



June 17, 2020

Dear School Administrator:

Music teaches to the heart and nurtures the development of the whole student like no other discipline. With the significant changes impacting our school environments in this challenging time of COVID-19, instrumental music education and the performing arts are more important than ever to the social and emotional well-being of our students and our society. Globally, people of all ages have turned to music and the arts during the pandemic for comfort, togetherness, fortitude, and inspiration. Ongoing participation in bands will keep students engaged, develop their confidence, and give them a sense of stability and community at a time when our education system is managing unprecedented hurdles. In addition to the well-documented benefits of music education on the human condition, being engaged in ensemble music-making will be a crucial factor in helping students re-integrate into their studies and their communities as we return to post-pandemic normalcy.

The Ontario Band Association (OBA), our province's voice of both band educators and industry partners, is keenly aware that there is great concern among administrators, band directors, music families and most importantly, our music students about the state of music education this coming September. The OBA, the second largest band association in Canada and one whose membership is largely composed of music teachers in public, Catholic, and independent schools, has led the way in providing quality professional development for decades. We recently gathered a panel of public band educators, university professors, and industry representatives to discuss, review research and deliver a series of recommendations to all stakeholders across the province regarding the delivery of band education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our primary objective is to support students in a healthy learning environment by providing the ideas and the tools our band educators need. "Now, more than ever, the critical components of learning must include relationships, respect, critical thinking, and collaboration" ([Deluzio et al.](#)). We are prepared to fully adopt new policies set forth by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, as well as regional Public Health and Safety departments. We have also sought out direction from leaders in the broader music education community. The Ontario Music Educators Association (OMEA), an organization with which the OBA is affiliated, has recently released a [Framework for Music Classes during COVID-19](#). This living document outlines, among other things, an in-depth look at the safety protocols for music instruction suggested by current research and public health recommendations, as well as examples of instructional methods given various scenarios we may be presented with this fall. [Research](#) is being conducted at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado State University, Rice University, and University of Maryland to investigate aerosol production from wind instruments. Similar studies have also been performed on safe disinfection processes at the [University of North Texas](#). Our band directors will adapt to these new times by implementing modifications to our programs based on this cutting-edge research and public health guidelines. Whatever physical scenario may be presented to educators across this province, band teachers will work collaboratively with their administrations to keep students engaged with music and their instruments.

The OBA will continue to support band educators through continued vetting and review of research, and exploration and adoption of online, supplemental music software and applications in an effort to help create a positive learning experience for their students. This temporary situation will be executed with creativity and high standards of excellence, but a full return to instrumental music-making will be critical to the health and well-being of students. Band instruction provides hands-on learning for students that is a unique experience and differs from all other subjects. Students in music classes experience cross-curricular connections that go far beyond what can be found in other core classes. The sense of community that arises from participation in band can especially help students whose mental health and well-being has been impacted by the prolonged isolation and social distancing.

The OBA recognizes that equity is a high priority for all school boards and administrators across this province. We believe that music needs to be a priority – that all students have access to music education, particularly during this pandemic. We also understand that every school has a different set of tools to deliver music curriculum – among them, band instruments are some of the most powerful and encompassing tools we have to deliver music education. To achieve these goals, it is crucial that our school boards continue to allow students the opportunity to use our vast inventory of instruments. We recognize there will be challenges – not all schools have the inventory to provide one instrument for every student. In this case, as in all curricular areas, instrumental music educators will need to reevaluate their situations and adapt. Music educators are creative thinkers, and these past few months of school have demonstrated their flexibility in adapting to change. We believe that decision-makers can be confident with peer-reviewed, evidence-based research in hand, that band education can continue to provide engaging, rich learning experiences in a safe way.

Music educators have been working together since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to share ideas, to learn new technologies, and to teach and support each other. Across Ontario, our members from elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions have come together to discuss creative solutions for providing music instruction this fall. We have dedicated ourselves to collaborating, communicating and connecting with each other to keep on top of current best practices across North America in an effort to maintain the best music education for our students in our schools, through band.

The Ontario Band Association is a proud partner of music educators in the province of Ontario. We feel it is our most immediate mission to help guide our school board officials, administrators, and members as we collaboratively work together, finding solutions that will ensure the safety of our students while continuing to provide the highest quality music education through band. Our common goal must be to keep our students safely engaged with music and prepare for the day when they can fully participate in ensemble music-making once again. We look forward to working together to achieve this goal.

On behalf of the Board of Directors,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Tucker', written over a horizontal line.

Lynn Tucker  
President, OBA