

State of the Art of Music Education in the Francophone Schools of New Brunswick

Anne Lowe and John Grashel

Introduction

In New Brunswick—the only officially bilingual province of Canada—the Ministry of Education is divided into two sectors based on the two official languages, French and English. Nancy Vogan’s chapter in this volume provides a clear and concise description of the hierarchical structure of the Ministry of Education of New Brunswick (MENB) as a backdrop to her discussion of music education in the English schools of New Brunswick. This chapter will focus more specifically on the status of music education in the French sector. In order to provide a comprehensive overview, we will begin first with a discussion of music education in the French public schools. The music education provincial program will then be explored, and we will conclude with a look at the undergraduate program in Music Education offered by l’Université de Moncton.

The French sector of the MENB is divided into five school districts based on geographical demographics. Each school district has a superintendent, a director of education, and five supervisors. Each supervisor is responsible for several subject areas, which includes music education. The same principle is applied at the Ministry level. In New Brunswick, the music education dossier is under the responsibility of a visual art major and this dossier is one among many under his jurisdiction.

Music Education in the French Public Schools

A questionnaire was sent to the music supervisor of each of the five French school districts in order to gain an overview of the state of music education in the French public schools of New Brunswick. This questionnaire was designed to obtain demographic information regarding the current music programs. The questionnaire and Table 2, which details the full results, appear in the Appendix at the end of this chapter.

Overall, the results of the questionnaire indicate that the music programs appear to be healthy and thriving mostly at the elementary level. Three of the districts (1, 9, and 11), for example, report that all elementary music is taught by specialists and that there is at least 30 minutes of instruction per week. On the other hand, School Districts 3 and 5 have had difficulty recruiting music specialists, and they attribute this difficulty as a problem resulting from the obstacles involved in recruiting music education graduates from French universities in Canada. (This problem will be discussed in further detail when we look discuss l'Université de Moncton.) Even though enrolment in music classes at the middle and high school levels are quite limited, most districts offer choirs and bands as extra-curricular options. It is important to add that no compulsory arts credit is required to obtain a secondary school diploma in New Brunswick. The numbers and percentage of students enrolled in music programs are outlined in the Table 1.

The results of the questionnaire also indicate that most schools at the middle school level and all schools at the high school level use the Standard of Excellence series in band classes. At the elementary level, teachers use the Passport Musical series, which they accompany with a variety of musical textbook materials based on personal interest and availability. It should be noted that music supervisors, both at the Ministry of Education and the School Board level, are

not music specialists. This reality is alarming and could have long-term consequences on the quality of music education programs in New Brunswick schools.

Table 1

Numbers of Students Per District in Grades 7–12 and Percentage of Music Students

	District 1		District 3		District 5		District 9		District 11	
	Total	Music	Total	Music	Total	Music	Total	Music	Total	Music
Grade 7	277	79%	584	20%	—	0%	308	42%	451	51%
Grade 8	253	73%	354	56%	—	0%	322	37%	431	47%
Grade 9	401	35%	683	49%	2110	1%	705	20%	556	1%
Grade 10	391	1%	540	9%	2110	1%	658	.03%	488	.2%
Grade 11	384	.04%	700	1%	2110	1%	734	1%	612	.2%
Grade 12	394	0%	631	0%	2110	1%	630	0%	487	.1%

Interaction between the music programs in the French and English districts appears to be, at best, minimal. This could be due to the emphasis put on developing cultural identity in French schools. In New Brunswick, where the French speaking population is the minority, certain policies are implemented in order to maintain the French heritage. Another factor minimizing French and English interaction is that two districts (#9 and #11) simply do not have any English schools nearby with which to interact. Notwithstanding these realities, renewed discussion between French and English districts could result in benefits to all the students and teachers.

Music Education Provincial Program

The current New Brunswick Music Education Program, enforced in French public schools (K–12), dates back to May 2003 and is still in its provisional form. A copy of this program can be found on the website of the MENB. It includes the theoretical background, divided into three sections: (1) orientation of the school system, (2) pedagogical components, and (3) orientation of the music program and the music curriculum. The first two sections of the theoretical background are common elements included in the programs for all subject areas while the orientation of the music program section respects the specificity of music itself. In this section, music and music education are defined with an emphasis both on intrinsic value and on music's specific contribution to the development of all dimensions of the individual; that is, intellectual, affective, physical, social, aesthetic, and cultural. Musical concepts are listed as related to the components of sound. Musical skills (performance, appreciation, and composition/improvisation) are the general music outcomes for all grade levels through which the understanding of the musical concepts will develop over time. The end results should be students who have gained musical independence and a sense of musical culture, and who will strive to become involved musically in society throughout their lives.

The music curriculum, as mentioned above, has three general learning outcomes, one for each musical skill (performance, appreciation, composition/improvisation) and has specific learning outcomes for each musical concept. The content for each concept is listed, although what needs to be covered for each grade level is not specified. It is understood that the teacher will teach the content elements related to each concept when it is pedagogically appropriate.

Université de Moncton Undergraduate Music Education Program

L'Université de Moncton (U de M)—the only French language university in New Brunswick—offers degree programs in various academic areas including Music Education. In the 1970s and 1980s the Department of Music graduated a large number of music educators who taught in the French public schools, but today the enrolment has decreased significantly, partly due to the length of the program itself. In 1992, the New Brunswick government legislated that all educators must obtain two undergraduate degrees to be certified to teach in the public schools. Therefore, Music Education students had to study four years at the Department of Music to obtain a B.Mus. plus two years at the Faculty of Education in order to receive a B.Ed. However, some students enrolled in the B.Mus. program did not have the necessary knowledge and skills to enroll in the Music Education program. These students had to complete a preparatory year, which lengthened their B.Mus. study to five years, and therefore seven years in total to complete both B.Mus. and B.Ed. programs. Many students became discouraged along the way and opted instead to complete performance, musicology, or theory concentrations. In fact, only five students graduated with a B.Mus./B.Ed. degree between 2002–5. This has had a direct impact on the lack of specialist music teachers in some of the rural French school districts of the province (districts 3, 5, 9, and 11, in particular). To remedy this situation, a new five-year combined B.Mus./B.Ed. program has been developed was implemented in January 2006.

Conclusion

Music education in the French schools of New Brunswick seems alive and well. All students experience the benefits of music education, at the very least, throughout the elementary

level (K–6). At the middle school level (7–8), students select either music or visual art in order to fulfill the required compulsory arts credit. Therefore, all students are exposed, at this level, to an art form. Even though enrolment in music education classes at the secondary school level is low, many students participate in extra-curricula activities including concert band, jazz band, and community choirs. In fact, some of the New Brunswick French school bands have won many awards at local, provincial, national, and international competitions. In addition, many of the community choirs are renowned for the quality of their voices and their musicality. In fact, Les jeunes chanteurs d'Acadie, a community youth choir composed of students from schools in the Moncton area, has been recognized in Canada and abroad for the superior quality of their vocal performance.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the state of music education in the French schools in New Brunswick, there are problems that need to be addressed. What can be done to resolve music specialist recruitment problems in rural French schools of the province? Will the new five-year B.Mus./B.Ed. program at l'Université de Moncton graduate enough students to answer to the needs of all schools of the province? What can we do to convince the MENB that music supervisors at all levels must be music education specialists? While acknowledging the importance the MENB provides to music education programs at the elementary and the middle school levels, what can be done to ensure that art credits are compulsory at the secondary school level? How can French and English districts work together to ensure quality Music Education programs for all students of New Brunswick? These issues need to be discussed seriously among educators at all levels including music teachers, supervisors, and Ministry of Education and Teacher Association personnel in order to find solutions that will ensure the best music education programs and educators for all students of the province of New Brunswick.

Appendix

Questionnaire Sent To Music Supervisors

1. What is the number of instrumental programs at the
 - a) High school level?
 - b) Middle school (7–8) level?
 - c) Elementary school (K–6) level?
2. What is the number of general music programs at the
 - a) High school level?
 - b) Middle school (7–8) level?
 - c) Elementary school (K–6) level?
3. What is the number of choral programs at the
 - a) High school level?
 - b) Middle school (7–8) level?
 - c) Elementary school (K–6) level?
4. Describe the qualifications of your music teachers?
5. How often do music classes meet?
6. How are musical instruments funded? How are materials funded?
7. What opportunities are offered for in-service activities?
8. Do you participate in contests and festivals?
9. What instructional materials are used at the
 - a) High school level?
 - b) Middle school (7–8) level?
 - c) Elementary school (K–6) level?
10. Do you have a music supervisor in your district? If not, did you previously have a supervisor?
11. What are the total number of students in each high school and middle school in your district? How many elect music offerings?
12. What extra-curriculum (outside of school hours) musical activities are offered?
13. Describe the interaction between French and English schools (beyond music festivals).
14. Does your district offer a jazz ensemble program at the high school level? Middle school level?

Table 2

Questionnaire Results

Total Number of Schools

	SD* #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	3	4	3	4	6
Middle school	4	13	10	18	17
Elementary school	6	13	19	20	17

*SD = School District

Offers Instrumental Music Programs

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	3	Many schools do not offer music due to a lack of teachers	3	4	1.7
Middle school	4	Many schools do not offer music due to a lack of teachers	7	15	14.5
Elementary school	2	Many schools do not offer music due to a lack of teachers	0	0	0

Offers General Music Programs

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	0	0	0	0	30%
Middle school	0	0	3	0	50%
Elementary school	All	Many schools do not offer music due to a lack of teachers	All	All	All

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
<i>Are all the elementary music teachers specialists?</i>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
<i>If no, how many are not?</i>		Several	2		

Offers choir programs

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	No	No	No	No	No
Middle school	No	No	No	Yes, in certain schools	No
Elementary school	Most schools have choir	4 Schools	Yes, in certain schools	Yes, in certain schools	Yes, in certain schools

How often do classes meet?

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	60 min/day	75 min/day	75 min/day	75 min/day	60 min/day
Middle school	45 min/twice a week	50 min/twice a week	50 min/twice a week	50 min/twice a week	45 min/twice a week
Elementary school	45-50 min/week	30-48 min/week	50 min/week kinder: 30 min/week	50 min/twice a week	45/50 min/week

Funding for musical instruments?

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	Yes, on request	Part of global budget	Part of annual global budget	A budget to repair instruments	Yes, on request
Middle school	Yes, on request	Part of global budget	Part of annual global budget	A budget to repair instruments	Yes, on request
Elementary school	Yes, on request	Part of global budget	Part of annual global budget	A budget to repair instruments	Yes, on request

Continuing training opportunities

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
	Yes, by MENB and district school	Same as all teachers	Yes, 1-2 days a year	Same as all teachers	Yes, by MENB and district school
<i>Contests and music festivals</i>	Yes	No	Only in Bathurst area	Yes	Yes

Materials use in schools

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	Standard of Excellence book 2-3	Standard of Excellence	Standard of Excellence book 2-3	Standard of Excellence	Standard of Excellence book 2-3
Middle school	Standard of Excellence book 1	Yamaha method	Standard of Excellence book 1	Concepts musicaux 1 et 2	Standard of Excellence book 2-3
Elementary school	Passport musical, Clacsons, and others	Passport musical, Clacsons, and others	Passport musical, A la decouverte de la musique and others		Passport musical, Clacsons, and others

Are the music supervisors in school districts musicians?

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
<i>Previously</i>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Today</i>	No	No	Yes	No	No

Number of students enrolled in music

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	191	120	34	146	379
Middle school	530	330	0	704	433

Extra curriculum activities

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
<i>Choirs</i>	Yes	Some schools	Some schools	Some schools	Very little
<i>Bands</i>	Yes	Some schools	Some schools	Some schools	Not enough students

Interaction between French and English schools

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
	No	No	No	No English schools in the area	No

Jazz programs or ensembles

	SD #1	SD #3	SD #5	SD #9	SD #11
High school	Yes	1 school	Not all schools	Yes	Yes
Middle school	Yes	No	No	Yes	No