 meters so that speaking droplets have enough space to fall to the floor. Sharing of stands should be avoided and chairs and stands should be set up to avoid any unnecessary movement or touching. To achieve this, divide your room's total square footage by 36 (as each student will need a 'block' measuring 6x6 or 36 square feet) to achieve the recommended distancing.



- Measurements of air turbulence by the Freiburg Institute for Musicians' Medicine suggest that air is not disturbed beyond the following distances:

Flutes	1.5 m in front of player; 0.8m from the end of the flute
Other Woodwinds (excluding saxes)	1.5 m
Brass & Saxophones	2m from the bell

Consideration for trombone & trumpet bell ends and the 2 meters of distance must also be considered. There are scientific studies in the works with a release date of July 2020.

- Wind instrument music classrooms need to have access to running water (sink & tap) for cleaning purposes. Three areas need to be available:
 - A station set up for cleaning (using soap/water and/or Sterisol or steri-spray in a pump or spray bottle) [no shared vessels for dipping mouthpieces]. Sterisol for instruments MSDS Sheet can be found [here](#). Steri-spray could also be used MSDS Sheet can be found [here](#)
 - Rinsing station (running water).
 - Paper towel station for drying off mouthpieces -- it is NOT recommended to use a common towel for drying.

Students will need to be rotated through these areas so physical distancing can be maintained. Investigation into other appropriate items for disinfection is ongoing.

Instrument Deployment Recommendations:

1:1 Ratio - no sharing	Sharing on a Rotary Basis	Daily Sharing of Instruments
<p>Based on these findings, at the time of this publication, students should be assigned their own instrument for individual use. Boards should use a hybrid model for instruments. School instruments supplemented with rental instruments to achieve a 1:1 ratio.</p>	<p>Instruments could be shared between students if they are left for a period of not less than 5 days between rotating groups.</p>	<p>Instruments could be shared daily if the outside of the instrument(s) (touch surfaces) are wiped down (with CDC approved wipes take note various surfaces require different materials) by the teacher. (Time would need to be allotted for the teacher to perform this task) and students would have their own mouthpieces.</p>

Student Kits for Sharing Instruments

Brass/Woodwind Instruments

- Mesh bag
- Mouthpiece
- Mouthpiece brush
- Personal cleaning cloth/swab

Percussion

- Stick bag or ziploc bag
- Sticks (mallets/drumsticks)

Disinfection of Instruments

Instrument Safety Considerations

A good source for cleaning instruments can be found [here](#) in a joint document by NAMM (National Association Of Music Merchants), NAFME (National Association for Music Education) and NFHS (National Federation of State High School Associations). Sterisol is the recommended product to be used for mouthpiece sterilization. The MSDS Sheet can be found [here](#). Steri-spray could also be used. The MSDS Sheet can be found [here](#). Investigation into other appropriate items for disinfection is ongoing.

Brass and Woodwind Instruments

- For detailed instructions on cleaning brass and woodwind instruments, refer to this [article](#) on hygienically cleaning woodwind and brass instruments from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.
- Water keys should not be released directly onto the floor. Paper towels should be provided to soak up the condensation from water keys.
- Reeds should NEVER be shared.

Percussion (Including Orff Instruments)

- Students should be provided their own percussion sticks/mallets (when possible) and they should keep them in a ziploc bag or stick bag. If students are unable to carry/keep these with them, then a designated area of the class should be determined.
- Where it is not possible to provide students with own set of mallets for equipment, then the mallets/sticks need to be wiped down in the same manner as hand drums.

Strings

- For stringed instruments, including orchestral strings, guitar and ukulele, isopropyl alcohol which is above 70% should only be used on the strings and unfinished finger and fret boards. There is more information to be found at this [website](#).

Plastic Instruments

- Recorders, Boomwhackers and other plastic instruments can be washed with warm, soapy water. Disinfectant solution and alcohol wipes may also be used.

Remo and Other Hand Drums

- For basic cleaning of Remo drums you can use standard disinfectants like disinfecting wipes, disinfection liquid (containing alcohol), or a wash cloth with soapy water (wrung out). Don't soak the drum. Simply wipe it down with a cloth that has the disinfectant on it, then wipe it with a dry cloth. The link to this article can be found [here](#).

Keyboard Percussion Instruments

- Use standard disinfectants like disinfecting wipes, disinfection liquid (containing alcohol), or a wash cloth with soapy water (wrung out). Don't soak the bars. Simply wipe it down with a cloth that has the disinfectant on it, then wipe it with a dry cloth. The link to this article can be found [here](#).

Electronics

- Amplifiers, keyboards, recording devices, CD/MP3 and other electronic devices should be wiped with antiseptic wipes. Always unplug from the power source before cleaning. It is advised that students be provided their own patch cord rather than sharing.

String, percussion, and keyboard instruments present fewer hygienic issues that can be solved simply by the player washing their hands before and after use for a minimum of 20 seconds.

Health and Wellness

Both the physical and mental health and well-being of students, faculty, and staff are of primary and critical importance.

It is the strong belief that music, and the Arts, are likely to have a profound positive effect on the social well-being of students. A number of articles point to just how important music and the arts are in Social Emotional Learning: [“Why we need the arts more, now than ever.”](#); [“The Power of Music in a stressful pandemic”](#); [Hal Leonard](#); [University of Chicago](#); [NAfME](#); [MusicforAll](#)

Recommendations: programming for staff and student well being

1. Students need music for their on-going mental health. Teachers can deliver the overall music expectations by undergoing changes to teaching *strategies* not curriculum.
2. Social emotional learning through music can take place safely when teachers prioritize the expectations in the curriculum that are non-performance related, while employing one of the performance strategies recommended in the [General Safety: Performance-Based Classrooms](#) section of this document.

Curriculum Delivery Models

This section outlines some ideas to inspire music educators depending on which delivery method may be employed by their board at the time. It is not extensive. Several ideas may be flexible, beginning in one method of instruction and moving into another. Sharing best practices going forward online, at conferences, in meetings will be of the utmost importance. Thanks to the many OMEA board members who have contributed ideas for the following scenarios. Lesson ideas can be found in Resources for Teaching and Instruction divided into divisions for grades 1-8.

The lessons ideas are developed with these approaches in mind:

Fully Distanced Learning Instruction

- Using both synchronous and asynchronous delivery methods, students would cover all the overall expectations in the music curriculum.

In-school Instruction with Lower-Risk Creative Performance Opportunities (no singing or wind instruments)

- Possible ways of employing creative strategies for lower-risk performance include using body percussion or individual hand percussion. The creative process should be used in a variety of ways that would lend itself to teaching the expectations in the Ontario Music Curriculum.

In-school Instruction Which Allows for Performance Without the Sharing of Instruments

- Traditional materials and strategies may be used as long as teachers are adhering to health guidelines regarding distancing and hand washing. Students will be working on their own instruments and not sharing with others. Ideas about how to attain a 1:1 ratio are outlined in the Resources for Teaching and Instruction.

In-school Instruction with No Performance

- Teaching the many expectations in the curriculum that are not performance-based will allow for the overall expectations to be covered. Specific performance-based expectations may follow as restrictions are eased. Teachers will focus on the use of the creative process wherever possible.

Teaching and Instruction

Music educators use tried and true methods of teaching performance skills that have been developed, modified and tested throughout our history. They work and they are extremely effective. However, they will need to be creatively modified for use in our schools during this health crisis.

All educators will depend on health professionals to communicate what measures need to be in place, and then educators will need to find teaching strategies that allow for the curriculum to continue to be taught. Music educators are in no different situation.

Recommendations for performance include, but are not limited to:

1. using flexible band arrangements which allow for creative instrumentation and smaller class sizes;
2. rotating performance units which would create opportunities for every student to play but at different times of the year, to avoid the sharing of instruments;
3. creating found-object instruments;
4. partnering with music industry representatives to create rental contracts, and thus eliminate the need for sharing of instruments.

Music educators are some of the most creative teachers in education. Keeping in mind the safety guidelines, educators can build a program that utilizes the creative process and touches on all the overall expectations of the curriculum in a mindful, health-conscious way.

Recommendations for pedagogical approaches

1. Use project-based instruction.
2. Employ content that engages students on a social emotional level.
3. Deliver lessons that are flexible to a blended learning delivery (online and at school).
4. Consider both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.
5. Design lessons that give options to students including the option to create their own assignments that are meaningful to them.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted virtually every aspect of our society. The arts and education sectors are no exception. Music educators are defined by our creative thinking, problem-solving, hard work, and perseverance. The OMEA will continue to advocate for music programs. Students now more than ever need music for their social-emotional well-being and to develop collaborative and creative problem-solving skills. We have all been asked to utilize these skills during these challenging times.

If you have any comments or suggestions about this document please feel free to complete this [form](#). This is a living document that will be amended and updated as needed.

Resources for Teaching and Instruction

Many teaching resources that appear in the appendices within this document will be developed further and housed on the [OMEA website](#). Thank you to the OMEA board of directors who contributed to these resources.

In each of these hyperlinks you will find lesson ideas and strategies for teaching the music curriculum under different delivery models.

In the coming weeks and months, these lessons will be developed into detailed plans and shared with Ontario music teachers on the OMEA Website.

[Primary Lesson Ideas 1-3](#)

[Junior Lesson Ideas 4-6](#)

[Intermediate Lesson Ideas 7-8](#)

[Secondary Lesson Ideas 9-12](#)

[Attaining a 1:1 Ratio of Instruments to Students](#)

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