

# SINGING IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS: COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY

## FINAL REPORT

Prepared by

Francine Morin, Ph.D., Principal Researcher  
Md Nazim Mahmud, Ph.D. Candidate, Research Assistant

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## Abstract

The onset and spread of COVID-19 have significantly altered music teaching practices and student learning in K-12 schools across the globe. This study examines COVID-19 pandemic impacts on the use of singing in K-12/CEGEP school music programs in Canada. A comprehensive 55-item online survey was used in April 2021 to gather the perspectives of a large representative sample of music teachers ( $N=944$ ). Descriptive statistical and qualitative data analysis techniques were used to summarize and interpret the information collected pertaining to the following investigative themes: COVID-19 pandemic impacts on teaching singing in the music program; overall support for singing and music education; COVID-19 pandemic impacts on implementing the music curriculum; COVID-19 pandemic impacts on assessing students' music learning; COVID-19 pandemic impacts on music educators; recovery and rebuilding music programs with singing; and positive outcomes and opportunities for music teachers and students.

Overall findings confirm that the impacts of COVID-19 on Canadian school music programs involving singing were severe and widespread. Due to rigorous health restrictions placed on singing, thousands of students no longer benefitted from the rich range of opportunities typically offered through regular and extra/co-curricular music programs involving singing and choral experiences. Music teachers were able to implement some, but not all, mandated health measures. Hundreds of music teachers identified five measures that were difficult for them to implement. Instructional time spent singing and the scope of singing experiences offered to students declined immensely, both in-person and online as teachers were suddenly required to find alternative pathways to teach music with little or no singing. It was not possible for most music educators to teach or assess many of the music learning outcomes mandated in official Canadian music curricula through singing, a situation that has led to significant music learning loss, especially related to singing, and incomplete profiles of students' musical growth. Working conditions declined for music teachers throughout the crisis and the majority found themselves working without modified music curricula and assessment tools to accommodate for the mandatory restrictions on singing. Professional development for teachers was inadequate in helping them cope with swiftly changing music teaching protocols, especially for singing. They experienced losses of designated music classrooms, opportunities to perform live with students, and were assigned additional non-teaching responsibilities. Teachers spent more time planning, and mostly without compensation. These factors, including feelings of having decreased support from division administrators and government authorities, negatively affected music teachers' mental health, well-being, and job satisfaction.

Looking ahead, music teachers expressed concerns about how to remediate music learning losses, singing skills, and rebuild music and singing-related programs. Despite these concerns, some positive outcomes, benefits, and opportunities for music education and singing were identified by teachers that arose from their innovative problem solving during 2020-2021. Recommended actions are offered in this report for strategic and sustained leadership for decision makers at all levels including government, divisions/districts, schools, and professional and community organizations

for rebuilding the singing/choral components of school music education programs across Canada. This research study fills a gap in the existing literature in that it targets the impacts of the pandemic on education systems with its focus on singing in school music education. The findings of this study have relevance for the Canadian school system and those in other countries in reaffirming the unique and important contributions of singing in music programs for students and their school communities. Learning can be a deeper and more powerful experience with singing. Singing, alone and with others offers a way of knowing and living in the world through an active, integration of the mind, heart, and voice.

### Select Highlighted Findings

Students were not permitted to sing during regular music classes in **70%** of music teachers' school music programs.

Extra-/Co-curricular music programs involving singing were suspended in **91%** of respondents' schools.

**68%** of music teachers reported that pandemic restrictions limited participation in school-based singing and choral ensembles for diverse, vulnerable student groups.

**Hundreds** of music teachers indicated that they had difficulty implementing five health measures (e.g., singing indoors with increased ventilation).

Live performances with students were eliminated from the music programs of **93%** of responding teachers.

The prominence of singing in respondents' music programs waned greatly.

Music teachers felt a lack of support from the highest levels of authority in education (e.g., Ministries of Education and School Divisions/Districts).

The percentage of music educators who could continue teaching in designated music rooms dropped from 84% to **27%**; most travelled to various instructional spaces using carts or taught online.

Professional development specifically addressing safe indoor singing or modifying the music curriculum to reflect pandemic restrictions on singing was perceived to be inadequate by **55%** of music teachers.

Teachers were unable to teach **60%** of the mandated music learning outcomes in Canadian music curricula due to health restrictions, and they were unable to assess students in relation to **66%** of these mandated learning outcomes.

**67%** of music teacher respondents **did not** receive modified music curricula to guide music instruction and assessment, particularly in relation to the limited use of singing.

## Executive Summary

### Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study, *Singing in Canadian Schools: COVID-19 Impact Survey*, funded by Choral Canada and its partners is to provide a national account of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of singing in K-12/CEGEP school music education in Canada during the 2020-2021 school year. A participatory community-based research approach was employed that involved the principal researcher working in concert with an advisory committee made up of representatives from Choral Canada and stakeholder groups. A comprehensive 55-item researcher-designed survey served as the primary tool for gathering data from music teachers across Canada.

Descriptive statistical and qualitative data analysis techniques were used to summarize and interpret the information gathered around eight themes investigated. Each of these themes is presented and discussed in depth in the final report.

- Teacher Respondent Information
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Teaching Singing in the Music Program
- Overall Support for Singing and Music Education
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Implementing the Music Curriculum
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Assessing Students' Music Learning
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Music Educators
- Recovery and Rebuilding Music Programs with Singing
- Positive Outcomes and Opportunities for Music Teachers and Students

### Key Findings and Recommended Actions

Several key findings and recommended actions emerged following a thorough review of the data. A selection of these findings has been highlighted and can be found immediately following the abstract. In this summary a complete list of findings and recommendations for each theme is presented using the same organizational structure and order used in the final report. A more comprehensive discussion of these findings, detailed data displays, and teachers' free-text comments can be found in the full-length final report.

### Teacher Respondent Information

- A large sample ( $N=944$ ) of Canadian K-12/CEGEP school music teachers completed the survey which strongly represents all regions of Canada's provinces/territories, student enrollments, grade levels, community settings, school designations, and languages of instruction.
- The overall number of participants ( $N=944$ ) was high considering that invitations to complete the survey were directed only to music teachers in Canada who use singing in their school music programs. This level of participation was gratifying for a comprehensive survey conducted in April 2021 during the context of the pandemic when teachers were experiencing increased stress and workloads.

- Most teachers participating in the study were music specialists (88%) with fewer classroom generalists (8%), or non-music specialists (4%) taking part.

### ***COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Teaching Singing in the Music Program***

- The pandemic has had a negative impact on the number of students who had opportunities to sing at school in both regular and extra/co-curricular music programs, a situation resulting in significant loss of music learning, skill development, and aesthetic experiences for thousands of students during the 2020-2021 school year. Some students may have been further disadvantaged by limited access to the benefits of participating in ensembles like choirs (e.g., improved self-esteem, school engagement, and belongingness).
- A critical mass (68%) of music teachers reported that pandemic restrictions limited participation in school-based singing and choral ensembles for diverse student groups, including students with complex needs and those who live in poverty, socially disadvantaged, Indigenous—First Nations, Metis, Inuit, racialized, and/or LGBTQIA2S+ students. This finding is troubling because for vulnerable students, music and choral learning programs are often protective, safe spaces that provide them with a sense of acceptance and inclusion.
- Prior to COVID-19 students were not only singing in school music programs but were also afforded rich opportunities for singing in extra and co-curricular programs such as choirs or vocal jazz groups. This constellation of pre-pandemic singing experiences exposed Canadian students to diverse musical styles and practices and provided them with opportunities to create through improvisation and composition. These varied singing experiences reported by teacher respondents confirm that students were receiving a high level of music learning through vocal and choral experiences in Canadian schools.
- Due to restrictions and mandated health measures in place for singing at school in most parts of Canada, the number of music teachers that were able to continue offering a robust range of singing within their programs declined immensely for both the in-person and online teaching contexts. Most respondents' schools (70%) were prevented from allowing students to sing during regular music classes. In some areas of Canada where singing was permitted and enabled by applying local health protocols, only about 30% of respondents' schools permitted students to sing. Sadly, 91% of respondents' schools were unable to offer any extra/co-curricular music programs involving singing.
- Instructional time spent singing in school music programs dropped dramatically during the pandemic crisis. Pre-pandemic, approximately 90% of music teachers spent at least 25% or much more of their time singing with students in general music classes. In contrast, during the pandemic, over 70% of music teachers spent no time or less than 25% of teaching time singing. Very few teachers reported to have used singing during online classes. Even in choral-context classes, the lack of instructional time devoted to singing in the hybrid/in-person milieu was more pronounced with almost 60% of teachers disclosing they spent no instructional time singing.

- Music teachers faced challenges when they tried to implement the multiple and varied health measures required by their administration units or governing bodies during the pandemic. Hundreds of teachers reported that they were unable to implement five health measures: increasing ventilation while singing indoors, singing indoors for 30 minutes or less after three air exchanges, singing outdoors, singing indoors without increased ventilation, and maintaining physical distancing. The health measures that higher numbers of teachers were able to implement included: singing virtually using remote online platforms, limiting singing as much as possible, humming, masking, no singing, and applying sanitizing protocols.
- After large audiences were no longer permitted to gather in efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus, live performance opportunities for music students in Canadian schools were all but eliminated. Almost all (93%) music teachers reported that they could not perform live with their students. In sharp contrast, during the three years prior to the pandemic, 99% reported that they performed regularly with students multiple times each year.
- Music learning enhancements for students involving occasions to work with guest musicians (85% ↓ 30%) or to go on singing/choral related field trips (85% ↓ 2%) were almost completely eroded during the pandemic. Furthermore, 71% of music teachers reported a significant decline in educational outreach opportunities designed to support school music/choral programs.
- The number of music teacher respondents meeting provincial/territorial requirements for music instructional time dropped from 84% to 65% during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Recommended Actions*

#### *It is recommended that...*

- Government authorities in education and health work with music education leaders (e.g., government music education consultants, division music education consultants, music education and choral music organization leaders, university music educators) to figure out how singing in schools can co-exist with the coronavirus while mitigating risks and keeping everyone safe. It is important to find ways to reduce the obstacles for *all* students to partake in school-based singing and choral ensembles, but especially for diverse student groups, as music is a critical agent for inclusion and their sense of well-being.
- Government authorities and division/district administrators ensure that students are receiving the recommended instructional time allotments for music in schools so that they have the chance to achieve mandated and/or modified music learning outcomes. For some Canadian students, school is the only opportunity for music education.

- Music education leaders along with government authorities meet to a) reimagine how music performances can continue in outdoor, adapted, and/or virtual environments (if moving forward school music performances for larger indoor audiences are not permitted) and b) review local guidelines for indoor and outdoor events and gatherings with the aim of resurrecting live student performances for their communities that are safe and mitigate the risk of viral spread.
- Canada's music educators accelerate the development of approved pedagogical innovations that will keep students safe and revitalize rich opportunities for singing in curriculum-based and extra/co-curricular school music programs.
- Division/district administrators and school leaders set up steering committees with music teacher representatives with the goal of addressing the challenges teachers identified in this survey that affected their abilities to implement health and safety protocols for safe group singing in schools (e.g., issues with ventilation in schools, maintaining social distancing, singing outdoors).
- Division/district and school leaders support music teachers by providing professional development, technologies, and resources for continuing a broad array of singing and performing experiences, especially for online contexts if necessary. The value of alternative and/or virtual performance experiences for school music students should be assessed, and if considered valuable, then implementation support and resources need to be provided. It is important to recognize that music teachers are leaders that play a key role in schools through their outreach to high numbers of students, nurturing of relationships, and engaging with families.
- Education and health ministries consider redefining guest musicians as essential workers, and not as visitors. Like substitute teachers, they enter schools for short periods to enhance music programs by leading workshops or making presentations. If guest musicians are not permitted to enter schools, then music teachers should augment the involvement of guests in programs virtually, which would offer reciprocal benefits to both students and professional musicians in our communities.
- As music teachers move to recovery efforts, they resume taking students on singing/choral related field trips and participate with them in music/choral education outreach programs. Community engagement is essential to musical development and brings music concepts alive for students. Equally important is collaborating with choral music organizations and cultural institutions on recovery efforts to work in partnerships with schools. It is crucial for music educators to reinstitute the practice of exposing students to a world of musical experiences that may not be opened at home (e.g., musical theatre, choral festivals, workshops, singing groups), especially for groups of diverse students.

### ***Overall Support for Singing and Music Education***

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' well-established curricular practices of using singing, a core component of music education, was profound. The prominent use of singing by respondents in their music programs waned greatly. Given the severe restrictions on singing in Canada's schools, teachers

relied heavily on using other modes of music learning such listening, playing instruments like guitars and drums, or they invented alternative approaches to teaching music with little or no singing.

- Support for singing in Canada's school music programs came from fewer stakeholder groups during the pandemic than before the challenges of the pandemic set in. It was disconcerting to find that the highest levels of authority for education in Canada, division/district administrators and education ministries, were identified less often than other groups as supporting the inclusion of singing in schools in both the normalized pre-pandemic and atypical pandemic contexts. In contrast, music teachers reported high levels of support from several groups (music teachers, parents, school administrators) working to maintain and sustain singing for students in schools prior to the pandemic.
- During the 2020-2021 pandemic year, one third of music teachers reported that funding for their school music programs decreased moderately (18%) or decreased greatly (17%). The remaining music teachers reported that funding remained about the same (53%), increased moderately (9%), or increased greatly (3%).
- Many music teachers lost their designated music classrooms during the pandemic. Music teaching spaces are critical for providing students with optimal learning environments and adequate physical space for safe group singing. Music rooms have been re-purposed and re-distributed to non-music teachers to allow for adequate social distancing of students learning at school. Consequently, music teachers have been working from multiple locations within their schools. The number travelling to and from classrooms using carts took a leap up to 29% from only 7% pre-pandemic, while the number remaining in music rooms to teach dropped dramatically from 84% down to 27%.
- During the pandemic, most music teachers (77%) continued to teach music at school in various instructional spaces (67%) or using online platforms (9%) to accommodate students learning at home. A much smaller group (23%) spent some time working and teaching from home using virtual music pedagogies for students who were also learning from home.
- Most provincial and/or territorial governments had not modified their official music curriculum documents and assessment requirements to account for the reality that in many schools throughout Canada in 2020-2021 singing could not be taught, nor could singing-related music outcomes be properly assessed. One third (33%) of music teacher participants *were* provided with modified music curricula to guide teaching, learning, and assessment, however, most (67%) *were not* provided with modified curricula.
- More than half (55%) of responding music teachers assessed the level of professional development (PD) opportunities received during the pandemic crisis as inadequate, particularly in relation to singing. Smaller portions (38%) of respondents assessed their PD as adequate or more than adequate (7%) for their pandemic teaching needs in music.

### ***Recommended Actions***

#### ***It is recommended that...***

- Education ministries, division/district administrators, and school leaders augment efforts to provide comprehensive support for school music teachers in their pandemic teaching efforts. Music teachers are working hard to sustain singing in schools, confront interruptions to teaching practices, reclaim music classrooms, and rebuild programs. This support needs to include adequate funding, PD, and resources for continuing and rebuilding comprehensive school music programs that include singing. Support is crucial for music teachers' resiliency, recovery efforts, and overall coping with teaching during a pandemic.
- Each provincial/territorial education authority establish a steering committee made up of representatives of partner organizations (e.g., school boards, universities, superintendents, school leaders, parent councils, teachers, music education organizations) to consider ways to develop safe singing protocols for school music programs if the pandemic persists, or another arises.
- In readiness for 2021-2022 and beyond, education authorities work with music education leaders in their jurisdictions to prioritize music learning outcomes that teachers can teach and assess and that students can learn and acquire. While doing so, it is important for leaders to keep in mind that singing is essential and needs to be safely re-positioned in the curriculum.
- Music education leaders undertake advocacy efforts in their local communities, provide curriculum and instructional leadership for music and singing, and offer support to music/choral teachers and school principals.
- Moving forward music educators and organizations who want to resurrect a strong place and role for singing in school music programs engage in advocacy initiatives with students and their families, which are two groups that have considerable influence on educational decision makers.
- All professional development providers, especially division/district authorities in collaboration with music education leaders, and music education and music community organizations make coordinated efforts to provide short-term professional development in targeted areas of need for teachers. Teachers with high needs are those who predominantly use singing and vocal/choral approaches in their music programs and serve students for whom singing, and choirs are crucial to life at school.

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Implementing the Music Curriculum**

- Music teachers were unable to address several music learning outcomes (MLOs) outlined in Canadian music curricula while teaching school music programs during the 2020-2021 pandemic context. Findings suggest that curriculum coverage of MLOs through singing was incomplete and therefore, there is a need for remediation. While music teachers used other modes of music learning (e.g.,

listening, instrument playing) in their planning and teaching of MLOs, it is evident that there was less teaching of MLOs using singing and choral experiences.

- As expected, several MLOs requiring students to perform music through singing could not be taught by most teachers (e.g., development of skills such as pitch matching or breath control or singing as a form of self-expression and communication). This finding is particularly concerning because music is a performing art, and therefore, performance-based learning is central to K-12 school music education.
- More than half of the respondent pool reported that they were able to design and implement lessons for six of 15 sample music learning outcomes (MLOs) or 40% of those listed on the survey. These six MLOs were related to listening and responding to music, understanding music in various historical and cultural contexts, and musical creativity.
- Surprisingly, more than half of music teachers reported some difficulty teaching MLOs that would take little effort to address in-person or virtually (e.g., generating ideas for composing songs or self-assessment of music learning).

### ***Recommended Actions***

#### ***It is recommended that...***

- Education ministries along with division/district and school leaders consider ways to address the challenges music teachers encountered to address the full range of mandated music learning outcomes outlined in Canadian music curriculum documents, as well as the disparities in students' music learning that accompanies this finding. Public health and education ministries should review the most current research on safe in-person singing, revise guidelines and safety protocols for singing in schools, and provide the resources and professional development necessary for teachers to implement them.
- Division/district and school leaders provide professional development opportunities for music teachers that target pedagogical approaches for all MLOs that teachers identified as difficult to teach but, these MLOs should not have been difficult for teachers to address in virtual or in-person teaching contexts.

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Assessing Students' Music Learning**

- Music teachers were unable to assess students' learning of several music learning outcomes (MLOs) outlined in Canadian music curricula during the 2020-2021 pandemic context. This finding is significant and worrisome. Results suggest that teachers' assessment of students' learning involving singing was nearly impossible to implement.
- More than half of the respondent pool reported that they were able to assess five of 15 sample music learning outcomes (MLOs) or 33% of those listed. These MLOs were related to listening, responding to music, and understanding music in

various historical and cultural contexts. Slightly less than half were able to assess another MLO addressing students' song compositions.

- As expected, more than half of the MLOs requiring teachers to conduct performance-based assessments of students' music achievements through singing posed the most difficulties (e.g., development of skills such as vocal production, reading musical notation via sight singing, or demonstrating understandings of timbre by singing) which means many MLO's could not be adequately assessed.
- Unexpectedly, the bulk of music teachers reported difficulty assessing some MLOs that would not present the same challenges as performance-based assessments (e.g., assessments of students' abilities to generate ideas for composing songs; self-assessing learning as performers, composers, or interpreters of vocal/choral music).
- Music teachers (88%) continued formal reporting of music learning to students and their parents/guardians during the pandemic, however reports would have been based upon modified music curricula—what teachers were able to teach and assess in 2020-2021. It is reasonable to conclude that assessment profiles of students' music learning for this pandemic-impacted school year would be incomplete.
- The finding that formal reporting of music grades continued during the pandemic suggests that schools made efforts to continue with music teaching and learning and it remains a valued area of the curriculum in Canadian schools.

### ***Recommended Actions***

#### ***It is recommended that...***

- Education ministries, divisional/district administrators, and music education leaders take swift collaborative action to develop efficient assessment strategies for music education for their jurisdictions that can be implemented in the short term. A comprehensive set of music assessment data gathered through multiple methods is advocated for all students, which will require additional supports for music teachers who will have to implement the assessments. Profiles of students' music learning are necessary for music educators to address learning gaps, especially related to singing, and then to design teaching and learning plans that address the gaps. For instance, teachers may find themselves having to teach and assess concepts and/or skills that would normally have been addressed in the preceding school year.
- Formal reporting of music grades continues following local division/district guidelines and policies moving forward. If necessary, modifications or adaptations to music report cards should be aligned with modified music curricula, particularly in school situations where essential areas of music learning are being restricted from being taught and adequately assessed. Realistically, students can not be expected to learn and progress through all music learning

outcomes included in official music curricula in the pandemic context due to fewer interactions between students and music teachers and health protocols that are significantly restricting some modes of music learning, such as singing.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Music Educators**

- The situation of most music teachers at work during 2020-2021 was far from ideal with several reporting declines in mental health and well-being (70%) and job satisfaction (60%).
- While 90% of music programs continued in some form, the use of singing in school music programs was suspended or highly restricted. 10% of music programs were fully suspended.
- Over 80% of teachers taught music at school with students while following relevant and mandated health protocols.
- 60% of teachers reported a lack of confidence with and preparation for online teaching. Due to problems associated with internet signal latency, teaching group singing online poses unique difficulties for teachers, as voices cannot sing together in time. The majority did not use hybrid models to accommodate both in-school and at-home learners at the same time.
- At the time of survey completion, few music teachers had been re-assigned to teach in non-music areas.
- Small numbers of music teachers were permitted to teach individual and group singing, but most were required to use alternatives to singing during music instruction. Only 33% of teachers were provided with modified music curriculum guidelines and resources to guide the continuation of singing in schools during COVID-19, while the rest did not have support documents.
- To respond to the pandemic crisis, close to 90% of music teachers spent one additional hour or more each week on non-teaching related tasks such as disinfecting instruments, materials, and classroom furniture. Building on that extra time, 75% of music teachers spent three additional hours or more each week planning new approaches for teaching and learning.
- Music teachers worked much harder than usual in 2020-2021 to keep up with their responsibilities, yet few (about 25%) were compensated with increased prep time. Allotted prep time for 75% of respondents scheduled during the day remained the same or in some cases, time was taken away.
- Music teachers felt compelled to dip into their personal funds and spend it on instructional supplies, resources, and professional development to adapt their practices during the pandemic. The amount of money spent by most did not exceed \$400.00.
- Some, but not all, music teachers participated in choral/music professional development (40%) during the pandemic and stayed connected to choral/music education organizations (35%).
- 35% of music teachers hosted university students preparing to become music specialists during the pandemic.
- Music teachers' free-text comments yielded valuable, nuanced insights into the impacts of the pandemic crisis on them personally and professionally.

## ***Recommended Actions***

### ***It is recommended that...***

- Moving forward educational authorities and music education leaders reassess risk and intentionally take steps to cautiously bring singing safely back into schools and music programs. Naturally, the health and safety of students is the highest priority for all leaders, educators, and families.
- Division/district administrators, school leaders, and choral/music education organizations make efforts to provide mental health and well-being supports for music educators who have been impacted by the pandemic.
- Provincial/territorial governments take stock of what has been done in their jurisdictions, and if necessary, move ahead quickly with curriculum modifications that accommodate singing, adapted assessment tools and requirements, and related resources for music teachers who using singing. Inequities were found between educational jurisdictions across the country regarding the provision of these supports for music teachers. Some provincial/territorial governments have been slow to respond and innovate.
- Given the additional stresses and changing workloads reported by music teachers, division/district administrators acknowledge music teachers' needs for increased planning and scheduled prep time during the school day and take action to provide it. Such actions could go a long way to counter teacher fatigue and job dissatisfaction in a complex pandemic environment.
- Education authorities contemplating recovery efforts heed the voices and experiences of music teachers in Canada, and those of their students. Relevant and creative strategies to improve the working/teaching conditions of music teachers are needed to resurrect teachers spirits and restore their well-being and work-life balance.

### **Recovery and Rebuilding Music Programs with Singing**

- Music teachers identified a range of concerns when asked to think ahead about planning to rebuild singing programs for Canada's schools. Approximately half of the teacher respondent pool was concerned about gaps in music learning through and about singing, vocal, and choral skill development and how students' learning will be recouped. To illustrate this point, one respondent remarked, "Mostly I fear that after a year (or more) without singing, it will take a long time and a lot of work to get students back to their former skill level and regular singing routine."
- Equally troubling is that music teachers expect to have difficulties recruiting students back into music/choral programs and dropping participation levels. As this teacher observed, "Already, we can see our course numbers dropping as students pursue courses where they are allowed to function as usual/normal—even under COVID-19 restrictions."

- Some music teachers feared they would not have access to performance spaces for making music or dedicated music rooms moving forward, as has been the case during 2020-2021, a situation which one teacher stated is “creating massive anxiety.”
- Other teachers were uncertain about their personal capacity to rebuild music programs. One respondent shared that their energy and motivation levels were depleted—“I feel so completely beaten down and exhausted.”
- A significant number were generally worried that school-based singing-based programs would be reduced or eliminated altogether. To exemplify this worry, one respondent stated, “I am concerned that my school board or the government may decide to exclude music from the curriculum.”
- Some music teachers shared their worries about losing scheduled preparation time, rehearsal time, and/or funding for singing programs.
- A minority identified job security as concerning.

### ***Recommended Actions***

#### ***It is recommended that...***

- Provincial/territorial education authorities in collaboration with division/district administrators and music educators shift from emergency response planning to recovery planning for the 2021-2022 school year and onward. The core goal should be to return music programs involving singing normal states as soon as possible. A key priority in recovery planning is to ensure that schools are safe spaces for all music educators and students so protocols that address music learning through singing should continue to be implemented as deemed necessary by public health authorities, but more balance is needed. Music learning and skill loss particularly as it relates to singing will be significant for many students and requires remediation.
- Action planning be undertaken at all levels of the education system (provincial/territorial, divisional/district, school, community) to return school music programs using singing to pre-pandemic states and increase supports for music/choral teachers who will be on the front lines implementing these plans. Such efforts require adequate funding for remedial music learning, enabling singing, modification of music curricula, assessment requirements and strategies, music teacher professional development, and supports for music teacher and student well-being. Available funds should be distributed equitably among all curriculum areas, including music.
- Provincial/territorial education authorities in collaboration with division/district administrators and music educators weigh the risk-benefit ratio that music and singing-related programs make to students’ social and emotional growth and well-being as they engage in recovery planning. Singing at school, especially in groups provides important social opportunities for students and fosters vital relationships that have been decimated during the pandemic. Shutting down

music programs that could help students overcome isolationism and rehabilitate their well-being seems counter-productive to education recovery efforts.

### **Positive Outcomes and Opportunities for Music Teachers and Students**

- Many music teacher respondents were able to identify a range of positive outcomes or opportunities that resulted for them and their students related to music education and/or singing at school during the complex pandemic context, while a smaller number could think of none. These ideas reflect the “silver lining” that emerged from music teachers’ experiences and problem solving when continuing to teach music in schools during 2020-2021.
- Worthwhile outcomes for music education more generally included: time to focus on a broader range of essential music learning outcomes, participation in virtual presentations and concerts, the incorporation of project-based music learning, the introduction of some new music programs, a renewed appreciation for music in the curriculum, and discovering that alternative approaches to music education also bring joy to students. To illustrate this category of comments, one experienced high school choral teacher revamped their performance-oriented choir classes which reportedly “morphed into some wonderfully creative composition challenges, song writing workshops, and passion projects utilizing a myriad of artistic forms of expression.”
- Helpful outcomes for singing at school encompassed: a renewed appreciation for singing-related experiences at schools, learning to sing outdoors, producing vocal/choral recordings, learning to sing online, the introduction of some new singing programs, time to focus on a broader range of vocal/choral topics, the incorporation of humming into vocal programs, the use of online rehearsals, and the introduction of virtual choirs. This category of sentiments is illustrated by comments like this one, “It has given me and my students a renewed sense of how important singing together and using our voices is to us. And how much it is a vital part of our community rituals and creating those feelings of togetherness and belonging.”
- Benefits for music teachers included: the discovery of alternative music pedagogies practices, and resources; an increased efficacy with virtual teaching and technology; opportunities for virtual professional learning and development; increased knowledge of students; time to focus on individual students; a decrease in performance-related stress; learning to adapt to a complex situation; increased teaching versatility; time to reflect on the role of music education; and the development of multi-level units of music instruction. This group of benefits evolved from the need for teachers to “think outside the box,” “push outside of [their] comfort zones,” and “get creative.”
- Benefits for music students included: participation in more diverse music learning experiences, a decrease in performance anxiety, smaller class sizes, opportunities to set personal music goals, opportunities for personal growth, and opportunities for therapeutic music experiences. For example, one teacher explained that, “Working in smaller ensembles has certainly been motivating for our students, and I believe that most of them have become better singers this year.”

- Moving forward, music teachers “will be grateful to sing again” with their students, and once they can, they will take along a plethora of new music pedagogies, resources, and experiences that they can use as they see fit in the continuing or post-pandemic context.

### ***Recommended Actions***

#### ***It is recommended that...***

- Division/district administrators, music education leaders, and music teachers participate in professional conversations to identify music pedagogy innovations and other positive outcomes that emerged from their pandemic teaching experiences and consider ways that these can be used to enhance school music education and singing-related programs moving forward.
- Leaders at all levels in the music and education system use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity to re-think school music education and the unique role it can play in education recovery and rebuilding efforts. The unique values of music and singing in education need to be shared in convincing, comprehensive, and compelling ways in ongoing advocacy initiatives to ensure that K-12 music programs across the country are resurrected, strengthened, and championed.

#### **Conclusion**

Navigating the terrain of recovery and rebuilding educational programs from times of disruption and uncertainty presents the field of music and choral education with unique challenges. Choral Canada and its national partners have taken the first critical step in the process by conducting this unique and timely study that offers the profession valuable insights into the impacts of the current pandemic situation on the teaching of singing in K-12 school music education across Canada. Findings reveal deep and comprehensive understandings of several adverse impacts, as reported by 944 music teacher participants across the country. A key message is encapsulated by one teacher who offered a comment using a lyrical line from a popular song—*that you don't know what you've got till it's gone* (Mitchell, 1970).

Indeed, the experience of the current crisis is a powerful reminder of how important music and singing are to the lives of students, schools, families, and communities at large. The attention of all stakeholders in music and education must now shift to what needs to be done in a timely manner to ensure that music learning through singing resumes safely in school music programs. Recommended actions suggest next steps for provincial/territorial education authorities, music education and community leaders, and music/choral teachers interested in resurrecting and advancing singing in K-12 music education once again for all students in Canada, both in the short-term and moving forward into the post-pandemic era.

## Section 1: Introduction and Overview

Community-based participatory research approaches are beneficial because they can help music, choral and education communities better understand and interpret the impacts of the current pandemic context on music and singing related programs in Canadian schools. There is no director's score for the music education and singing communities that can be used to guide recovery from the disruption to school programs during this unprecedented coronavirus crisis. It is very important at this juncture to provide information regarding the current state of music education and singing within Canada's educational system and assess what has been lost regarding students' music learning and singing experiences since March 2020. There is a need for data that offers the profession a comprehensive answer to the central research question focusing this study. To fill this gap, Choral Canada took the lead and enlisted the help of a music education researcher to conduct *Singing in Schools: A COVID-19 Impact Survey*.

The aim of the study is to provide a national account of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of singing in K-12 school music education in Canada. More specifically, the goals of the study are to:

- Increase understandings of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on music education and singing in K-12 school music programs in Canada;
- Use the results to advocate for adapting K-12 school music programs to the pandemic environment if necessary, so that singing can remain core to achieving the music learning goals of K-12 schools, and meaningfully accessible to students;
- Use the results to identify areas of need and subsequently guide the provision of resources and equitable access to music and singing in schools for students; and
- Provide information for rebuilding music and singing education practice in Canadian schools, thereby charting a course of action for the immediate future.

Section 2 provides a brief overview of each element of the research design including: methodology, purpose and research question, data sources and collection, and data analysis and interpretation. Section 3 presents and discusses findings gleaned from the survey which is organized around the eight themes investigated: teacher respondent information, impacts on teaching singing in the music program, overall support for singing and music education, impacts on implementing the music curriculum during the pandemic, impacts on assessing students' music learning during the pandemic, impacts on music educators, recovery and rebuilding music programs with singing, and positive outcomes and opportunities for music teachers and students. Section 4 draws conclusions and sets forth recommended actions for provincial/territorial education authorities, division/district and school leaders, and other relevant stakeholder groups in music and choral education.

## Section 2: Research Design

### 2.1 Methodology

A participatory community-based research design was employed in this study that involved the principal researcher working in concert with a research advisory committee made up of representatives from Choral Canada and its stakeholder groups. Community-based research is a collaborative approach to research that involves partnerships between researchers and community organizations (Coughlin, Smith & Fernandez, 2017). It attempts to empower communities to address matters of concern to them and then take action to resolve problems and improve their situations.

To explore matters of concern to the Canadian music and singing in education communities, a nonexperimental survey research method was employed. The survey combined fixed and open-ended items which required music teacher participants to directly report their perspectives on the research question and eight themes identified for investigation (Fowler, 2014; Ruel, Wagner & Gillespie, 2016).

### 2.2 Purpose and Primary Research Question

The purpose of this survey research is to increase our understandings of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of singing in K-12 school music education in Canada. Furthermore, it is intended that the information presented in this final report will provide the data upon which Choral Canada, its national partners in music education, and provincial/territorial educational authorities across Canada can use to design recovery plans for rebuilding school music and singing related programs. In keeping with these core purposes, the primary research question guiding this study is:

- What perspectives do Canadian music educators hold about the impacts of the pandemic on the teaching of singing as a core component of K-12 school music programs?

### 2.3 Data Sources and Collection

A comprehensive researcher-designed survey served as the primary tool for gathering data from a sample of school music teachers across Canada. The survey was drafted based upon areas of interest to Choral Canada and its Advisory Committee members. It was revised twice after soliciting feedback from group members. The tool was drafted first in English, translated into French, and then it was piloted in both languages by two groups of pilot participants to ensure clarity and determine the estimated completion time. Final revisions to the survey were based upon feedback from the English and French pilot participants, as well as the French translator. The survey was administered using *Qualtrics* (2012), a secure online survey platform.

The *Singing in Canadian Schools: COVID 19 Impact Survey* used in this study is comprised of 55 questions, 52 fixed items, and three open-ended questions. It is

organized around eight broad themes for investigation that relate to the primary research question. The eight themes include:

- Teacher Respondent Information
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Teaching Singing in the Music Program
- Overall Support for Singing and Music Education
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Implementing the Music Curriculum
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Assessing Students' Music Learning
- COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Music Educators
- Recovery and Rebuilding Music Programs with Singing
- Positive Outcomes and Opportunities for Music Teachers and Students

Choral Canada recruited music teachers who use singing in their school music programs to complete the survey using a convenience sampling approach. Invitations went to all Choral Canada's e-newsletter subscribers across the country, and information about the survey was shared via their social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. To ensure the invitation to participate reached as many music teachers as possible, Choral Canada enlisted the help of its national partner and provincial/territorial choral/music education organizations to recruit participants. Efforts were made to ensure that the opportunity to complete the survey would not leave out music teachers who are not currently subscribers to their e-newsletter.

A recruitment letter including details about informed consent, instructions for completing the survey, as well as an active link to the survey was forwarded to potential participants by Choral Canada in April 2021 (see Appendix A). Participants were given 14 days to complete the online survey. They were able to return to the link and continue to complete the survey anytime within the two-week timeframe. Follow-up reminders, a short extension, and thank you memos were techniques used to increase the overall participation rate and representation from across Canada which are considered important factors related to data quality in survey research (Fowler, 2014; Ruel, Wagner & Gillespie, 2016).

## **2.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

*Qualtrics* (2012) software was used for data management and statistical analyses of the fixed response survey items. The program creates an anonymous data record for each respondent. Using the aggregate raw data, basic descriptive statistical analyses were conducted and then used to describe and summarize the results for each fixed survey item.

Open-ended questions were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis and interpretative techniques suggested by Saldana (2015). The transcriptions of respondent's written responses were translated into French or English and entered into the qualitative database. Data were analyzed using an approach involving coding and categorizing. The coding process involves assigning meaningful labels to units of text, sorting similar units into categories, and generating concepts and themes. This process

entails summarizing data, selecting key quotations, and the sense-making that leads to interpretation. The two types of data collected, quantitative and qualitative were used to confirm and illustrate findings.

## Section 3: Findings and Discussion

### 3.1 Teacher Respondent Information

#### *Representation and Response Rates*

The context for establishing the level of participation by Canadian music teachers in this survey will be presented from the outset. The survey was completed by 944 music teachers who use singing in Canada. Figure 1 and Table 1 below show the number and percentage of music teachers who participated in the survey from each province/territory. To establish representativeness, student enrollment data in Canadian schools can be considered. The most recent available data from Statistics Canada for the 2018-2019 school year illustrates how many students are enrolled in schools across Canada and how those students are distributed in schools across the provinces/territories (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201015/t001a-eng.htm>). Ideally, the percentage of music teacher respondents by province/territory would mirror those of the student enrollments. A close examination of this data set shows that music teachers from western Canada (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan), and by extension their students, are well and appropriately represented. Responses from central Canada (Ontario and Quebec) are somewhat mixed with good representation from Ontario, while Quebec is lower and less satisfactory. Music teachers from eastern Canada (New Brunswick, Newfoundland/Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) participated at high rates, and so are strongly and somewhat overrepresented. Percentagewise, representation from northern Canada was appropriate and very gratifying. These results indicate that the subset of music teacher respondents, except for Quebec, accurately reflects the total group. A representative respondent group such as this one is highly satisfying as it yields the most valid results and is often difficult to achieve.

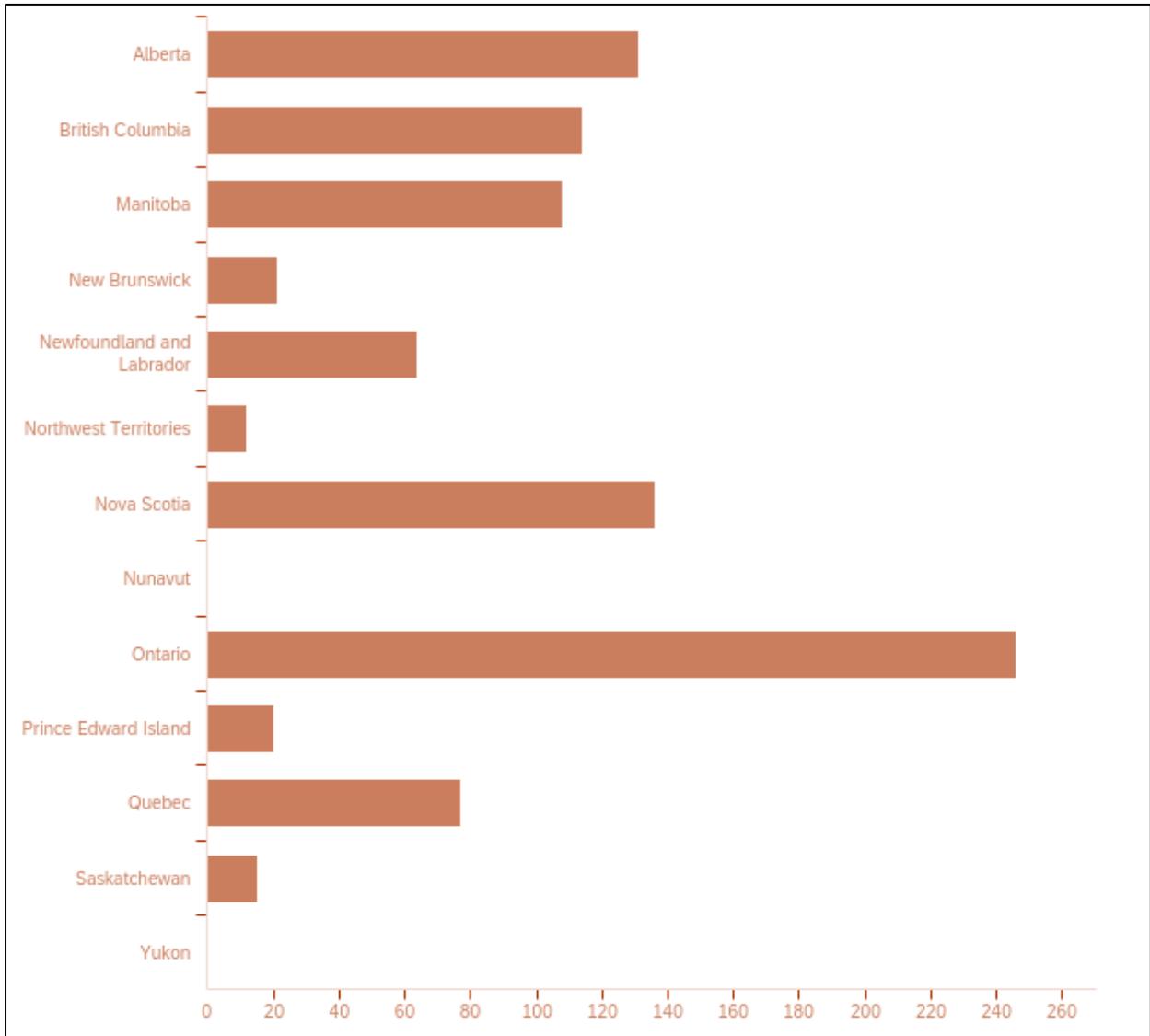


Figure 1. Music Teacher Respondents by Province/Territory

Table 1

Music Teacher Respondents by Province/Territory and Student Enrollment

Province/Territory	Number of Teacher Respondents	% of Total Teacher Respondents	Number of Students Enrolled in Schools	% of Student Enrollment
<b>Alberta</b>	131	13.88%	704,058	12.49%
<b>British Columbia</b>	114	12.08%	655,062	11.62%
<b>Manitoba</b>	108	11.44%	200,544	3.56%
<b>New Brunswick</b>	21	2.22%	99,150	1.76%
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	64	6.78%	65,193	1.16%
<b>Northwest Territories</b>	12	1.27%	8,493	0.15%

(table continues)

<b>Nova Scotia</b>	136	14.41%	124,785	2.21%
<b>Nunavut</b>	0	0.00%	10,653	0.18%
<b>Ontario</b>	246	26.06%	2,191,149	38.86%
<b>Prince Edward Island</b>	20	2.12%	20,802	0.37%
<b>Quebec</b>	77	8.16%	1,362,987	24.18%
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	15	1.59%	189,630	3.36%
<b>Yukon</b>	0	0.00%	5,448	0.10%
<b>Total</b>	944	100%	5,637,954	100%

In most circumstances, the calculation for the response or participation rate for a survey is simple: it is the number of responses divided by the number of people who were invited to participate. Music teachers who use singing in their school music programs were recruited to complete the survey by Choral Canada using their list of approximately 2000 e-newsletter subscribers across the country. Information about the survey was also shared via their social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. To ensure the invitation to participate reached as many music teachers as possible, Choral Canada enlisted the help of its national partner and provincial/territorial choral/music education organizations to recruit participants. Efforts were made to ensure that the opportunity to complete the survey would not leave out music teachers who are not subscribers to their e-newsletter.

Unfortunately, we do not have accurate numbers of how many music teachers who use singing in their programs belong to the partner organizations or the number of groups who undertook recruitment efforts on behalf of Choral Canada, and therefore an exact participation rate cannot be calculated. Moreover, some music teachers belong to more than one music education network and others belong to none. It follows then that some Canadian music teachers who use singing in the target population will have received multiple invitations to participate, while others would have not been invited. It is important to note, however, that only Canadian music teachers who belong to choral/music provincial/territorial and/or national organizations would have received an invitation to participate and so the perspectives of those who do not belong are not included in the findings that follow which is a limitation of the study.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) prominently posts facts about Canadian schools on their website, gleaned from Statistics Canada (<https://www.cmec.ca/en/>). There are approximately 15,500 schools in Canada; the large majority (10,100) are elementary, 3,400 are secondary, and 2,000 are mixed elementary and secondary. We also know that not all schools in Canada offer music programs and therefore, many schools do not have dedicated music teachers. A reasonable estimate would be that 9,300 or 60% of Canadian schools have dedicated music teachers that use singing. A good maximum sample size for this total population would be 930 participants or 10% (Fowler, 2014). Moreover, survey researchers would agree that a minimum of 100 responses is necessary for useful and meaningful results. Given that the 944 responses received for this survey far exceeds 100, and translates to 10.15% of the estimated total population, our participation rate is more than ideal for trustworthy results.

One provincial example can be used to further contextualize the participation rate. Research completed by People for Education (2017) on the arts in Ontario schools showed that 40% of elementary schools have no music teacher. Reports in 2018 indicated that 92% of secondary schools in Ontario offered music. Ontario has 3,900 elementary and 920 secondary schools, so it is likely that there are about 2340 elementary and 846 secondary music teachers or 3,186 in all. It is also probable that all elementary music educators use singing as a mode of music education and that about one third of the secondary programs are singing-related (e.g., music theatre, vocal jazz, concert choir). A good total estimate for choral music teachers in Ontario, therefore, would be 2,620. If Choral Canada's invitation reached all Ontario schools and their choral/music teachers, our participation rate of 246 music teacher respondents from Ontario would be 9.39%, also very acceptable.

In summary, the sample of music teachers responding to this survey is strongly representative of all regions of Canada, provinces/territories, and school student enrollments. The sample is also large enough to represent the total population of music teachers who use singing in Canada (10.15%), and likely by province as was exemplified by participation rates for the total population of music teachers using singing in Ontario (9.39%). This level of representativeness and rate of participation lends validity to the results. These results are very gratifying for this 55-item, comprehensive survey. Moreover, the survey was conducted in April 2021 during the context of a global pandemic when all K-12 teachers were experiencing increased stress and workload, which makes their efforts even more noteworthy.

### **School Community Settings**

The community settings in which music teacher respondents' schools are located are displayed below in Table 2 and Figure 2. The highest portion of music teachers (399 or 43%) participating in this study work in schools located in inner city/urban settings, followed by suburban settings (300 or 32.33%), rural (22.09%), and northern/remote (2.59%). These proportions reflect the reality that in Canada music programs and music teachers are more prevalent in large urban and suburban areas than they are in rural and northern/remote communities.

Table 2  
*Respondents' School Locations by Community Setting*

<b>School Community Setting</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Rural</b>	22.09%	205
<b>Northern/Remote</b>	2.59%	24
<b>Inner City/Urban</b>	<b>43.00%</b>	399
<b>Suburban</b>	32.33%	300
<b>Total</b>	100%	928

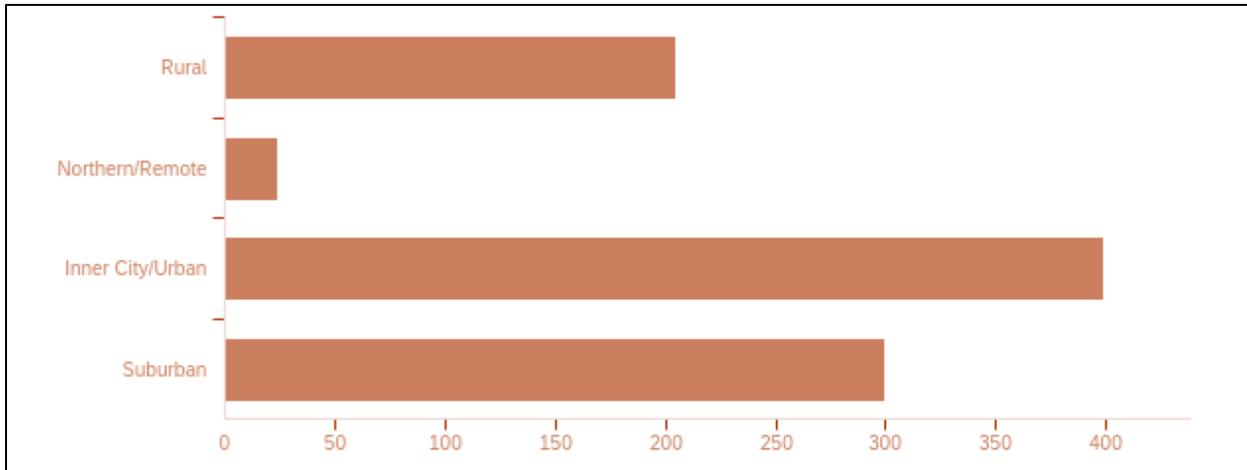


Figure 2. Respondents' School Locations by Community Setting

### **School Designations**

Table 3 below displays the distribution of school designations for music teacher respondents which can also be viewed visually in Figure 3. Almost 90% (89.98% or 844) of the music teachers participating in the survey are working in public schools. This portion aligns with Statistics Canada's 2018-2019 reporting that 91.8% of Canadian students were enrolled in public schools, 7.5% in private/independent schools, and a very small portion (0.7%) were being home schooled (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201015/t001a-eng.htm>). Our teacher survey sample also closely mirrors student enrollments for private/independent schools at 6.61% (62), especially considering the additional 2.4% (21) who indicate they teach at faith-based schools. Small percentages of our music teacher sample group indicated that they worked in "other" (0.53% or 5), First Nations (0.32% or 3), charter (0.32% or 3) schools.

Table 3  
Respondents' School Designations

School Designations	% of Total	Frequency
Public (provincial/territorial funded; governed by locally elected school board)	89.98%	844
Independent/Private (funding through tuition; governed by an independent board)	6.61%	62
First Nations Operated (federally funded; governed by locally elected school board)	0.32%	3
Charter School (provincial/territorial funded, governed by independent board)	0.32%	3
Faith-based School (dual track secular & religious curricula; with few exceptions, funded through tuition; governed by independent board)	2.24%	21
Other	0.53%	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>938</b>

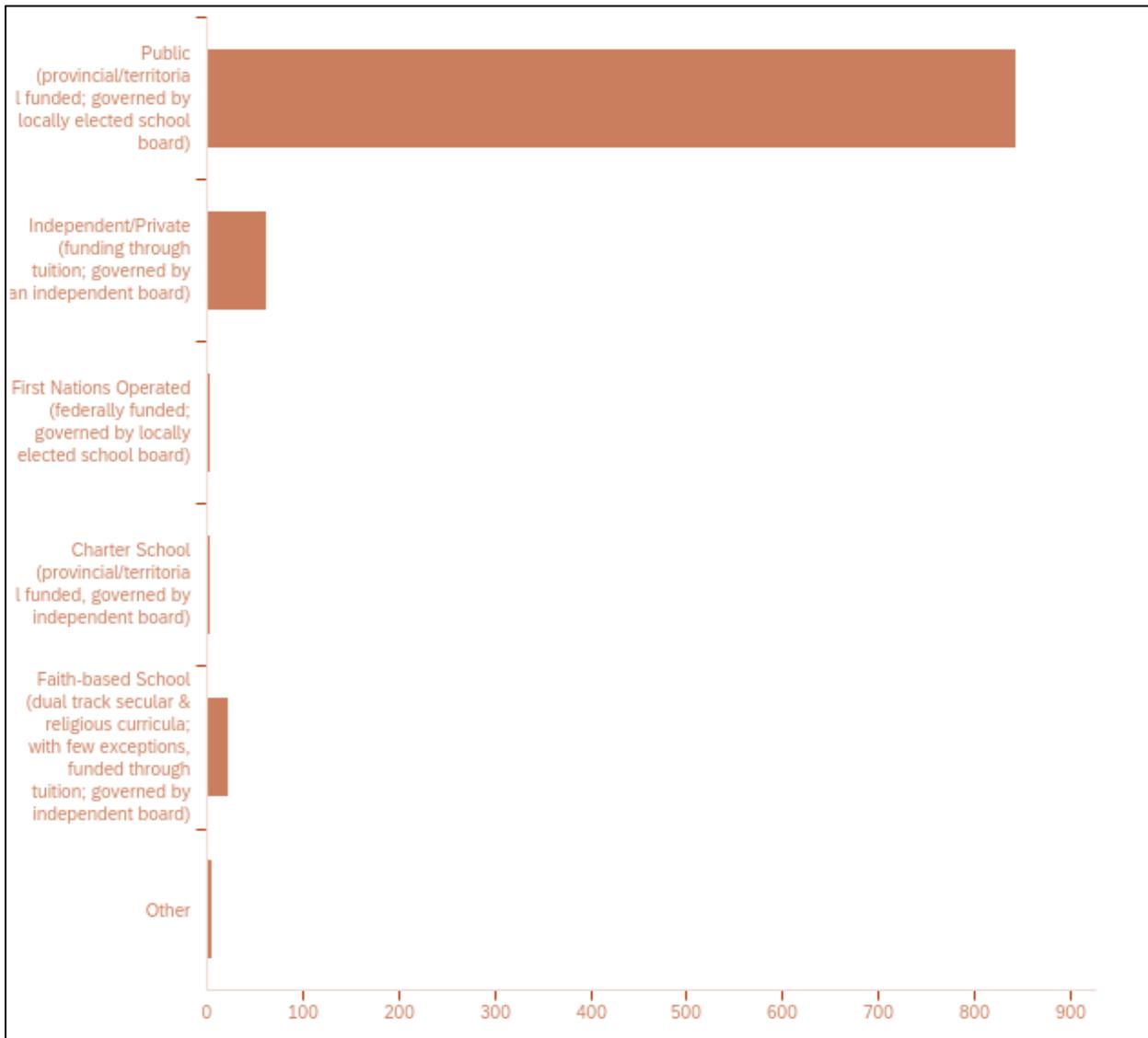


Figure 3. Respondents' School Designations

### **Language of Instruction**

Table 4 and Figure 4 below show the distribution of music teacher respondents' language of instruction. The school music programs offered by most respondents are implemented in English only (79.36% or 746). A smaller number of music teachers indicate that they offer their music programs only in French (108 or 11.49%). The remaining 8.62% (81) offer music programs in both English and French, likely in dual-track or French Immersion schools, or they offer music instruction in another heritage or Indigenous language (5 or 0.53%). It is important to note that our respondent pool of music teachers closely aligns with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) census data—67.6% of the Canadian population speak English only, 13.3% speak French only, and 17.4% are bilingual and speak both French and English.

Table 4  
*Music Teacher Respondents' Language of Instruction*

Language of Music Program	% of Total	Frequency
English only	79.36%	746
French only	11.49%	108
Both English and French	8.62%	81
Other	0.53%	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>940</b>

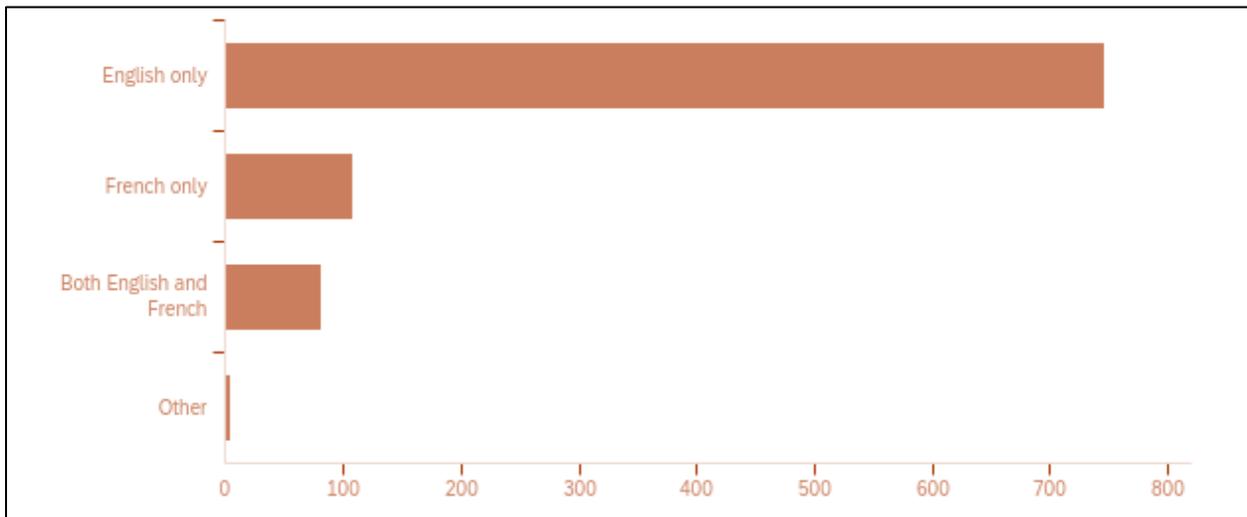


Figure 4. Music Teacher Respondents' Language of Instruction

### **Job Titles**

The job titles of the teachers responding to this survey are delineated in Table 5 below and presented visually in Figure 5. Most teachers participating in the study are music specialists (888 or 87.75%). A smaller portion reported to be general classroom teachers (8.10% or 82) or non-music specialist teachers (4.15% or 42). Given that some teachers selected more than one option for item 5 indicates that some respondents do more than teach music for their employers. For instance, a secondary teacher might teach drama courses as well as singing-related courses like music theatre, or a classroom generalist responsible for teaching academic subjects might also teach music to their own students and/or be timetabled to teach music to students in other classrooms in the school.

Table 5  
*Music Teacher Respondents by Job Title*

Job Title	% of Total	Frequency
Specialist teacher (music)	87.75%	888
Specialist teacher (non-music)	4.15%	42
General classroom teacher	8.10%	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1012</b>

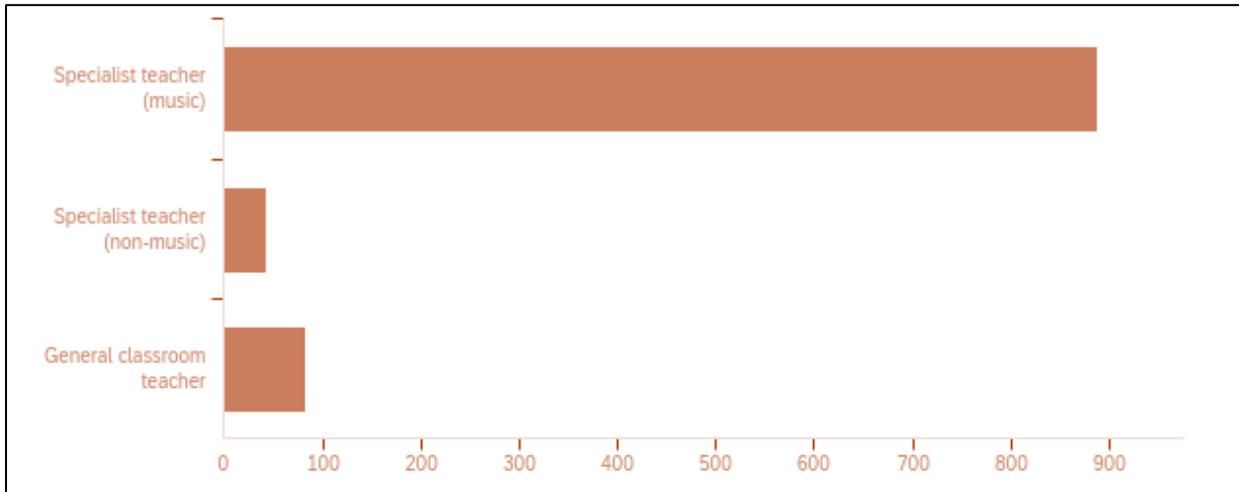


Figure 5. Music Teacher Respondents by Job Title

### **Grade Level Inclusion in School Music Programs**

Survey item 6 was posed to determine the grade levels included in music programs at the schools where respondents teach. Overall, all grade levels across the Canadian school level spectrum are encompassed within respondents' schools, however it is important to note that each province/territory has its own grade level structure. The frequency counts and percent of total responses displayed below in Table 6 and Figure 6 show that Grades 1-5 are included in the school music programs of our sample pool most often with all counts for these grades greater than 600 and 10%. These levels are followed closely by Grade 6 (600 or 9.47%) and Kindergarten/Primary (594 or 9.37%). A pattern of attrition for grade level inclusion in the music programs at respondents' schools is noted as the grade level increases, apart from the Pre-K/Pre-Primary level which is included in only 78 (1.23%) of schools. This finding indicates that about one third of respondents' schools include Grades 7 to 12/CEGEP in their music programs. This pattern of grade level inclusion reflects similar student enrollment trends observed in school music programs across Canada. More K-Grade 6 students are enrolled in school music programs than are Grades 7-12/CEGEP or Pre-K/Pre-Primary students. These results are expected with few exceptions across the country, as enrollment in music is mandatory for Kindergarten/Primary to Grade 6 students in Canada so all students take music. On the other hand, enrolling in music is optional in Grades 7-12/CEGEP. And finally, it is important to note that some Pre-K/Pre-Primary programs

are offered through the Canadian school system, and young children do have scheduled time with music teachers, but music for early childhood at these levels is not widespread.

Table 6

*Grade Levels Included in Respondents' School Music Programs*

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Grade-1</b>	10.29%	652
<b>Grade-2</b>	10.40%	659
<b>Grade-3</b>	10.62%	673
<b>Grade-4</b>	10.70%	678
<b>Grade-5</b>	10.43%	661
<b>Grade-6</b>	9.47%	600
<b>Grade-7</b>	6.22%	394
<b>Grade-8</b>	5.71%	362
<b>Grade-9</b>	4.29%	272
<b>Grade-10</b>	3.85%	244
<b>Grade-11</b>	3.83%	243
<b>Grade-12 or CEGEP (Quebec)</b>	3.61%	229
<b>Pre-K/Pre-Primary</b>	1.23%	78
<b>Kindergarten/Primary</b>	9.37%	594
<b>Total</b>	100%	6339

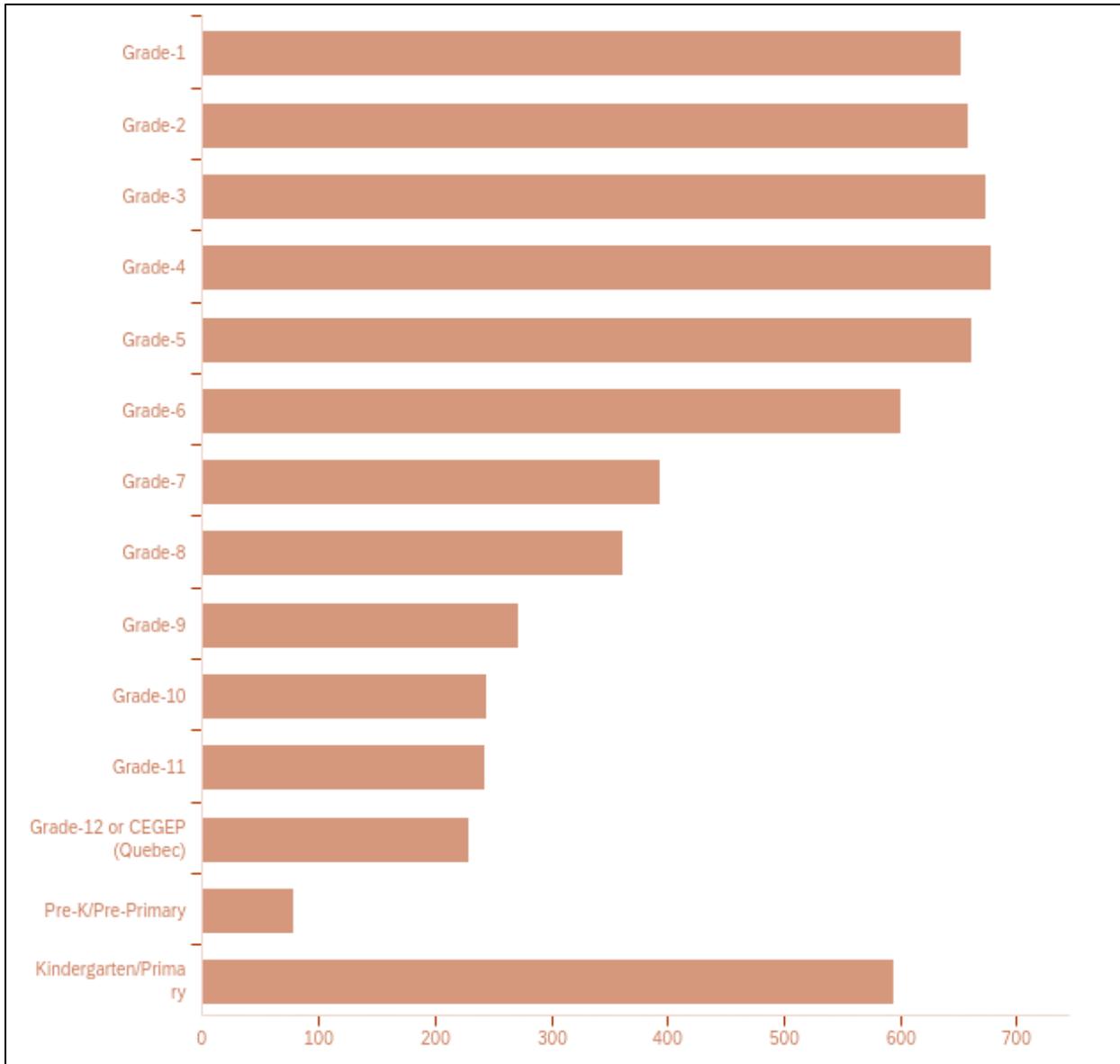


Figure 6. Grade Levels Included in Respondents' School Music Programs

**Grade Levels Taught by Music Teachers**

Respondents were also asked to indicate the specific grade levels to which they teach music (item 7). Again, it was found that the survey respondent pool teaches music to all grade levels represented in the Canadian education system. The frequency counts and percent of total responses displayed in Table 7 and Figure 7 below show that Grades 1-5 are taught most often by respondents with all counts for these grades greater than 560 and 10%. These levels are followed closely by Grade 6 (532 or 9.70%) and Kindergarten/Primary (473 or 8.63%). These findings suggest that most respondents are K-Grade 6 music teachers. As was found for grade level inclusion at respondents' schools, a pattern of attrition for grade levels taught by them is also evident as the grade level increases, apart from the Pre-K/Pre-Primary level which is taught by only 48

(0.88%) of the music teachers participating in this study. This result indicates that about one third of respondents teach music to Grades 7-12/CEGEP students.

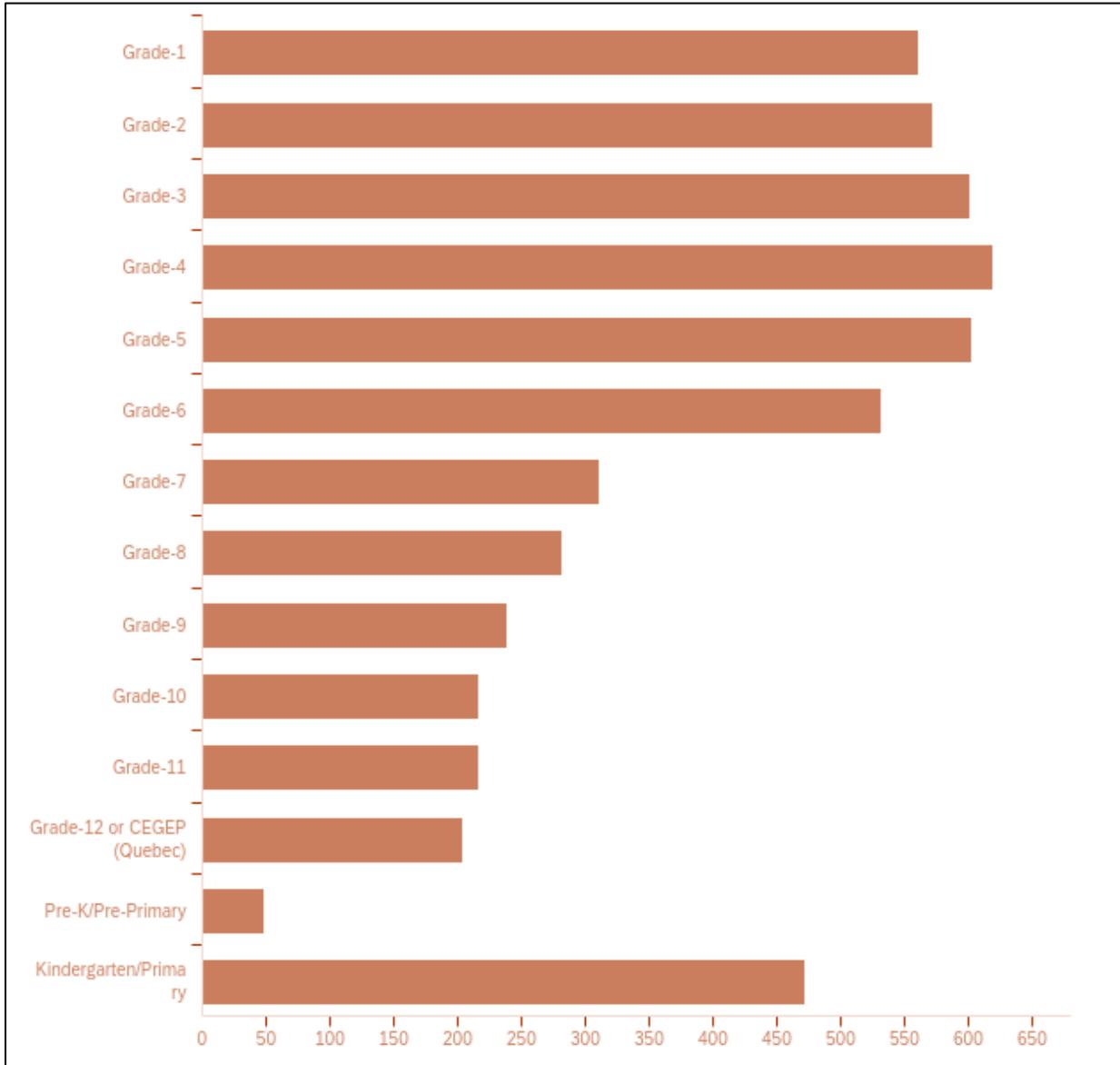


Figure 7. Grades Taught by Music Teacher Respondents

Table 7  
Grade Levels Taught by Music Teacher Respondents

Grade Level	% of Total	Frequency
Grade-1	10.25%	562
Grade-2	10.45%	573
Grade-3	10.98%	602
Grade-4	11.31%	620
Grade-5	11.02%	604

(table continues)

<b>Grade-6</b>	9.70%	532
<b>Grade-7</b>	5.67%	311
<b>Grade-8</b>	5.14%	282
<b>Grade-9</b>	4.36%	239
<b>Grade-10</b>	3.94%	216
<b>Grade-11</b>	3.94%	216
<b>Grade-12 or CEGEP (Quebec)</b>	3.72%	204
<b>Pre-K/Pre-Primary</b>	0.88%	48
<b>Kindergarten/Primary</b>	8.63%	473
<b>Total</b>	100%	5482

### 3.2 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Teaching Singing in the Music Program

#### *Opportunities for Students to Sing at School*

Survey items 25-28 were intended to gauge how the pandemic was impacting students' opportunities to experience singing in curriculum-based and extra/co-curricular school music programs across Canada during the 2020-2021 school year. As displayed in Table 8 below, before the pandemic music teachers responding to the survey reported that a total of 162,317 students were singing in their curriculum-based music programs, such as general music programs, chamber choir, and/or vocal jazz ensemble courses. This total number dropped drastically to 46,474, down to 29% of the total during the crisis, leaving 115,897 (71%) students unable to engage in music learning through singing. Likewise, before the pandemic 43,438 students across grade levels were also singing in a range of extra/co-curricular programs led by their teachers, like primary school choir, music theatre, or show choir, but sadly only 3,731 (9%) students continued in these programs during the pandemic. The chance for enriched and advanced musical growth through singing in extra/co-curricular programs was eliminated for the vast majority of respondents' students (39,707 or 91%) after the coronavirus hit.

Table 8  
*Students Singing in School Music Programs*

<b>Students Singing in Curriculum-Based Music Programs</b>		
<b>Context</b>	<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Before the Pandemic</b>	162,317	270.98
<b>During the Pandemic</b>	46,474 (29%)	77.98
<b>Students Singing in Extra/Co-Curricular Music Programs</b>		
<b>Context</b>	<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Before the Pandemic</b>	43,438	74
<b>During the Pandemic</b>	3,731 (9%)	6.33

Singing as an important core of both regular music programs and schools' extra/co-curricular programs was not available to thousands of students amid the pandemic in Canada at the time this survey was conducted. Results suggest that approximately 30% of Canadian schools were finding some ways to continue singing as a mode of formal

music learning at school, while 70% were no longer permitting the use of singing in music programs. Moreover, an even smaller portion of Canadian schools (about 10%) had contingency plans that allowed students to sing in the context of extra/co-curricular programming, but 90% of schools had no such plans. This result was likely due to the health and safety restrictions placed on schools by government authorities in their efforts to reduce or eliminate COVID-19. The compounded impacts of reduced opportunities for students to sing in curriculum-based and extra/co-curricular school music programs will be significant loss of music learning and skill development using the singing voice during 2020-2021 school year. Students may also be disadvantaged by limited access to the many benefits of participating in extra/co-curricular activities like choirs, such as improved self-esteem, school engagement, and belongingness. Singing lifts spirits and offers students a sense of joy. **There is a need for Canada's music educators to accelerate the development of approved pedagogical innovations that will simultaneously keep students safe and revitalize rich opportunities for singing in curriculum-based and extra/co-curricular school music programs.**

### ***Instructional Time for Music Classes***

The aim of survey item 29 was to examine any changes to the instructional time allotted for school music classes that might be occurring across Canada since the arrival of the pandemic. Table 9 and Figure 8 show that for almost all (95.19%) of the music teachers responding to this item, instructional time remained about the same (384 or 61.54%), decreased moderately (120 or 19.23%), or decreased greatly (90 or 14.42%). Reports of decreasing music instruction time in the schools for slightly more than one third of this pool is discouraging because of the potential negative impacts on the music learning and achievement of the students who attend those schools. Very few music teachers reported that instructional time for music had increased moderately (18 or 2.88%) or increased greatly (12 or 1.92%).

Table 9  
*Instructional Time for Music Classes*

<b>Options</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Increased greatly</b>	1.92%	12
<b>Increased moderately</b>	2.88%	18
<b>Remained about the same</b>	<b>61.54%</b>	384
<b>Decreased moderately</b>	19.23%	120
<b>Decreased greatly</b>	14.42%	90
<b>Total</b>	100%	624

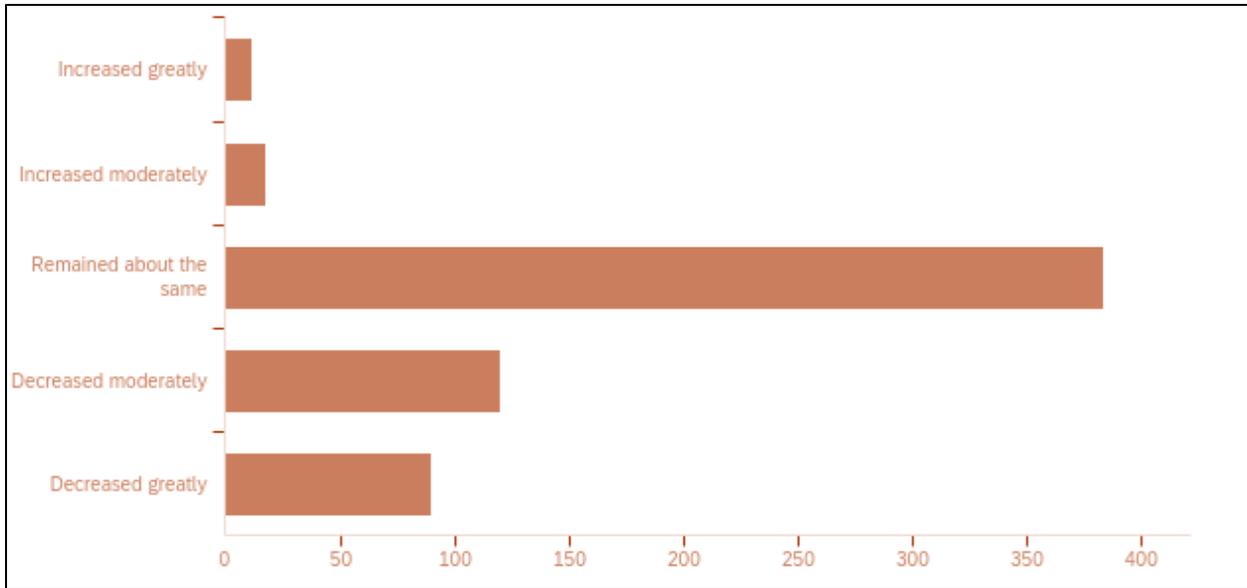


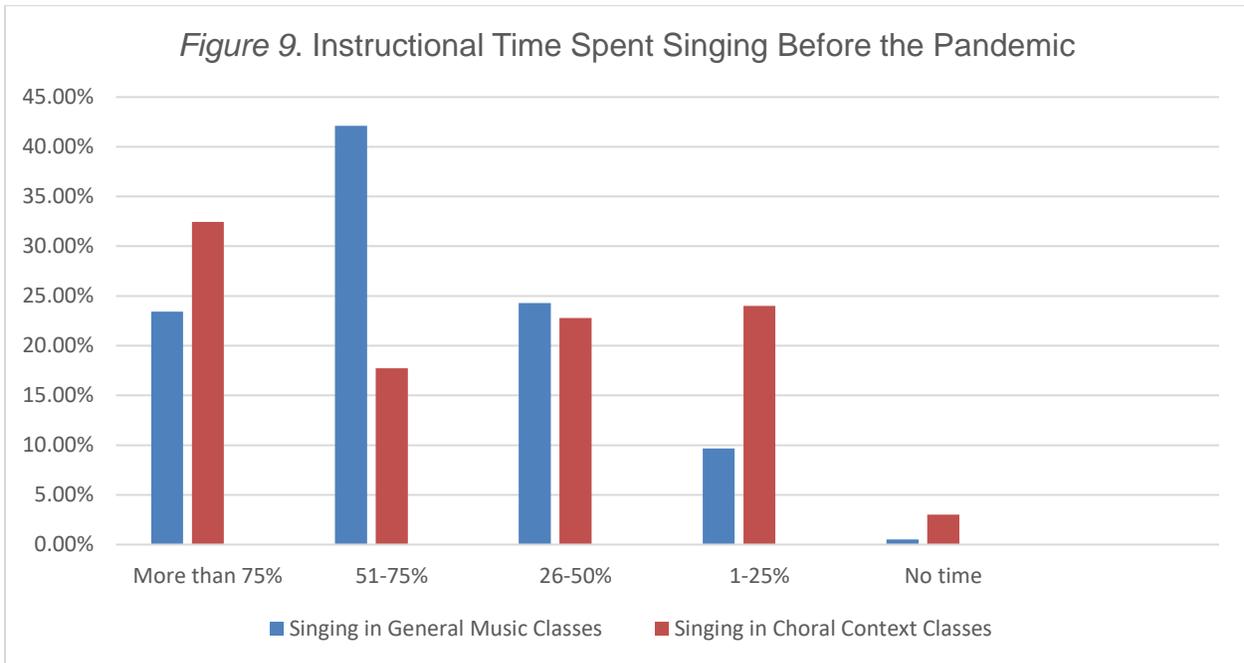
Figure 8. Instructional Time for Music Classes

### **Instructional Time for Singing**

Music teachers participating in the survey were asked what percentage of their instructional time would typically be spent singing in general music contexts (item 30) and choral context classes (item 32) before the pandemic was declared and affected normal ways of working in schools. The prominent use of singing by teachers developing musical literacy among students in general music classes is evident by the data presented in Table 10 and Figure 9. Approximately 90% of the music teachers responding to item 30 spend at least 25% of their instructional time singing with students, but most spend much more. A high number (248 or 42.11%) reported spending 51-75% of their music classes singing. About a quarter invest 26-50% (142 or 24.48%) of their instructional time on singing and another quarter devotes over 75% of the class to singing (138 or 23.43%). Reports for instructional time spent singing in more specialized choral context classes were a little different with about half spending more than 75% (161 or 32.46%) or 51-75% (88 or 17.74%) of class time using vocal and choral strategies. The other half reported 1-25% (119 or 23.99%) or 26-50% (113 or 22.78%). In both general music (3 or 0.51%) and choral context classes (15 or 3.02%) few respondents reported that they spent no music teaching time singing with students. Overall, these results confirm what we already know—singing supports broad music development and is at the very heart of Canadian music classrooms in schools.

Table 10  
*Instructional Time Spent Singing Before the Pandemic*

Options	Singing in General Music Classes		Singing in Choral Context Classes	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
<b>More than 75%</b>	23.43%	138	<b>32.46%</b>	161
<b>51-75%</b>	<b>42.11%</b>	248	17.74%	88
<b>26-50%</b>	24.28%	143	22.78%	113
<b>1-25%</b>	9.68%	57	23.99%	119
<b>No time</b>	0.51%	3	3.02%	15
<b>Total</b>	100%	589	100%	496



Survey items 31 and 33 were posed to music teacher participants to determine the impact of COVID-19 on their instructional approaches to music education in schools, and especially on the time they spent singing with students in music classes during the pandemic. An examination of the data summarized in Table 11 and Figure 10 affirm that most music teachers were working in hybrid/in-person contexts, with very few working solely online. Instructional time spent singing in music classes during the pandemic was markedly different from time spent singing before the crisis, with significant decreases reported. Findings suggest that the rich breadth of sounds regularly produced by student singers may not be resonating through the halls of Canadian schools if the coronavirus persists.

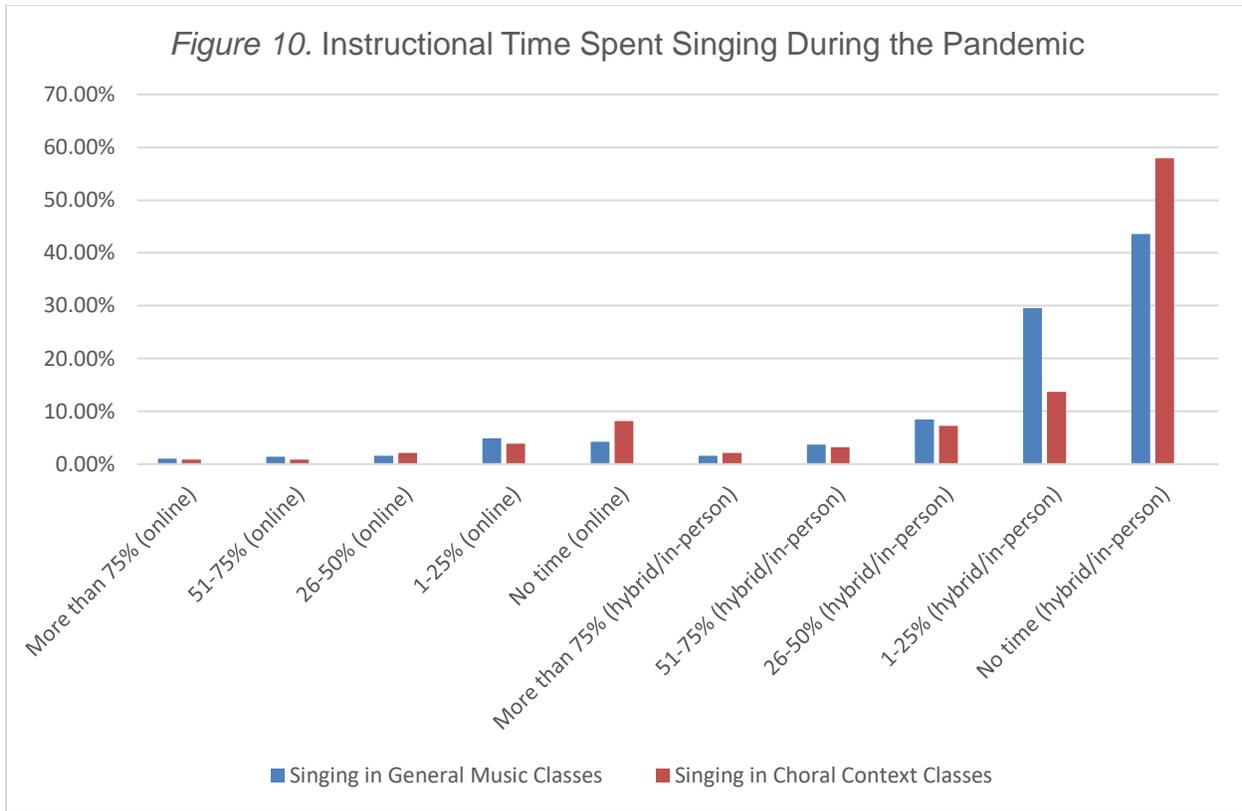
For singing in general music classes during the pandemic, the highest number of teachers (248 or 43.59%) revealed that they spend no time singing in hybrid/in-person contexts or spend 1-25% (168 or 29.63%) of that instructional time singing. This group

of respondents constitutes more than 70% of the total number reporting for general music classes. A smaller number of music teachers leading general music classes in hybrid/in-person situations continued to teach using singing—26-50% (48 or 8.44%), followed by 51-75% (21 or 3.69%), and more than 75% (9 or 1.58%). In online settings, 28 (4.92%) music teachers reported to be spending 1-25% of their instructional time using singing in general music classes, but almost an equal number are not using any singing (24 or 4.22%). Very few incorporated singing into their online music classes at higher levels: 26-50% (9 or 1.58%), 51-75% (8 or 1.41%), or more than 75% (6 or 1.05%).

For singing in choral context classes, the lack of instructional time devoted to singing in the hybrid/in-person milieu is even more pronounced with 271 (57.91%) teachers responding to this survey item disclosing they spend no time singing with students. In this milieu the same pattern is evident as what was seen for general music classes—the number of teachers reporting to be teaching with singing decreases as the instructional time spent using singing increases: 1-25% (64 or 13.68%), 25-50% (34 or 7.26%), 51-75% (15 or 3.21%), more than 75% (10 or 2.14%). Even in online settings, music teachers responsible for teaching choral classes were not spending any instructional time singing (38 or 8.12%), or less than half of class time (1-25%, 18 or 3.85%; 26-50%, 10 or 2.14%). Although a very small group, some choral teachers in the sample pool taught online with ample time spent singing (51-75%, 0.85% or 4; more than 75%, 0.85% or 4).

Table 11  
*Instructional Time Spent Singing During the Pandemic*

Options	Singing in General Music Classes		Singing in Choral Context Classes	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
<b>More than 75% (online)</b>	1.05%	6	0.85%	4
<b>51-75% (online)</b>	1.41%	8	0.85%	4
<b>26-50% (online)</b>	1.58%	9	2.14%	10
<b>1-25% (online)</b>	4.92%	28	3.85%	18
<b>No time (online)</b>	4.22%	24	8.12%	38
<b>More than 75% (hybrid/in-person)</b>	1.58%	9	2.14%	10
<b>51-75% (hybrid/in-person)</b>	3.69%	21	3.21%	15
<b>26-50% (hybrid/in-person)</b>	8.44%	48	7.26%	34
<b>1-25% (hybrid/in-person)</b>	29.53%	168	13.68%	64
<b>No time (hybrid/in-person)</b>	<b>43.59%</b>	248	<b>57.91%</b>	271
<b>Total</b>	100%	569	100%	468



### **Required Instructional Time for Music**

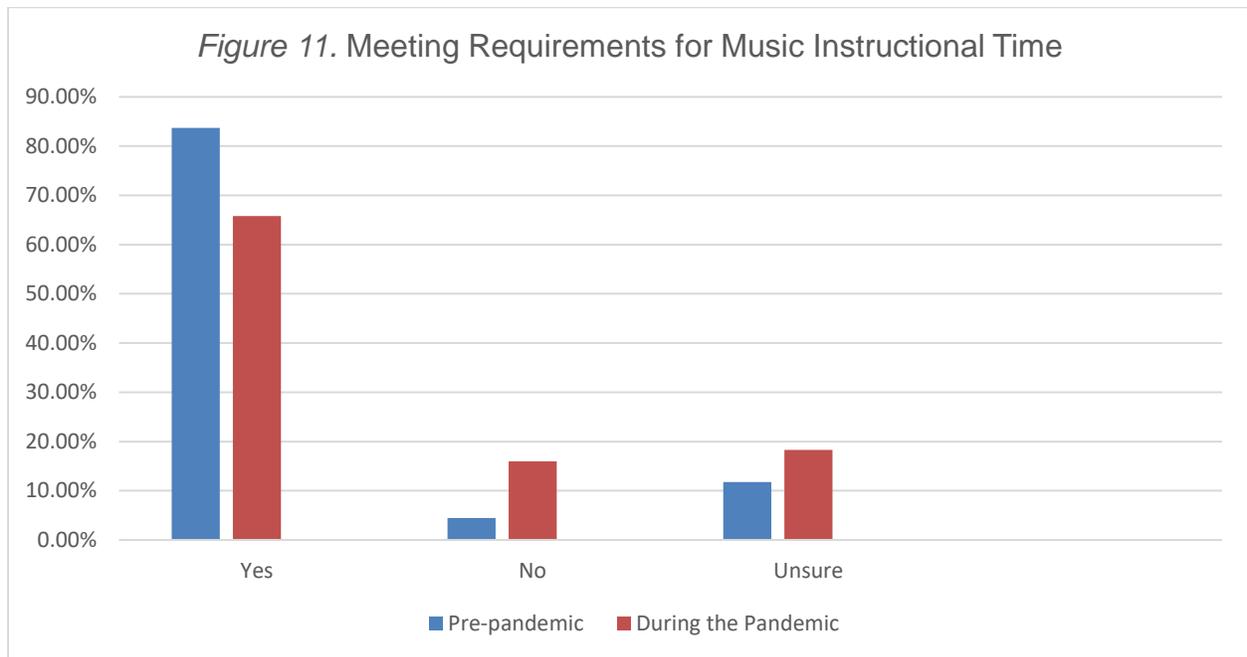
Provincial and territorial government authorities for education require or recommend instructional time for music which is outlined in each jurisdiction's official curriculum policies. Instructional time for music varies somewhat for each jurisdiction across Canada and each province could be using a combination of approaches to meet time allotments for music (e.g., focused music instructional time and/or music integration time). While guided by policy, instructional time for curriculum areas like music and physical education are typically scheduled at the local school/division/district level and are dependent upon various factors. In this study, we asked music teacher respondents if their schools were meeting the provincial or territorial requirements for music instruction time prior to the start of the pandemic (item 34) and during the pandemic (item 35).

It can be seen by the findings displayed in Table 12 and Figure 11 that the time teachers spend actively teaching music was being adhered to within 83.72% of music teacher respondents' schools pre-pandemic, but this percentage dropped to 64.78% during the pandemic. Smaller portions of respondents indicated that their schools were falling short of meeting requirements for music instruction time prior to the pandemic (4.49% or 27) but this number grew for some schools in the pandemic context as reported by 96 teachers (15.95%). Interestingly, there were relatively large cohorts of teachers in the sample pool who did not know if the required or recommended

instructional time for music was being met pre-pandemic at their schools (11.79% or 71) or at the time of completing the survey during the pandemic (18.27% or 110).

Table 12  
*Required Instructional Time for Music*

Options	Pre-Pandemic		During the Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
<b>Yes</b>	<b>83.72%</b>	504	<b>65.78%</b>	396
<b>No</b>	4.49%	27	15.95%	96
<b>Unsure</b>	11.79%	71	18.27%	110
<b>Total</b>	100%	602	100%	602



**Government authorities and division/district administrators should ensure that students are receiving the recommended instructional time allotments for music in schools so that they have the chance to achieve mandated and/or modified music learning outcomes. For some Canadian students, school is their only opportunity for a music education. It is recommended that music teachers review the provincial/territorial music curriculum policy that applies to their school context and ensure they are aware of recommended or required instructional minutes for music. Music teachers across divisions/districts should also be aware of the approaches being used in their school communities to meet requirements. It is important to recognize that effective teaching, which requires instructional time, has more impact on students' music learning and achievement than any other in-school factor (Burroughs et al., 2019).**

### ***Students' Singing Experiences Pre-Pandemic***

Survey item 36 was designed to learn more about Canadian students' singing experiences at school prior to the onset of the pandemic. Music teachers were asked to read written statements describing at-school singing experiences and respond by choosing one option for each statement. Teachers responded to the written statements that described and applied to their teaching contexts and so the number of teachers responding to each statement varies. The options were: never, rarely, some classes, most classes, or every class.

According to the data presented in Table 13 for statement 2, an overwhelming proportion (97.2%) of Canadian students were afforded opportunities for group singing during general music classes or choral ensembles (e.g., vocal jazz, concert choir) every class (50.58%), most classes (34.88%), or at least in some classes (11.74%) before the pandemic began to affect music teaching and learning at school. It was important to find extremely low numbers of teachers reporting that students were rarely (1.16%) or never (1.65%) receiving group singing experiences in their school music programs. Almost all (93.82%) music teachers also reported that their students were singing with a sense of joy and belonging at gatherings like school assemblies, with the highest percentage indicating these experiences occurred every class (38.82%), followed by most classes (31.43%) and some classes (23.36%). Again, only small numbers of students were not afforded such opportunities (2.18%) or rarely got them (4.20%).

Approximately 80% of Canadian students participating in teacher respondents' school music programs were also engaging in group singing via non-credit choral ensembles like school choirs before the pandemic with the highest percentage indicating that these experiences occurred during some (42.69%), most (20.75%), or every class (16.60%). Fewer numbers indicated that such group singing described in statement 5 never (10.47%) or rarely (9.49%) happened at their schools prior to the coronavirus. Solo singing was also occurring pre-pandemic in about 80% of respondents' general music classes and/or choral ensembles on a regular basis as can be seen by results for statement 1: some classes (42.88%), most classes (20.94%), or every class (15.41%). Close to three quarters of all music teachers (73.73%) reported that singing-based pedagogies were being implemented pre-pandemic which means that lots of Canadian students may have been acquiring non-music content knowledge through songs. For statement 7, quite high reports were given for the use of song integration in some classes (46.76%), most classes (19.42%), or every class (7.55%), with the remainder indicating rare (19.78%) or no use (6.47%).

Table 13  
*Students' Singing Experiences Pre-Pandemic*

Statements	Never	Rarely	Some classes	Most classes	Every class	Total
1. Sing alone in general music class or choral ensembles (e.g., vocal jazz, concert choir)	4.69%	16.08%	<b>42.88%</b>	20.94%	15.41%	597
2. Sing in groups in general music class or choral ensembles (e.g., (vocal jazz, concert choir)	1.65%	1.16%	11.74%	34.88%	<b>50.58%</b>	605
3. Write/compose songs	5.66%	23.29%	<b>56.74%</b>	9.32%	4.99%	601
4. Sing in other ensemble courses (e.g., Indigenous singing and drumming, jazz band with vocalists, rock band)	22.75%	23.18%	<b>36.27%</b>	11.80%	6.01%	466
5. Sing in non-credit choral ensembles (e.g., show choir, school choir)	10.47%	9.49%	<b>42.69%</b>	20.75%	16.60%	506
6. Sing in non-credit other ensemble courses (e.g., music theatre, Orff ensemble)	18.80%	17.31%	<b>36.11%</b>	17.09%	10.68%	468
7. Sing songs to support learning in other subject areas	6.47%	19.78%	<b>46.76%</b>	19.42%	7.55%	556
8. Sing with a sense of joy and belonging (e.g., school assemblies)	2.18%	4.20%	23.36%	31.43%	<b>38.82%</b>	595

Composing is also an essential component of a comprehensive school music program, and therefore it was gratifying to find that 71.05% of the music teacher sample pool indicated that their students were experiencing opportunities for song writing/composing during some classes (56.74%), most classes (9.32%) or every class (4.99%) before the onset of COVID-19. On the other hand, in response to statement 3 related to composing songs, 23.29% revealed their students rarely experienced song writing, or never (5.66%) composed during music classes before March 2020 and things changed at school.

Also critical is the opportunity to participate in extra/co-curricular music experiences. Results provide evidence to suggest that many students had the chance to experience singing in non-credit ensemble courses like music theatre or Orff ensembles in about two thirds of music teacher respondents' schools prior to the pandemic. This finding is supported by teachers' combined responses for statement 6: some classes (36.11%), most classes (17.09%) or every class (7.55%). The number of students not getting opportunities to sing in non-credit ensemble contexts before the pandemic is somewhat surprising and concerning, as combined reports for never (18.80%) and rarely (17.31%) seem high for school music offerings in Canada. Statement 4 was posed to accommodate for pre-pandemic singing opportunities in other ensemble courses that might represent less common music practices such as Indigenous singing and drumming or rock band where singing is combined with instrumental playing. The distribution of responses for this statement indicated that a little more than half (54.08%) of Canadian students represented by teacher respondents were not getting (22.75%) or rarely (23.18%) getting opportunities to sing in these types of ensembles prior to the pandemic. In contrast, 43.95% of responding teachers reported to be implementing singing in combination with playing experiences in other types of ensemble courses. The highest proportion were offering these ensembles pre-pandemic at least in some classes (36.27%), followed by most classes (11.80%), or every class (6.01%).

The data put forward by music teacher respondents across Canada for item 36 wholly suggest that the field was providing students with extensive school-based singing experiences prior to the pandemic. The experiences reported ranged from students singing alone and/or in groups during regular music classes and/or various choral ensemble classes. Students were afforded opportunities for singing in both curriculum-based programs and supplemental extra/co-curricular programs, during focused music instruction and non-music instruction, and they were singing accompanied, singing unaccompanied, and/or at times while playing instruments, moving, or dancing. Most students would have even experienced singing songs they had composed on their own. This constellation of pre-pandemic singing experiences would certainly have been exposing Canadian students to a range of songs and singing practices representing diverse cultures, styles, types, and historical periods. Such varied occurrences confirm that students were receiving a high level of music learning through vocal and choral experiences at schools in Canada.

### ***Students' Singing Experiences During the Pandemic***

Survey item 37 examined students' singing experiences in Canadian schools during the pandemic. Music teachers were asked to read the same written statements describing at-school singing experiences as they did for item 36 and respond by choosing one option for each statement as it applies to their in-person teaching context and then one response for their online teaching context. Teachers responded to the written statements that described and applied to both of their teaching contexts during the pandemic and so the number of teachers responding to each statement varies. The options were: never, rarely, some classes, most classes, or every class. Table 14 displays the distribution of music teachers' responses for each written statement for the

in-person teaching context which can then be compared with Table 15 that displays the same for online teaching. Further comparisons can be made by viewing Figures 12-19 which juxtapose students' singing experiences pre-pandemic, in-person during the pandemic, and online during the pandemic.

Table 14

*Students' Singing Experiences During the Pandemic for In-Person Teaching*

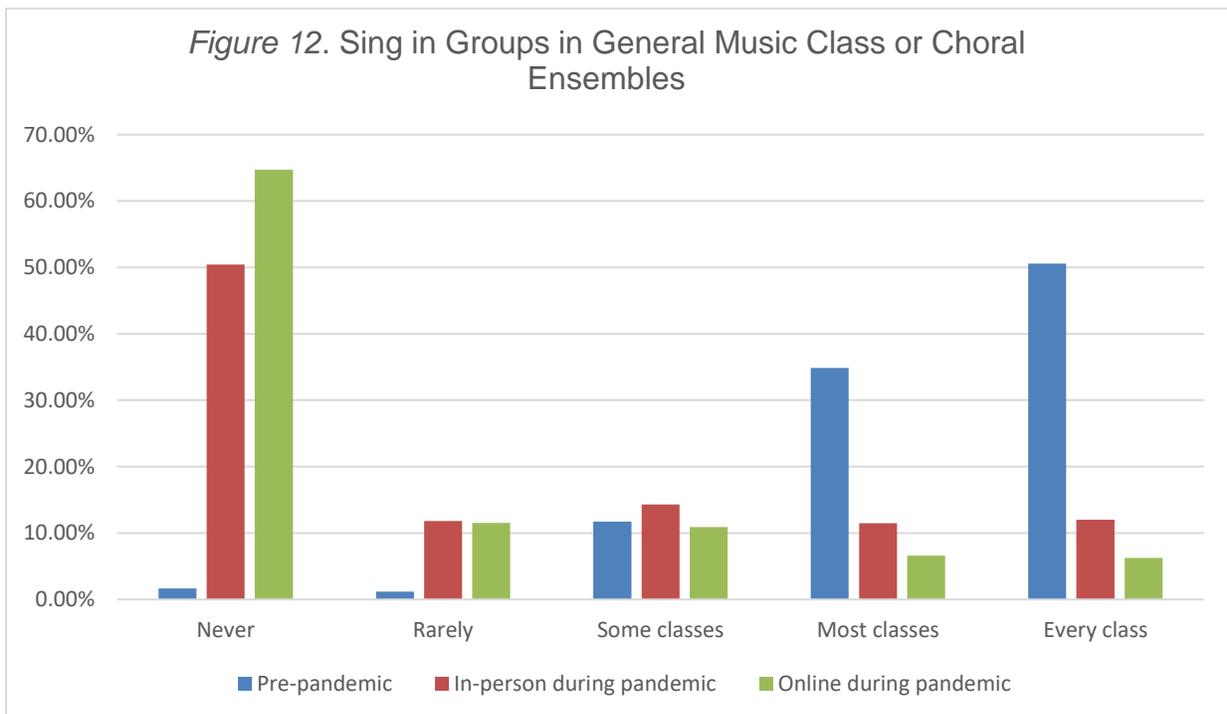
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Some classes</b>	<b>Most classes</b>	<b>Every class</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1. Sing alone in general music class or choral ensembles (e.g., vocal jazz, concert choir)</b>	<b>55.89%</b>	19.16%	16.34%	5.62%	2.99%	569
<b>2. Sing in groups in general music class or choral ensembles (e.g., (vocal jazz, concert choir)</b>	<b>50.44%</b>	11.82%	14.29%	11.46%	11.99%	567
<b>3. Write/compose songs</b>	16.31%	22.70%	<b>47.87%</b>	9.93%	3.19%	564
<b>4. Sing in other ensemble courses (e.g., Indigenous singing and drumming, jazz band with vocalists, rock band)</b>	<b>74.30%</b>	10.71%	11.35%	1.93%	1.71%	467
<b>5. Sing in non-credit choral ensembles (e.g., show choir, school choir)</b>	<b>76.63%</b>	4.67%	10.57%	4.88%	3.25%	492
<b>6. Sing in non-credit other ensemble courses (e.g., music theatre, Orff ensemble)</b>	<b>78.80%</b>	6.21%	8.99%	4.07%	1.93%	467
<b>7. Sing songs to support learning in other subject areas</b>	<b>56.38%</b>	18.48%	18.85%	4.62%	1.66%	541
<b>8. Sing with a sense of joy and belonging (e.g., school assemblies)</b>	<b>58.44%</b>	9.80%	9.80%	11.98%	9.98%	551

Table 15  
*Students' Singing Experiences During the Pandemic for Online Teaching*

Statements	Never	Rarely	Some classes	Most classes	Every class	Total
1. Sing alone in general music class or choral ensembles (e.g., vocal jazz, concert choir)	42.36%	17.52%	20.38%	10.51%	9.24%	314
2. Sing in groups in general music class or choral ensembles (e.g., (vocal jazz, concert choir)	64.69%	11.55%	10.89%	6.60%	6.27%	303
3. Write/compose songs	36.74%	20.77%	32.59%	7.67%	2.24%	313
4. Sing in other ensemble courses (e.g., Indigenous singing and drumming, jazz band with vocalists, rock band)	80.00%	12.24%	5.71%	1.63%	0.41%	245
5. Sing in non-credit choral ensembles (e.g., show choir, school choir)	83.46%	8.08%	5.77%	2.31%	0.38%	260
6. Sing in non-credit other ensemble courses (e.g., music theatre, Orff ensemble)	86.25%	8.75%	4.17%	0.83%	0.00%	240
7. Sing songs to support learning in other subject areas	61.15%	20.27%	14.86%	2.36%	1.35%	296
8. Sing with a sense of joy and belonging (e.g., school assemblies)	58.00%	17.33%	13.67%	6.00%	5.00%	300

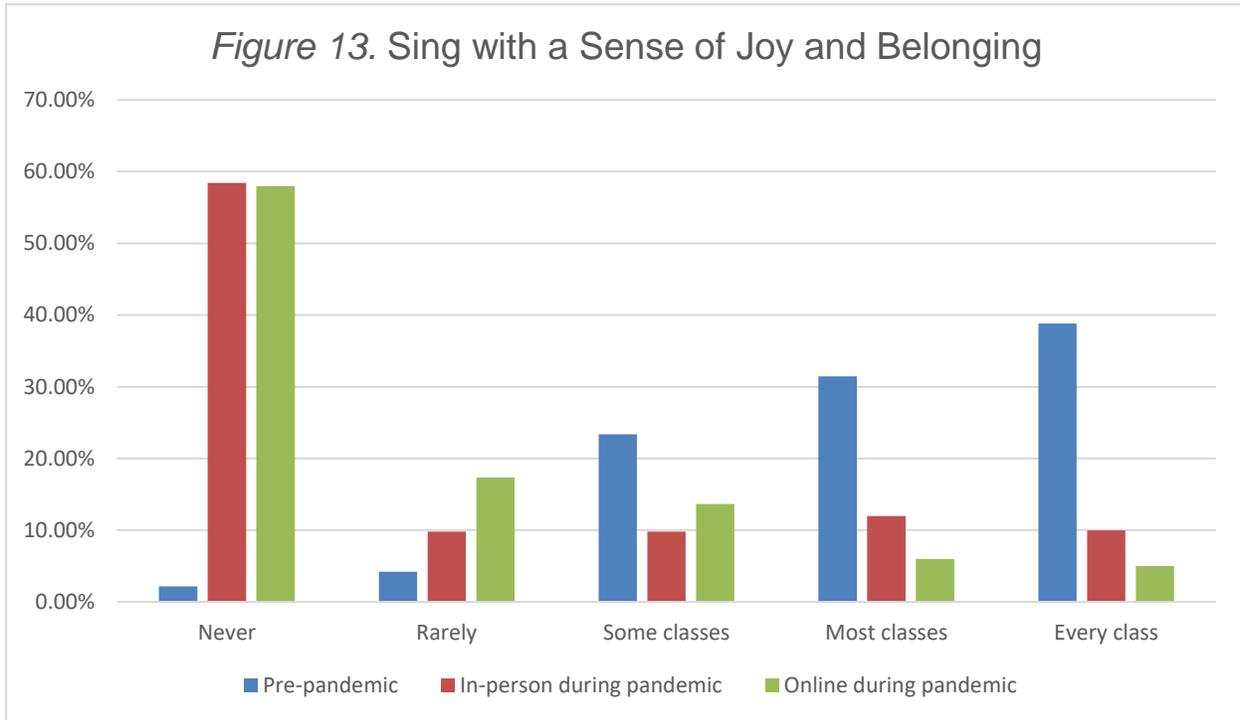
Prior to the pandemic, almost all (97.2%) of the Canadian students in the classrooms of music teacher respondents were singing in groups in the general music program or choral ensembles such as voice jazz or concert choir. It can be seen in Figure 12 below that group singing experiences for students dropped significantly to less than 40% overall during the pandemic while learning at school, evidenced by teachers reporting that group singing takes place in some classes (14.29%), every class (11.99%), or most classes (11.46%). For most (62.26%) students learning in-school during the pandemic, group singing never (50.44%) or rarely (11.82%) occurred. Opportunities for singing

together in groups sank even further when music teachers shifted to online teaching during the pandemic. Reports of using group singing when teaching music online were proportionally much smaller—during some classes (10.89%), most classes (6.60%), or every class (6.27%). Often, however, no group singing (64.69%) occurred or it was rarely used (11.55%) in the online teaching context. These reports represent a net drop of about 60% for group singing experiences when students were learning at school during the pandemic, and a net drop of almost 75% when learning occurred online during the pandemic. Comparatively, group singing experiences were maintained by more teachers while working in-person at school than most other singing experiences listed for this survey item, apart from composing songs.

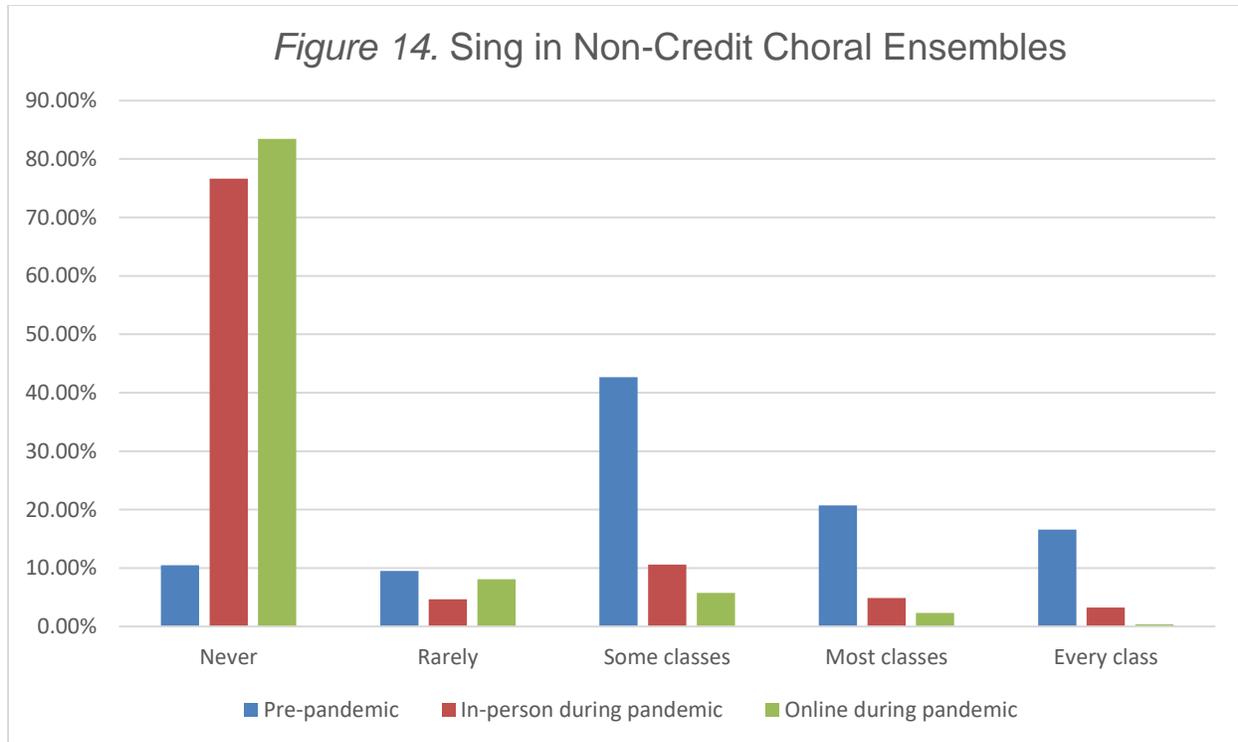


Under normal conditions before the pandemic impacted schools, high numbers of Canadian music teachers (93.82%) reported that their students regularly and consistently experienced singing in community and joyfully. As was found for group singing, Figure 13 shows that opportunities for singing with a sense of joy and belonging dropped significantly for students learning at school during the pandemic with just over 30% of music teachers offering these jubilant types of singing experiences for students in most classes (11.98%), every class (9.98%), or some classes (9.80%). Unfortunately, for most students learning in-person at school, singing for sheer pleasure at events like assemblies was non-existent (56.44%) or rare (9.80%). These singing experiences, so important for adding a musical dimension to the school day for students, plummeted even more when music teachers pivoted to the online context. Small numbers (24.67%) afforded students with opportunities for singing together in some classes (13.67%), most classes (6.00%), or every class (5.00%), but much larger numbers (75.33%) of Canadian music teachers reported that they were unable (58.00%) or rarely able (17.33%) to do so. Again, it was found that experiences for

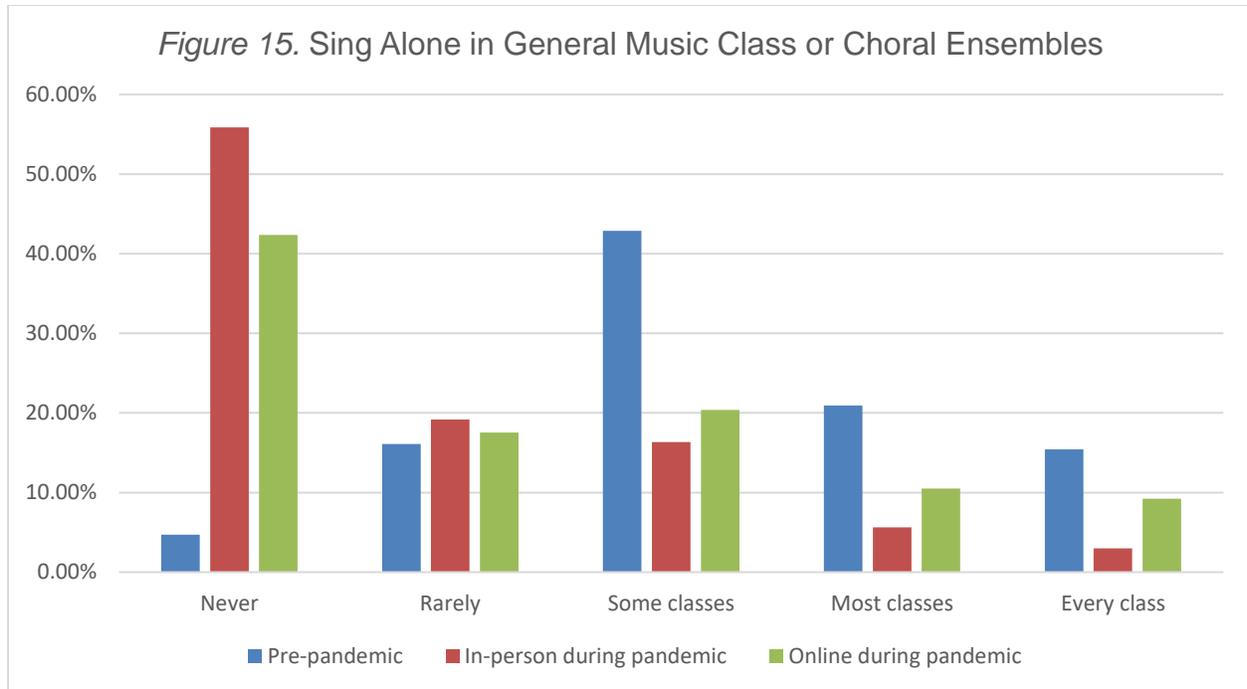
students to sing with a sense of joy and belonging declined substantially by over 60% during in-person learning at school, and by almost 70% during online learning at school.



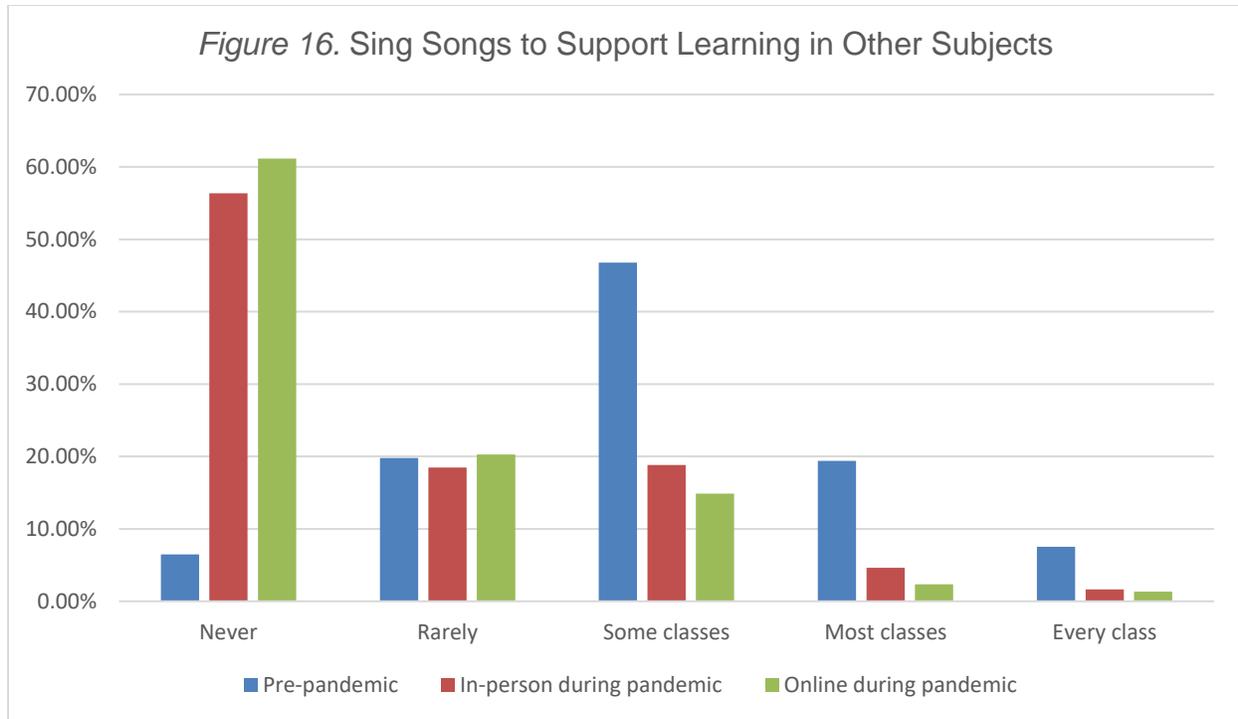
Pre-pandemic it was found that the majority (80.04%) of respondents' students in Canada had opportunities to sing in non-credit choral ensembles like show choir or school choir. Non-credit choral ensembles provide opportunities for enhanced music learning and development at school, but also, they offer many students a much-needed additional space for musical expression, engagement with friends at school, and the chance to contribute to the success of a performing group. This high level of engagement in non-credit choral ensembles pre-pandemic dropped to a disturbing level given that less than 20% of music teachers reported to be leading non-credit choral ensembles in some classes (10.57%), most classes (4.88%) or every class (3.25%) while teaching in-person during the pandemic (see Figure 14). The majority (81.30%) of music teachers working in-person at school indicated that they never (76.63%) or rarely (4.67%) offered non-credit choral ensembles during the pandemic. These percentages were even lower for online contexts with only 8.46% offering choral ensembles during some classes (5.77%), most classes (2.31%), or every class (0.38%). In effect, 91.54% of music teachers abandoned offering choral ensemble experiences to their students (83.46%) or rarely (8.08%) offered online ensemble experiences since the onset of COVID-19. To summarize, offering non-credit choral ensemble experiences were down more than 60% among music teachers who were working in-person in schools during the pandemic and down more than 70% when they were working virtually.



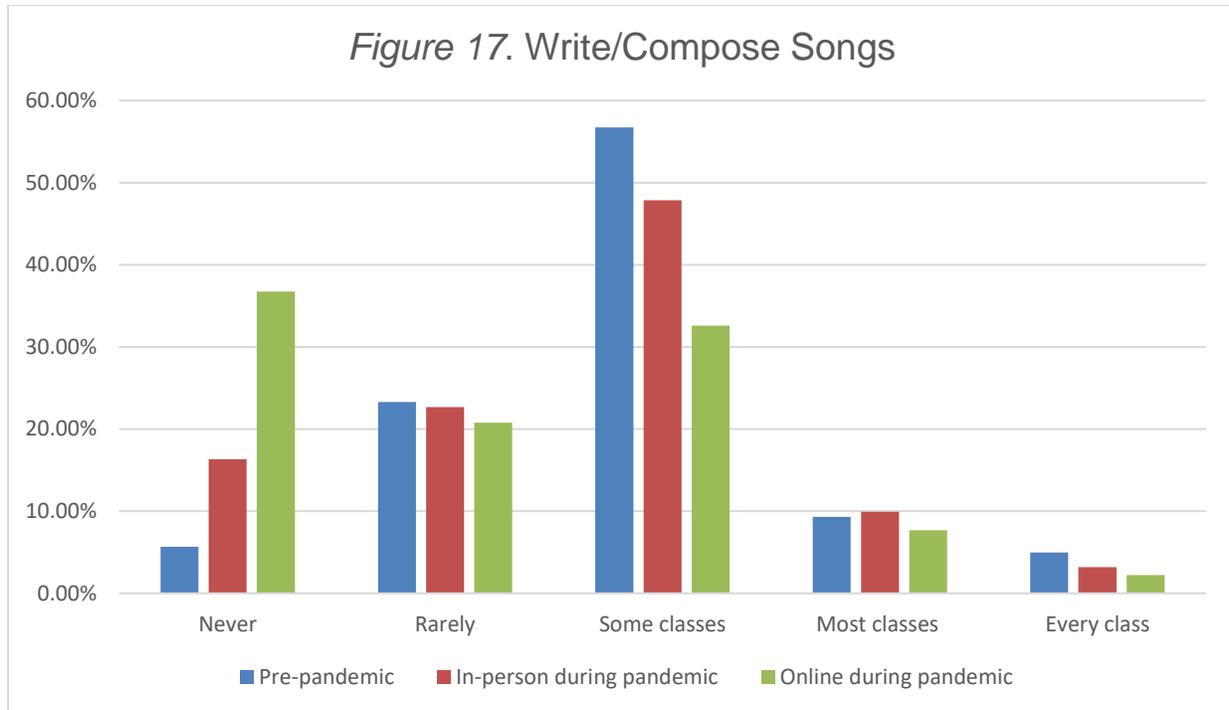
Opportunities to sing alone in general music classes or choral ensembles were afforded to students by most (79.23%) music teacher respondents prior to the pandemic. It can be seen in Figure 15 below that this number sinks greatly during the pandemic for in-person teaching contexts indicated by small numbers of teachers (24.95%) reporting that they were able to allow students to sing alone in some classes (16.34%), most classes (5.62%), or every class (2.99%). During in-person teaching during the pandemic, most (75.05%) respondents never (55.89%) or rarely (19.16%) provided opportunities for students to sing alone. It is not surprising to find that solo singing opportunities were being used by more teachers in the virtual teaching environment with 40.13% using solo singing during some classes (20.38%), most classes (10.51%), or every class (9.24%). Given that solo singing is not restricted when teaching virtually, it is somewhat perplexing to find that 59.88% of the respondent pool never (42.36%) or rarely (17.52%) continued to use solo singing when teaching online during the pandemic. Holistically, these results suggest the use of solo singing decreased by more than 50% for in-person teaching during the pandemic, and by about 40% in the online context.



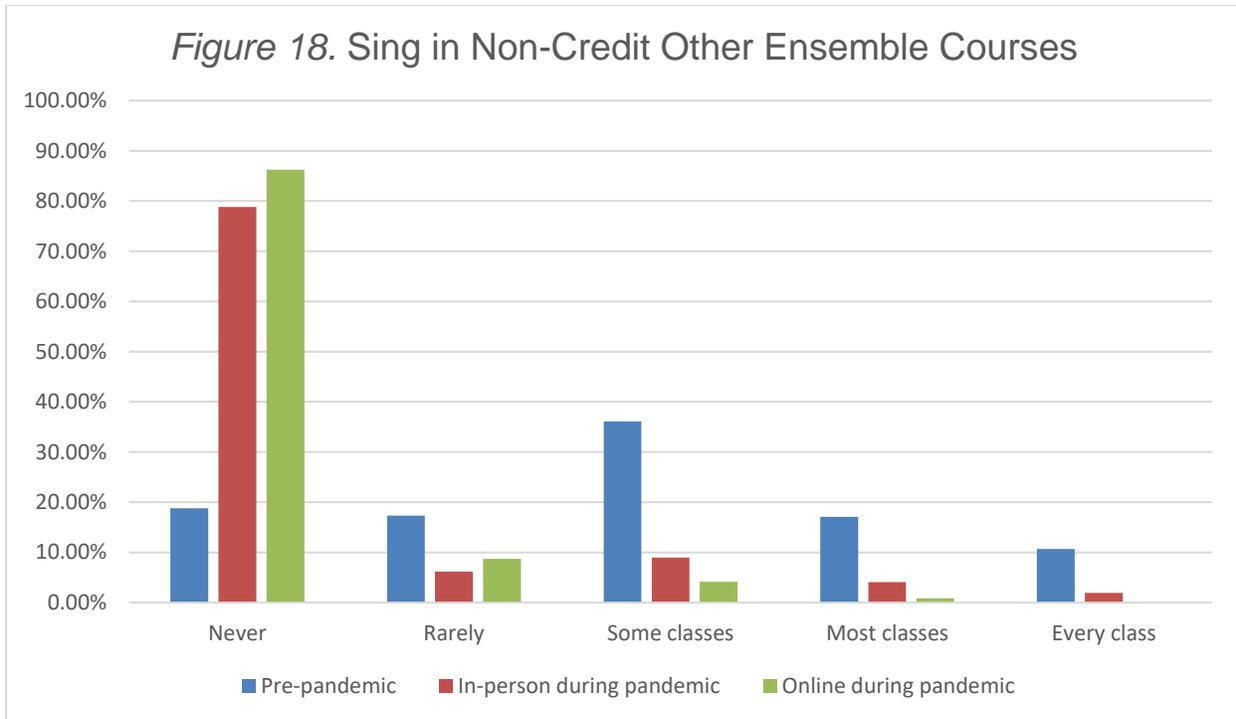
Prior to March 2020 and COVID-19, most (73.73%) music teachers reported that their students were experiencing learning about non-music curriculum content through songs and singing at school. During the pandemic when music teachers were working in-person, Figure 16 shows that a smaller group (25.13%) continued to use song integration in some classes (18.85%), most classes (4.62%), or in every class (1.66%), but the majority (74.86%) never (56.38%) or rarely (18.48%) did so. The group continuing to use song integration dropped lower to 18.57% when respondents were using online teaching with only 14.86% using this approach in some classes, most classes (2.36%), or every class (1.35%). Most (81.42%) teacher respondents refrained from using (61.15%) or rarely (20.27%) used songs as a vehicle for learning while teaching online. Given that songs have such engaging power it was expected that teachers might continue to use this strategy or even increase its use during online teaching contexts when it is much more challenging to hold the interest of students. On a more general level, the use of song integration dropped from pre-pandemic levels—down almost 50% during in-person teaching situations and down 55% during online teaching through the pandemic.



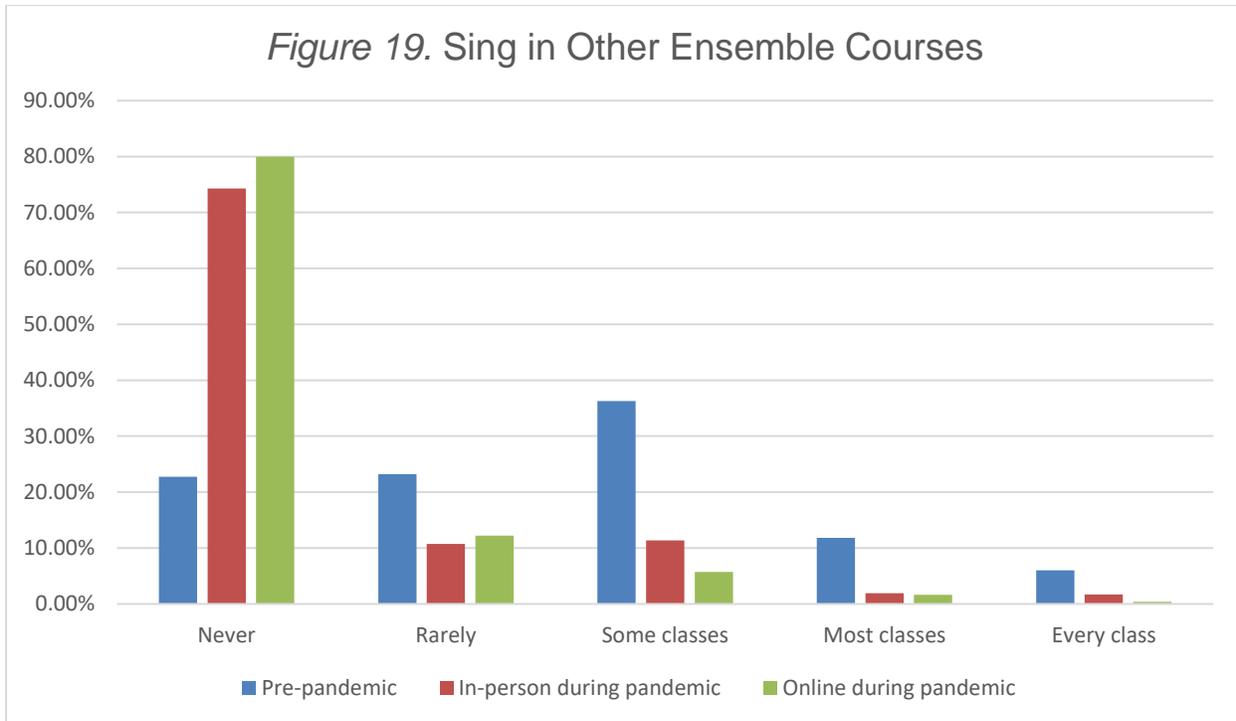
Pre-pandemic, many (71.05%) of the music teachers who participated in this survey provided their students with opportunities for song writing. Results showed that students' experiences with composing songs were least impacted by the onset of COVID-19 when compared with other school singing experiences. Figure 17 shows that the largest group (60.99%) of responding teachers involved students in song writing in some classes (47.87%), most classes (9.93%), or every class (3.19%) when teaching in-person at school during the pandemic. This result only constitutes a minor drop (about 10%) in the number of teachers who were engaging students in composing pre-pandemic. A smaller group (39.01%) either never (16.31%) or rarely (22.70%) offered composing experiences to students while teaching in-person at school during the pandemic. While it would seem feasible to continue with composing pedagogies in the virtual context, only a smaller portion (42.50%) of the total pool continued to do so. Of the group who continued composing with students online, teachers reported to be doing this creative work in some classes (32.59%), most classes (7.67%), or every class (2.24%). More than half (57.51%) of all respondents indicated that they never (36.74%) or rarely (20.77%) undertook composing songs with students when they were teaching online during the pandemic. This result represents an overall drop of almost 30% in the number of music teachers providing songwriting experiences for students after shifting to online teaching.



About two thirds (66%) of music teacher respondents indicated that students in their schools had opportunities to participate in non-credit ensemble courses that involve singing such as music theatre or Orff ensemble. Akin to findings for non-credit choral ensembles, Figure 18 depicts sizeable drops for other types of ensemble opportunities for students while teachers were working in-person during the pandemic. Only 14.99% of responding teachers continued offering other ensembles involving singing for some classes (8.99%), most classes (4.07%), or every class (1.93%) at school, while the bulk (85.01%) either never (78.80%) or rarely (6.21%) carried on with them. The decline in offerings of other non-credit ensemble courses involving singing expectedly worsens when teachers move to online teaching during the pandemic with only 5% finding ways to continue them in some classes (4.17%) or most classes (0.83%). Almost all (95%) music teacher respondents never (86.25%) or rarely (8.75%) continued with non-credit ensemble courses involving singing. Overall, the number of teacher respondents offering non-credit ensemble courses involving singing, other than choral ensembles, dropped over 50% after the onset of the pandemic when teaching in-person at school, and dropped over 60% when teaching online.



Before the pandemic 43.95% of music teacher respondents were providing students with singing experiences within other music ensemble courses like Indigenous singing and drumming, jazz band with vocalists, or rock band. Small numbers (14.99%) indicated that they offered some classes (11.35%), most classes (1.93%), or every class (1.71%) connected to these courses during the pandemic while teaching in-person (see Figure 19). A large proportion (85.01%) of music teachers either never (74.30%) or rarely (10.71%) continued teaching these types of ensemble courses in-person during the pandemic. In the online environment during COVID-19, even fewer teachers reported offering some classes (5.71%), most classes (1.63%), or every class (0.41%) linked to ensemble courses that involve some singing. The number of teachers implementing ensemble courses that necessitate singing dropped almost 30% during the pandemic in the in-person context and dropped 36% when they were teaching online.



The discussion now turns to a synthesis for in-person teaching contexts. The number of teachers who were able to offer singing experiences that afforded students joy and belonging and those that occurred in non-credit choral ensembles declined critically by more than 60% during the pandemic. The numbers giving students' opportunities to sing in groups or alone during general music class or choral ensembles dropped by close to 60% and 55% respectively, as did they for offering non-credit ensemble courses that involve some singing and for learning about other subject areas through songs which are both down about 50%. About 30% fewer teachers offered other diverse ensemble courses that involve singing. The one singing experience that continued more successfully during in-person pandemic teaching contexts was writing/composing songs with students which only dropped slightly by 10%.

For online teaching situations during the pandemic, all singing activities were implemented by fewer teachers except for singing alone which was implemented by 15% more teachers than what resulted for in-person teaching environments. Group singing was impacted most when teachers shifted online, evidenced by a decline of more than 70% of responding music teachers who were able to use this mode of learning or continue to implement non-credit choral ensembles like school choirs. The joy of singing together at school-wide events was not experienced by the students of almost 70% of music teachers who refrained from facilitating such events online. Even virtually when some experiences would have been feasible, like using singing as a teaching tool for other subjects or singing alone, these activities were eliminated by more than 55% and about 40% of the respondent pool respectively. Fewer (36%) teachers offered other diverse ensemble courses that incorporating singing when teaching online, and almost 30% fewer were composing songs with students.

In summary, the findings generated by music teachers' responses for survey item 37 overall reveal that Canadian students' singing experiences in music programs at school have been significantly and negatively impacted during the pandemic. Due to restrictions and mandated health measures in place for singing within school programs, the number of music teachers that were able to continue offering a robust range of singing experiences within their programs declined immensely during the pandemic, for both in-person and online teaching contexts.

**These findings call for government authorities in education and health to work with music education leaders (e.g., government music education consultants, division/district music education consultants, music education and choral music organization leaders, university music educators) to figure out how singing in schools can co-exist with the coronavirus while mitigating risks and keeping everyone safe. It is also seeming to be the case that teachers need to be better supported and resourced with professional learning and technologies for continuing a broad array of singing experiences online when necessary.**

### ***Health Measures for Teaching Singing During the Pandemic***

The Government of Canada (2021) published COVID-19 guidelines for K-Grade 12 division/district/school administrators and provincial/territorial government authorities. These guidelines are intended to support local authorities in assessing the risks of in-school learning during the pandemic and offer ways to mitigate the probability of viral transmission within school buildings. Canadian government guidelines do address singing and choir because these school activities, like many others such as sports, playing wind instruments, or recess, can elevate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Suggestions for risk mitigation measures for singing include singing outdoors, physical distancing, reorganizing choir formations, reducing overall numbers of singers, and keeping same-household students singing together and apart from others. Given that epidemiology differs and fluctuates across provinces/territories and local communities, as do the needs of different groups of students, health measures for in-school learning vary and change across the country.

Three survey items were posed to music teachers that relate to the health measures put into place in their jurisdictions during the pandemic to guide their use of singing while teaching music. First, respondents identified specific measures from a list of 11 measures that were required by their respective administrative units or governing bodies (item 38), and then indicated which ones they were able to successfully implement (item 39) while teaching singing in the current pandemic context, and those that they were unable to implement (item 40).

The counts displayed in Table 16 are converted to percentages of the total number of responses in Table 17 below. These results provide strong evidence that multiple, but varying health measures were required by the administrative units or governing bodies of almost all music teacher respondents, with only 15 or 0.56% reporting that there were no health measures in place for teaching singing in their school music programs. Of the

11 measures listed, the highest counts were found for masking (432 or 16.23%), physical distancing (420 or 15.78%), and applying sanitizing protocols (337 or 12.66%) which indicate that these measures were likely in place for most music teachers across Canada. Several music teachers were formally directed not to use singing (277 or 10.41%), to sing outdoors (266 or 9.99%), or hum (228 or 8.56%) melodies rather than singing them with students. To a lesser extent prescribed health protocols required music teacher respondents to limit singing as much as possible (194 or 7.29%), increase ventilation while singing indoors (177 or 6.65%), limit singing to 30 minutes or less after three air exchanges (145 or 5.45%), or use remote online platforms to sing virtually with students (124 or 4.66%). Small numbers of music teachers (47 or 1.77%) reported that the health measures they followed allowed for singing indoors without increased ventilation.

The highest numbers of responding music teachers were successfully able to implement two enforced health measures while teaching with singing during the pandemic—masking (339 or 16.46%) and no singing (302 or 14.67%). Music teachers were also relatively successful complying with sanitization protocols (282 or 13.70%), physical distancing (255 or 12.38%), and humming (205 or 9.96%). Fewer teachers reported that they were able to limit singing (157 or 7.63%), sing outdoors (145 or 7.04%), sing virtually using remote online platforms (119 or 5.78%), and sing indoors with increased ventilation (103 or 5.00%) which is evident by dropping counts for these requirements. Even smaller numbers revealed the ability to successfully sing indoors for 30 minutes or less after three air exchanges (82 or 3.98%) and to sing indoors without increased ventilation (70 or 3.40%).

There were more health measures identified by the music teacher respondent pool that they were unable to implement (N=2185) while teaching music with singing during the pandemic than they were able to implement (N=2059). Music teachers struggled most with their ability to increase ventilation while singing indoors (367 or 16.80%), sing indoors for 30 minutes or less after three air exchanges (334 or 15.29%), sing outdoors (289 or 13.23%), sing indoors without increased ventilation (261 or 11.95%), and maintain physical distancing (243 or 11.12%). Less frequently, music teachers reported being unable to comply with health measures for: singing virtually using remote online platforms (198 or 9.06%), limiting singing as much as possible (118 or 5.40%), humming (113 or 5.17%), masking (98 or 4.49%), no singing (90 or 4.12%), and applying sanitizing protocols (74 or 3.39%).

Table 16  
*Health Measures for Singing During the Pandemic (Frequencies)*

Options	Required by Authorities	Able to Implement	Unable to Implement
<b>No health measures in place</b>	15	N/A	N/A
<b>Singing outdoors</b>	266	145	289
<b>Physical distancing</b>	420	255	243
<b>Applying sanitizing protocols</b>	337	282	74
<b>Masking</b>	432	339	98

(table continues)

<b>Humming</b>	228	205	113
<b>Singing indoors with increased ventilation</b>	177	103	367
<b>Singing indoors without increased ventilation</b>	47	70	261
<b>Singing indoors for 30 minutes or less after three air exchanges</b>	145	82	334
<b>Singing virtually using remote online platforms</b>	124	119	198
<b>Limiting singing as much as possible</b>	194	157	118
<b>No singing</b>	277	302	90
<b>Total</b>	2662	2059	2185

Table 17  
*Health Measures for Singing During the Pandemic (%)*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Required by Authorities</b>	<b>Able to Implement</b>	<b>Unable to Implement</b>
<b>No health measures in place</b>	0.56%	N/A	N/A
<b>Singing outdoors</b>	9.99%	7.04%	13.23%
<b>Physical distancing</b>	15.78%	12.38%	11.12%
<b>Applying sanitizing protocols</b>	12.66%	13.70%	3.39%
<b>Masking</b>	16.23%	16.46%	4.49%
<b>Humming</b>	8.56%	9.96%	5.17%
<b>Singing indoors with increased ventilation</b>	6.65%	5.00%	16.80%
<b>Singing indoors without increased ventilation</b>	1.77%	3.40%	11.95%
<b>Singing indoors for 30 minutes or less after three air exchanges</b>	5.45%	3.98%	15.29%
<b>Singing virtually using remote online platforms</b>	4.66%	5.78%	9.06%
<b>Limiting singing as much as possible</b>	7.29%	7.63%	5.40%
<b>No singing</b>	10.41%	14.67%	4.12%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%

Overall, the most worrisome results are represented by the health measures that music teachers reported being unable to implement. Access to safe schools is important for all teachers and all students regardless of subject matter. More specifically, results point to the inadequacy of proper ventilation in schools so that singing can be experienced without worry in music programs. Music teachers are also reporting difficulties setting up opportunities to sing outdoors and maintaining physical distancing. In essence, many music teachers are saying that they just cannot implement mandated health measures; this reality will surely lead music teachers to feel unsafe at school and increase their already high levels of stress and anxiety. It is important to note that implementing health measures under optimal circumstances already adds to the complexity of the music teacher's role and responsibilities at school and increases their workload, so confronting inability to implement them could have serious consequences for the well-being of music teachers and their students, as well as their sense of safety.

**Division/district administrators and school leaders should set up steering committees with music teacher representatives with the goal of addressing the challenges teachers identified that affected their abilities to implement health and safe protocols for safe group singing in schools (e.g., issues with ventilation in schools, maintaining social distancing, singing outdoors) as preparations are made to guide safe singing and choral ensembles for the next school year and beyond. There is an acute need for school authorities to improve ventilation in schools where systems may be outdated or problematic. Teachers need support from their school administrators to ensure that provisions can be made for them to create outdoor music spaces for singing even in colder weather. Strategies also need to be explored by school administrators to increase access to physical spaces that can be used for proper distancing among music students when singing.**

### ***Limitations on School-Based Singing for Diverse Student Groups***

The disruption to school programs related to the current COVID-19 pandemic have caused much concern among educators around the world regarding equity and inclusion for diverse student groups (for example, see OECD, 2020). Diverse student groups are comprised of Canadian children and youth with complex learning needs and those from low-income and single-parent families. They include the many newcomer students in Canada who also represent racial, linguistic, cultural, and religious minorities in their school communities. Indigenous students and those who are gender diverse are also special groups attending schools that are more vulnerable and face additional barriers to learning and succeeding in life.

It is profoundly important at this time of upheaval that a comprehensive approach to education is offered and maintained for *all* students, especially our most vulnerable. A comprehensive curriculum is holistic. It addresses the mind, heart, and body through a full range of student development areas such as: academic, cognitive, aesthetic, physical, psychological, social-emotional, and ethical. Music education programs are included in the school curriculum because they contribute to students' aesthetic development and result in unique learnings for students that are not easily acquired in non-music programs such as self-expression, imagination, empathy, and agency (Hoffman Davis, 2012).

For many of our diverse students in Canada, school is the only pathway to receiving a music education and opportunities for learning music through singing and choral ensembles. These students may not have access to music learning opportunities in the community or support at home for fostering their interests in music and singing. The impetus for survey item 41 was to identify the student diversity groups that are perceived by music teacher respondents to have been disadvantaged by the restrictions on singing in schools and the limitations these restrictions placed on their participation in school-based singing and choral ensembles. Table 18 below shows that 857 of the 1268 (67.59%) responses by teachers to this item identify student diversity groups for which participation in singing and choral ensembles were limited because of the health restrictions. It is important to note that this number represents a critical mass of

respondents and all student diversity groups were identified as being affected. Of these responses the highest count is for students with complex needs (184 or 14.51%), followed by economically disadvantaged (159 or 12.54%), socially disadvantaged (156 or 12.30%), Indigenous—First Nations, Metis, Inuit (122 or 9.62%), racialized (118 or 9.31%), and LGBTQIA2S+ (118 or 9.31%). The remainder of the responses were generated by music teachers who were not sure what impact the restrictions were having on the participation levels of diverse student groups in singing and choral ensembles at school (222 or 17.51%) or who did not think the restrictions were in fact limiting participation for diverse student groups (189 or 14.91%).

Table 18

*Limitations on School-Based Singing for Diverse Student Groups*

Options	% of Total	Frequency
<b>Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, Inuit)</b>	9.62%	122
<b>Racialized</b>	9.31%	118
<b>LGBTQIA2S+</b>	9.31%	118
<b>Students with complex needs (e.g., physical, intellectual, mental health)</b>	14.51%	184
<b>Economically disadvantaged</b>	12.54%	159
<b>Socially disadvantaged</b>	12.30%	156
<b>No</b>	14.91%	189
<b>Unsure</b>	17.51%	222
<b>Total</b>	100%	1268

The finding that restrictions were reported by the bulk of respondents as curbing involvement in school-based singing and choral ensembles for diverse student groups is worrisome because for some students, music and choral learning spaces at school are protective, safe havens. Singing and choral programs can be the reason that some students come to school and stay after school. They are sometimes the only school-based programs where students feel included, accepted, and valued. It is where they connect, develop a sense of belonging to a singing group, and self-efficacy as student musicians. All these benefits contribute to the overall well-being and flourishing of diverse students. In short, music and singing programs are critical agents for inclusive education. In this sense, music programs and the teachers that lead them are irreplaceable and regular interactions between them and diverse student groups are needed. It is also important to keep in mind that music teachers are leaders that play a key role in the school through their outreach to all students, nurturing relationships, and engaging families. **In planning for the future, it is important to revisit the restrictions on school-based singing and choral ensembles with government authorities in education and health, along with music education leaders to find ways to lessen the obstacles for partaking in school-based singing and choral ensembles for *all* students, but especially for diverse student groups as music is a critical agent for inclusion and their sense of well-being. For some diverse students, music can be a lifeline for them.**

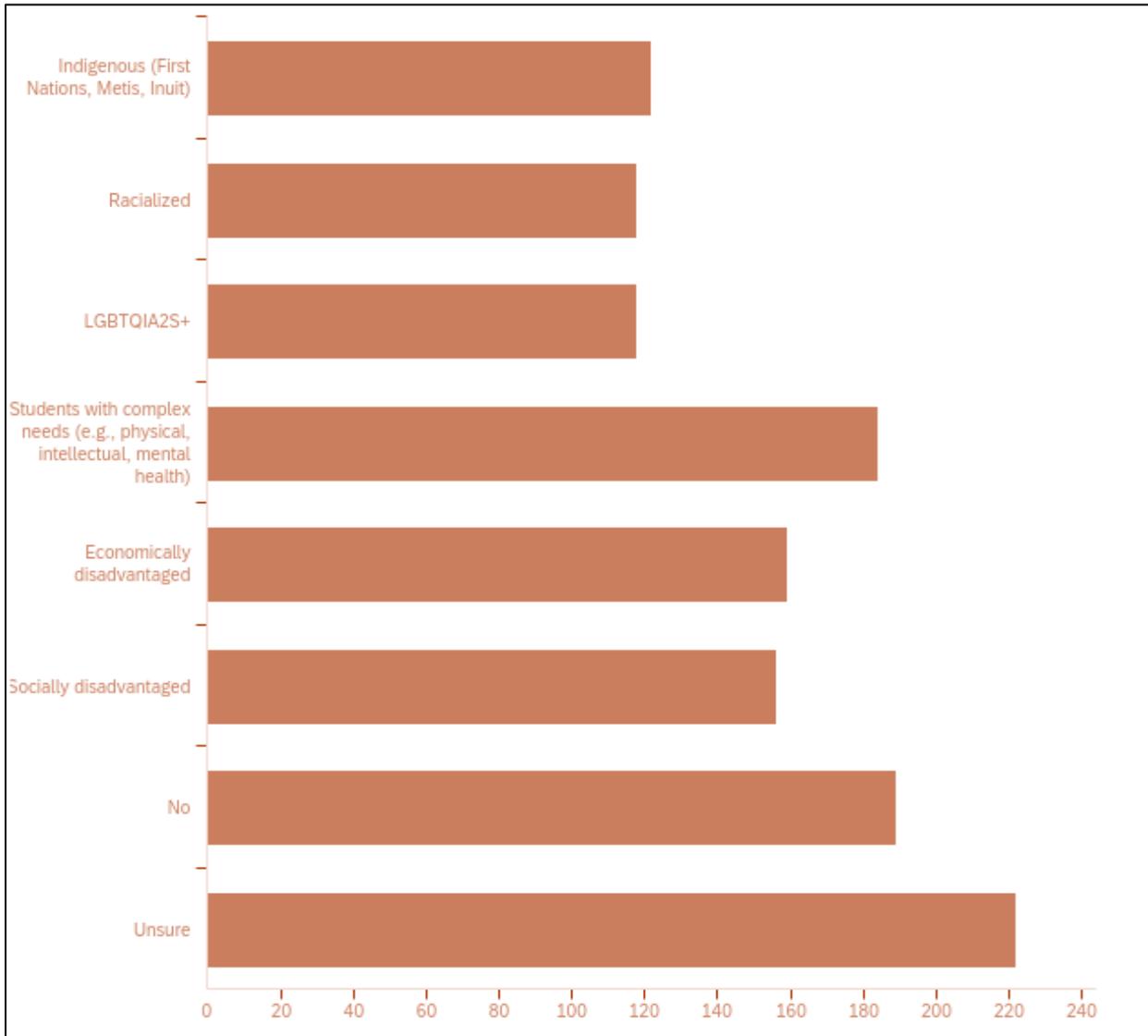


Figure 20. Limitations on School-Based Singing for Diverse Student Groups

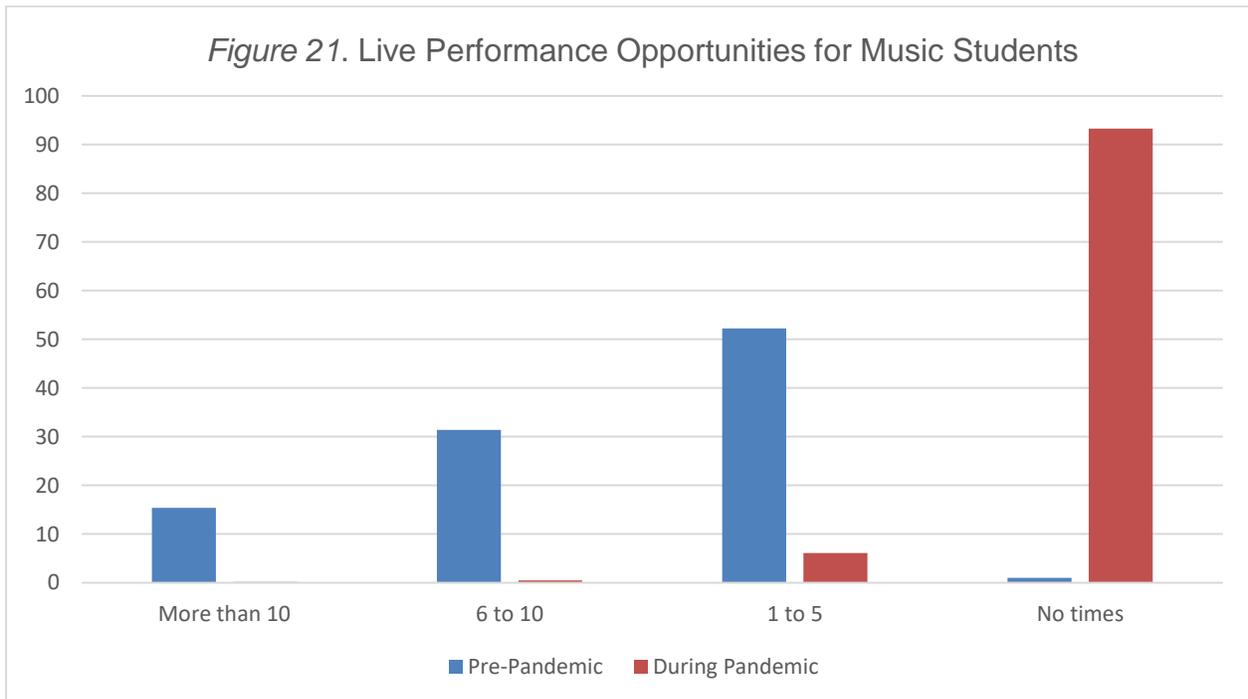
### **Live Performance Opportunities for Music Students**

Items 42 and 43 of the survey aimed to ascertain how the COVID-19 crisis is impacting live performance opportunities for school music students across Canada. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, music teacher respondents were very active performing with K-12 music students for diverse audiences and purposes as can be seen by examining the data summaries in Table 19. When asked to consider levels of performance over the last three years, slightly more than half (316 or 52%) reported performing with students 1 to 5 times each year, almost one third (190 or 31%) 6 to 10 times, and 15% (93) more than 10 times. Only 1% (6) of all respondents indicated that they had not provided any live performance opportunities for their students during the last three years. After large audiences were no longer permitted to gather to slow the spread of

the coronavirus, live music performance came to a screeching halt across Canada for student musicians, and professional musicians alike. Students could no longer learn and rehearse together during school closures and/or restricted in-person school learning environments. The sizable effect of these measures is reflected in the pandemic context reports from these same music teachers (see Figure 21). It is not surprising to confirm that almost all music teachers (93% or 568) reported that they did not undertake any live performances with their music students during the pandemic. Very small numbers found ways to continue to perform live with their students (7% or 41 combined), albeit not as often.

Table 19  
Live Performance Opportunities for Music Students

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
More than 10	15.37%	93	0.16%	1
6 to 10	31.40%	190	0.49%	3
1 to 5	52.23%	316	6.08%	37
No times	0.99%	6	93.27%	568
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>609</b>



Music educators hold that performance is an important component of their students' music learning journeys, and all Canadian music curriculum documents have learning outcomes related to sharing music with others. There are benefits to providing students with performing opportunities. Performance is an authentic motivator, affording music teachers and their students the chance to showcase the results of their collaborative

efforts in music classrooms. Music is meant to be shared and performing live for families and community members is critical to maintaining and nurturing relationships with them and their support for school music programs.

**Moving forward, if live performances for larger indoor audiences are not permitted, music education leaders and government authorities should meet to reimagine how music performances can continue in outdoor, adapted and/or virtual environments. It is recommended that local guidelines for indoor and outdoor events and gatherings be reviewed with the aim of resurrecting live student performances for communities that are safe and mitigate the risk of viral spread. For example, imagine a live small-scale ensemble student performance in a large, well-ventilated space with open windows, high ceilings, and air cleansers where members of a reduced-size audience sanitize upon entry, mask, and sit distanced while listening.**

**Music teachers are leaders that play a key role in schools through their outreach to high numbers of students, nurturing of relationships, and engaging with families. They need to be better supported by division/district and school leaders and resourced with professional development and technologies for continuing a broad array of singing and performing experiences, especially for online contexts if necessary. The value of alternative and/or virtual performance experiences for school music students should be assessed, and if considered valuable by music teachers, then implementation support and resources are required, especially for those who are not tech-savvy. While virtual concerts are not a satisfying replacement for live concerts, music education and performance can continue if teachers are resourced with the tools that are available today and willing to learn how to use them.**

### ***Opportunities for Music Students to Work with Guest Musicians***

Quality music programs are characterized by strong school-community partnerships, teachers working together with musicians, community music organizations, and cultural institutions who contribute to the success of music programs (for example, see Seidel et al., 2009). It is common therefore for music teachers in Canada to seek the involvement of guest musicians to supplement and enhance students' music learning and development at school. Professional musicians come together with teachers and classes of students or ensembles at school for single classes, short term residencies, and sometimes longer-term residencies. Some initiatives underway across Canada cultivate close partnerships between musicians and teachers who collaboratively plan for working with students.

Items 44 and 45 were included on the survey to determine if the pandemic is hindering opportunities for music students and their teachers to work with guest musicians in school music programs. Music teacher respondents were first asked if they had invited guest musicians at any time to work with students in their music programs in the last three years prior to the pandemic (item 44). They chose from four options: yes, in-

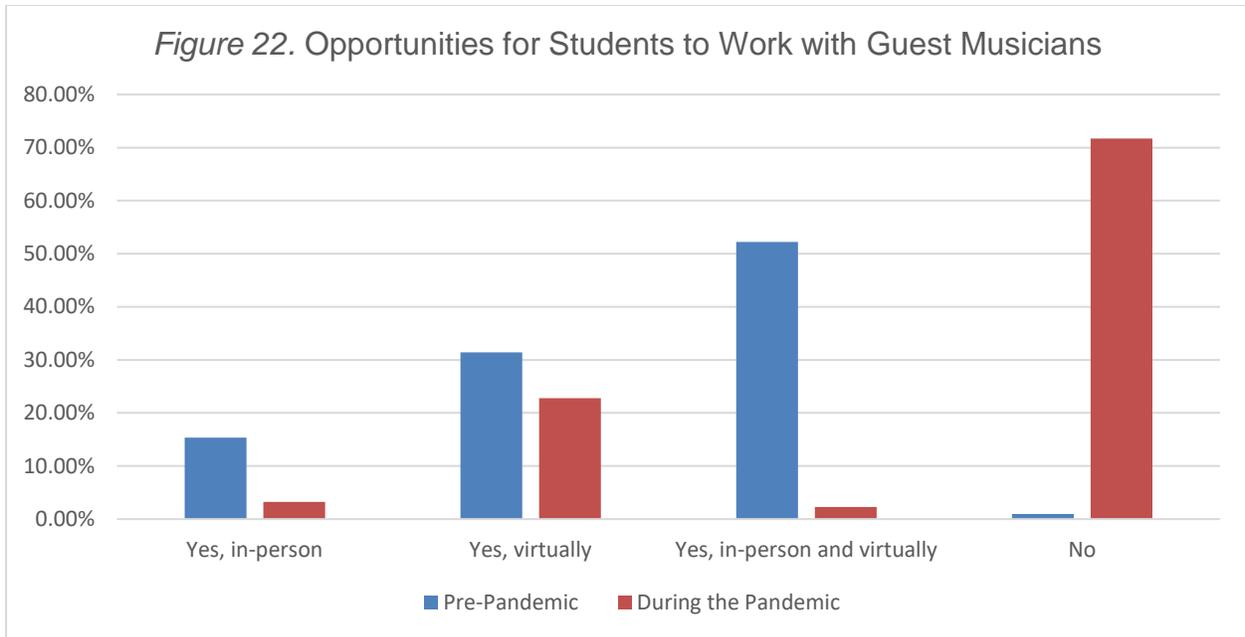
person; yes, virtually; yes, in-person and virtually; and no. Then they were asked if they had invited guest musicians at any time to work with students in their music programs during the pandemic using the same options (item 45).

Table 20 below shows that prior to the pandemic, approximately 85% of music teacher respondents answering this item indicated yes, affirming that over the last three years they had indeed invited guest musicians to work with students in-person (488 or 79.35%), in-person and virtually (35 or 5.69%) or virtually (1 or 0.16%). A much smaller number (91 or 14.80%) reported that they had not arranged for guest musicians to work with students in their schools in the three years before the pandemic.

Table 20  
*Opportunities for Music Students to Work with Guest Musicians*

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
<b>Yes, in-person</b>	79.35%	488	3.23%	20
<b>Yes, virtually</b>	0.16%	1	22.78%	141
<b>Yes, in-person and virtually</b>	5.69%	35	2.26%	14
<b>No</b>	14.80%	91	71.73%	444
<b>Total</b>	100%	615	100%	619

Figure 22 below depicts a shocking loss in opportunities to interact and learn from musicians in the larger community. These enriching events declined significantly during the pandemic evidenced by very high counts of teachers who revealed they had not invited any musicians into their schools (444 or 71.73%). In-person teaching by guests were arranged by very few music teachers (20 or 3.23%) representing a huge drop (76.12%) from the pre-pandemic context reported at 79.35%. A very small number (14 or 2.26%) indicated they did invite musicians to partake in their programs with students using in-person and virtual teaching.



One possible cause of the drop is that guest musicians may have been defined as “visitors” and health measures restricted visitors from entering schools in most divisions/districts in Canada. A larger portion (141 or 22.78%) of music teachers continued to bring musical guests into their programs during COVID-19 using virtual platforms. It is surprising that more teachers did not use online forums for this purpose as the approach is feasible and professional musicians would surely have welcomed opportunities for meaningful employment during the pandemic. In essence then, while about 85% of music teachers planned for the involvement of guest musicians in their music programs pre-pandemic, only about 30% continued with this pedagogical practice during the pandemic which has serious implications for the level of music learning enhancements currently provided for Canadian students at school. Therefore, looking ahead two suggestions can be offered. **First, it is recommended that education and health ministries consider redefining guest musicians as essential workers, and not as visitors because like student teachers or itinerant substitute teachers, they enter schools for short periods to teach. If guest musicians are not permitted by authorities to enter schools to teach, then music teachers should augment the involvement of guests in programs virtually, which would offer reciprocal benefits to both students and professional musicians in our communities.**

### ***Opportunities for Music Related Field Trips***

The broader music community is an important extension of the school music classroom and particularly so for music programs involving singing and choral learning. It is very common for Canadian music/choral teachers to participate with their student choristers in choral festivals or take them to experience cultural events such as musicals and choral concerts. Items 46 and 47 of the survey were posed to music teacher respondents to examine the extent to which the pandemic has impacted opportunities for students to make these kinds of music learning connections within their

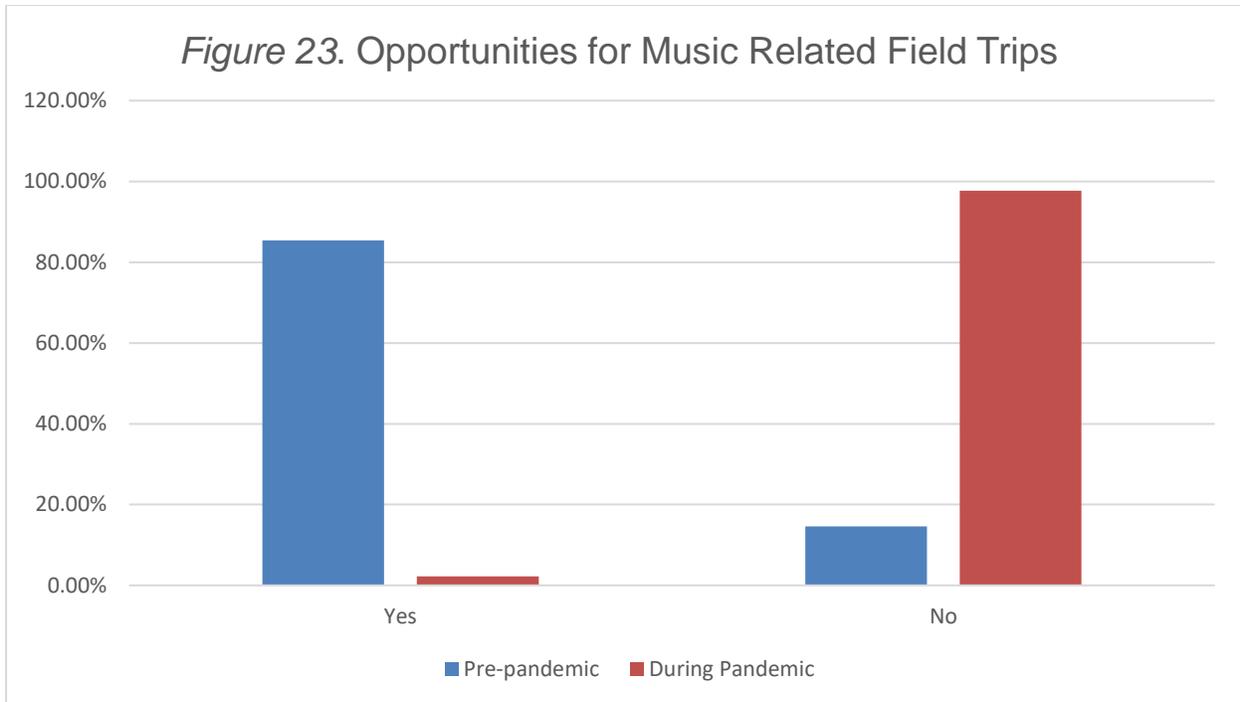
communities. Music teacher respondents were first asked if they had taken their students into the community for a singing/choral related field trip to enhance learning in the three years prior to the pandemic (item 46). They chose from two options, yes or no. Then they were asked if they had taken their students into the community during the pandemic for singing/choral related field trips, using the same options (item 47).

It is gratifying to find in the data displayed in Table 21 that the vast majority (527 or 85.41%) of music teachers in Canada answering this question report that they had taken students on singing/choral related field trips in the three years pre-pandemic. Far fewer (90 or 14.59%) in the respondent pool had not taken students on any singing/choral related field trips during the most recent three-year period before the pandemic arrived. This finding is a strong indicator that Canadian music teachers promote active, authentic learning in music by leaving the confines of their classrooms and inviting students to experience music firsthand in their local communities and for some students outside their communities or even abroad. Frequent reports of singing/choral field trips may also reflect efforts on the part of cultural institutions, choral community organizations, and music education organizations to establish and augment community-based educational programming and events for schools.

Table 21  
*Opportunities for Music Related Field Trips*

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of <i>N</i>	Frequency	% of <i>N</i>	Frequency
<b>Yes</b>	85.41%	527	2.27%	14
<b>No</b>	14.59%	90	97.73%	604
<b>Total</b>	100%	617	100%	618

The data presented in Table 21 and shown visually in Figure 23 confirms that singing/choral related field trips for students are being completely eradicated for Canadian students in the current pandemic environment given that 604 (97.73%) of music teachers responding to this item reported that they had not taken any field trips since March 2020. Very few (14 or 2.27%) music teacher participants affirmed that they managed to continue with field trips for their students during the pandemic. One explanation for this finding is that COVID-19 is having an ongoing impact on live music performances and/or gatherings such as music festivals (Music Canada, 2021). Music performing venues like concert halls and churches are mostly closed for live events, and some cultural institutions shifted to serve their communities in alternative ways, mostly online.



**As we move to thinking about recovery efforts it is recommended that music teachers resume field trips as a learning strategy as soon as possible as they are essential to bringing music concepts alive through community-based experiences with other student and professional singers and choirs, conductors, teachers, and musical works. Importantly singing/choral related field trips cultivate an appreciation of what students' musical communities have to offer and builds audiences for the future. Equally important is working with choral music organizations and cultural institutions on their recovery efforts to work in partnerships with schools. It is crucial for music educators to resume the practice of opening students up to a world of musical experiences that may not be opened at home (e.g., music theatre, choral concerts, music festivals, workshops, singing groups), especially for student diversity groups.**

### ***Opportunities to Participate in Educational Outreach Programs***

Professional musicians, music ensembles, cultural institutions, and music organizations make their venues, music, and resources accessible to students and music educators in various forms through educational outreach programs and events. These efforts provide students in school music programs with increased contact with professional choirs, singers, songwriters, and the like. Cultural services to schools that are related to singing can go a long way to help students deeply understand the art of singing and the choral arts, especially when strategies like post-performance talks and study guides are designed to connect with local music curricula that support music learning at school. Participatory experiences like choral and song writing workshops or community honor choirs offered by institutions particularly for schools provide rich singing experiences that go beyond audience-based encounters.

In survey item 48, we asked Canadian music teachers if opportunities to participate in educational outreach programs (e.g., Western University’s High School Honor Choir, National Arts Centre’s Songwriting Workshops) to support singing and music learning in schools have changed since the onset of the pandemic. The distribution of responses displayed in Table 22 and illustrated in Figure 24 show that for over 70% of music teacher participants, opportunities to participate in educational outreach programs had decreased greatly (340 or 57.92%) or decreased moderately (77 or 13.12%). Less than 30% of the pool reported that their access to educational outreach programs had remained the same (120 or 20.44%), increased moderately (43 or 7.33%), or increased greatly (7 or 1.19%).

Table 22  
*Opportunities to Participate in Educational Outreach Programs*

Options	% of Total	Frequency
Increased greatly	1.19%	7
Increased moderately	7.33%	43
Remained the same	20.44%	120
Decreased moderately	13.12%	77
Decreased greatly	57.92%	340
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>587</b>

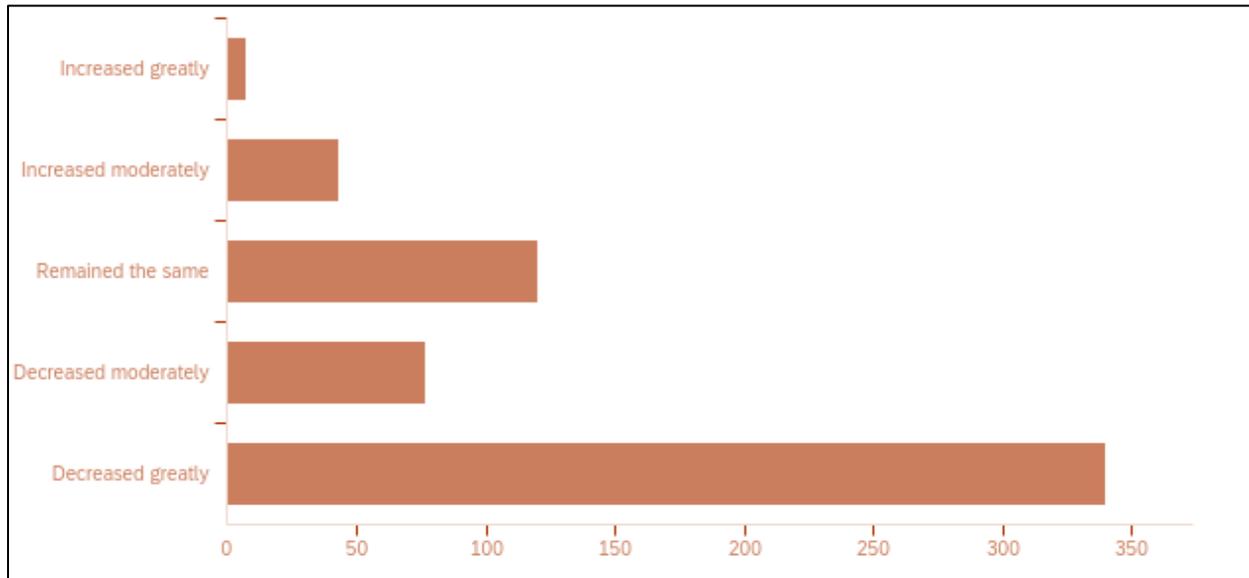


Figure 24. Opportunities to Participate in Educational Outreach Programs

As was the case for music field trips, an explanation for this finding is that COVID-19 is having an ongoing impact on in-person music performances, community-based programs, and/or close contact gatherings such as choirs. Many cultural groups, music organizations, and professional musicians involved in implementing in-person offerings for schools have had to suspend them. Some have pivoted to maintain service to schools by creating web-based resources and videos for schools, but most are unable

to conduct any in-person programs and events in the current context.

**Recommendations for the recovery of educational outreach programs to support singing and choral ensembles in schools are the same as they were for music field trips in the previous section.**

### 3.3 Overall Support for Singing and Music Education

#### *Importance of Singing in Music Programs*

Music teacher respondents were asked in items 8 and 9 about the importance of singing as a mode of learning in their music programs when compared with other components such as listening, moving, or playing instruments, before and during the pandemic. Table 23 shows that before the onset of the pandemic, almost all (95%) of all responding music teachers indicated that singing was as important (57.55% or 465) or more important (37.25% or 301) than other modes of learning. The remaining 5% reported that singing was not as important (4.58% or 37) as other components or not important at all (0.62% or 5). These findings were not surprising given that for decades Canadian music educators who work with younger students (K-Grade 6) have applied vocal and choral strategies across the music curriculum and continue to do so (Abril, 2016). Although musical understandings are also developed through a wide array of other experiences such as listening and playing instruments, it is very difficult to imagine a school music program without singing. These more general music education approaches provide the foundation for more specialized vocal and choral music programs offered to older students (Grades 7-12). In these programs, singing factors prominently which is reflected in the pre-pandemic responses.

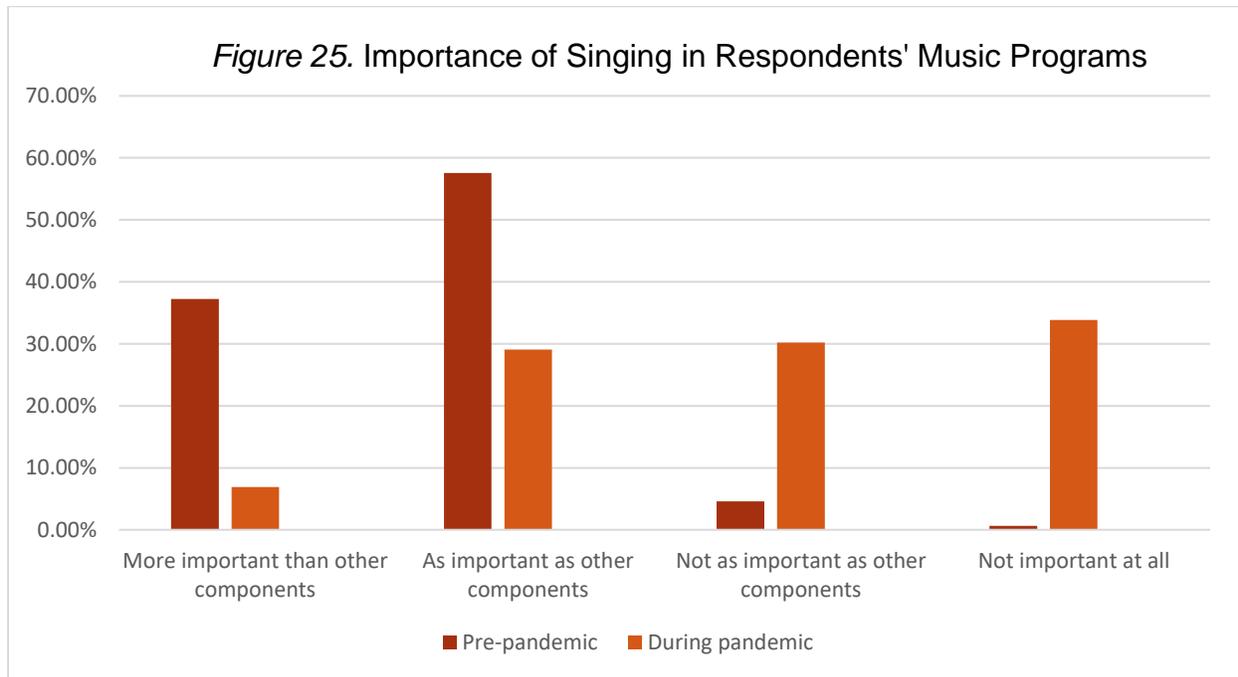
Table 23

#### *Importance of Singing in Respondents' Music Programs*

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
<b>More important than other components</b>	37.25%	301	6.87%	55
<b>As important as other components</b>	57.55%	465	29.09%	233
<b>Not as important as other components</b>	4.58%	37	30.21%	242
<b>Not important at all</b>	0.62%	5	33.83%	271
<b>Total</b>	100%	808	100%	801

During the pandemic the significance of singing in respondents' music programs waned, evidenced by almost two thirds (64.04%) who reported that singing is not important at all (33.83% or 271) or not as important as other components (30.21% or 242). Given the pandemic health restrictions on singing in Canada's schools, this result suggests that music teacher respondents had to invent alternative approaches to teaching music without singing or with limited use of singing. Almost one third of the respondent pool (29.09% or 233) reported to have kept singing on par with other components in their classrooms, but only a small portion (6.87% or 55) prioritized singing over other core components. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the established, historical practices of music educators was profound, as illustrated in Figure 25. In the pandemic

context, singing can no longer be considered the hallmark of music education. At the time this survey was conducted, the unthinkable was now a reality—schools without students singing.



### ***Groups Supporting Singing in School Music Programs***

For survey items 10 and 11, music teacher respondents were invited to identify all groups from a list of 12 that support the inclusion of singing in school music programs. Overall, the data summarized in Table 24 shows that respondents perceived support for singing from a smaller number of listed groups during the pandemic than they did before the challenges of the pandemic set in. A pre-pandemic count of 6904 indicates that music teachers across Canada felt high support for singing and were able to identify seven or eight (7.31) different groups that work to maintain and sustain singing experiences for students in schools. This total count dropped sharply to 3199 during the pandemic, which meant that respondents were feeling less support from these groups for singing in schools during the 2020-2021 and were only able to identify three or four (3.39) from the list of 12.

Table 24  
*Groups Supporting Singing in School Music Programs*

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
<b>Education Ministry</b>	5.48%	378	1.91%	61
<b>School Board</b>	7.52%	519	2.78%	89
<b>Division/District Administrators</b>	5.81%	401	2.44%	78
<b>School Administrators</b>	9.75%	673	7.47%	239

(table continues)

Parents/Guardians	10.04%	693	8.78%	281
Community at Large	8.21%	567	4.63%	148
Music Education Consultants/Supervisors	8.07%	557	8.66%	277
Music Teachers	11.15%	770	18.35%	587
Other Teachers	7.89%	545	7.35%	235
Students	9.92%	685	13.72%	439
Music Education Associations (e.g., Ontario Music Educators Association, Canadian Music Educators' Association)	8.72%	602	13.00%	416
Music Community Associations (e.g., Manitoba Choral Association, Choral Canada)	7.44%	514	10.91%	349
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6904</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3199</b>

The downward shifts among music teacher respondents' perceived support for singing in schools is depicted clearly in Figure 26. Before the onset of the pandemic, the highest counts (greater than 600) for five groups identified by respondents as supporting the inclusion of singing in school music were: music teachers (770), parents (693), students (685), school administrators (673), and music education associations (602). During the pandemic, the highest counts (greater than 300) emerged for four groups: music teachers (587), students (439), music education associations (416), and music community associations (349). While we would expect ongoing support for incorporating singing in schools from music teachers and their professional organizations, it is interesting that students were identified as a group that wants or feels the need to continue singing at school in the pandemic context. **This finding is a caution to the profession to not overlook students as an influential group in advocacy efforts for restoring safe ways to carry on with vocal and choral learning in schools moving forward.**

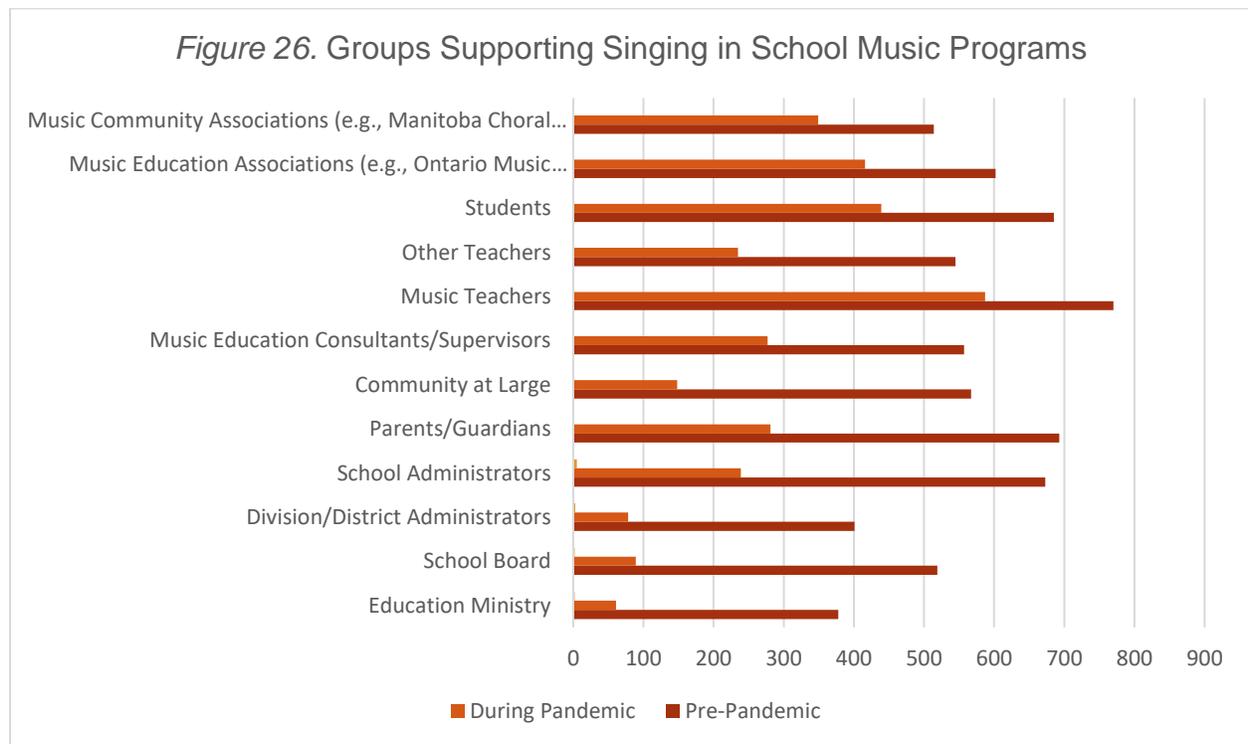
Pre-pandemic, moderately high counts (greater than 500) were found for the following five groups opined by at least half of the respondent pool as supporters for the incorporation of singing in schools: community at large (567), music consultants/supervisors (557), other teachers (545), school boards (519), and music community organizations (514). During the pandemic, moderately high counts were much lower (between 200 and 300) and only four groups were identified by about one quarter of the respondent pool: parents (281), music education consultants (277), school administrators (239), and other teachers (235).

**While parental support dropped to moderate levels during the pandemic, the voices of students' families and their influence on educational decision-making should not be overlooked by music educators wanting to secure a strong place for singing in school music programs again in the years ahead. Music education leaders, and especially consultants where they exist across the country, have an important role to play in providing much needed curriculum and instructional leadership for reimagining pathways for continuing singing at school. Where**

**consultants are not in place, other music education leadership models should be explored to increase capacity, thereby ensuring that music educators can support students’ musical understandings through singing alongside of other modes of learning. This group can provide support to music teachers, as well as school administrators who are preoccupied with pressures to shape new practices and support entire teaching staffs across all curriculum areas. Collegial support for singing in schools remained at the moderate level before and during the pandemic, which is as important for music teachers to give as it is to receive.**

It was disconcerting to find that the highest levels of authority for education in Canada, division administrators (401) and education ministries (378), were identified less often than all other groups by respondents as ones who support the inclusion of singing in schools in the normalized pre-pandemic context. This finding held true for the atypical current pandemic context as well—division administrators (78) and education ministries (61) were identified even less often as groups that support singing in school music programs. During this pandemic crisis it was surprising to find that school boards (89) were identified as offering lower levels of support considering parents, whom they represent, seemingly offer higher levels of support. Encouragement from the community at large (148) also declined during the pandemic which is not surprising because they can no longer benefit from hearing students sing live at school music concerts and productions.

Figure 26. Groups Supporting Singing in School Music Programs



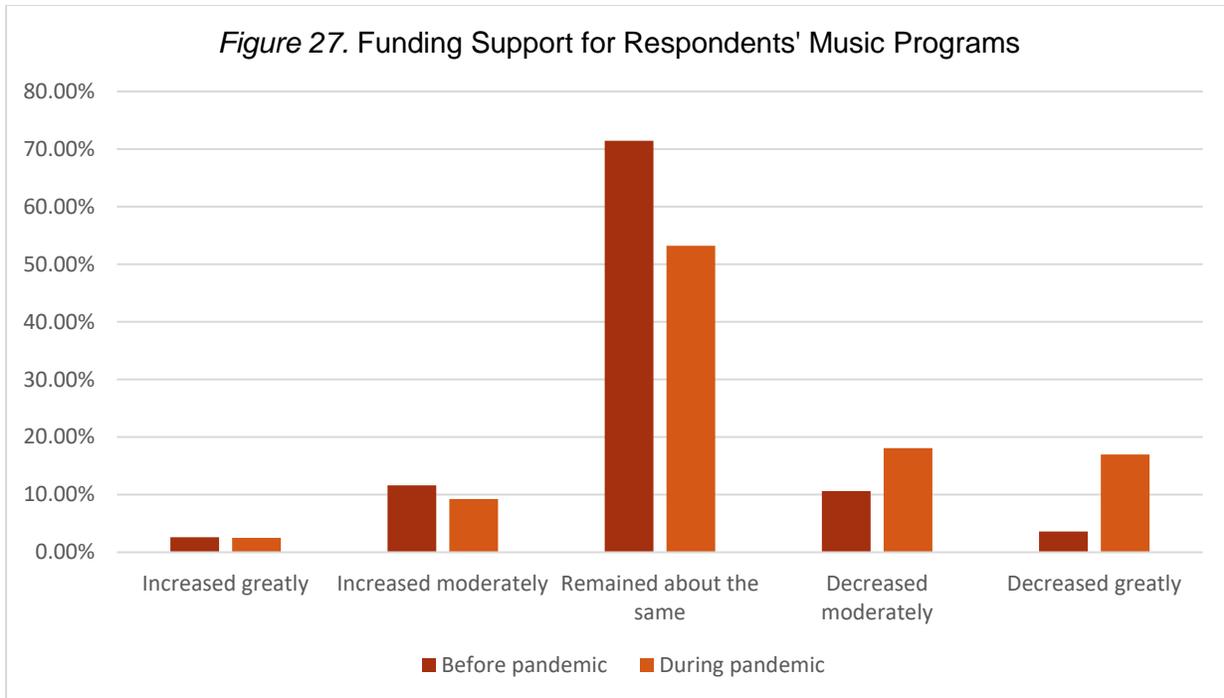
**Authorities in education should heed the findings of a recent Canadian study on the prevention of teacher burnout during the pandemic cited in *The Conversation Canada* (Sokal, Babb, & Eblie Trudel (2020) confirming that perceived support matters a lot to teachers' resiliency, recovering efficacy, and overall coping. Support is crucial for music teachers' resiliency, recovery efforts, and overall coping with teaching during a pandemic. Now is the time for education ministries, division/district administrators, and school leaders to augment efforts to provide wraparound support for school music teachers, as teachers work to sustain singing as foundational to the development of musical literacy, confront significant interruptions to their teaching practices, reclaim music classrooms, and rebuild programs.**

### ***Funding Support for School Music Programs***

Items 12 and 13 were geared to gain insights into school funding patterns for respondents' music programs before the start of and during the pandemic. Response data for these items presented below suggest that funding cuts for school music programs were not as severe as expected. Table 25 and the accompanying Figure 27 show that funding to support over 85% of respondents' music programs remained the same (71.46% or 571), increased moderately (11.64% or 93), or increased greatly (2.63% or 21) in the three years preceding the arrival of the coronavirus. Small numbers of respondents reported that funding for their music programs decreased moderately (10.64% or 85) or decreased greatly (3.63% or 29) during that same three-year period. Over the 2020-2021 school year, during the pandemic crisis, about 65% of the respondent pool answered in the same way, a 20% drop from 85%. Amid the pandemic, funding for music programs reportedly remained about the same (53.24% or 427), increased moderately (9.23%), or increased greatly (2.49% or 20). It is important to note, however, about one third of responding music teachers indicated that funding for their programs indeed did decrease moderately (18.08% or 145) or decrease greatly (16.96% or 136).

Table 25  
*Funding Support for Respondents' Music Programs*

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
Increased greatly	2.63%	21	2.49%	20
Increased moderately	11.64%	93	9.23%	74
Remained about the same	71.46%	571	53.24%	427
Decreased moderately	10.64%	85	18.08%	145
Decreased greatly	3.63%	29	16.96%	136
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>802</b>



We do know that additional funding has come forward from provincial/territorial and federal governments to support Canada's education systems' responses to COVID-19 (People for Education, 2020). Hundreds of millions of Canadian dollars have been spent over the last year on school re-opening plans, health and safety protocols, adapting in-person learning environments, creating new online learning environments, investing in connectivity, purchasing online resources and supports for teachers, and so on. It is difficult to know if these investments have been enough, or if there will be more challenges ahead that will affect future funding for school music programs. It will be important to continue to track funding patterns over the next three years to see if there is any further decline in funding for school music programs. **Division/district administrators and school administrators must recognize that support for music education includes adequate funding and resources for comprehensive programs that include singing.**

### ***Location of Choral/Music Education Classes***

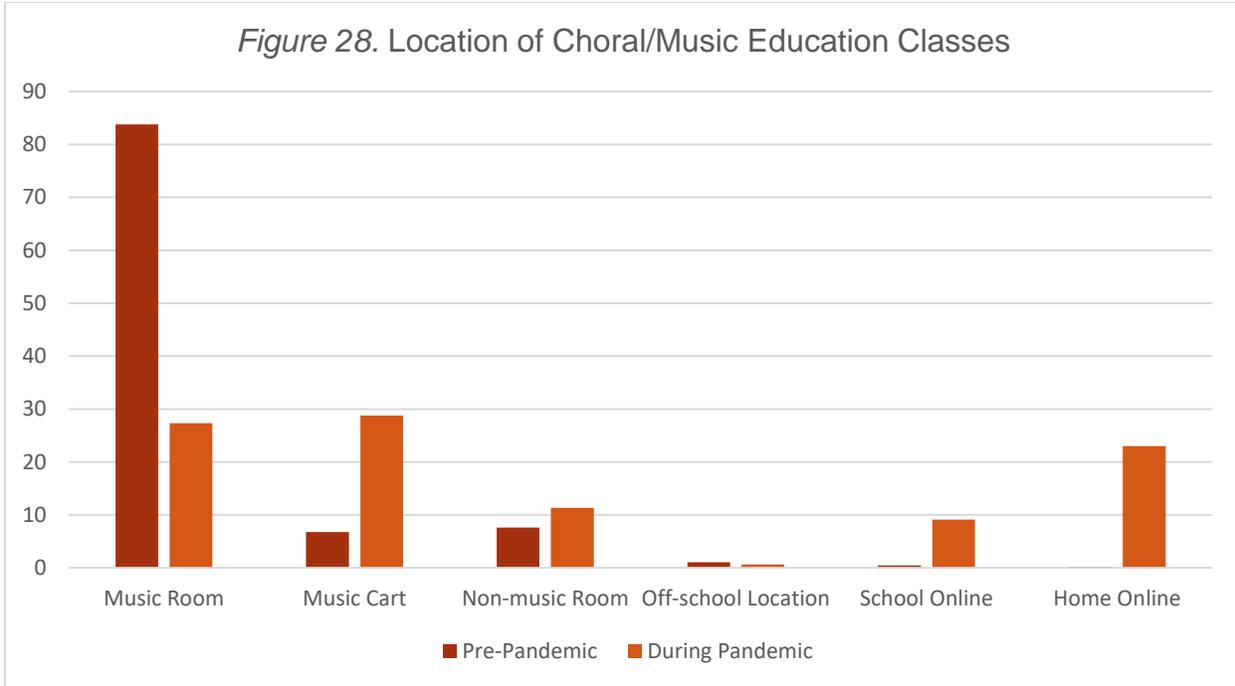
Choral/music teachers consider designated music rooms as among the necessary supports and resources for providing students with optimal learning environments. The location of music classes appropriate for singing pre- and post-pandemic were targeted in items 14 and 15. Most choral/music teachers (704 or 84%) who completed this survey indeed were teaching in spaces devoted to music education at their schools prior to the pandemic. A much smaller group (64 or 8%) worked in non-music spaces such as gyms or cafeterias. Even fewer (57 or 7%) reported to be travelling from classroom to classroom to teach music to their students, using a cart to transport their music equipment and instructional materials. And, almost no music teachers (9 or 1%) taught at off-school locations such as community centres, and hardly any were teaching online

from home or school (6 or less than 1% combined) before the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the data summary in Table 26 suggests that Canadian music teachers responding to this survey had adequate facilities for teaching music and would have felt supported in that aspect of their work.

Table 26  
*Location of Choral/Music Education Classes*

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
<b>At school in the music room</b>	83.81%	704	27.34%	353
<b>At school travelling to regular classrooms using a cart to transport instructional materials</b>	6.79%	57	28.58%	369
<b>At school in a non-music space (e.g., gym, cafeteria)</b>	7.62%	64	11.31%	146
<b>At an off-school location (e.g., community centre)</b>	1.07%	9	0.62%	8
<b>At school using an online learning platform</b>	0.48%	4	9.14%	118
<b>At home using an online learning platform</b>	0.24%	2	23.01%	297
<b>Total</b>	100%	840	100%	1291

However as indicated by the responses referencing the current pandemic context also summarized in Table 26 and displayed visually in Figure 28 below, the location of choral/music education classes shifted abruptly after COVID-19 began to threaten school communities. Many respondents were working in more than one location within the school which is reflected in the fact that some chose two or more response options. After COVID-19 hit, the number of teachers who had to work out of carts took a huge leap upwards to 369 (29%) from only 57 or 7% pre-pandemic, while the number who remained in music rooms to teach dropped dramatically down to 353 (27%) from 704 (84%). This finding suggests that music teachers' rooms were re-purposed and re-distributed to other teachers to allow for adequate social distancing of students while engaged in non-music learning at school. To continue teaching music during COVID-19, many more respondents (32%) reported to be using online platforms to teach music from home (297 or 23%) or school (118 or 9%). Music teachers who taught from off-school locations stayed about the same and was rarely reported as they worked through the pandemic context (less than 1%). Overall, 77% of the music teachers who completed this survey continued to teach music at schools with their students in various instructional spaces (67%) or used online platforms (9%) to teach students who were at home. A much smaller cohort (23%) spent at least some of their time working and teaching from home using virtual music pedagogies for students who are also learning from home.



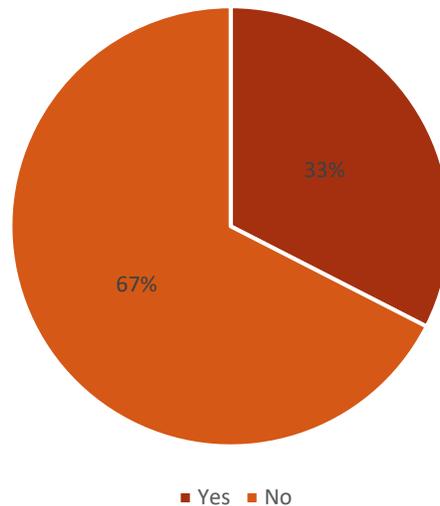
**Modification of Official Music Curriculum Documents and Assessments**

The responses of 664 music teachers to item 16 presented in Table 27 below provide evidence that most provincial and/or territorial governments had not modified their official music curriculum documents and assessment requirements to account for the reality that in many schools throughout our nation singing couldn't be taught, nor could singing-related music outcomes be properly assessed. Approximately one third (216 or 33%) of music teachers participating in the survey reported that they *did* have a modified music curriculum to guide teaching, learning, and assessment in their programs, however, most (448 or 67%) *did not* (see Figure 29). One reason for this finding is that in the first instance, governments around the world were prioritizing and modifying literacy and numeracy curricula in their efforts to minimize learning loss for students in core academic areas (Charland, Deslandes Martineau, Gadais, et al., 2021).

Table 27  
*Modification of Music Curriculum Documents*

Since the onset of the pandemic, have your music curriculum documents and assessment requirements been modified by your provincial or territorial government if singing and singing-related music outcomes could not be taught?		
Response	% of N	Frequency
<b>Yes</b>	32.53%	216
<b>No</b>	67.47%	448
<b>Total</b>	100%	664

*Figure 29. Modified Music Curriculum Documents and Assessment Requirements*



The disruption of school music education environments, particularly those that include singing as a core mode of learning pre-pandemic necessitate the need to rethink and adapt official music curriculum documents for the crisis context. Consequently, in readiness for 2021-2022 and beyond, education authorities across Canada should work with music curriculum leaders in their jurisdictions to prioritize music learning outcomes in essential areas, those that teachers can teach and assess, those that students can learn and acquire. While doing so, it is important to keep in mind that singing is essential and needs to be safely re-positioned in the curriculum. Each provincial/territorial education authority should establish a steering committee made up of representatives of partner organizations (e.g., school boards, universities, superintendents, school leaders, parent councils, teachers, music education organizations) to consider ways to develop safe singing protocols for school music programs if the pandemic persists.

### ***Professional Development Support***

The provision of professional development opportunities is critical for all teachers who are required to remain abreast of changes and new developments in the field of education generally and in their respective specific curriculum specializations during normal circumstances, but the need for such provisions was heightened after March 2020 brought COVID-19 into school communities. Educators were forced to rethink school-as-usual, leading to abrupt mandated changes and adaptations to everyday life in classrooms, including music rooms. Large numbers of seriously underprepared teachers now had to face implementing their programs in different ways; they had no choice but to learn new pandemic protocols and procedures in very short order to survive and carry on. This unique situation is the reason items 17, 18 and 19 were

included on the survey which asked music teacher respondents to identify all areas for which they had received or pursued professional development in support of implementing their music programs along with singing during the pandemic, and to assess the adequacy of those experiences.

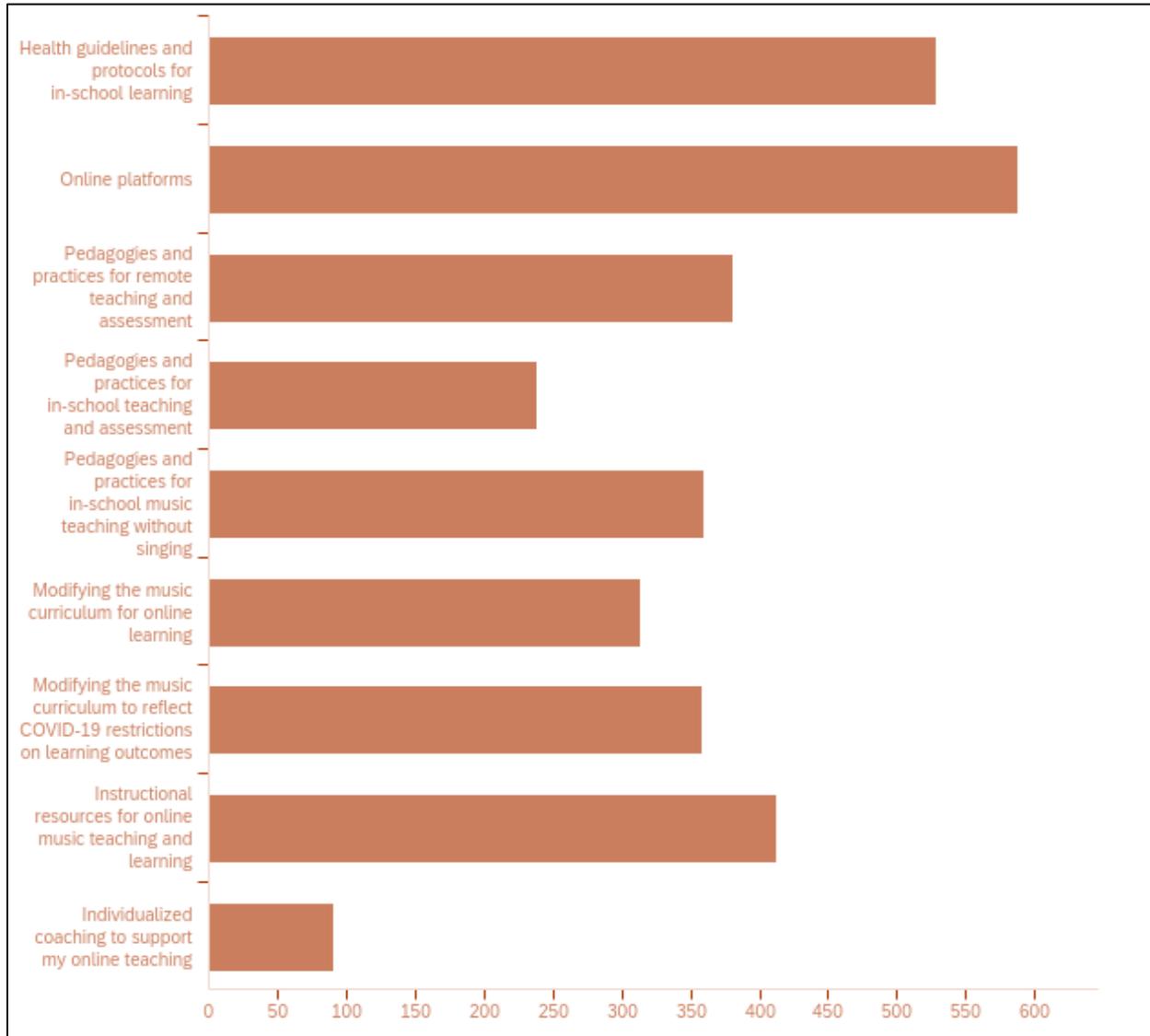
If the entire respondent pool (N=944) answered item 17, Table 28 and Figure 30 counts are indicative that more than half received professional development in two general areas: online platforms (588) and health guidelines and protocols for in-school learning (528), but the rest did not. About 40% of participating music teachers acquired targeted professional learning in five other important areas: instructional resources specifically for online music teaching and learning (413), pedagogies and practices for remote teaching and assessment (381), pedagogies and practices for in-school music teaching without singing (360), and modifying the music curriculum to reflect COVID-19 restrictions on learning outcomes (359). While these numbers are good, it does beg the question of why so many other respondents did not acquire these learnings through PD. The topics on the list were timely and crucial, and yet many responding teachers did not receive what they would have undoubtedly needed in 2020-2021. These findings suggest that many Canadian music teachers were left to their own resources to problem solve and cope. It also suggests that those most responsible for the professional development of music teachers (e.g., school divisions, music education organizations, music education consultants) did not, had not yet, or were simply unable to design and deliver necessary professional learning. It was not surprising that fewer music teachers reported to have taken sessions on pedagogies and practices for in-person teaching and assessment (238) as teachers are already adequately trained for face-to-face pedagogies and assessment practices, albeit some adaptations would be necessary during the pandemic. Considering the costs that would be involved in one-on-one coaching to support music teachers' online instructional delivery, it was not surprising to find just 90 teachers across Canada reporting such mentoring.

Table 28

*Areas of Professional Development Support for Implementing Music Programs*

<b>Areas</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Health guidelines and protocols for in-school learning</b>	16.14%	528
<b>Online platforms</b>	17.98%	588
<b>Pedagogies and practices for remote teaching and assessment</b>	11.65%	381
<b>Pedagogies and practices for in-school teaching and assessment</b>	7.28%	238
<b>Pedagogies and practices for in-school music teaching without singing</b>	11.01%	360
<b>Modifying the music curriculum for online learning</b>	9.60%	314
<b>Modifying the music curriculum to reflect COVID-19 restrictions on learning outcomes</b>	10.98%	359
<b>Instructional resources for online music teaching and learning</b>	12.63%	413
(table continues)		

<b>Individualized coaching to support my online teaching</b>	2.75%	90
<b>Total</b>	100%	3271



*Figure 30. Areas of Professional Development Support for Implementing Music Programs*

While music teachers have a wide array of experiences to draw upon for teaching music, from listening and moving, to composing and improvising, playing various instruments, reading music, or conducting historical/cultural music inquiries, none have been more restricted during the pandemic than singing and playing wind instruments. Many jurisdictions in Canada did not permit any singing or wind instrument playing indoors at school at times when cases of COVID-19 spiked, and therefore teachers needed to figure out how to work outside or in the virtual environment. At times when cases dropped and ministries allowed singing and wind instrument playing, the

allowances were accompanied by a range of safety protocols (e.g., Cole, 2021). Music teachers for example, had to become familiar with several new rules and recommendations about masking, physical distancing, how students should stand, proper ventilation, and so on. It follows naturally then, that professional development in several key areas to support the implementation of singing in respondents' music programs during the pandemic would have been and continues to be a critical need in the field. The extent to which respondents received specific professional learning for singing safely indoors or using alternative pedagogical strategies in the pandemic context was addressed by item 18.

If all respondents (N=944) answered this item, then the data displayed in Table 29 and Figure 31 is worrisome. Overall counts of 1002 suggest that all teachers likely received training in one area specifically related to the challenges of teaching with singing, and a small number in two areas, but most would have not received training across all five areas listed at the time they completed the survey. The highest count resulted for professional development focusing on health guidelines and protocols for in-school teaching with singing (409), which represents about 43.33% of *N* or less than half overall. About 30% (270) of the music teachers participating in the survey had the chance to learn about modifying their music curriculum to reflect COVID-19 restrictions on music learning outcomes related to singing. Even fewer (less than 20%) received professional development targeting instructional resources for online music teaching through singing (164) or pedagogies and practices for teaching and assessing singing online (120 or 13% of *N*). Small numbers (39 or 4% of *N*) were partnered with a coach to support their online singing teaching.

Table 29

*Areas of Professional Development Support for Implementing Singing in Music Programs*

<b>Areas</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Health guidelines and protocols for in-school teaching with singing</b>	40.82%	409
<b>Pedagogies and practices for teaching and assessing singing online</b>	11.98%	120
<b>Modifying the music curriculum to reflect COVID-19 restrictions on learning outcomes related to singing</b>	26.95%	270
<b>Instructional resources for online music teaching through singing</b>	16.37%	164
<b>Individualized coaching to support my online teaching of singing</b>	3.89%	39
<b>Total</b>	100%	1002

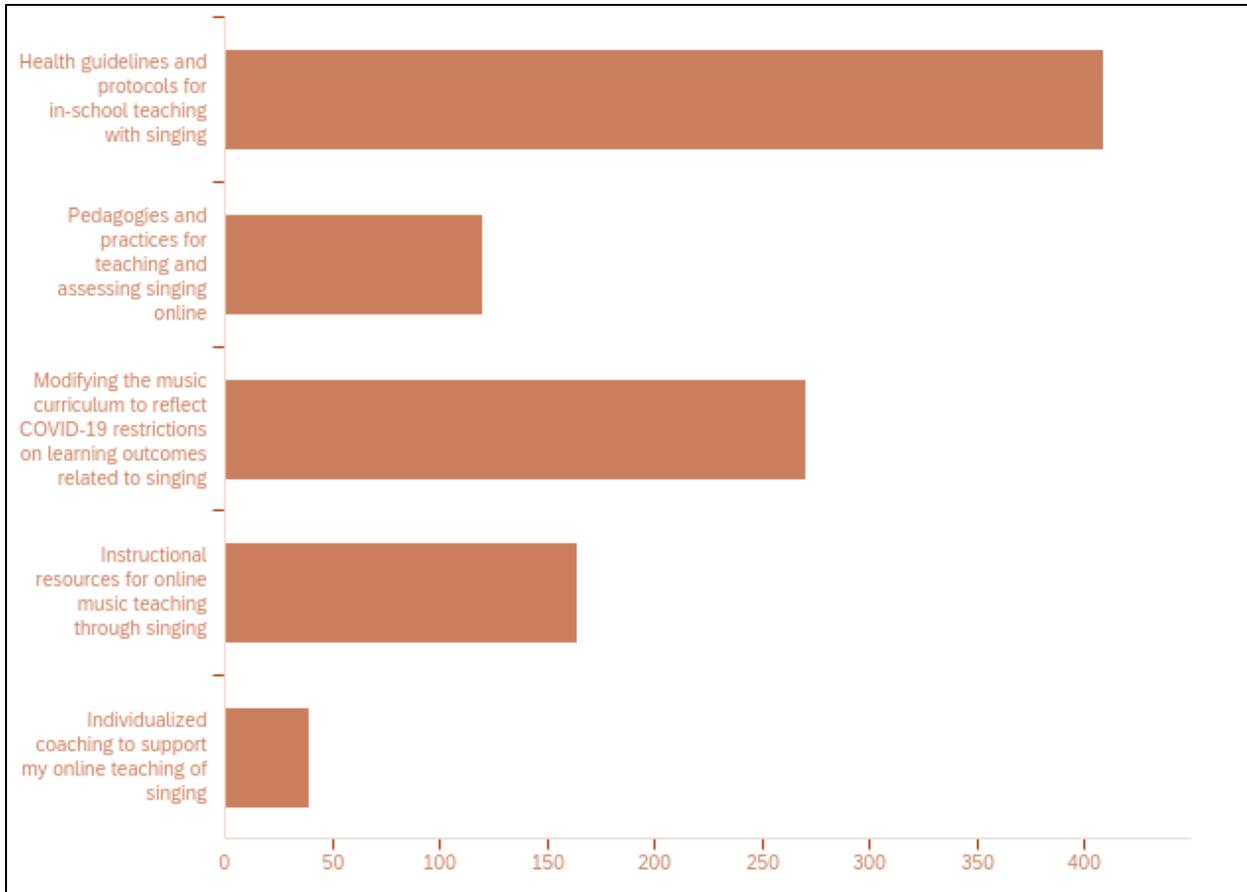


Figure 31. Areas of Professional Development Support for Implementing Singing in Music Programs

For item 19, respondents were asked about the adequacy of the professional development they received and/or pursued for implementing their music programs during the pandemic. The distribution of responses presented in Table 30 and further illustrated in Figure 32 confirm that more than half (55.09%) of Canadian music teacher respondents assessed the level of professional development opportunities they received during the pandemic crisis in 2020-2021 as inadequate. A smaller portion of the respondent pool (38.24%) assessed their professional development training as adequate, and a minority (6.67%) felt training was more than adequate for their needs.

Table 30  
Adequacy of Professional Development Support for Music Teachers

Options	% of Total	Frequency
More than adequate	6.67%	53
Adequate	38.24%	304
Less than adequate	55.09%	438
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>795</b>

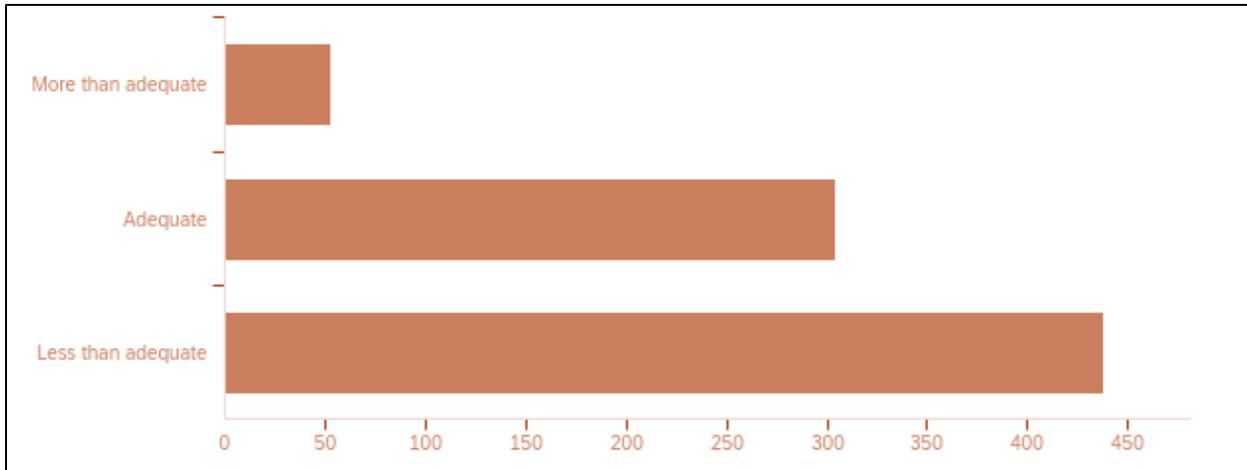


Figure 32. Adequacy of Professional Development Support for Music Teachers

Results for items 17, 18, and 19 provide evidence that general and music-specific professional learning opportunities were being provided for music teachers teaching during the pandemic 2020-2021 school year, but that increased opportunities are required to address high challenge circumstances in the music classroom—teaching using vocal and choral approaches. **The responsibility for professional learning in music education is primarily held by school division/district authorities in collaboration with music education leaders, and music education and music community organizations. All professional development providers need to make coordinated efforts to provide short-term professional development in targeted areas of need for teachers who predominantly use singing and vocal/choral approaches in their music programs and serve students for whom singing, and choirs are crucial components of their school lives (e.g., von Stackelberg, 2020).**

### 3.4 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Implementing the Music Curriculum

Implementing the official music programs guided by curriculum documents published by each Canadian province and territory during the pandemic is solely dependent upon music teachers' abilities to design and implement teaching plans that address mandated music learning outcomes (MLO). Survey item 49 required music teacher respondents to consider a list of 15 sample MLOs and indicate the extent to which they were able to teach them through singing during the pandemic using a five-point Likert scale. The scale was defined in the following way: 1=not able; 2=slightly able; 3=moderately able; 4=mostly able; and 5=fully able. Respondents also had the option of indicating if a MLO was not applicable to their curriculum. Counts for the MLOs range from 594 to 602 which suggests that the sample outcomes were relevant and applicable to most of the pool. The mean score for each MLO is presented in Table 31 below. Mean scores of less than 3.0 indicate that the MLO was difficult for music teachers to address through singing while teaching during the pandemic, while mean scores of greater than 3.0 indicate that the MLO was more straightforward for music teachers to plan and deliver

using singing as part of their program amidst COVID-19. Table 32 offers readers the 5-point Likert data in the form of percent distributions for each MLO.

Well over half of all music teacher respondents were able to design and implement lesson plans for two sample MLOs connected to listening, reflecting, and responding to music evidenced by higher mean scores (3.18) and combined percentages for teachers selecting moderately, mostly, or fully able (67.9% for MLO 12; 68.4% for MLO 13). The two outcomes reported to be easiest to teach using singing were: MLO 12—students analyze songs and choral music excerpts, recordings, and performances and MLO 13—students interpret, construct meaning, and personal responses to songs and choral music. A slightly smaller proportion consisting of 50-60% of the pool selected moderately, mostly, or fully able to plan and teach four additional MLOs (50.25% for 6; 55.25% for 9; 55.45% for 10; 57.02% for 11). Three of these MLOs target helping learners understand music in various contexts related to time, place, and community, as well as music cultures and styles and one focuses on musical creativity: MLO 11—students demonstrate understandings of the role of singing in the lives of people, communities, and society (2.84); MLO 10—students experience and understand various vocal/choral music styles and traditions (2.85); MLO 9—students experience and understand vocal/choral music from various historical times, places, and cultural groups (2.83); and MLO 6—students compose songs using music elements, techniques and compositional tools (2.64).

Less than half but more than one third of music teachers who participated in the survey were moderately, mostly, or fully able to design and implement music lessons for five MLOs using singing. MLO 5—students generate ideas and use inspirational sources to compose songs generated a mean score of 2.5 which is surprisingly low for an outcome that would take little effort to address in either the face-to-face or virtual learning environment. While 44.44% of teachers were able to teach this outcome linked to musical creativity, 55.73% were not or only slightly able to address it. It was also unexpected to learn that only 38.25% of music teachers responding felt they could involve students in self-assessing their learning as performers, composers, and interpreters of vocal/choral music (MLO 14; 2.33). Of the outcomes listed, MLO 14 would not present the same teaching challenges as others that require singing in groups and choral contexts. Findings for MLO 7, MLO 2, and MLO 3 were expected as they all call for performing music through singing which was highly restricted in schools. Some teachers (39.15% or 2.29) were moderately, mostly, or fully able to work with students on interpreting and performing their songs and the songs of others creatively (MLO 7), but most were not able to do the same. About one third (33.44%) or slightly more (35.38%) of the responding pool were up to planning and teaching MLO 3 (2.17) and MLO 2 (2.22) respectively, but the other two thirds were not doing so. These results are predictable because MLO 3 requires students to demonstrate skill and understandings of the basic elements of music through singing and MLO 2 targets the development of singing skills for performing, aurally or by reading music, both of which were very limited because of health protocols.

The most difficult MLOs for music teachers to address were represented by mean scores of 2.01 and lower which included: MLO 4 (2.01), MLO 1 (1.98), MLO 8 (1.97), and MLO 15 (1.96). Less than 30% of responding teachers (29.07%) were moderately, mostly, or fully able to plan and teach so that students could demonstrate their skills and understanding of musical expression, timbre, and form through singing (MLO 4) which leaves almost 70% not working on these fundamental elements in this way. Similarly, only a smaller percentage (27.45%) were positioned to plan and teach MLO 1 which targets the development of solo or group singing skills for performing music. Almost the same small portion (27.18%) of teachers enabled students to demonstrate learning about other subject area through singing, which leaves about 73% refraining from integrating singing across the curriculum. The lowest percentage of teachers (26.51%) planned and taught students to sing as a form of self-expression which means that the large majority (73.5%) of music teachers indicated they were not able to teach MLO 8 which is so foundational to music learning.

Table 31  
Teachers' Mean Responses for Ability to Teach Music Learning Outcomes Through Singing

<b>Music Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1. Students develop singing skills (e.g., pitch matching, breath control, diction, intonation, vocal production...) for performing music alone and in groups.</b>	1.98	601
<b>2. Students develop singing skills for performing music through aural means and reading music notation.</b>	2.22	602
<b>3. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of rhythm, melody, texture, and harmony through singing.</b>	2.17	601
<b>4. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of expression, timbre, and form through singing.</b>	2.01	602
<b>5. Students generate ideas and use inspirational sources to compose songs.</b>	2.50	594
<b>6. Students compose songs using music elements, techniques, and compositional tools.</b>	2.64	597
<b>7. Students interpret and perform their songs and the songs of others creatively.</b>	2.29	595
<b>8. Students sing as form of self-expression.</b>	1.97	600
<b>9. Students experience and understand vocal/choral music from various historical times, places, and cultural groups.</b>	2.83	601
<b>10. Students experience and understand various vocal/choral music styles and traditions.</b>	2.85	597
<b>11. Students demonstrate understandings of the role of singing in the lives of people, communities, and society.</b>	2.84	598
(table continues)		

<b>12. Students analyze songs and choral music excerpts, recordings, and performances.</b>	3.18	592
<b>13. Students interpret, construct meaning, and personal responses to songs and choral music.</b>	3.18	595
<b>14. Students assess their learning as performers, composers, and interpreters of vocal/choral music.</b>	2.33	596
<b>15. Students demonstrate learning about other subject areas through singing.</b>	1.96	596

Table 32

*5-Point Likert Data % Distributions for Ability to Teach Music Learning Outcomes Through Singing*

<b>Music Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>1 Not Able</b>	<b>2 Slightly Able</b>	<b>3 Moderately Able</b>	<b>4 Mostly Able</b>	<b>5 Fully Able</b>
<b>1. Students develop singing skills (e.g., pitch matching, breath control, diction, intonation, vocal production...) for performing music alone and in groups.</b>	50.42%	22.13%	12.31%	9.82%	5.32%
<b>2. Students develop singing skills for performing music through aural means and reading music notation.</b>	39.04%	25.58%	17.28%	10.13%	7.97%
<b>3. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of rhythm, melody, texture, and harmony through singing.</b>	43.09%	23.46%	13.48%	13.14%	6.82%
<b>4. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of expression, timbre, and form through singing.</b>	49.34%	21.59%	13.12%	10.30%	5.65%
<b>5. Students generate ideas and use inspirational sources to compose songs.</b>	24.75%	30.98%	22.39%	13.13%	8.75%
<b>6. Students compose songs using music elements, techniques, and compositional tools.</b>	20.77%	28.98%	23.62%	18.59%	8.04%
(table continues)					

<b>7. Students interpret and perform their songs and the songs of others creatively.</b>	35.80%	25.04%	19.66%	12.94%	6.55%
<b>8. Students sing as form of self-expression.</b>	54.00%	19.50%	10.67%	7.67%	8.17%
<b>9. Students experience and understand vocal/choral music from various historical times, places, and cultural groups.</b>	16.14%	28.62%	22.80%	20.80%	11.65%
<b>10. Students experience and understand various vocal/choral music styles and traditions.</b>	14.24%	30.32%	22.28%	22.28%	10.89%
<b>11. Students demonstrate understandings of the role of singing in the lives of people, communities, and society.</b>	14.21%	28.76%	26.59%	19.23%	11.20%
<b>12. Students analyze songs and choral music excerpts, recordings, and performances.</b>	11.32%	20.78%	24.32%	25.84%	17.74%
<b>13. Students interpret, construct meaning, and personal responses to songs and choral music.</b>	11.43%	20.17%	25.21%	25.21%	17.98%
<b>14. Students assess their learning as performers, composers, and interpreters of vocal/choral music.</b>	33.05%	28.69%	18.79%	11.24%	8.22%
<b>15. Students demonstrate learning about other subject areas through singing.</b>	49.16%	23.66%	14.09%	7.89%	5.20%

Given these results it is reasonable to conclude that curriculum coverage of music learning outcomes through singing during the 2020-2021 school year was incomplete during the pandemic context. It could be that music teachers were able to use other modes of music learning (e.g., instrument playing) in their planning and teaching of music learning outcomes, but it is certain that there would be less coverage of music learning outcomes using singing and choral experiences. It is also likely that Canadian music teachers were unable to address as many music learning outcomes as they were pre-pandemic. **Education ministries along with division/district and school leaders need to consider ways to address the challenges music teachers confronted to address the full range of mandated music learning outcomes outlined in Canadian music curriculum documents, as well as the disparities in students' music learning that accompanies this finding. It is recommended that public health and education ministries review the most current research on safe in-person singing, revise guidelines and safety protocols for singing in schools, and provide the resources and professional development necessary for teachers to implement them. Division/district and school leaders need to provide professional development for music teachers that target pedagogical approaches for all MLO's that teachers identified as difficult to teach but should not have been virtually or in-person.**

### 3.5 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Assessing Students' Music Learning

Music teachers in Canada regularly assess student learning to guide their instructional practices and address students' music learning needs. Assessment in music can be challenging even under optimal circumstances because music teachers have high student enrollments in their programs and limited instructional time that must be devoted to both teaching and assessment. Survey item 50 required music teachers participating in this study to reconsider the list of 15 sample music learning outcomes (MLOs) presented in item 49 and indicate the extent to which they were able to assess them through singing during the pandemic using a five-point Likert scale. The scale was defined in the following way: 1=not able; 2=slightly able; 3=moderately able; 4=mostly able; and 5=fully able. Respondents also had the option of indicating if a MLO was not applicable to their situation. Counts for the MLOs range from 565 to 577 which affirms that the sample outcomes were relevant and applicable to most of the pool. The mean score for each MLO is presented in Table 33 below. Mean scores of less than 3.0 indicate that the MLO was difficult for music teachers to assess through singing during the pandemic, while mean scores of 3.0 or greater indicate that the MLO was easier for music teachers to assess using singing amidst COVID-19. Table 34 presents the 5-point Likert data in the form of percent distributions for each MLO.

It was not surprising that findings for teachers' abilities to assess sample MLOs through singing during the pandemic were closely aligned with findings for teaching them using singing. Close to 60% of music teacher respondents were able to assess two sample MLOs connected to listening, reflecting, and responding to music evidenced by higher mean scores (3.00; 2.95) and combined percentages for teachers selecting moderately, mostly, or fully able (59.7.9% for MLO 12; 58.76% for MLO 13). As was found for

teaching, the two outcomes reported to be most straightforward to assess using singing during COVID-19 were: MLO 12—students analyze songs and choral music excerpts, recordings, and performances and MLO 13—students interpret, construct meaning, and personal responses to songs and choral music. A slightly smaller proportion consisting of 50-55% of the pool selected moderately, mostly, or fully able to assess three additional MLOs (53.68% for 9; 53.17% for 10; 54.39% for 11). These MLOs target the assessment of learners' understandings of music in various contexts related to time, place, and community, as well as music cultures and styles: MLO 11—students' demonstrated understandings of the role of singing in the lives of people, communities, and society (2.79); MLO 10—students' experiences and understandings of various vocal/choral music styles and traditions (2.77); and MLO 9—students' experiences and understandings of vocal/choral music from various historical times, places, and cultural groups (2.77). Just under half (48.23%) of the pool were moderately, mostly, or fully able to assess MLO 6—students compose songs using music elements, techniques, and compositional tools (2.60), which is an outcome related to musical creativity.

Less than half but more than 30% of music teachers participating in the survey were moderately, mostly, or fully able to assess three MLOs using singing. MLO 5—students generate ideas and use inspirational sources to compose songs generated a mean score of 2.49 which like the finding for teaching, is surprisingly low for an outcome that would be relatively easy to evaluate in either the face-to-face or virtual learning environment. While 43.76% of teachers were able to assess this outcome linked to musical creativity, 56.24% were not or only slightly able to assess it. It was also unexpected to learn that only 36.79% of music teachers responding felt they could make judgments regarding students' achievements in self-assessing their learning as performers, composers, and interpreters of vocal/choral music (MLO 14; 2.29). Of the outcomes listed, MLO 14 would not present the same evaluation challenges as others that require performance-based assessments using singing in groups and choral contexts. Findings for MLO 7 was expected because it calls for assessing through singing performance which was often just not possible in schools during 2020-2021. Some teachers (35.38% or 2.22) were moderately, mostly, or fully able to appraise students on interpreting and performing their songs and the songs of others creatively (MLO 7), but most were not able to do so.

Findings for MLO 2 and MLO 3 were foreseeable as they too call for students to perform music through singing to demonstrate their learning which has been highly restricted in schools. Even fewer teachers who reported some ability to teach these outcomes, indicated they could assess them. Only 29% and slightly less (26.01%) of the responding pool were able to assess MLO 3 (2.01) and MLO 2 (1.98) respectively, but many respondents were not doing so. MLO 3 requires students to show their skills and understandings of the basic elements of music through singing and MLO 2 requires demonstrations of students' developing singing skills for performing, aurally or by reading music, both of which were nearly impossible for students to demonstrate because of health protocols.

The four most difficult MLOs for music teachers to assess were the same ones that teachers found most difficult to teach. These four MLOs are represented by low mean scores for: MLO 8 (1.95), MLO 15 (1.94), MLO 4 (1.91), and MLO 1 (1.86). Less than 30% of responding teachers (25.65%) were moderately, mostly, or fully able to assess MLO 8—students sing as a form of self-expression and several were not (55.32%) or only slightly (19.02%) to make these judgments. A small portion (27.07%) of teachers reported some ability to assess other subject area content through singing, but 72.92% were not (52.21%) or were only slightly able (20.71%) to assess learning outcomes via song integration. About the same proportion (26.21%) of respondents were moderately, mostly, or fully able to assess so that students could demonstrate their skills and understandings of musical expression, timbre, and form through singing (MLO 4) which leaves 73.79% not (55.56%) or only slightly able (18.23%) to assess fundamental elements in this way. A very small percentage (22.71%) were positioned to assess MLO 1, solo or group singing skills for performing music, but the greatest portion of respondents (77.29%) were not (56.67%) or only slightly able (20.62%) to assess it.

Table 33  
Teachers' Mean Responses for Ability to Assess Music Learning Outcomes Through Singing

<b>Music Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1. Students develop singing skills (e.g., pitch matching, breath control, diction, intonation, vocal production...) for performing music alone and in groups.</b>	1.86	577
<b>2. Students develop singing skills for performing music through aural means and reading music notation.</b>	1.98	576
<b>3. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of rhythm, melody, texture, and harmony through singing.</b>	2.01	576
<b>4. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of expression, timbre, and form through singing.</b>	1.91	576
<b>5. Students generate ideas and use inspirational sources to compose songs.</b>	2.49	569
<b>6. Students compose songs using music elements, techniques, and compositional tools.</b>	2.60	566
<b>7. Students interpret and perform their songs and the songs of others creatively.</b>	2.22	571
<b>8. Students sing as form of self-expression.</b>	1.95	573
<b>9. Students experience and understand vocal/choral music from various historical times, places, and cultural groups.</b>	2.77	572
<b>10. Students experience and understand various vocal/choral music styles and traditions.</b>	2.77	568
<b>11. Students demonstrate understandings of the role of singing in the lives of people, communities, and society.</b>	2.79	570
(table continues)		

<b>12. Students analyze songs and choral music excerpts, recordings, and performances.</b>	3.00	567
<b>13. Students interpret, construct meaning, and personal responses to songs and choral music.</b>	2.95	565
<b>14. Students assess their learning as performers, composers, and interpreters of vocal/choral music.</b>	2.29	568
<b>15. Students demonstrate learning about other subject areas through singing.</b>	1.94	565

Table 34

*5-Point Likert Data % Distributions for Ability to Assess Music Learning Outcomes Through Singing*

<b>Music Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>1 Not Able</b>	<b>2 Slightly Able</b>	<b>3 Moderately Able</b>	<b>4 Mostly Able</b>	<b>5 Fully Able</b>
<b>1. Students develop singing skills (e.g., pitch matching, breath control, diction, intonation, vocal production...) for performing music alone and in groups.</b>	56.67%	20.62%	7.97%	9.19%	5.55%
<b>2. Students develop singing skills for performing music through aural means and reading music notation.</b>	50.87%	22.22%	11.11%	9.72%	6.08%
<b>3. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of rhythm, melody, texture, and harmony through singing.</b>	50.69%	20.31%	13.02%	9.38%	6.60%
<b>4. Students demonstrate skill and understandings of expression, timbre, and form through singing.</b>	55.56%	18.23%	12.15%	8.16%	5.90%
<b>5. Students generate ideas and use inspirational sources to compose songs.</b>	27.59%	28.65%	20.21%	14.76%	8.79%
<b>6. Students compose songs using music elements, techniques, and compositional tools.</b>	25.09%	26.68%	22.61%	14.31%	11.31%
(table continues)					

<b>7. Students interpret and perform their songs and the songs of others creatively.</b>	40.28%	24.34%	17.16%	9.81%	8.41%
<b>8. Students sing as form of self-expression.</b>	55.32%	19.02%	9.42%	8.20%	8.03%
<b>9. Students experience and understand vocal/choral music from various historical times, places, and cultural groups.</b>	19.06%	27.27%	23.43%	18.36%	11.89%
<b>10. Students experience and understand various vocal/choral music styles and traditions.</b>	18.49%	28.35%	23.24%	17.78%	12.15%
<b>11. Students demonstrate understandings of the role of singing in the lives of people, communities, and society.</b>	18.07%	27.54%	23.68%	18.25%	12.46%
<b>12. Students analyze songs and choral music excerpts, recordings, and performances.</b>	15.87%	24.34%	20.99%	21.69%	17.11%
<b>13. Students interpret, construct meaning, and personal responses to songs and choral music.</b>	17.17%	24.07%	21.24%	21.24%	16.28%
<b>14. Students assess their learning as performers, composers, and interpreters of vocal/choral music.</b>	37.85%	25.35%	15.67%	11.97%	9.15%
<b>15. Students demonstrate learning about other subject areas through singing.</b>	52.21%	20.71%	14.51%	5.66%	6.90%

It can be recalled that results for survey item 29 showed that music instructional time was lost during the pandemic for about 35% of Canadian music teachers participating in this study (see Table 23). We also learned that more than half of the respondent pool faced challenges in both teaching (see section 3.4) and assessing most (10 of 15) sample music learning outcomes through singing. This loss of music instructional time for so many teachers coupled with inability to teach and assess music learning outcomes effectively through singing as mandated by provincial/territorial curriculum documents is very concerning. Once schools re-open and can operate more normally, students will need increased support to recuperate what they will have lost from being unable to learn music through singing since the mushrooming of coronavirus.

**Education ministries, divisional/district administrators, and music education leaders need to take swift collaborative action to develop efficient assessment strategies for music education for their jurisdictions that can be implemented in the year ahead. A comprehensive set of music assessment data gathered through multiple methods is advocated for all students, which will require additional supports for music teachers who will have to implement the assessments. Profiles of students' music learning are necessary for music educators to address learning gaps, especially related to singing, and then to design teaching and learning plans that address the gaps. Assessment data is required to steer recovery efforts as music teachers begin work on rebuilding curricular and extra-curricular school music programs that include singing.**

### ***Summative Reporting of Music Grades***

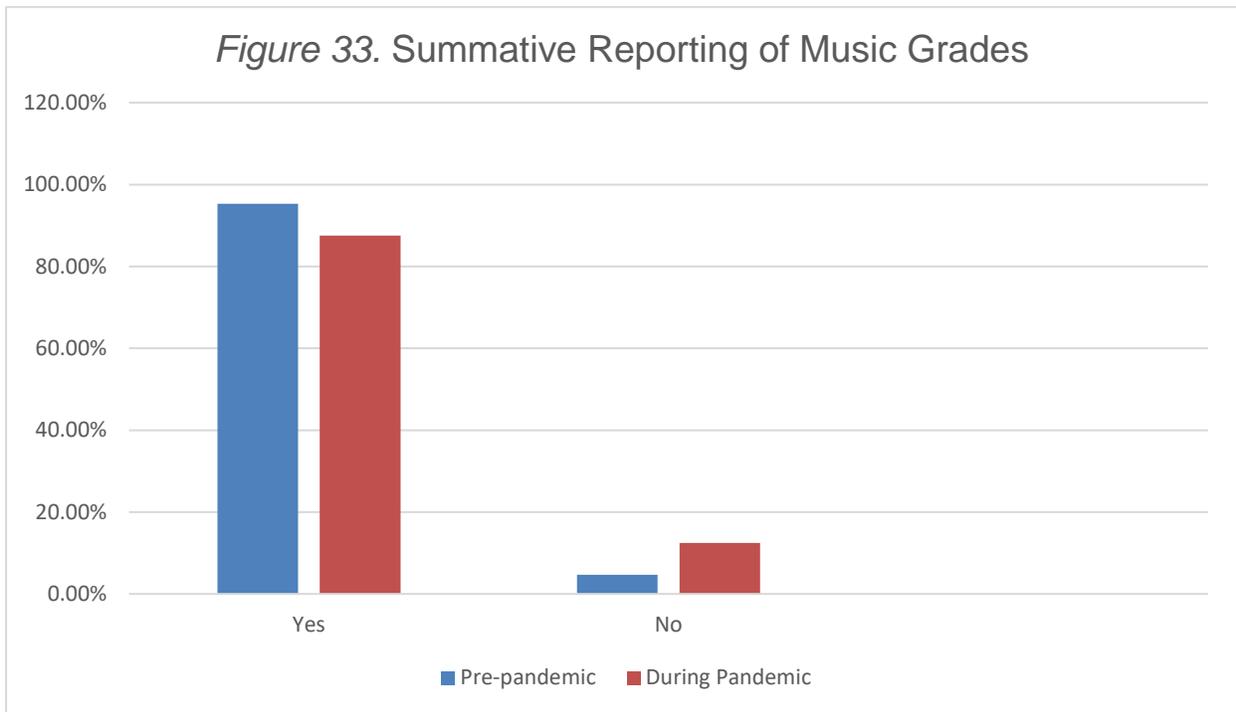
All provincial/territorial education authorities in Canada have report card guidelines and policies that teachers are required to follow (for example, see Manitoba Education and Training, 2018). Teachers of all subject areas, including music, have a responsibility to assess and evaluate students' progress in relation to the mandated learning outcomes outlined in official curriculum documents in their respective jurisdictions on an ongoing basis. Typically, the report card provides a summary of what a student has accomplished since the last reporting period and sets goals or next steps for the student's learning for the next period. Teachers report information on subject area achievements to students and parents/guardians using some combination of grades, ratings, and comments. Report cards that include grades for students' growth and achievement as music learners are typically completed three times each school year by Canadian music teachers.

Items 51 and 52 of the survey were posed to music teacher respondents to examine if the pandemic had affected their report card practices. Participants were first asked if they formally reported students' summative music grades to parents/guardians before the onset of the pandemic (item 51). They chose from two options, yes or no. Then they were asked if they continued to formally report students' summative music grades to parents/guardians during the COVID-19 pandemic, using the same options (item 52). It can be seen from Table 35 and the cluster bar graph (Figure 33) below that the pandemic had little impact on music teachers' formal reporting of music learning to students and their parents/guardians. Almost as many music teachers responded "yes"

to reporting during the pandemic (514 or 87.56%) as they did prior to it (551 or 95.33%). A relatively small number (73 or 12.44%) were not formally reporting students' music achievement to parents/guardians at the time they completed this survey during the pandemic, and an even smaller number (27 or 4.67%) were not reporting before the pandemic. While it is acknowledged that music teachers were feeling under-supported and valued during this pandemic period, this result is gratifying because subject areas that are evaluated and formally included on report cards do reflect the importance of essential learning areas.

Table 35  
Summative Reporting of Music Grades

Options	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	% of N	Frequency	% of N	Frequency
Yes	95.33%	551	87.56%	514
No	4.67%	27	12.44%	73
Total	100%	578	100%	587



The finding that formal reporting of music grades continued during the pandemic suggests that schools made efforts to continue with music teaching and learning and it remains a valued area of the curriculum in Canadian schools. It is important to note, however, that reports would have been based upon modified curricula—what teachers were able to teach and assess in 2020-2021. It is reasonable to conclude that profiles of students' music learning for the 2020-2021 pandemic-impacted year would be incomplete. **It goes without saying that formal reporting of music grades should continue following local division/district guidelines and policies moving forward.**

**If necessary, modifications or adaptations to music report cards should be aligned with modified music curricula, particularly in school situations where essential areas of music learning are being restricted from being taught and adequately assessed. Realistically, students can not be expected to learn and progress through all music learning outcomes included in official music curricula in the pandemic context due to fewer interactions between students and music teachers and health protocols that are significantly restricting some modes of music learning, such as singing.**

### **3.6 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Music Educators**

#### ***Music Teachers' School Situations***

Survey item 20 required music teacher respondents to read 19 statements related to their school situations during the pandemic and use a 7-point Likert scale to indicate the extent to which each statement was true for them. The scale was defined in the following way: 1=never true; 2=rarely true; 3=sometimes but infrequently true; 4=neutral; 5=sometimes true; 6=usually true; and 7=always true. Respondents also had the option of indicating if a statement was not applicable to their situation. Counts ranged from 634 to 750 which suggests that all statements were relevant and applicable to most of the pool. The mean score for each statement is presented in Table 36 below. Mean scores less than 4.0 indicate that the statement is not true or less frequently true for most respondents, while mean scores greater than 4.0 indicate that the statement is true or more frequently true for respondents. Table 37 offers readers the 7-point Likert data in the form of percent distributions for each school situation statement.

There were four school situations found to be sometimes, usually, or always true for many respondents. Most music teacher respondents are permitted to teach music at school with students while following health protocols, evidenced by a high mean score of 5.37 and a high number (82.47%) who selected the range of points on the true side of the scale. A high portion of respondents (72.52%) work at schools that are for the most part hosting student teachers in non-music areas (mean score=5.11). Unfortunately, it is true that a lot of Canadian music teachers (77.20%; mean score=5.09) are experiencing a decline in their mental health and sense of well-being at work. Another despairing truth is that school music programs have continued but singing was suspended for some of that time for 35% of those responding, often for 12%, and totally suspended for 30%. Only 20% of respondents reported that statement 2 was never, rarely, or infrequently true for them which means singing is continuing in the music programs for a minority during the pandemic.

Mean scores falling between 3.5 and 4.0 were found for three school situation statements—15, 16 and 17 which translate into somewhat mixed results. While many teachers in non-music subject areas are still hosting student teachers, the same does not hold true for music teachers evidenced by results for statement 17. While some (35.65%) reported on the true side of the scale, a larger group (39.91%) disagreed, while the remainder stayed neutral (24.45%). A mean score of 3.72 for this statement

related to music student teachers suggests that many practicing music teachers did not get the much-needed help and support that pre-service teachers provided to non-music teachers during the pandemic, and that university students preparing to become music specialists may not have had access to practicum courses in music classrooms which is a critical component of their professional studies. Almost half (48.1%) of music teachers responding indicated that participation in effective choral music professional development sessions during the pandemic was not true for them, and slightly less than half (41.8%) said the statement was true for them, yielding a mean score of 3.70. Similar results (mean score=3.56) were found for statement 15 with just more than half of all respondents (50.8%) reporting a feeling of connection to choral/music education organizations during the pandemic was not true for them. On the other hand, 35.3% reported that they did feel connected to these organizations, and the rest remained neutral. Since many music teachers work alone in their schools, the networking, professional support, and sense of belonging they receive from staying connected to their music education and music community organizations is critical. Efforts should be made by music organizations to continue to reach out to and provide whatever support they can for music teachers.

Lower mean scores between 3.0 and 3.49 resulted for six school situation statements which are given in descending order—10 (3.15), 9 (3.14), 14 (3.05), 6 (3.05), 7 (3.02), and 13 (3.00). Coupled with the percentages displayed in Table 37, it seems clear that most (60.4%) music teachers who responded to the survey lack self-efficacy with teaching music and singing in virtual environments using online platforms (statement 10). This shortfall in confidence is less disconcerting given that the highest proportion (61.68%) of music teacher respondents are not teaching music online as shown by the Likert data for statement 9. Regretfully, job satisfaction waned during the pandemic for music teachers who use singing with results showing only 25.1% agreement with statement 14, and the largest portion (61.9%) disagreeing it is true for them. For those who teach strictly choral music, job dissatisfaction is further verified by results for statement 13 with even less (20.6%) agreeing that the statement was true for them and most disagreeing (62.1%) with it. Statement 6 results show that about one third (33.8%) were permitted to teach students to sing at school while employing health protocols, but for a much greater number (62.2%) this situation did not hold true. Similar results were found for statement 7 with about one third (31.9%) of the respondent pool able to teach singing as they follow ministerial guidelines, but the majority (62.7%) did not have guidelines produced by their ministries that would enable singing as a music learning mode at their schools during COVID-19.

Table 36  
Teachers' Mean Responses to School Situation Statements

School Situation Statements	Mean	Frequency
1. The school music program has been suspended so I am not teaching singing related courses.	2.72	709
2. The school music program has continued but singing has been suspended.	5.00	740
3. I continue to teach music using individual singing.	2.26	735

(table continues)

4. I continue to teach music using group singing	2.64	737
5. I can teach music at school with students while following local health protocols.	<b>5.37</b>	747
6. I can teach singing at school with students while following local health protocols.	3.05	740
7. I can teach singing at school while following ministerial guidelines.	3.02	730
8. I am provided with the resources I need to teach singing at school in keeping with the ministerial guidelines.	2.58	725
9. I continue to teach music from school/home using online remote platforms, while my students learn from home.	3.14	689
10. I am confident teaching music and singing virtually using online learning platforms.	3.15	702
11. I continue to teach music using a hybrid approach to accommodate students learning at school while others learn at home.	2.34	659
12. I have been re-assigned to non-music teaching duties.	<b>2.18</b>	713
13. I am still satisfied with my job as a choral music teacher.	3.00	694
14. I am still satisfied with my job as a music teacher who uses singing.	3.05	729
15. I feel connected with choral/music education organizations.	3.56	739
16. I have participated in effective professional learning and development for choral/music teachers.	3.70	734
17. I still can host a student teacher candidate in music.	3.72	634
18. My school can still host student teachers in non-music subject areas.	5.11	706
19. My mental health and well-being at work have declined.	5.09	750

Table 37

*7-Point Likert Data % Distributions for School Situation Statements*

At any time during the pandemic...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. The school music program has been suspended so I am not teaching singing related courses.	<b>51.62%</b>	7.62%	6.49%	6.06%	15.80%	4.37%	8.04%
2. The school music program has continued but singing has been suspended.	11.89%	3.92%	5.27%	2.03%	<b>34.86%</b>	12.30%	29.73%

(table continues)

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3. I continue to teach music using individual singing.	<b>54.56%</b>	15.10%	9.39%	1.90%	12.93%	2.45%	3.67%
4. I continue to teach music using group singing.	<b>48.17%</b>	12.35%	10.45%	2.17%	16.01%	5.43%	5.43%
5. I can teach music at school with students while following local health protocols.	4.95%	2.41%	4.69%	5.49%	<b>35.21%</b>	15.80%	31.46%
6. I can teach singing at school with students while following local health protocols.	<b>39.86%</b>	12.16%	10.14%	4.05%	16.89%	8.38%	8.51%
7. I can teach singing at school while following ministerial guidelines.	<b>40.27%</b>	11.92%	10.55%	5.34%	16.30%	6.03%	9.59%
8. I am provided with the resources I need to teach singing at school in keeping with the ministerial guidelines.	<b>49.38%</b>	12.97%	6.90%	9.52%	9.52%	5.66%	6.07%
9. I continue to teach music from school/home using online remote platforms, while my students learn from home.	<b>31.49%</b>	13.35%	16.84%	4.79%	22.50%	3.77%	7.26%
10. I am confident teaching music and singing virtually using online learning platforms.	<b>22.51%</b>	19.09%	18.80%	13.39%	15.95%	6.98%	3.28%
11. I continue to teach music using a hybrid approach to accommodate students learning at school while others learn at home.	<b>57.36%</b>	11.08%	6.22%	5.92%	10.47%	3.34%	5.61%
(table continues)							

12. I have been re-assigned to non-music teaching duties.	<b>66.62%</b>	5.19%	6.03%	1.82%	11.78%	2.95%	5.61%
13. I am still satisfied with my job as a choral music teacher.	<b>25.22%</b>	21.47%	15.42%	17.29%	11.24%	5.62%	3.75%
14. I am still satisfied with my job as a music teacher who uses singing.	<b>26.61%</b>	20.44%	14.81%	13.03%	13.72%	7.54%	3.84%
15. I feel connected with choral/music education organizations (e.g., Choral Canada).	13.94%	19.22%	17.46%	14.07%	<b>21.65%</b>	8.66%	5.01%
16. I have participated in effective professional learning and development for choral/music teachers.	17.85%	13.22%	17.03%	9.67%	<b>25.34%</b>	9.40%	7.49%
17. I still can host a student teacher candidate in music.	<b>27.29%</b>	7.26%	5.36%	24.45%	13.88%	5.84%	15.93%
18. My school can still host student teachers in non-music subject areas.	11.33%	3.12%	3.26%	9.77%	26.20%	10.91%	<b>35.41%</b>
19. My mental health and well-being at work have declined.	2.80%	4.00%	8.93%	7.07%	<b>39.47%</b>	18.13%	19.60%

The lowest mean scores presented in descending order resulted for the following six statements: 1 (2.72), 4 (2.64), 8 (2.58), 11 (2.34), 3 (2.26), and 12 (2.18). It is gratifying to learn that statement 1 on balance was untrue for 65.7% of music teacher respondents across Canada, however school music programs have indeed been suspended at least some of the time during the pandemic for almost one third (27.5%). Based on Likert data for statement 1, it is likely that at least 10% of music programs across Canada were fully suspended, denying thousands of students the opportunity for musical development through any medium. This finding is devastating given that music is so vital to students' lives, engagement at school, and overall aesthetic development. Findings for statements 3 and 4 corroborate the fact that both individual and group singing were being shut down as approaches to teaching music in the schools of survey

respondents with only 19.1% continuing to teach music using individual singing and 26.9% continuing with group singing. The vast majority of music teachers were no longer employing individual singing (79.1%) or group singing (71.0%) which suggests they used other modes of learning such as listening, composing, or playing non-wind instruments. **While all educators acknowledge that the health and safety of students is the highest priority, largely eliminating singing from school music programs seems purely reactive. Moving forward educational authorities and music education leaders should reassess risk and intentionally take steps to cautiously bring singing safely back into schools.**

It was not surprising to learn that a large portion of teachers (69.3%) had not yet been provided with necessary resources to teach singing at school that align with ministerial guidelines because in most school situations across Canada, even the guidelines did not yet exist (statement 7). A small number (21.3%) of music teacher respondents were fortunate enough to have both ministerial guidelines and proper resources, but **findings for statement 8 exposed serious inequities between educational jurisdictions across the country for music teachers and the students and families they serve. It appears that some governments have been slow to innovate, and they need to take stock of what has been done, and if necessary, move ahead quickly with music curriculum modifications that accommodate singing, adapted assessment tools and requirements, and related resources for music teachers who use singing.** It is satisfying that statement 11 held true for a small minority (19.4%) of the music teacher sample pool. The need to continue to teach using hybrid models to accommodate both in-school and at-home learners simultaneously has been a contentious issue for teachers during the pandemic. Thankfully, almost 75% of music teachers in Canada do not need to “text and drive” at the same, an analogy often used in the media to describe teaching during the pandemic. A fear that music teachers in Canada have been re-assigned to teach in non-music areas seems unfounded. Statement 12 held completely true for very few Canadian music teachers (5.61%) while the greatest percentage (77.84%) reported that this situation was never, rarely, or very infrequently true for them. Results suggest that during an urgent situation such as when a school principal had difficulty finding a substitute teacher, a music teacher might occasionally be assigned to cover a non-music class, but generally music teachers continued to teach music during the pandemic.

### ***Impacts on Music Teachers' Working Conditions***

Under normal circumstances, music teachers require ample planning time because they are responsible for delivering instruction to multiple diverse groups of students every day. In any given week, it would not be unusual for a music teacher to plan for 30 or 40 periods of instruction, so at the best of times planning is a huge undertaking. Unlike their non-music teaching colleagues, music teachers do not reap the benefit of having others in their schools who also teach music, nor can they then partake in timesaving collaborative planning. In fact, most music teachers are isolated and simply must plan on their own. A day of productive and creative pedagogy in the music classroom requires substantial planning time for making instructional decisions, selecting teaching

strategies and repertoire, collecting resources, preparing instructional materials, organizing musical equipment, and/or designing and implementing assessments. Moreover, COVID-19 has added planning burdens to music teaching jobs, like mapping out seating plans for social distancing or thinking about necessary sanitizing protocols between classes, and so on. It is for these reasons, that survey item 21 was posed to music teachers in Canada. We wondered how much additional time each week it was taking for teachers to plan for music teaching since the onset of the pandemic.

The counts presented in Table 38 and displayed visually in Figure 34 illuminate some of the realities experienced by music teachers during the pandemic. Overall, about 75% of those responding to this item (N=752) spent over 3 hours additionally each week on planning. Of these most were spending 3 to 4 hours (28.06%) more each week planning, followed by reports of 5 to 6 hours (17.29%), more than 10 hours (13.16%), 7 to 8 hours (9.97%), and 9 to 10 hours (3.99%). A smaller percentage offered accounts of needing to spend only 1 or 2 hours (17.95%) of extra time planning each week, and less than 10% of the sample (72 teachers or 9.57%) indicated that they had not spent any additional time planning for music teaching and learning in the COVID-19 environment.

Table 38  
*Additional Time Required for Planning to Teach Music*

Options	% of Total	Frequency
More than 10 hours	13.16%	99
9 to 10 hours	3.99%	30
7 to 8 hours	9.97%	75
5 to 6 hours	17.29%	130
3 to 4 hours	<b>28.06%</b>	211
1 to 2 hours	17.95%	135
No additional time	9.57%	72
<b>Total</b>	100%	752

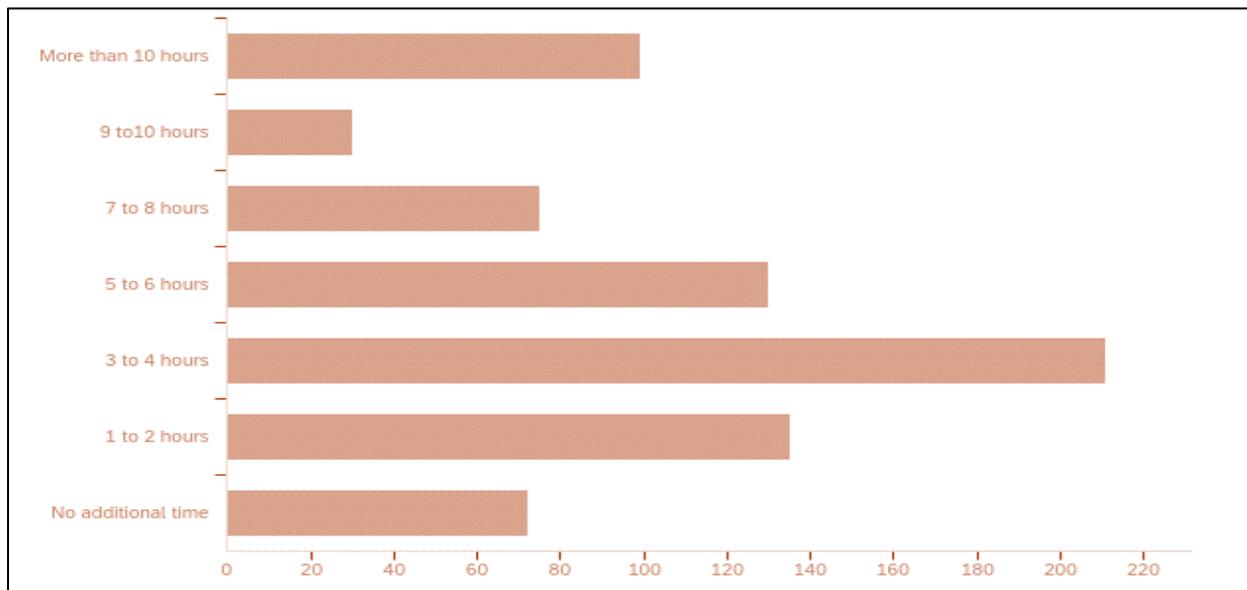


Figure 34. *Additional Time Required for Planning to Teach Music*

Teachers in Canada have contractual rights to “prep time” which is essentially a block of time for self-directed professional work such as planning field trips, reviewing resources, grading, returning calls or emails to parents/guardians, preparing communications for families, setting up instructional materials, meetings with administration, or whatever they determine needs to be done. Prep time is variable among teachers in Canada and the number of minutes per week depends on district/divisional employers, school designations, provincial/territorial jurisdictions, and the level of schooling taught. Prep time ranges from about 20 to 45 minutes a day for an elementary teacher, and secondary teachers typically have longer prep periods that can range from 60 to 75 minutes each day or more. Prep time is important for teachers of all subject areas as it provides them with uninterrupted time to focus on delivering their programs.

During these uniquely difficult circumstances and the need for additional planning time, it would seem reasonable to find ways to schedule more prep time for music teachers during regular school hours. The data displays in Table 39 and Figure 35 show that for about 25% of music teachers responding to survey item 19, scheduled prep time had increased moderately (115 or 15.35%) or increased greatly (7 or 9.48%), a gesture of support genuinely need at this time. Regrettably, this was not the case for most (75%) music teachers in Canada whose scheduled prep time remained about the same (415 or 55.41%), decreased moderately (75 or 10.01%) or decreased greatly (73 or 9.75%) in the pandemic climate. Music teachers in some provinces in Canada already have less time to prep during school hours than others, so these results are very worrisome for that cohort. **District/division administrators across the country should acknowledge music teachers’ needs for increased planning and scheduled prep time during the school day and take action to provide it. Such actions could go a long way to counter teacher fatigue and job dissatisfaction in the complex pandemic environment.**

Table 39  
*Scheduled Prep Time During School Hours*

Options	% of Total	Frequency
Increased greatly	9.48%	71
Increased moderately	15.35%	115
Remained about the same	<b>55.41%</b>	415
Decreased moderately	10.01%	75
Decreased greatly	9.75%	73
<b>Total</b>	100%	749

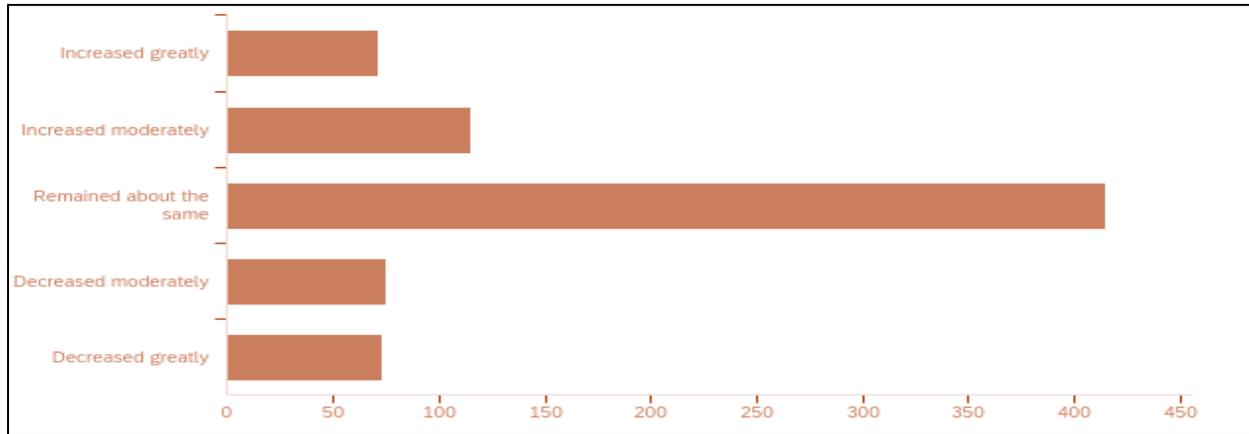


Figure 35. Scheduled Prep Time During School Hours

It has been well-documented that re-opening schools in the fall of 2020 caused overwhelming stress for Canadian teachers (Wong, 2020). In part, the rising workload has been created as much by increases in non-teaching related work such as disinfecting classroom furniture and materials, as it has been by increases in teaching-related work. Survey item 23 focused on how the issue of non-teaching duties has impacted working conditions for music teachers.

The counts presented in Table 40 and displayed visually in Figure 36 add more details to the picture being painted about school music teaching during the pandemic. Overall, close to 90% of those who responded to this item (N=756) spent over an hour additionally each week on non-teaching tasks. Of these most spent 1 to 2 hours (49.87%) more each week, followed by reports of 3 to 4 hours (20.11%), 5 to 6 hours (9.52%), 7 to 8 hours (3.44%), more than 10 hours (2.12%), and 9 to 10 hours (1.85%). A small percentage (13.10%) of music teachers indicated that they had not spent any additional time on non-teaching related duties at the time they completed this survey which is advantageous for them and surely supported their well-being in 2020-2021.

Table 40  
*Additional Time Spent on Non-Teaching Duties*

Options	% of Total	Frequency
More than 10 hours	2.12%	16
9 to 10 hours	1.85%	14
7 to 8 hours	3.44%	26
5 to 6 hours	9.52%	72
3 to 4 hours	20.11%	152
1 to 2 hours	49.87%	377
No additional time	13.10%	99
<b>Total</b>	100%	756

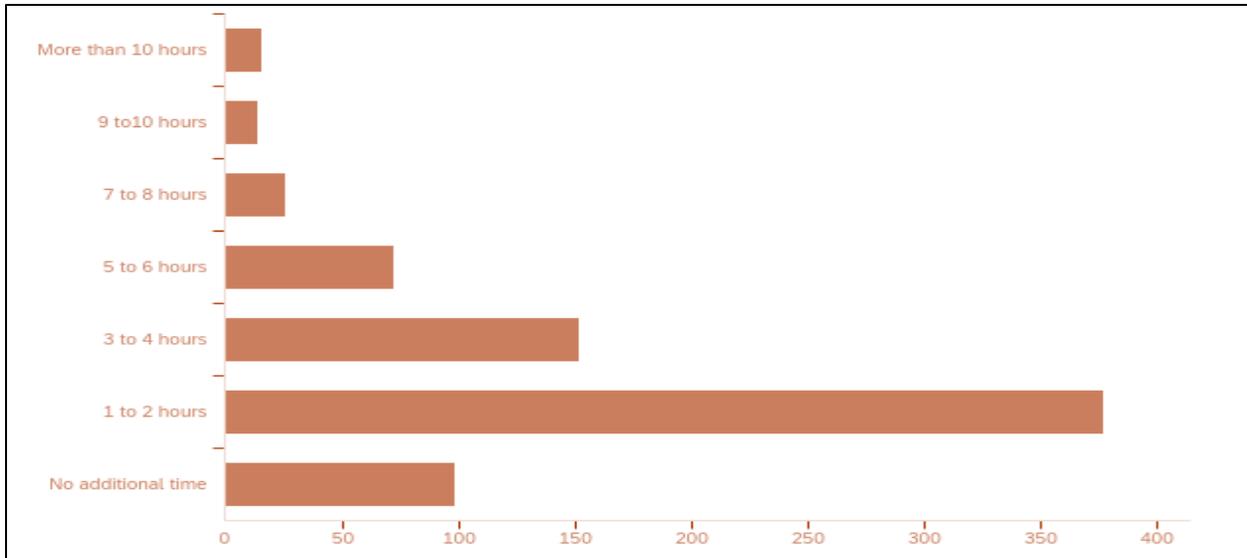


Figure 36. Additional Time Spent on Non-Teaching Duties

Many teachers supplement classroom resources and supplies out of their personal funds under normal circumstances, and music teachers are no exception. However, the need to boost individual teachers' classroom budgets may well be higher during the pandemic if one considers the possibility of needing to purchase better technology, resources, and software for teaching music digitally, or additional materials and equipment so that music students do not have to share. Beyond technology and resources would also be the need to pay for professional development sessions or courses to better prepare music educators for teaching remotely, skills which few teachers had acquired prior to the onset of the crisis. If professional development was not provided by employers as quickly as needed, some teachers would no doubt proactively pursue it on their own and pay out of pocket. Survey item 24 was designed then to ascertain the level of strain placed on the personal finances of music teachers during the coronavirus pandemic.

The results presented in Table 41 and Figure 37 confirm that personal money spent by most music teachers in Canada on instructional resources and/or professional development combined during the pandemic was relatively low. The largest groups representing about 75% of the responding pool spent \$1.00 to \$200.00 (313 or 41.40%), \$201.00 to \$400.00 (158 or 20.90%), or did not spend any of their own money at all (115 or 15.21%). On the other hand, a smaller but still sizeable group representing almost 25% of the cohort spent a lot of personal money on resources and professional learning. This group reported to have spent \$401 to \$600.00 (79 or 10.45%), over \$1000.00 (46 or 6.08%), \$601.00 to 800.00 (23 or 3.04%), or \$801.00 to \$1000.00 (22 or 2.91%).

Table 41

*Personal Money Spent on Instructional Resources and Professional Development*

Options	% of Total	Frequency
Over \$1000.00	6.08%	46
\$801.00 to \$1000.00	2.91%	22
\$601.00 to \$800.00	3.04%	23
\$401.00 to \$600.00	10.45%	79
\$201.00 to \$400.00	20.90%	158
\$1.00 to \$200.00	<b>41.40%</b>	313
No money	15.21%	115
<b>Total</b>	100%	756

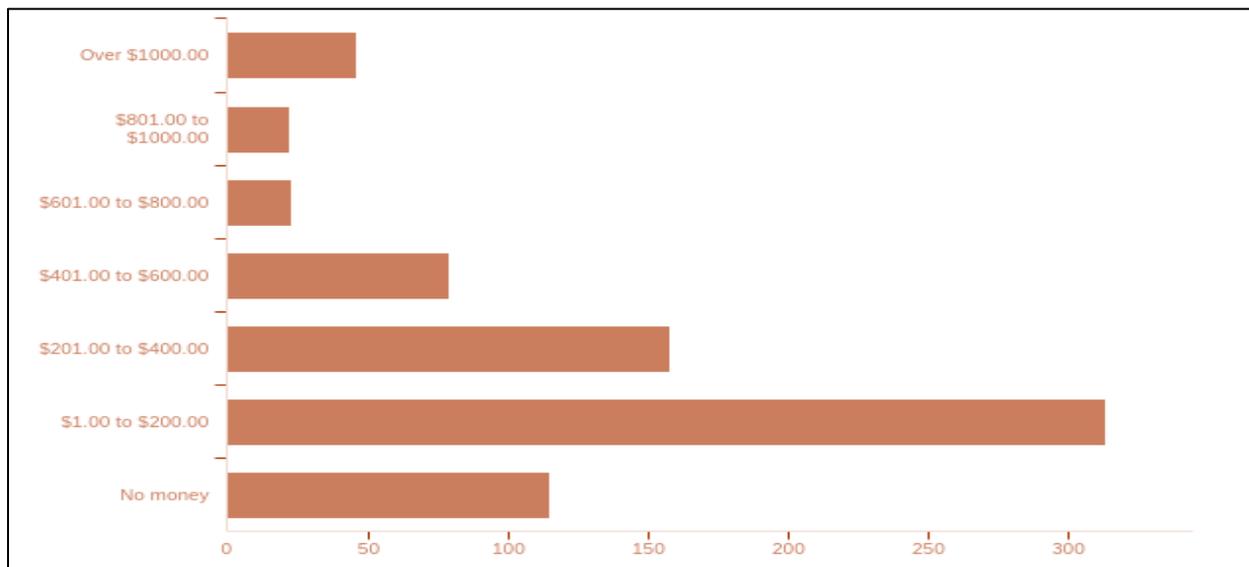


Figure 37. Personal Money Spent on Instructional Resources and Professional Development

In summary, working conditions for most Canadian music teachers during the pandemic have not been ideal. Survey results confirm that thoughtful responses to the current situation mean that music teachers were spending three hours or more each week planning for teaching and learning, as well as at least another hour or more on non-teaching related tasks. Music teachers were working much harder than usual, yet they were not compensated with increased prep time. Rather, prep time scheduled during the day remained the same or in some cases, time was taken away. Although teachers were not directly asked, it is probably safe to say that teachers were taking more time away from their personal and family lives than normal, just to keep up with their responsibilities. Furthermore, music teachers dipped into their personal funds and spent it on instructional supplies, resources, and professional development in their efforts to adapt their practices. **Education authorities contemplating recovery efforts must heed the voices of music teachers in Canada. Strategizing ways to improve working conditions to resurrect the spirits and restore their well-being and life-balance is needed.**

### 3.7 Listening to the Voices of Music Teachers

Item 53 of the survey asked music teacher respondents the following question—What additional comments can you share to help us better understand the impact of the pandemic on singing in your school music program? This opportunity to provide additional information about pandemic influences generated 1,775 lines of transcribed text from nearly 40% of all participants (378 of 995 or 38.58%). The narrative account below written by an Ontario teacher respondent offers a window into the experiences of those teaching music in Canada since March 2020 and serves as a powerful introduction to the themes distilled from the comments of Canadian music teachers that are presented in this section of the report.

*Before the pandemic I sang every day in every single class I taught. Singing was like breathing for me and essential in delivering fun, meaningful, expressive, thoughtful, and continuous music programming from grades 4 to 8. Most of my students have zero music training. I'm all most of them will ever get. I created meaningful relationships and a lifelong respect for music education within the thousands of students I teach, and I have taught. When students play wind instruments, I know they are more successful because of the singing and music instruction they received in the junior grades. The pandemic has had a resounding impact on my mental health, resilience, and well-being because I cannot sing anymore. In the Ottawa area, we are not allowed to sing indoors or outdoors. It has caused me to reinvent everything I teach in music. It is hard to be a good music teacher without a singing voice. I feel like my soul has been cut out of my teaching. Sadly, next year is looking the same. How devastating that I will have potentially two years of students who don't know the joy and challenges of music. I really hope that you can advocate a way forward for us.*

These written accounts provided by music teachers were analyzed and grouped into 14 thematic categories which are displayed in Table 42. The most prevalent themes recurred at “higher” levels of frequency when compared to other others listed, representing key ideas that were at the fore of music teachers’ thinking and experiences at school during the pandemic at the time they completed the survey. Themes found less frequently are indicated by the “moderate” and “lower” level terms. Figure 38 is a word cloud or visual representation of the qualitative data collected for this question. It displays the most prominent or frequent words that teachers used in their comments. The importance of the words is reflected by the size of the font and the heavier bold font.

Table 42

*The Voices of Music Teachers: Pandemic Impacts on Singing in School Music Programs*

Thematic Category	Frequency
<b>1 Teacher frustration with singing restrictions</b>	Higher
<b>2 Hampered music teaching and student learning caused by restrictions</b>	Higher
(table continues)	

3	Hampered music teaching and student learning caused by loss of music classrooms	Higher
4	Decreased enrollments in choirs and choral ensemble courses	Higher
5	Decreased opportunities for extra-curricular singing-related ensembles	Higher
6	Decreased opportunities for student performances	Moderate
7	Well-being concerns	Moderate
8	Challenges implementing health measures	Moderate
9	Re-imagining music programs	Moderate
10	Decreased student engagement	Moderate
11	Inconsistent health and safety directives	Lower
12	Teacher support for singing restrictions	Lower
13	Concerns about recovering singing in schools	Lower
14	Differing restrictions for music and physical education	Lower

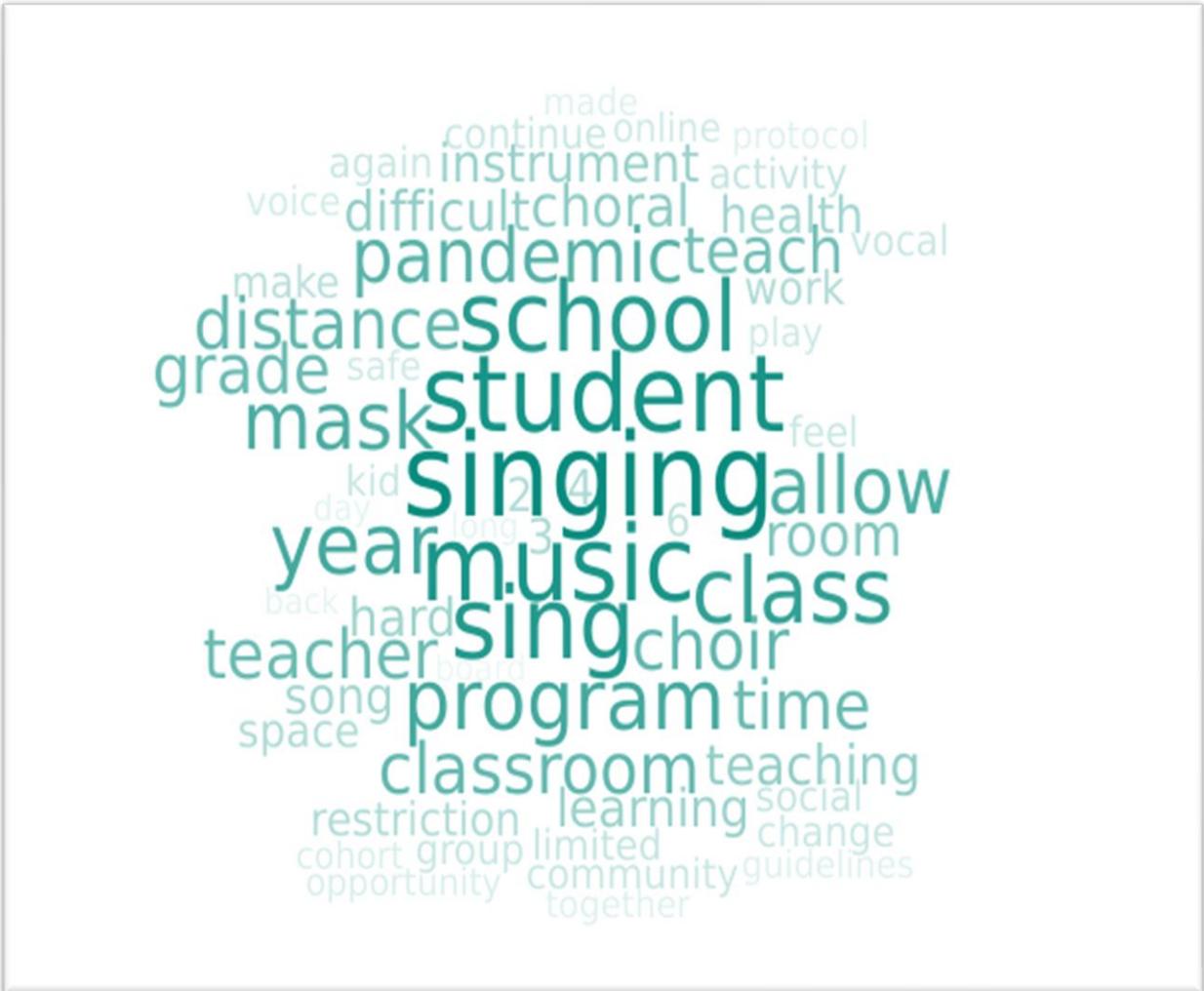


Figure 38. Word cloud generated from teachers' comments for item 53.

*Theme 1. Teacher frustration with singing restrictions.* Several comments reflected teachers' outright frustration with the health and safety restrictions that were placed on singing at school during the pandemic and a range of other impacts this situation had on them—"Not being able to sing with the students this year has been extremely limiting and frustrating." The unhappiness and sadness teachers felt for Canadian students is summarized by this potent but simple statement, "not being able to come together in joy and join our voices hurts." Shifting restrictions were both stressful and frustrating for music teachers. It is easy to empathize with this teacher who dealt with confusing and conflicting information, "Initially my school was going to cut our music program (thankfully they did not), but we have since had four reorganizations this year, resulting in four changes to my timetable. First our protocol was no singing, but humming/speaking [was] okay; then it was no singing/no humming."

Education and health authorities shifted from banning singing all together in schools to very limited opportunities to use singing at school. The challenges this situation presented to music teachers and their students are reflected in these sample sentiments, "It has been very difficult for both myself and my students to adjust to a music program with either no singing or later in the school year with very limited singing in a non-music space" and "I have not been allowed to include singing in any way, shape, or form inside the school since the onset of the pandemic. This has been severely detrimental to the music class in general." The negative influence of COVID-19 restrictions permeated the walls of music classrooms and spilled into school communities more wholly, as illustrated by this teacher's poignant reflection, "The impact of no singing has deeply affected me, and I would say the school at large."

*Theme 2. Hampered music teaching and student learning caused by restrictions.* The severe restrictions on singing hampered music teachers' abilities to use singing as a mode of music learning which in turn limited what their students were able to learn in, about, and through singing in music classes. Teachers made comments such as, "I am teaching only about 40% of the music curriculum" or "I simply cannot cover any of the singing outcomes and the performing outcomes are limited as well." One teacher estimated that "students have lost more than a year of developing their singing skills." Another cautioned that "it will take a lot of skills and the right approach to get middle school students to sing again, now that they haven't [sung] for over a year." After ministerial restrictions were finally loosened around singing in one Canadian jurisdiction, a music teacher reported that "most students ha[d] forgotten how to control and use their voices".

It was evident in some commentary analyzed that teachers noted progress in one area of music learning while learning in other areas declined. An observation made by one respondent illustrates this finding, "The students' sense of rhythm has improved but their melodic sense has greatly diminished. We listen to more music, but without directly trying to sing, they do not internalize their learning." Another shared the detrimental impacts of the restrictions on relationality in the classroom, an important element of effective music teaching and learning: "Malgré les efforts techniques autour des mesures, il ya a une perte considerable de le dimension humaine, naturelle et

relationnelle générée par le chant dans son état normal et vial, par le rassemblement autour de la musique.”

These kinds of decimating impacts resulting from the health and safety restrictions on students’ music learning while engaged in singing were shared repeatedly. The curtailment of singing made it “extremely difficult for music teachers to develop a sense of pitch” among student singers or “to work on cultivating the ability to hear and sing in parts.” In reference to one high school music program, a choral teacher lamented, “these are students preparing for university auditions and music careers who have not been able to engage in any singing-based music making at school.”

*Theme 3. Hampered music teaching and student learning caused by loss of music classrooms.* A review of music teachers’ comments for question 53 provided insights into obstacles teachers faced traveling around the inside of their schools and outside to teach from carts and how this situation hampered both music teaching and student learning. After losing designated music classrooms, teachers wrote about how difficult it was for them to teach in satisfactory ways which, in their minds also hampered their students’ music learning and overall achievement in 2020-2021. One music teacher spoke out about how difficult it was “to adjust to travelling from classroom to classroom on a cart and or teaching from the gym and not being able to have [their] classroom space for planning and teaching and access to resources, visuals, and instruments.” In another case, the music teacher taught outside on a wagon for the first five weeks of school. The respondent told this story— “The school rented a speaker which was hooked up to a microphone so my voice could carry for the students to hear me. I learned to put all my lessons on an iPad using Microsoft Office platforms which I played on my personal portable Bluetooth speaker. A great deal of time was spent travelling to different parts of the school as different levels were restricted to their own cohort areas outside. At each of these areas I struggled to find a location where the wi-fi would work to be able to project the music so the students could sing along.”

Several music teachers elaborated on this theme. One described how moving from room to room to deliver music classes “disables a fluid delivery of the music outcomes because every room is a different layout.” This teacher talked about how being confined to a cart that needed to carry all the instructional music materials required to deliver multi-level instruction for diverse groups of students was so difficult. The traditional arc of music teaching and learning and efforts to differentiate instruction could not be achieved during the pandemic because other teachers like this one had to keep lesson plans for diverse groups alike to fit everything onto their carts. Traveling on carts presented even more challenges when singing was being used by teachers, “once again every room is laid out differently and has to be considered when social distancing from everyone. Instruction of voice has been made harder too because I am required to wear a mask in front of my students because I move between so many class bubbles.”

*Theme 4. Decreased enrollments in choirs and choral ensemble courses.* Canada’s music teachers reported decreased student enrollments in choirs and school choral course offerings during the 2020-2021 pandemic year which surfaced as a dominant

theme within their comments. This decline in student participation has been catastrophic for some music teachers who have spent years building strong, vibrant choral programs. The damage is apparent in the reflections of this teacher—"The restrictions around COVID have decimated the choral arts field. As a choral conductor and classroom music teacher, it is absolutely devastating. My choirs have all moved to online, but I've lost 70% of the kids after years of building." Choral programs have suffered during the pandemic in part because of the limitations on the numbers of students who were permitted to sing in a choir at any one time. As one teacher shared, "now I am limited to having 10 singers in choir due to rules surrounding singing in schools." Some students simply chose not to join ensembles at all in 2020-2021 and therefore for music teachers, "it is a huge struggle to maintain the numbers and skill development." This bleak reality was deeply felt by music teachers across Canada—"It was heartbreaking to see the program numbers essentially dissolve coming into this year."

Teachers offered a range of other explanations for declines in enrollments in their choral ensembles and courses. For instance, some reasoned that students refrained from continuing to enroll in choral offerings because parents were "nervous about the riskiness of their students taking vocal music in the return to the classroom" or they believed that choir was a dangerous "super-spreader" of COVID-19. Other teachers felt that the mandate to sing with masks was a deterrent for some students. It is difficult to sing with a mask, uncomfortable, and unnatural. Moreover, some students were "intimidated by wearing masks while singing". The suspension of choral programs at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, surely impacted enrollments for the remainder of the year in some programs as evidenced by this teacher's remarks, "The suspension of the high school program [choral] was the most heart breaking. Less than half of the students enrolled when it was reinstated in February."

At the time of this survey, music teachers were already worried about declining enrollments in choral offerings for the next school year, "I don't know what the numbers are looking like for next year, but I can't imagine they will be good." Without the ability to demonstrate the joy of singing in choral ensembles to incoming students, teachers expressed the concern that "there will be significantly less signing up for the courses." Other teachers already knew that they would be dealing with lower enrollments in their choral offerings for 2021-2022 which is evident in these two sample statements, "My numbers are very low for next year's grade 8s and 9s, so I have lost an entire chamber choir and two blocks of concert choir". And from another, "Next year registration numbers have been hit hard! My classes have lost 2/3 of the singers."

*Theme 5. Decreased opportunities for extra-curricular singing-related ensembles.*

Compounding the layers of loss for Canadian students, music teachers wrote again and again about the impacts of COVID-19 on the decreased or non-existent opportunities that their students have had to participate in extra-curricular singing-related ensembles at school since March 2020 and some of the reasons for those declines. For some, music teachers' choir programs were "put on hold" or simply "cancelled for the time being". One early service music teacher affirmed this point, "It's my first year at the

school, but they had two school choirs (grades 2/3 and 4/5). They both have been cancelled for the time being.” The justification for eliminating ensembles such as choirs included reasons such as the following: “having 50+ students in the same room was not viable,” “no other spaces were available to rehearse and hold class”, or “our choir is multi-grade 6-8 and would involve the interaction of every cohort.” Technological issues were also cited as a reason for the suspension of extra-curricular choral/vocal programs as exemplified by this response, “No extra-curricular activities have been happening in person and without adequate technology to hold rehearsals, these ensembles have been scarce.”

The sizeable impact in some school contexts was also evident, “We had many extra-curricular choral and musical theatre programs. All of that stopped since the pandemic.” In relation to their extra-curricular singing-related ensembles, music teachers expressed hope and anticipation for a swift return of programs—“On a hâte qu'on puisse faire à nouveau de la chorale dans les activités parascolaires, ça fait 3 sessions qu'on ne peut pas et ça compte parmi mes activités vedettes.” There is a sense among music teachers that recovery will be difficult because many students will have not experienced the delight of participating in ensembles like choirs for months and months. One respondent remarked, “Choir is non-existent now. I worry that it will be hard to get it back, to get it back into the timetable. Kids will have forgotten what choir is.”

*Theme 6. Decreased opportunities for student performances.* At more moderate levels, music teachers’ statements incorporated their thoughts and feelings about severely constrained to no opportunities to perform with their students during the pandemic as portrayed by this teacher’s comment, “We had a very active choral performance program, but all of that stopped since the pandemic.” The lack of music performing opportunities for students attending K-12 schools had several negative consequences from shifting away from choosing music performing as a career to destroying school spirit. To illustrate, one music teacher offered these words, “I worry about the number of performance opportunities for students and how that will translate into auditions for arts-based programs at the post-secondary level. I have students who I thought were on a path to audition for [admission into] music schools, but due to a lack of performances and that sense of belonging to a group/ensemble, they have changed their minds.” Without the chance to implement various school choirs as per typical times, the result of the crisis for some teachers has been that “this year it has been difficult to cultivate school spirit.”

This dire situation which essentially wiped-out school music performances has meant that “there are no concerts or assemblies to look forward to” for music teachers and their students.” Another substantiates what has been lost with these related insights, “Singing was an opportunity for the WHOLE school to connect with each other in choir and for the whole school to sing in assemblies.” Opportunities for music teachers and students to connect with their school communities through live performances has declined significantly during the pandemic crisis. This music teacher offers a rich description of the consequences:

The holiday concert was always close to standing room only at three performances. Free tickets had to be given to families to monitor gym capacity for the evening performances. We had to divide the concert into two days and nights (K-2) and grades 3-5 to accommodate our growing population and attendance at these performances. It created a sense of excitement in the students and community. We do not have singing goals such as music festival or a spring musical and the impact that music has on children's lives is less "out there". I miss the magic, stillness, and peace that the physical act of singing brings out in my students.

It is painful to find that the practices of rehearsing and staging school musicals at special times of the year and performing out in the community to sing at festivals and community events is now becoming a distant memory for many Canadian music teachers and their students.

*Theme 7. Well-being concerns.* Music teachers expressed concerns about the well-being of their students and themselves after singing in school music programs was limited. At moderate levels, music teachers' commentaries contained reports to suggest that "the pandemic really effected the mental health of [their] students." To illustrate, one teacher observed, "Students are quiet and seem sad. Singing brought a lot of joy to the class that is now gone." Other teachers viewed the problem differently, writing that students were "unhappy and disconnected" or feeling "lost and lonely" because concerts and extra-curricular choral activities were cancelled. A more vivid picture of this problem triggered by the pandemic was offered via these perspectives —"I noticed that students' mental health was greatly affected in a way that I've never experienced after music and singing were removed from their daily activities." This respondent stated that students who were usually "stable and mentally well", became depressed and lacked motivation to do anything. This decline in well-being was attributed to the lack of singing which typically brings life and happiness into the daily routines of schooling. This teacher sums up this perspective nicely, "By nature, kids want and love to sing. It has been a hard year, despite finding other ways to make music. While I am not discounting the ways, they have created and performed music through other means, singing heals us from within. I think we are all in need of a little healing right now."

The battle to advocate for singing and music programs during 2020-2021 was described as "beyond draining" by one music teacher. Others felt similarly, and one admitted to being left feeling "no morale, no enthusiasm for [their] job anymore." The pandemic crisis clearly has taken a huge toll on music teachers' mental health and work-life balance, as one teacher stated, "I am spending much more time than I normally do on planning new lessons and/or adapting my previous lessons and engaging in professional development in order to meet the needs of students while following either no singing or limited singing requirements." The inability to sing has been "emotionally draining for teachers and students." This dire situation caused one respondent to "question [their] worth as a music teacher." Words of desperation give a sense of just how unwell some music teachers were feeling—"I am very close to going on a sick leave because of stress and I now have chronic back pain from pushing a cart. People are asking the impossible from music teachers" ... "I took a leave at the end of

February. I was burning out even though I have good administration, my bucket was empty.”

*Theme 8. Challenges implementing health measures.* Some music teachers took the opportunity in response to this open-ended question to elaborate upon the difficulty they had with implementing health restrictions when allowed to do some singing at school. One teacher explained that “the guidelines make it difficult if you can’t get the social distancing” while another revealed “no classroom in our school is able to accommodate the spacing.” Even going outside to sing proved to be “virtually impossible” or a “logistical nightmare” for some teachers because of conflicts with physical education classes, “staggered recesses, and lunch hours”. In other cases, the teachers’ locations were “very noisy”, and students could not hear them speak, nor could teachers hear them sing. One music teacher who was permitted to sing after February 2021 while following strict protocols was initially excited to be able to sing again, but “the added stress of setting up, tearing down, and the class management issues that have arisen, do not make it worth it.” In the end then, some teachers just gave up and “stopped” trying to sing. Another teacher remarked that the “guidelines for social distancing and general music in elementary schools were “pretty wishy washy” and so was not sure what to do. This same teacher was “unable to get Plexiglas barriers” and had to purchase their own simply to have a safe space for mask removal.

*Theme 9. Re-imagining music programs.* Given the restrictions on singing and wind instrument playing during the pandemic, another theme that arose to a lesser extent in response to question 53 was the need for music teachers to re-imagine their music programs with limited or no singing. One teacher explained that choir was removed from the timetable and instructional time was increased, but the shift “severely changed how and what I can teach.” At the middle school level, a music educator talked about “switching completely to performing through percussion and non-wind instruments” and placing a much greater focus on the study of “music history and music genres” since singing was limited. “Music instruction is currently music appreciation” is representative of how teachers approached re-focusing their music programs. It was not uncommon for music teachers to make statements such as, “We have spent more time listening and analyzing music than ever before” or “The students have done a lot at looking into how choral music affects their lives and others’ lives and how choral music does (or does not) reflect society.” Giving students “the chance to compose” was discussed several times in relation to this theme and accompanied by statements like, “I don’t know if I would have done it [composing] in a normal year.”

Music teachers also often turned to technology to continue teaching music without singing and wind instruments, and sometimes dipped into their own funds to do so. To illustrate, this music teacher declared, “I purchased (personal funds) the rights to use two auxiliary programs. I subscribe to YouTube Premium so that learners have ad-free access to content (personal purchase). Without the use of those programs, I would not have been able to pivot to a non-singing program.” In another case, the music teacher “tried teaching through YouTube videos” and put lessons up on “Google Classroom” but found neither approach satisfying. In place of a typical fall musical, this same teacher

turned to filming rather than live performing. Cleverly, the teacher and students, “pre-recorded all the dialogue and solos so they could act along with their own voices when it came time to film, as they were not allowed to talk/sing on stage.”

**Theme 10. Decreased student engagement.** The lack of opportunities to use singing and wind instrument playing (e.g., recorders, band instruments) in school music programs and the suspension of music ensembles, live performances, and music field trips has greatly altered music programs and students experiences with music at school and therefore their overall engagement with music learning. One teacher admitted that “engagement with the students has been difficult. In September there was a great deal of apathy and disengagement, especially in the upper grades. The lower grades have a hard time not moving around the room with various action songs.” Teachers of all grades like this primary level teacher reported that “no singing limits my music program and the engagement of my students.” Comments from middle school teachers were similar, “grades 7-8 seemed less motivated and were more interested in playing on their phones or playing games on their Chrome Books. In normal circumstances, students have singing and instrumental programs to keep them focused and plugged in.” Even when continuing to sing with students, music teachers conveyed how difficult it was to keep them engaged while masking. One observed, “while I continue to have students physically distance and wear mask in class, so that we can sing, I find the that the mask inhibits the students from singing out.” Also, without the motivation of preparing for performances, music teachers commented from time to time that it was difficult to keep students engaged in alternative music activities. As diverse types of active music-making experiences were curtailed in Canadian music programs, the alternatives teachers used were often not as captivating for students— “Music was more of a *doing* activity as opposed to a *thinking* activity in my program. The lack of singing has changed that *doing* to more of a listening and thinking type of program which doesn’t really appeal to the children over the long term.”

**Theme 11. Inconsistent health and safety directives.** Some music teachers chose to write about the inconsistencies they encountered related to the health and safety protocols that were intended to guide singing practices in schools. It was reported that there were different messages sent by government authorities and education administrators at the division/district and/or school levels which caused confusion for teachers. For example, one teacher wrote, “The Chief Medical officer of the province said we could sing, yet the board and administrators are saying no.” Similarly, in another province, choral and music education organizations worked diligently to update their provincial government on safe singing practices, but some school division authorities “still chose not to support indoor singing. Yet because the government shared the guidelines, co-workers, students, and the community were confused and thought that we had the go-ahead to sing.” Even within the same school divisions/districts, miscommunication around singing restrictions were confirmed by some respondents to not be the same. This teacher points to the problem, “There is no continuity throughout my board. Some music teachers were told one thing, and others something completely different.” Interestingly there was evidence in the comments that, “music teachers found that even within the same building there were inconsistencies—

“mask rules have been inconsistent and variable, and this is reflected in student practice.” Other music teachers simply took matters into their own hands and proceeded in ways they thought to be safest, “In grades 1-3 masks are optional, and I have never had the majority of the class masked, despite a request to parents, so we do not sing in those grades.”

*Theme 12. Teacher support for singing restrictions.* A lower frequency theme identified within music teachers’ written comments included statements of their support for the health and safety restrictions placed on singing in schools. Some teachers were conscious of the fact that their schools could not meet health and safety mandates, and therefore they were “comfortable with no singing”. One firmly stated, “I am not going to advocate for singing in schools until proper measures are put in place to ensure the safety of students, me, and the people I interact with.” Other music teachers thought that the “restrictions on singing were entirely reasonable” and necessary to keep cases of COVID-19 down to a minimum. There was an awareness among music teachers that people in their communities would not feel safe until most members were fully vaccinated. Views such as this one can be shared, “I would not be comfortable returning to the prior way of singing but would rather maintain safely measures” until it is safe to sing again.

Even when permitted to sing at school, some music teachers made a personal choice not to do so. In some of the written comments, there was evidence that some teachers mistrusted administrative decision-makers which is exemplified by these remarks: “My district says it’s okay to sing with masks on, but I don’t totally trust the hypothesis behind the decision. I fear getting sick and so I have done some light speaking level singing to a small degree only. I miss singing as much as the next person, but my desire to stay alive outweighs that.” The sheer number of students that music teachers interact with across the school was a deterrent for other music teachers who were nervous about their health and safety. This teacher’s perspective serves to illustrate, “I have made the personal medical choice not to include singing in my program. Some classroom teachers are singing with their students, but I don’t feel safe with about 400 students.”

*Theme 13. Concerns about recovering singing in schools.* Periodically, music teachers discussed their concerns about recovering singing in schools and what they would have to do to rebuild their programs. Because singing no longer occurred daily, teachers expressed fear that the few students they had in their programs who were reluctant to sing would become the majority. One respondent expressed, “Cultivating a culture of singing will take much time...I also fear the scheduled choir periods will not be returned to the 7-day cycle. They have been taken out of the schedule during the pandemic.” Along the same lines, another stated, “Not being able to sing has really had an impact on students’ confidence and willingness to be vulnerable and share their voices. It will take long to recover from this!”

Given the fact that students’ learning and development using their voices and singing has been greatly hampered, some music teachers conveyed a sense of uncertainty

about what to do moving forward—" We all miss singing greatly. I am not sure where to start with my program when we return to being able to sing again." Others anticipate the return to normal to be much farther into the future than most hope, taking years and not months to recover and rebuild. An example illustrates this view, "I can't imagine things going back to normal for several years. It is going to take a huge amount of rebuilding—if it's even possible. Without the student experience of the joy of our work together to keep the momentum in the program, it will be hard. I hope our programs can survive this, to be honest, particularly if things can't return to normal next year." Sadly, there were other music teachers who communicated a sense of hopelessness. One voice representing this group indicated that the pandemic, "completely destroyed our program, and I do not think it will be able to be built up again."

*Theme 14. Differing restrictions for music and physical education.* Music teachers in Canada took issue with different and seemingly inequitable restrictions placed upon singing and other music related activities when compared with those for physical education. While this theme surfaced less often than others, the differences were clearly on music educators' minds. For instance, in some locations, students could sing without masks, but had to be 12 feet apart, however during physical education classes, "students could scream and shout" without worrying at all about physical distancing. According to music teachers, even students were aware of the differing protocols and "questioned the validity of the restrictions in music when sports did not have the same restrictions." One teacher commented, "Parents can watch their kid play basketball, but we're not allowed to have a live performance." Teachers wondered why physical education in their school divisions/districts were "operating without restrictions" while music programs were consistently restricted. This teacher spoke frankly, "Anytime we are in a strict health observance level, no vocal or wind ensembles are allowed—but of course, sports still are!" In rebuttal, another music teacher offered this kind of reasoning..." if sports and physical education can continue as they have throughout this pandemic, then so should singing in music education." Comments revealed that music teachers and students felt hurt that music and the arts seemed to be an "after thought when compared to sports."

### **3.8 Recovery and Rebuilding Music Programs with Singing**

Canadian educators, like all educators around the world will now shift from emergency response planning to recovery planning for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond (Giannini, 2021; OECD, 2020). A key priority for authorities and the profession more wholly will be to ensure that schools are safe spaces for all students and educators and so health and safety protocols will continue to be implemented as necessary to keep community viral and variant spreads to a minimum. Learning and skill loss since March 2020 will be significant for many students across curriculum areas. Declines are also expected in the areas of social and emotional growth, health and well-being, and other areas of development among school-aged students, and therefore, recovery from these losses and declines will need to become the primary focus of teachers. Moreover, grandiose efforts must be made to return Canadian curriculum to pre-pandemic states and increase supports for teachers who will be on the front lines implementing recovery

plans. Funding typically used for offering a rich range of programs at school may need to be rerouted for safety, supplies, and cleaning protocols, remedial learning for literacy and numeracy, digital learning devices and other technologies, modification of curricula and assessment tools and approaches, teacher professional development, and increasing wellbeing supports for students and educators. Like the last year, there are still lots of unknowns as schools start to move into recovery planning for 2021-2022 and beyond. No one really can be certain about what lies ahead.

It is against this global backdrop, coupled with experiencing the impacts of severe restrictions on singing in music programs, and perceptions of declining support for music and singing at school that music teacher respondents were asked to identify what concerns them most as they think ahead to making plans to rebuild singing programs for schools in Canada (item 54). Each respondent on average identified three worrisome areas, evidenced by the counts in Table 43 below which converts counts to % of *N* as well as % of the total number of responses for this item. Like their colleagues around the world and across subject areas, Figure 39 illustrates that about half of the respondent pool (*N*=944) is concerned about gaps in music learning through and about singing, vocal, and choral skill development (47.99%/16.69% or 453). Serious concerns about the recoupment of learning is one shared by music teachers' colleagues in all other curriculum areas as well. Equally troubling for many (47.03%/16.35% or 444) is the expectation that teachers will have difficulties recruiting students back into music/choral programs and consequently overall participation levels in programs involving singing could drop.

Almost one third of respondents fear they will not have access to performances spaces for making music (27.86%/9.69% or 263) or dedicated music rooms (27.75%/9.65% or 262), and teachers are uncertain about their ability to rebuild capacity (27.74%/9.65% or 262). A significant number (236) of music teacher respondents representing 25% of the total sample pool or 8.69% of all responses are worried that there will be reductions to school-based singing programs or that programs will be eliminated altogether. About 20% of all respondents are concerned about losing scheduled preparation and/or rehearsal time (21.93%/7.62% or 207) and overall funding for singing programs (19.39%/6.74% or 183). A minority of music teachers responding (15.68%/5.45% or 148) identified singing-related course offerings and job security (14.19%/5.53% or 134) as concerning.

Table 43  
*Planning for Rebuilding Singing Programs: Music Teachers' Concerns*

Concerns	% of <i>N</i> (944)	% of Total	Frequency
<b>Gaps in learning and skill development</b>	<b>47.99%</b>	16.69%	453
<b>Building capacity</b>	27.75%	9.65%	262
<b>Access to music room</b>	27.75%	9.65%	262
<b>Access to music-making/performance spaces (e.g., theatre, cafetorium, gym)</b>	27.86%	9.69%	263
<b>Reduced participation/singer recruitment</b>	47.03%	16.35%	444

(table continues)

<b>Lost prep and/or rehearsal time</b>	21.93%	7.62%	207
<b>Course offerings</b>	15.68%	5.45%	148
<b>Program cuts (e.g., reduction or elimination of singing based program)</b>	25.00%	8.69%	236
<b>Funding</b>	19.39%	6.74%	183
<b>Job security</b>	14.19%	4.94%	134
<b>Other (Please expand in the comment box below)</b>	13.03%	4.53%	123
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	2715

Some of these concerns are certainly understandable. In some Canadian jurisdictions Grade 7-12 music is an elective and students chose among a range of music or other arts education course offerings. In these instances, the reality is that students might not enroll in singing if it is too restrictive or if it is perceived to be unsafe. Less singing-related course offerings could then easily lead to reassigning music educators to teach other courses and reductions from full-time to part-time appointments. Given that singing at school, especially in groups provides important networking and social opportunities for students, a reduction in course offerings could have negative and far-reaching impacts for students who thrive when singing in groups and taking choral/vocal ensemble courses. These interdependent group relationships afforded by music teachers are ones that have been decimated for students during that pandemic. Shutting down any programs that could help to overcome isolationism and rehabilitate relationships would seem to be counter-productive to education recovery efforts at this time.

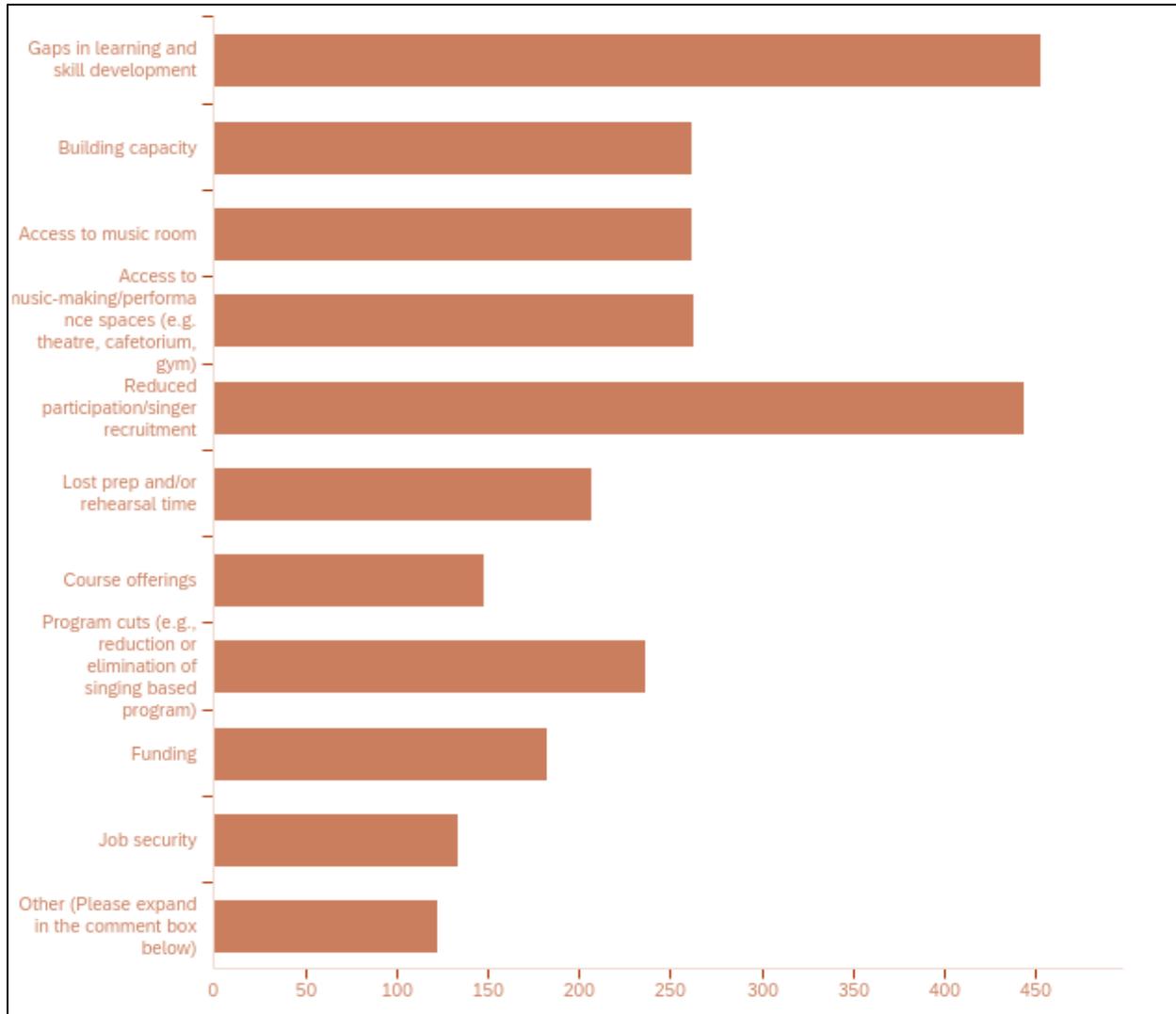


Figure 39. Planning for Rebuilding Singing Programs: Music Teachers' Concerns

For item 54, respondents also had the opportunity to provide additional comments which generated written statements from 123 (13.03% of *N*) music teachers or 382 lines of transcribed text. An analysis of themes derived from these comments resulted in the categories summarized below in Table 44. The most dominant themes contain related statements that were found at “higher” levels of frequency in comparison with others identified. These themes represented the thoughts and feelings that were at the top of teachers’ minds when completing this survey and thinking about recovery and rebuilding their programs moving forward. Themes found less frequently are indicated by the “moderate” and “lower” level terms. Figure 40 is a word cloud or visual representation of the qualitative data collected for this question. It displays the most prominent or frequent words that teachers used in their comments. The importance of the words is reflected by the size of the font and the heavier bold font.



*Theme 1. Regaining singing-related losses.* The most dominant theme by far for this item 54 was represented by expressions of concern among music teachers about regaining the losses related to restricted singing in school music programs since the onset of the pandemic. Teachers identified a range of singing-related forfeitures such as declines in “prestige,” “school spirit,” and well-established “singing cultures” within their schools after such long absences from singing. Music teachers communicated strongly that the place of music in the school curriculum was less of a priority when compared with other subject areas. Some felt a dramatic dissipation of singing capacity within their schools— “I feel like all of our hard work with singing is gone, and we will just have to start again from the beginning when we are allowed to sing again.”

The inability to perform vocal/choral music during the pandemic was perceived to have several negative consequences. Performing for younger students at school is an important strategy used by teachers to “build [their] programs.” The following teacher’s reflection illustrates the dilemma the pandemic has created for music teachers, “The lack of exposure to our singers through concerts and so on may impact younger singers becoming involved. Younger singers can’t be inspired to join [choral ensembles] if they can’t hear the older singers perform.” After missing out on the “joy and wonder of group singing,” respondents commented that students “may not participate in choirs and choral singing as they progress through school and into adulthood.” Another music teacher mentioned that the loss of performing also equates with the potential loss of funding that comes into schools from “concert revenues” to support music programs. The lack of opportunity to hold “traditional concerts” also put a damper on getting school-aged singers out into the community to perform and inviting the public into schools to enjoy their performances. This situation has resulted in the “loss of community” along with the “bond that comes from singing together” for different audiences and events such as concerts and festivals. Perhaps most significant losses for students are that they have been deprived from experiencing the “joy in making and performing music” and they have lost the levels of “comfort and confidence” they had when performing pre-pandemic. Teachers are very uneasy about these losses and some expect that students’ “passion and motivation to sing” will transmute into reluctance. Teachers also reported “emotional losses” for students who couldn’t sing, especially for those who sang in school ensembles and classes to maintain a sense of belonging and well-being.

Feelings of “uncertainty” among music teachers were evident, like this teacher who wondered “when choir would resume as a valued part of the music program.” Several were anxious that funding and possibly their programs would not be reinstated at all—“I worry that school boards and the Ministry will believe that schools no longer require funding because we got by with so little over the past year of the pandemic. In addition to our vocal music program, our instrumental program has been non-existent.” Another remarked fearing a loss of funding because music teachers have “found a way to teach without it [money] this year.” It was also concerning for music teachers in Canada that there could be a more permanent “loss of district funding for music festivals, sharing sessions, and district-wide music celebrations.” For some, the loss of human resources (e.g., volunteers or in-person music teacher) was a real possibility as well. One music

teacher shared the following view, “School choirs that rely on teachers volunteering their time will become even more rare as teachers are burnt out from planning and reinventing music classes during the pandemic.” One teacher volunteer who led extra-curricular activities involving singing pre-pandemic now said, “I am afraid of the fatigue that comes with running these activities.” Another teacher conveyed uneasiness about the possibility of losing in-person teaching time and instead the practice of online music teaching could continue to be used to deliver music programs moving forward—“I fear it [technology] may be easy to be overused in the future post-pandemic.”

*Theme 2. Health and safety restrictions.* Health and safety restrictions continued to surface over and over within teachers’ written statements as they shared what concerns them most as they think about rebuilding their singing programs. Most teachers were concerned that the health and safety restrictions on singing that they experienced during 2020-2021 at school would remain in place for 2021-2022 and they would have to continue to implement them. Health and safety protocols have increased music teachers’ workloads (e.g., sanitization protocols) and these procedures take time away from music teaching and learning. This respondent worries that this situation will become the norm moving forward, “Classes only have music once a week and most of that time is used in picking up, changing shoes, coats, bathroom and WASHING HANDS, snacks, eating lunch, taking [students] out to their play zones, or back to the classroom!” Others were apprehensive about continuing to have responsibilities for “managing restrictions and implementing sanitization requirements.” On the other end of the spectrum, some teachers are worried for their own and their students’ health and safety; they expressed concerns that COVID-19 restrictions would be loosened or eliminated overall and put them and their students at risk. To illustrate, this music teacher stated, “I want singing back desperately, but I’m very concerned about COVID-19 and I would rather stay safe than sing.”

There were opinions emanating from music teachers who were frustrated with the restrictions on singing while other activities which also were perceived to pose health risks at their schools were not being restricted in the same way. One said, “I am frustrated that small children cannot sing yet are permitted to speak loudly in classrooms and shout outside at recess. I teach K-3 who generally have very soft voices when singing.” One hoped that the semester or quad systems that have “killed music programs” would not continue. Some conveyed an understanding that for singing to resume in schools, health and safety restrictions would have to be loosened, but were not sure that would be the case. One teacher explained that if restrictions on physical spaces did not change then “I will not be able to have students singing due to a lack of physical distancing.” Another music teacher discussed the need for “student spacing to be moved from three meters to two meters so that they can hear each other better, and so that more students can fit into their rooms.” Repeatedly, teachers shared their worries that schools “do not have the funds or resources” to allow for safe singing in schools and some teachers have simply resigned themselves to the fact that “I will not be having students sing during or outside of class time until COVID is no longer such a serious health concern.”

*Theme 3. Fear of singing.* The qualitative data yielded several comments which indicated that music teachers are troubled about the stigma that is now attached to singing and playing wind instruments. Particularly since a serious outbreak of COVID-19 among choristers in Washington state choir made headlines in the media in March 2020, there has been a growing public perception that singing is “dangerous” and that “it’s somehow worse and more unsafe for us than physical education and sports.” Music teachers in Canada fear that there will be “reservations about the return to large group activities such as singing as there is the potential spread of the virus.” They predict that “parents will be worried about adding singing back” and that “children will be afraid to sing since they have been told it is dangerous and spreads COVID-19!!” One teacher said that students do not want to sing because they are afraid “they will be infected by the virus and they don’t want to infect others either.” Another is concerned that “even after the vaccination [program has been fully implemented], schools and daycares will choose not to have music classes.” One teacher thought that education and health authorities should be reviewing the research literature on this topic and differentiating between adults singing and children singing and was “disappointed that authorities are not finding ways to allow students to sing safely at school.”

*Theme 4. Regaining music learning losses.* Another theme that surfaced frequently among teacher respondents for item 54 related to students’ music learning losses during the pandemic and concerns about how to regain those losses. One music teacher explained that before the onset of the pandemic “students had the opportunity to focus on the development of their singing skills, learning how to manipulate their voices, how to listen and match pitch, how to sing together expressively with their classmates, how to watch and respond to a conductor, and more.” Early years students have “not had an opportunity to learn any of these skills in their first years of school.” Another respondent went far in stating that “our curriculum has taken a beating—not being able to accomplish as much AND putting some concepts on the back burner.” Many teachers view singing to be at the core of elementary programs and therefore choral music making and cultivating interdependency among choristers “will take a long time to rejuvenate”. Unfortunately, young students will have “missed the opportunity for early vocal exploration, a crucial window for developing their confidence in and awareness of their singing voices.”

Recognizing that early musical development lays the foundation for success in the future, high school music teachers expressed concerns about rebuilding “strong high school choral programs, and lifelong choral singers.” For older students the losses identified by teachers included, “loss of motivation”, “loss of training”, “loss of vocal development,” “loss of knowledge base, and annual repertoire.” Of course, the lack of opportunity for honing part-singing skills was a concern among teachers of older students—“we can’t do that anymore because of room capacity and health regulations.” Others were worried about “losing precious time in [developing] tuning and reading notation, especially in choral music.” At the high school level, one teacher assessed the situation as dire, writing that “we will see programs decimated because we will have two years of students no playing instruments or singing.” Optimism and less concern were evident in the viewpoints of other teachers. For instance, one wrote, “students may be a

bit behind in pitch matching, but students will essentially be all together in that regard, so not a particular concern.” A similar comment was made by another respondent, “I do worry about skill development some—but we can fix that.”

**Theme 5. Music program cuts.** The fifth theme that emerged from a higher number of respondents focused upon music teachers’ trepidation about potential cuts to music programs for the 2021-2022 school year and potentially further into the future. “I’m worried that my music program may not exist after the pandemic,” reflects the fear shared by some music teachers. In some provinces, teachers perceived music programs to be a low priority for the allocation of resources and staffing as suggested by this dismayed respondent who wrote, “The reality is that music has always been near, or on, the chopping block when it comes time for course offerings and staffing to be examined. Our province consistently made it clear that music education was NOT a priority throughout the pandemic.” Some comments were stated in strong terms, “My music colleagues and I all fear that this is the opportunity many school boards and [the ministry in my province] have been waiting for to destroy music education and cut it back to bare bones.” On the other hand, a smaller group does not believe that music programs will be cut because music programs with specialist teachers provide classroom teachers with their contracted preparation time. Others predicted that once the pandemic is over, “music and the arts will see an upswing.”

In some provinces, music was identified as a “non-essential” or an “optional” course which fueled worrisome perspectives among respondent teachers. Other indicators included teachers’ observations such as “the school board has no plan in place to resume vocal and band music” or “my school board is going to maintain the status quo.” The consequence of this latter comment for some meant “no music offerings for next year” or that “reductions to music teaching time will stay [in place] for 2021-2022.” Music teachers expressed uneasiness that school boards or ministries “may decide to exclude music from the curriculum” altogether or music as a mandated curriculum subject area will be “forgotten as reopening gradually happens.” In some cases, teaching capacity for music in schools was forfeited during the pandemic and may not be reinstated because “music specialist teachers were reassigned to classroom teaching positions” or “deployed into classrooms and teach little to no music.” The angst about potential music program cuts rang loud and clear from most writing about this theme—“I am just really worried that the music program I’m teaching in will be decimated next year.” Another wrote, “It took years for them to offer vocal for credit. I fear it will never be offered again.”

**Theme 6. Recovery efforts.** At more moderate levels, teachers’ comments revealed concerns about the extent of the recovery efforts that will be needed to return school music programs to pre-pandemic states, but especially so for singing-related components. The rebuilding that lies ahead feels “overwhelming at best” for music teachers. There was a sense conveyed through the written statements that rebuilding cannot be accomplished quickly, as reflected in this direct statement, “se remettre de cette coupure ne se fera pas jour au lendemain.” One teacher said it another way,

“Mostly I fear that after a year (or more) without singing, it will take a long time and a lot of work to get students back to their former skill level and regular singing routine.”

The complex nature for recovering singing at school is highlighted by these statements offered by one respondent—“I feel some students will take a long time to recover their confidence to sing out so others can hear them. Students transitioning from grade 3 to 4 are particularly at risk, as they become so self-conscious. Without the incentive of working on school musicals or extra-curricular choir (since we can’t mix “bubbled” classes) or rock band, there are some students who have lost their interest in and momentum for singing at school and may never feel safe (socially and health-wise) enough to [sing] again.” Another music teacher augments this perspective, “Singing is a holistic way of learning so many different concepts, but also for building self-esteem, body awareness, and community. It will be challenging to rebuild those skills and benefits if/when we are able to sing again.”

Music teachers expect to confront students who are “unwilling to engage in singing” once using the singing voice is finally permitted again in school music programs. They anticipate the need to be creative and invent approaches to encourage and elicit singing anew in music classrooms. Given such a long leave from singing-related experiences at school, respondents expressed angst about having to “start rebuilding choirs from scratch.” One downhearted teacher shared that “the pandemic seems to be a losing battle for the vocal program in my school. I will have to rebuild it by recruiting as many singers as possible to all the choirs.” Similar sentiments were offered by others, “Our school was very choral-based, and next year we’ll have to start from scratch. If next year...” and “By the time next year comes, none of my grades 3-5 students will have sung in a choir with me.” Sadly, some music teachers, such as this one, have been so negatively impacted by the pandemic that they are questioning whether they can do the work of recovery in the future, “I don’t know if I have the energy or motivation to get this started up again. I feel so completely beaten down and exhausted.”

*Theme 7. Declining enrollments and recruitment.* A significant but moderately recurring theme evident within music teachers’ comments for item 54 was the notable decline in student enrollments for music curriculum courses and extra-curricular programs involving singing which were typically accompanied by statements addressing the recruitment efforts that would be required to return enrollments to typical levels. Expectedly, one cause for the decline in participation was identified as the health and safety restrictions on singing at school which made the overall experience of singing less appealing for students. This teacher explained the issue, “Already we can see our course numbers dropping as students pursue courses where they can function as usual/normal—even under COVID-19 restrictions. In the gymnasium for example, students are not required to wear masks. One can certainly understand a student pursuing those courses over those that require such stifling rules simply to participate.” Given the severe limitations on what teachers using singing can do, another stated, “I am worried that in the years to follow we will have very little participation in the music program.”

Other teachers attributed the decline in enrollments to the lack of opportunity for public performances and they also expect that recruitment efforts moving forward will be difficult for performance-based courses. One music teacher remarked, “The buy-in of the older students was to be involved in extra-curricular activities like musicals – which can’t be done across cohorts right now.” Other teachers speculated, “There will be a downturn in recruitment for programs with public performances and rebuilding programs will take time.” Another wrote, “I think we can expect that we’ll enter into a low enrolment period.” There was a particular worry conveyed about high school vocal/choral programs because there may not be “students from feeder elementary schools” who had developed their singing voices and the passion to continue singing at more advanced levels.

The lack of singing in schools made it increasingly difficult for teachers to re-engage students in vocal/choral activities which is also causing the decline in enrollment numbers. One teacher’s voice is offered to illustrate this viewpoint, “I am usually able to promote singing in the school and can get the older students to buy in, but this year has been extremely difficult to get grades 4-6 to participate in any singing because they haven’t been doing it regularly. Hopefully I can bring singing numbers back.” Another respondent put it this way, “Encouraging children who may have been reluctant singers prior to the pandemic will be a challenge. Recruitment for auditioned choirs will be a huge issue because students have not been singing at all.” The scope of the decline is exemplified by this teacher who reported, “I generally have around 518 students, but this year I have only taught 370. My students were overjoyed when we could sing again but I still can’t do any sort of comprehensive choral groups or extra-curricular vocal or any other musical activities because of the cohort and pod divisions and overall low attendance. My lowest attended classes were anywhere from one to four students at a time. Most of those classes were ineffective as [students] were too shy in the small group to engage.” The magnitude of the drop in Canadian schools is further substantiated by this comment, “We had 30+ sections of music. Next year we have 19.”

*Theme 8. Equitable access to music.* Teachers’ comments exposed inequities in students’ abilities to access music at school during the pandemic when compared with other curriculum areas, and some that teachers also perceived to be posing health and safety risks. Music teachers observed that students taking physical education at school were able to continue quite normally with only minor logistical changes, while changes for implementing music programs were much stricter. One teacher protested, “No one is asking our hockey players to ensure a six-foot distance while they play! Yet this is precisely what is required of our singers. Nothing about singing, masked, six feet apart from your peers resembles the choral experience that students are accustomed to and is required for genuine development.” These discrepancies were evident in pandemic policy statements as well—“Music is invisible in health protocols and when it is mentioned, decisions are sheathed as “DRAFT” documents” but for physical education, policies are stated in final forms—The school gymnasium, if available MUST be used for physical education instruction and programming.” Another exasperated teacher offered this view, “Students are discouraged, and the administration has de-valued the arts curriculums with their policies. Many rules applied to singing, theatre, and music-making

while sports teams could practice in large groups with no masks and even play against other schools. Throughout this whole process, I didn't simply feel undervalued, I felt TARGETED."

Music educators were concerned about the lack of access to music for diverse students who "gravitate to the arts and the long-term effects it's going to have for them and their mental health." This teacher elaborates the point, "Music should be as important as all other subjects. Singing is emotion and factors into the well-being for students." Many statements communicated that music is being under-appreciated as an essential subject area and they continually cited other subjects that are valued more, "We would never cut a football program. We would never cut anything to do with sports. The value of music education far exceeds what our government and our school boards value. Music needs to be protected and it's about time our union fights for us as well. It's disgusting that our education is not valued the same as French."

According to some Canadian music teachers the undervaluing of music has impacted students' perspectives during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis as well. Students they said have been directly or indirectly led to believe that some components of schooling are essential, and some are non-essential. One stated, "Music (singing and band) have been shown to be non-essential components of our educational system. I think that when we begin singing in school again, students will remember that music is not important, non-essential, and optional. In rebuilding my program, I will [have to] spend a lot of time trying to convince students that singing is indeed an essential part of their learning." One teacher found it "eye opening to see how fast music could disappear" from their teaching assignment. Contributing to the problem of access were "scheduling issues" and other administrative decisions made to "block access to music." It is unfortunate that music teachers are now left pondering, "Does music really count? Who will take the lead to restore confidence in singing at school for students? Is singing an acceptable risk for most presumably healthy students?"

*Theme 9. Designated music rooms.* Some comments revealed that music teachers see regaining the use of designated music rooms as key to their recovery and rebuilding efforts, but some are worried that they will not get these teaching spaces back. One music teacher who returned to their music room after several months on a cart affirmed how necessary physical space can be to successful recovery efforts, "having the music room is the main thing that has helped the most in continuing with a semblance of normalcy." Music specialist teachers were uneasy when thinking that "administrators may feel that the music program can be delivered just as successfully from a cart as from a music room." The continued loss of music teaching spaces is creating "massive anxiety" for some music teachers like this one who was told, "they may not have a room for me next year." A statement expressing the angst is offered, "I am worried that next year may result in my music room being used as an additional classroom. Teaching on a cart going classroom to classroom with no singing allowed is causing major gaps in student learning." One teacher equates the return of music rooms directly to their ability to rebuild (or not rebuild) music programs—"I won't have the opportunity to rebuild since my administrator has chosen to keep me on a cart for next year."

**Theme 10. Administrative support.** The fifth and final theme surfacing at moderate levels of frequency was the lack of administrative support that some music teachers felt as they contemplated recovery efforts for music programs. There was evidence to suggest as teachers look ahead, a few have “very little confidence that those with decision making power are willing to examine their missteps to date, “nor are educational leaders perceived to be “willing to improve the situation for the students who so desperately require music in their lives.” Again, in the context of comments related to this theme, teachers expressed discouragement with “administration’s undervaluing of music” and some even went far in stating that “There is no support from our administration anymore.” One teacher reported being unable to simply get necessary instructional resources, “It is frustrating that I have asked for teaching support materials, including titles on the authorized provincial list. Of 15 titles ordered in the last three years, I received one resource and I can’t implement it because it is based on breath and breathing.”

Teachers of singing-related courses also noted differences in administrators’ valuing of some music courses over others. For example, one deflated teacher wrote, “Administration does not value vocal music in the same way that they value instrumental music. I spent countless hours, time, energy, effort, and money building my program, and to have it shut down so quickly was truly devastating.” In a few comments, the reduction in administrative support was also reflected in the lack of consultation with music teachers when making decisions impacting their programs. One understandably disconcerted teacher shared this story, “The use of the outdoor classroom for music was *announced* in a staff meeting, in front of my classroom teaching colleagues, with no prior consultation with me. After even after the initial settling into the à la carte classroom music teaching routine, there have been NO consultations with me as the music teacher on a possible spring 2021 implementation of a plan for outside music teaching.” Another teacher echoed this sentiment, “My principal was not willing to consult me, the expert in the area, and that was demeaning.”

**Theme 11. Job security.** To a much lesser extent, music teachers expressed job security as a concern when thinking about the future, rebuilding, and recovery. The odd high school teacher indicated that “jobs are determined by course enrollments” and clearly felt somewhat threatened because music course enrollments had dropped. One teacher said that the “reconfiguration of the schools in my area is threatening my job security” but it is difficult to interpret exactly what was meant by this comment as it relates to recovery of music programs moving forward.

**Theme 12. Hope and optimism.** The final theme that recurred less often within the written comments for item 54 were ones that communicated a sense of hope and optimism about recovery efforts. For example, one teacher who had “no concerns” stated that, “Some older students may be more reluctant to sing since having a year off, but the younger ones will embrace it and we will carry on. I do not anticipate long-term negative effects from a year without singing. Likewise, another music offered this perspective, “I believe there will come a time again when singing in class will be resumed and the curriculum for the singing program can be implemented once again.”

Another respondent working in high challenge circumstances reported that it had always been difficult to engage students who “frankly do not want to be engaged musically”. For this teacher, “the pandemic and loss of access to singing and the music room is actually helping students to like music more.” This view provides a good transition into the next section of this report which presents music teachers’ positive takeaways that resulted from their experiences teaching music and singing during the pandemic crisis.

### 3.9 Positive Pandemic Takeaways for Singing in School Music Education

The final open-ended question on the survey (item 55) invited music teachers to answer the question—What are the positive outcomes or opportunities that resulted for you and/or your students related to singing and music education at school during the pandemic? In asking this question, the aim was to garner insights into whether a “silver lining” was emerging from this difficult and complex pandemic situation for music teachers and/or their students. In other words, it is possible that some positives arose during the bleak months that followed March 2020, and if so, these positives should be identified.

Additional written statements were generated in response to this question from 375 teachers (39.72% of *N*) which resulted in 857 lines of transcribed text. Most of these respondents (319 or 85.07%) identified a range of positive outcomes for music education and singing, as well as benefits for both music teachers and their students. A smaller group (56 or 14.93%) could not think of any positive outcomes or benefits. An analysis of themes derived from these comments resulted in the categories summarized below in Table 45. The most dominant themes contained statement patterns found at “higher” levels of frequency in comparison with other themes identified. Themes found less frequently are indicated by the “moderate” and “lower” level terms. Figure 41 is a word cloud or visual representation of the qualitative data collected for this question. It displays the most prominent or frequent words that teachers used in their comments. The importance of the words is reflected by the size of the font and the heavier bold font.

Table 45  
*Positive Outcomes or Opportunities Resulting for Music Teachers and Students Related to Singing and Music Education at School During the Pandemic*

<b>Thematic Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b><i>Positive Outcomes for Music Education</i></b>	
<b>Time to focus on a broader range of essential music learning areas</b>	High
<b>Virtual presentations and concerts</b>	Moderate
<b>Project based learning</b>	Moderate
<b>New music education programs</b>	Low
<b>Renewed appreciation for music</b>	Low
<b>Music still brings joy</b>	Low
(table continues)	

<b><i>Positive Outcomes for Singing</i></b>	
Renewed appreciation for singing-related experiences	High
Learning to sing outdoors	Moderate
Production of recordings	Moderate
Learning to sing online	Low
New singing program	Low
Time to focus on other vocal/choral topics	Low
Learning to use humming in vocal program	Low
Online rehearsals	Low
Virtual choir	Low
<b><i>Benefits for Music Teachers</i></b>	
Discovery of alternative music pedagogies, practices, and resources	High
Increased efficacy with virtual teaching and technology	High
Professional learning and development opportunities	High
Increased knowledge of students	Moderate
Time to focus on individual students	Low
Decreased performance-related stress	Low
Learning to adapt	Low
Increased versatility	Low
Time to reflect on role of music education	Low
Development of multi-level units	Low
<b><i>Benefits for Students</i></b>	
Increased diversity of music learning experiences	High
Decreased performance anxiety	Moderate
Smaller class sizes	Moderate
Opportunity to set music goals	Low
Opportunity for personal growth	Low
Opportunities for therapeutic music experiences	Low
<b><i>No Positive Outcomes or Benefits</i></b>	
Overall, none	High
None for singing	Moderate

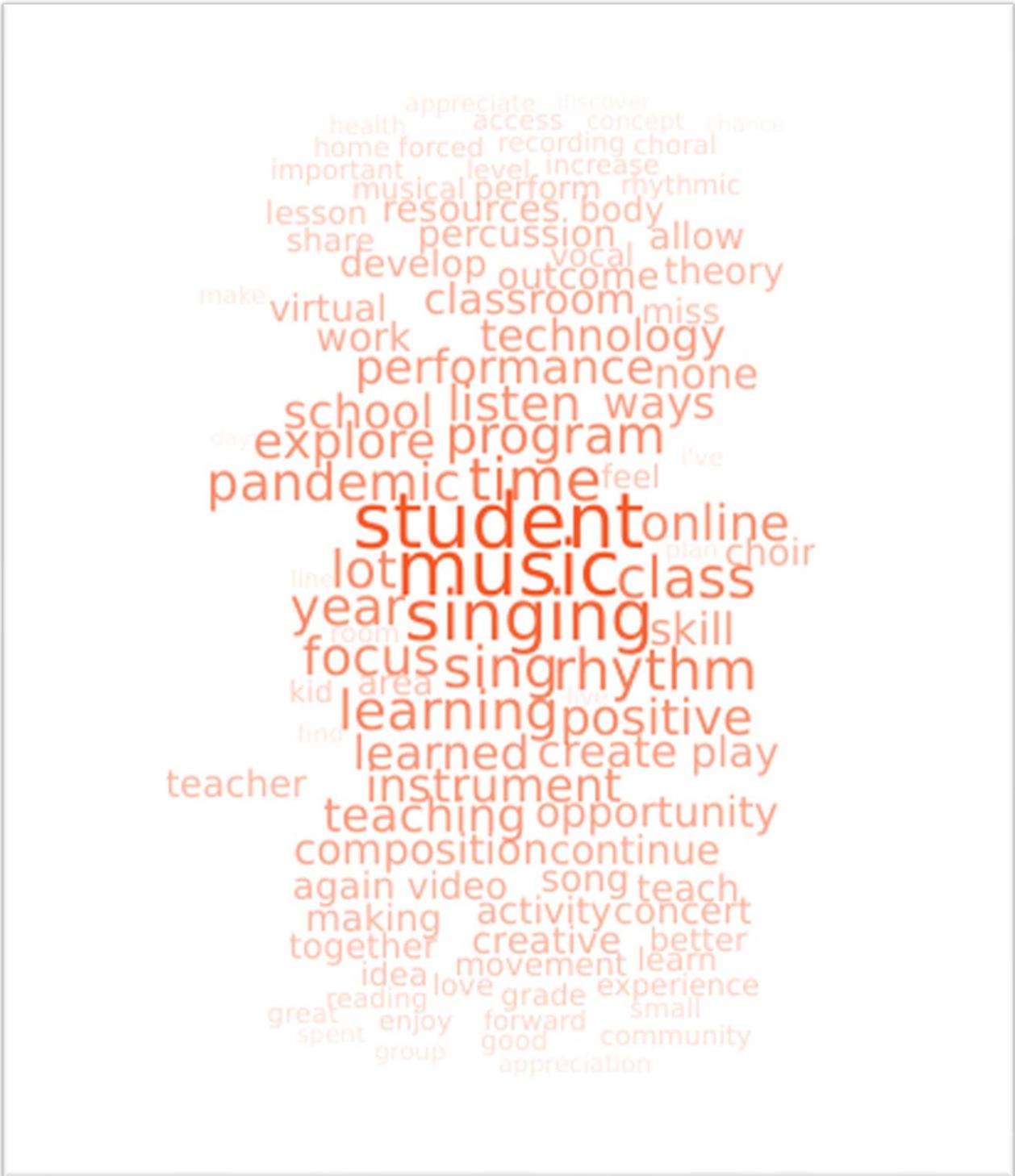


Figure 41. Word cloud generated by teachers' comments for item 55.

*Positive outcomes for music education.* By far, increased time to explore aspects of the music curriculum that teachers had limited time to address in their school programs under normal circumstances was the most frequently cited positive outcome for music education within teachers' comments— “We have been able to concentrate on some

other areas of music that are sometimes ignored due to a lack of time.” For instance, one experienced high school choral teacher revamped their performance-oriented choir classes which reportedly “morphed into some wonderfully creative composition challenges, song writing workshops, and passion projects utilizing a myriad of artistic forms of expression.” Another stated that after the crisis forced them to shift away from their predominantly performance-based teaching model, new areas of learning were fostered with students which will “make my program more balanced in the long run.” An elementary music educator was able to “focus more on aural melodic and rhythmic discrimination, reading rhythm patterns and playing them on instruments, learning about jazz and classical composers as well as learning new skills like bucket drumming and body percussion.”

It was clear that additional time was at teachers’ disposal because of the limitations placed on higher-risk music teaching and learning activities. Instructional time typically spent pre-pandemic singing and playing wind instruments during classes, engaging students in performance-based activities, and/or preparing for live music performances was now available to advance other music concepts and skills that did not involve these restricted activities. Two teachers summed up this perspective, “We have used the challenge of not singing to strengthen other music skills that will make us stronger when we sing again” and “I’ve been able to introduce students to a much larger variety of music and go more in-depth with topics I wouldn’t be able to otherwise as many classes were spent in rehearsals.” There was a sense that these additional learnings would “strengthen the foundation of singing” once music programs return to normal.

Music teachers commented on how they studied a broader range of music styles, genres, and forms with their students, including non-Western musical practices. Additional active music learning through “body movement, gestures, and even sign language” was explored during the pandemic. Further instructional time was devoted to the development of music literacy skills, aural skills, reading music, theoretical concepts, and music vocabulary. For example, one teacher said, “I realize there are many other valuable skills that can be developed without singing. I taught more theory, practiced more ear training, and rhythm exercises each day.” Another cited benefits from “having the class time to focus on theory, rhythm, reading notes on a musical staff, form, history, styles, listening, composition, instruments, symphonies, different performers, styles, and body percussion.” Classes spent on composing music took a leap during the pandemic, as did studies of music history, composers, orchestral and world instruments. Comments like this one were common: “I had time to focus on things I normally rush through or don’t cover as thoroughly, for example, the creative process and composing” or *Nous avons fait davantage de projets de création musicale.* Teaching modules on beat and rhythm were explored via various media such as: non-pitched percussion instruments, body percussion, and different types of drums (e.g., West-African drums, bucket drums). One teacher shared, “we have been able to study rhythms and rhythmic composition on a much deeper level.” Teachers delved into studies of pitched percussion instruments (e.g., tone-bared instruments, tone bells, boom whackers, stringed instruments (e.g., ukulele, guitar), and even keyboard instruments as they were “pushed to explore instruments more.”

The opportunity to involve musical guests in school music programs through virtual presentations/workshops and/or sharing the results of music teaching and learning through producing virtual concerts that “reached wider audiences” than they did via in-person concerts were ideas raised at moderate levels by teachers as definite benefits of the pandemic to music education. An elementary teacher reported that “Each class learned a piece of music for a virtual Christmas concert using either instruments, movement with or without props, and performed songs with sign language. This month we were able to have a virtual workshop involving all 24 classes in the school with the National Arts Centre featuring two presenters.” Another explained that doing performances online had been a “positive experience” and described one “amazing collaborative video performance,” but with the caveat that performing online is “not nearly as fulfilling as live concerts.” Regarding the chance to work with guests, one vocal choral teacher affirmed, “The biggest benefit is I can get high level virtual artists to stream into my classes that I could never have had into my classes in a face-to-face format.” Another predicts, “We will surely continue to invite guest speakers (e.g., composers) living elsewhere to join us online.”

Another positive outcome that came to light at moderate levels was the chance that students were given to undertake project-based learning in the music classroom, a form of learner-centered inquiry rarely used in pre-pandemic music classrooms. One teacher was excited about this work, “My grade 8’s did a fantastic project called *My Musical Journey* that they reflected upon, researched, and recorded.” A few teachers reported on how they had time during the pandemic to develop and pilot new music programs—“I was able to use one-to-one Chromebooks to design a fully online PBL [project-based learning] music program, which might have further applications after the pandemic.” Small numbers also cited a renewed appreciation by students for music education as a positive outcome of the pandemic, indicated by statements like “The students have realized what they have taken for granted for so long and crave for a return to normalcy.” Some also mentioned that despite the restrictions, “music still brings joy to my students.” Students who participated in music during the pandemic continued to feel “very connected to each other” and maintained a sense of community.

*Positive outcomes for singing.* Music teachers also reflected upon and delineated positive outcomes that related more specifically to singing. Most often they talked about how the absence of singing during the COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a reawakened appreciation of singing and choral-related experiences in schools. This sentiment is represented by comments like these ones, “It has given me and my students a renewed sense of how important singing together and using our voices is to us. And how much it is a vital part of our community rituals and creating those feelings of togetherness and belonging” or “We realized just how much we LOVE singing. You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone,” or “Maybe there is a new desperation to sing that sparks a singing revolution next year.” A key message conveyed by Canada’s music teachers is that the value of singing in schools and the contributions that vocal and choral programs make to students’ musical and social-emotional lives is something that may have been taken too lightly prior to the pandemic and it is now sorely missed. One teacher put it

simply this way, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” It seems clearer now that school music programs that include singing and choral music ensemble experiences are critical to contributing to the overall musical development and well-being of students, as well as school cultures. Several teachers concluded that the pandemic has “reinforced how much we do value singing” and without a doubt they will be “so grateful to be able to sing again.”

At more moderate levels learning to sing outdoors and produce recordings of singing and choral performances were identified by teachers of singing as useful outcomes of the pandemic. Some discovered that “we were able to sing outside” and “outdoor teaching and learning is possible and effective in a vocal music classroom.”

Vocal/choral teachers created many recordings during the pandemic including “videos of small group singing that were sent home to parents.” One music teacher wrote happily, “Much more recording of performances has given us the opportunity to reach a wider audience a trove of videos to share in future recruitment efforts,” and likewise one indicated, “We have been able to live stream performances from our music room which has allowed family and friends who would not been able to attend a performance at school to be a part of our concerts in real time.” Video recordings were also considered helpful because offered a permanent record or “souvenir of their music making.”

Less frequently, music teachers identified other benefits which can be identified. One explained, “If I go online, I can model singing and students can respond safely at home”. Such comments showed that teaching and learning singing online was enabling and an important outcome of the pandemic situation for some. This idea is substantiated by one teacher’s efficacious report, “I’ve developed my 100% online vocal course from the ground up, and it’s given me a boost of confidence that I can still teach what I love in new ways.” Likewise, another teacher had the opportunity to be “piloting a new program during the pandemic, and coincidentally it’s having a positive impact on singing in my program specifically.” The musical needs of diverse student groups were also addressed. For example, one music teacher was able to “offer a special music class for our special needs students in place of my choir slot... something I hope we can keep.”

Teachers of singing devoted more time to topics like “vocal anatomy and vocal health” or they led studies on “solo performers who have continued to create through the pandemic,” “song composition,” or “the ethics of performing.” One vocal choral teacher, “dove into listening examples in concert choir” and “scatting [vocal jazz] as individuals and the theory behind it, all without the time restraints of learning a few tunes for our next performance.” An increased experimentation with non-singing approaches led some teachers to discover that “humming does have a place in a vocal program.” Others choral teachers commented on the usefulness of virtual rehearsals with one concluding that “ZOOM rehearsals will be kept” in the future. A similar sentiment was echoed by this teacher, “Our new-found abilities to work online mean that we will be able to hold rehearsals virtually rather cancel completely in case of bad weather.” Evident in a few comments was the emergence of “virtual choirs” at some schools, which was also considered a constructive result of the COVID-19 teaching experience.

*Benefits for music teachers.* One of the most highly cited benefits for music teachers resulting from their pandemic music teaching experiences since March 2020 was the exploration and discovery of a broad array of alternative music pedagogies, practices, and instructional resources—“I learned so many different ways to teach my students that I would have never considered before.” This newly acquired repertoire of teaching approaches evolved from the need for teachers to “think outside the box,” “push outside of my comfort zone,” and “get creative.” They had to work imaginatively and quickly to find new ways forward for continuing music programs at school, in most cases under highly constrained contexts and without the use of singing, wind instrument playing, or their music classrooms and equipment. Because of the variety and novelty that these pandemic teaching strategies provided to students, teachers also observed some increased student engagement. This connection is represented by this comment, “I really had to search for ways to teach as many outcomes as possible in a safe way. Many of these engaged my students more than ever and I will be continuing to use these ideas in the future.”

In response to this survey question, again and again music teachers identified increased knowledge of and efficacy with teaching using various technologies as worthwhile outcomes of the pandemic. It was common for teachers to state in a general way that they were simply “learning a lot about technology,” “becoming more tech savvy,” or “les résultats positifs sont ma capacité à enseigner la musique virtuellement.” In other statements specifics were evident, such as this teacher who said they developed “a music technology curriculum that will benefit programming post-pandemic.” Teachers identified a range of technology tools as advantageous: “I love MusicplayOnline—it saved me in classroom lessons,” “I will keep my head-set mic after the pandemic”, or “I discovered online theory programs and using TEAMS to communicate and do assignments” as advantages. Some trialed other kinds of applications, “I have created a music website which has been well received and I discovered a plethora of online teaching tools.” One teacher will continue to post classroom performances of songs on the school’s website because this practice “increases awareness of the classroom music program.” Overall, music teachers benefitted from acquiring various technology skills such as: mastering online video teaching (ZOOM, Microsoft TEAMS), rehearsing, and performing platforms, music software programs, and video and audio recording and editing. Although cautious about using too much in the way of digital music-making moving forward, some music teachers indicated that “technology will remain part of [their] music classes.”

A third benefit raised many times by music teachers pointed to the expansive opportunities for professional learning and development that was afforded to them during the pandemic. One music teacher working in a rural community was thrilled to report, “I have participated in in more music-specific PD this year than ever before.” Communities of music educators and various organizations locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally came together to support one another through networking in efforts to share instructional resources and pedagogies considered feasible for teaching music during the pandemic. Several respondents reported in this way, “Many music teachers have shared resources, tips, and ideas on digital platforms for free to

help each other through pandemic teaching, and this has definitely helped my teaching and personal professional development.” Others gave specific examples such as, “I was able to attend ukulele teacher training online” or “I have also taken part in lots of online webinars and self-directed courses that pre-pandemic I could never have afforded to attend or been able to travel to as they normally occurred across North America or halfway around the world. Being able to participate online has opened a whole new world of live and on-my-own time PD opportunities.”

At more moderate levels, teachers commented on benefitting from learning more about their students as musical learners. To illustrate, this teacher said, “I have gotten to know my choir members on a deeper level, the connection has been truly meaningful.” For one teacher, the QUAD system, “enabled me to get to know the students one-on-one better than the pre-COVID school timetable.” While working online with students learning at home, another admitted to discovering that “some of the terribly shy students have beautiful voices.” A few teachers said that they had time for “more deeper conversations with students” and “getting to know students individually and personally.” This notion seemed to go hand in hand with another advantage of teaching during the pandemic, although mentioned less frequently, which was more time to give students individualized attention because class sizes were smaller during the pandemic.

Less often teachers mentioned that they experienced some relief from the “stress that comes with preparing for live performances” such as concerts, assemblies, and festivals. Teachers learned that they had the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and said they gained versatility and resourcefulness. For instance, one teacher said that the pandemic, “made me a more versatile teacher with a quick ability to implement unique music lessons and units on the fly.” Without the pressures of preparing for performances and the suspension of many extra-curricular music programs, music teachers had time to reflect on their practices and re-think the role of music in education. For instance, one respondent wrote, “I have been able to focus on other musical areas and rethink lesson plans, which has resulted in some creative teaching ideas.” Another said, “I think we rely on singing too much and this has taught me to think more outside the box and consider the needs of students who do not like to sing.” A more philosophical shift was contemplated by this teacher, “I believe that this [the pandemic] has also opened student learning beyond the *whiteness* of our existing performance-based programs, and that is a good thing.” And finally, because of teaching on carts, teachers developed their ability to create multi-level units of instruction for use with various grade levels. One teacher reported to be “rotating units through different levels” to create music without singing.

***Benefits for students.*** Teachers identified some worthwhile outcomes for students in their responses to this question. Most frequently, they indicated that students benefitted from experiencing music learning in more diverse ways or as one put it “adding SO MANY new activities” to music classes for students. To illustrate, teachers offered comments such as, “The pandemic allowed success for students who are not successful at performance-based tasks” or “The use of digital audio workstations (like Soundtrap) has greatly improved students’ interest and capacity in music-making in

older grades.” Another teacher offered this explanation, “Learners who were previously reluctant to sing or move are benefitting from acquiring a comprehensive gesture vocabulary because I devote more time, detail, and attention to the use of gesture to communicate learning and understanding... I offer individual choice.”

At more moderate levels, teachers reported that students benefitted from experiencing less performance anxiety during the pandemic—“Students did not have to “navigate that anxiety because singing is not being asked of them this year.” To further illustrate this point one teacher wrote, “Some students felt more comfortable to record themselves singing and then have the recording played in class rather than performing in front of their peers. I will continue to use this method at times in the future.” Similarly, this teacher observed, “When students upload performances, they have many chances to get it right. Normally, they used to perform live and didn’t always do as well. So, they like pre-recording their tests. Performance test marks tend to be higher this year.”

Also emerging at more moderate levels, music teachers reported that their students benefitted from the chance to work with them in smaller sized classes, and in some cases, they linked low enrollments to greater music learning. One teacher reported, “Working in smaller ensembles has certainly been motivating for our students, and I believe that most of them have become better singers this year.” Physically distanced students and wearing masks “helped develop skills in projection and listening.” There were “fewer classroom management issues” which provided more time for learning. For example, “Smaller grade level choirs have allowed for more music literacy, individualized instruction, exploration of more culturally specific songs, skill sets, and abilities.” In smaller classes, quieter students were also engaging and interacting more comfortably. According to this teacher, “My ADD [attention deficit disorder] students were able to focus and engage more in class activities in smaller groups!!” When class sizes were 10-12 students, another noted that their music classes were “awesome for students’ attention, engagement, and progress!”

Less frequently, teachers wrote about their ability to give students more individualized attention during the pandemic and set learning goals for them. There were opportunities for both musical and personal growth for music learners—“They are doing a lot of individual learning rather than in groups, so they are developing independence. They are developing their creativity and higher-level critical thinking skills. When we return to singing, they will be better equipped.” Another teacher reported that “some students got a LOT more of my time and energy in a more 1-1 way.” Music teachers had time to focus on students who did not always feel comfortable with music making in groups and were “able to explore some solo projects.” In terms of personal growth, during the pandemic teachers noted increases in students’ “patience,” “persistence,” “respectfulness,” “resilience,” “empathy,” “social awareness,” “mindfulness,” and self-regulation skills.”

At lower levels, teachers described offering therapeutic music experiences during the pandemic which was viewed as a benefit. Some used the music classroom to foster “positive mental health, belonging, purpose, a place to shine, a way to feel special and

valued.” One directly aimed to use “music as therapy” and “teach that learning an instrument doesn’t have to be as studied and polished and can be more of an organic [process], using instruments and sound and patterns that sooth us, or help us celebrate the positive things in our lives and world.” Others made comments like “I want music to ease burdens of worry amongst the children” or indicated that there has been “more time for reflection” during music classes in the pandemic context.

*No positive outcomes or benefits.* A smaller proportion (14.93%) of music teachers responding to this question were unable to identify any worthwhile outcomes or opportunities resulting from the pandemic for them or their students related to music education generally and/or singing more specifically. Of these, the most frequent comments were brief and included phrases like, “I can’t think of any,” “Il n’y en n’a pas,” “absolutely nothing,” “aucune,” or “There were none, sadly.” Less frequently, the comments were more embellished and offered fuller descriptions of how teachers were feeling, “I can only hope we’ll find them. I have lost the energy to find creative ways around all the roadblocks and I feel quite frankly, exhausted. For the first time in my career, I am seriously thinking about quitting the teaching profession.” In another example, a music teacher elaborated on why they were unable to see any positives. The reasons included the lack of joy, difficulties with health restrictions, feeling undervalued and anxious about the future, loss of their music budget, and inequitable treatment between music and physical education programs in the school. The teacher’s story concluded in this way, “My program has been slashed...I work so hard to build an incredible program, get instruments replaced, form three different choirs, two bands, and many more things. And now it’s all gone.”

This aching feeling of losing everything connected to teachers’ school music programs also shone through another large group of comments related more specifically to singing. Likewise, within this group of comments, and understandably so, teachers could just not point to anything productive arising from their teaching experiences during the pandemic that could be construed as helpful to them or their students that was singing-related. In some of these cases, it was clear that both curricular and extra-/co-curricular vocal/choral music programs had been fully suspended. To illustrate, one teacher stated conclusively, “The pandemic has literally decimated my choral program and children have not been singing or performing in choral settings for over a year. I cannot superficially put a shallow spin on this desperate situation.” Another teacher who was reassigned to other teaching duties reported, “The stress levels I have experienced due to the loss of most of my music program and being forced to teach multiple non-music courses to multiple classes, with no support or consideration for the exposure [to COVID-19] I face each week has been catastrophic. I have had to take a four-month medical leave.” Others simply indicated that the “loss of singing has been very difficult.” It was not surprising to find no positive outcomes in teachers’ comments because “singing at our school has been eliminated until at least the next school year” or “There has been no singing and our extra-curricular choral and rock band groups have been suspended.”

## Section 4: Conclusions and Recommended Actions

The final section of this report presents conclusions and recommended actions resulting from *Singing in Canadian Schools: COVID-19 Impact Survey*, a research project funded by Choral Canada and its partners. The study was designed to provide a national account of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of singing in K-12/CEGEP school music education in Canada during the 2020-2021 school year, as well as to guide action planning moving forward. These statements organized by the themes investigated are intended to suggest next steps for Canadian government authorities in education and health, music education leaders, and other interested stakeholders as they launch efforts to rebuild school music programs that will address students' music learning losses in both curricular and extra/co-curricular contexts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

### 4.1 Teacher Respondent Information

Findings are aggregated survey responses generated by a large sample ( $N=944$ ) of Canadian K-12/CEGEP school music teachers that strongly represent Canada's provinces/territories, student enrollments, grade levels, community settings, school designations, and languages of instruction.

### 4.2 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Teaching Singing in the Music Program

COVID-19 had a detrimental effect on teaching and learning through singing in Canadian school music programs in 2020-2021. Vocal and choral experiences for students in both curricular and extra-curricular contexts were dramatically reduced. The instructional time teachers spent using singing during scheduled music classes dropped significantly. Challenges emerged for teachers while implementing health and safety measures for teaching at school which also caused significant disruptions to their regular music teaching practices, especially those involving singing. Live music performances and other singing-related learning enhancements such as musical guests and singing-related field trips were nearly eliminated from school music programs.

#### *It is recommended that...*

- Government authorities in education and health work with music education leaders (e.g., government music education consultants, division music education consultants, music education and choral music organization leaders, university music educators) to figure out how singing in schools can co-exist with the coronavirus while mitigating risks and keeping everyone safe. It is important to find ways to reduce the obstacles for *all* students to partake in school-based singing and choral ensembles, but especially for diverse student groups, as music is a critical agent for inclusion and their sense of well-being.
- Government authorities and division/district administrators ensure that students are receiving the recommended instructional time allotments for music in schools so that they have the chance to achieve mandated and/or modified music

learning outcomes. For some Canadian students, school is the only opportunity for music education.

- Music education leaders along with government authorities meet to a) reimagine how music performances can continue in outdoor, adapted, and/or virtual environments (if moving forward school music performances for larger indoor audiences are not permitted) and b) review local guidelines for indoor and outdoor events and gatherings with the aim of resurrecting live student performances for their communities that are safe and mitigate the risk of viral spread.
- Canada's music educators accelerate the development of approved pedagogical innovations that will keep students safe and revitalize rich opportunities for singing in curriculum-based and extra/co-curricular school music programs.
- Division/district administrators and school leaders set up steering committees with music teacher representatives with the goal of addressing the challenges teachers identified in this survey that affected their abilities to implement health and safety protocols for safe group singing in schools (e.g., issues with ventilation in schools, maintaining social distancing, singing outdoors).
- Division/district and school leaders support music teachers by providing professional development, technologies, and resources for continuing a broad array of singing and performing experiences, especially for online contexts if necessary. The value of alternative and/or virtual performance experiences for school music students should be assessed, and if considered valuable, then implementation support and resources need to be provided. It is important to recognize that music teachers are leaders that play a key role in schools through their outreach to high numbers of students, nurturing of relationships, and engaging with families.
- Education and health ministries consider redefining guest musicians as essential workers, and not as visitors. Like substitute teachers, they enter schools for short periods to enhance music programs by leading workshops or making presentations. If guest musicians are not permitted to enter schools, then music teachers should augment the involvement of guests in programs virtually, which would offer reciprocal benefits to both students and professional musicians in our communities.
- As music teachers move to recovery efforts, they resume taking students on singing/choral related field trips and participate with them in music/choral education outreach programs. Community engagement is essential to musical development and brings music concepts alive for students. Equally important is collaborating with choral music organizations and cultural institutions on recovery efforts to work in partnerships with schools. It is crucial for music educators to reinstitute the practice of exposing students to a world of musical experiences that may not be opened at home (e.g., musical theatre, choral festivals, workshops, singing groups), especially for groups of diverse students.

### 4.3 Overall Support for Singing and Music Education

The importance of singing in school music programs in Canada waned greatly during the pandemic while other modes of music learning like listening or playing guitars and drums increased. Support for singing at school came from fewer stakeholder groups during the pandemic than were identified by teachers before the pandemic set in. Support for singing from the highest authorities for education in Canada, division/district administrators and education ministries were notably lower. One third of teachers experienced decreased funding for their music programs in 2020-2021. Most teachers lost their designated music classrooms during the pandemic. Instead, they taught music at school from multiple locations or traveled to and from classrooms using carts. A small number spent some time working and teaching from home using virtual music pedagogies. One third (33%) of music teacher participants received modified music curricula from their provincial/territorial ministries to guide teaching, learning, and assessment, however, most (67%) *did not* receive modified curricula. More than half (55%) of responding music teachers assessed the level of professional development (PD) opportunities received during the pandemic crisis as inadequate, particularly in relation to singing.

#### *Recommended Actions*

##### *It is recommended that...*

- Education ministries, division/district administrators, and school leaders augment efforts to provide comprehensive support for school music teachers in their pandemic teaching efforts. Music teachers are working hard to sustain singing in schools, confront interruptions to teaching practices, reclaim music classrooms, and rebuild programs. This support needs to include adequate funding, PD, and resources for continuing and rebuilding comprehensive school music programs that include singing. Support is crucial for music teachers' resiliency, recovery efforts, and overall coping with teaching during a pandemic.
- Each provincial/territorial education authority establish a steering committee made up of representatives of partner organizations (e.g., school boards, universities, superintendents, school leaders, parent councils, teachers, music education organizations) to consider ways to develop safe singing protocols for school music programs if the pandemic persists, or another arises.
- In readiness for 2021-2022 and beyond, education authorities work with music education leaders in their jurisdictions to prioritize music learning outcomes that teachers can teach and assess and that students can learn and acquire. While doing so, it is important for leaders to keep in mind that singing is essential and needs to be safely re-positioned in the curriculum.
- Music education leaders undertake advocacy efforts in their local communities, provide curriculum and instructional leadership for music and singing, and offer support to music/choral teachers and school principals.

- Moving forward music educators and organizations who want to resurrect a strong place and role for singing in school music programs engage in advocacy initiatives with students and their families, which are two groups that have considerable influence on educational decision makers.
- All professional development providers, especially division/district authorities in collaboration with music education leaders, and music education and music community organizations make coordinated efforts to provide short-term professional development in targeted areas of need for teachers. Teachers with high needs are those who predominantly use singing and vocal/choral approaches in their music programs and serve students for whom singing, and choirs are crucial to life at school.

#### **4.4 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Implementing the Music Curriculum**

The impact of COVID-19 on teachers' abilities to implement official music curricula was found to be extremely concerning. Several music learning outcomes (MLOs) requiring students to perform music through singing could not be taught by most teachers (e.g., development of skills such as pitch matching or breath control or singing as a form of self-expression and communication). Music is a performing art, and therefore, the performance-based learning central to K-12 school music education now requires remediation. More than half of the teachers were able to design and implement lessons addressing MLOs related to listening and responding to music, understanding music in various historical and cultural contexts, and musical creativity. Surprisingly, more than half had difficulty teaching MLOs that should have taken little effort to address while teaching in-person or virtually (e.g., generating ideas for composing songs or self-assessment of music learning).

#### ***Recommended Actions***

##### ***It is recommended that...***

- Education ministries along with division/district and school leaders consider ways to address the challenges music teachers encountered to address the full range of mandated music learning outcomes outlined in Canadian music curriculum documents, as well as the disparities in students' music learning that accompanies this finding. Public health and education ministries should review the most current research on safe in-person singing, revise guidelines and safety protocols for singing in schools, and provide the resources and professional development necessary for teachers to implement them.
- Division/district and school leaders provide professional development opportunities for music teachers that target pedagogical approaches for all MLOs that teachers identified as difficult to teach but should not have been difficult for teachers to address in virtual or in-person teaching contexts.

#### 4.5 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Assessing Students' Music Learning

The impact of COVID-19 on teachers' abilities to assess students' learning related to mandated music learning outcomes (MLOs) was also distressing. Several music learning outcomes (MLOs) that require students to be assessed through singing were impossible to evaluate (e.g., development of skills such as vocal production, reading musical notation via sight singing, or demonstrating understandings of timbre by singing). Over half were able to assess MLOs related to listening, responding to music, and understanding music in various historical and cultural contexts, and slightly less than half were able to assess students' song compositions. Unexpectedly, the bulk of music teachers reported difficulties assessing MLOs that do not present the same challenges as performance-based assessments (e.g., assessments of students' abilities to generate ideas for composing songs; self-assessing learning as performers, composers, or interpreters of vocal/choral music). Music teachers (88%) continued formal reporting of music learning to students and their parents/guardians during the pandemic, however reports would have been based on modified music curricula. Assessment profiles of students' music learning for the 2020-2021 pandemic-impacted school year would be incomplete. Formal reporting of music grades continued during the pandemic which suggests that schools made efforts to continue with music teaching and learning, and that music remains a valued area of the curriculum in Canadian schools.

#### *Recommended Actions*

##### *It is recommended that...*

- Education ministries, divisional/district administrators, and music education leaders take swift collaborative action to develop efficient assessment strategies for music education for their jurisdictions that can be implemented in the short term. A comprehensive set of music assessment data gathered through multiple methods is advocated for all students, which will require additional supports for music teachers who will have to implement the assessments. Profiles of students' music learning are necessary for music educators to address learning gaps, especially related to singing, and then to design teaching and learning plans that address the gaps. For instance, teachers may find themselves having to teach and assess concepts and/or skills that would normally have been addressed in the preceding school year.
- Formal reporting of music grades continues following local division/district guidelines and policies moving forward. If necessary, modifications or adaptations to music report cards should be aligned with modified music curricula, particularly in school situations where essential areas of music learning are being restricted from being taught and adequately assessed. Realistically, students can not be expected to learn and progress through all music learning outcomes included in official music curricula in the pandemic context due to

fewer interactions between students and music teachers and health protocols that are significantly restricting some modes of music learning, such as singing.

#### **4.6 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Music Educators**

The professional lives of school music teachers during 2020-2021 were far from ideal as their well-being and job satisfaction declined. While 90% of music programs continued with alternative pedagogies, teachers' abilities to offer group singing, performance-based activities, and extra-curricular programs were highly restricted. Most continued to teach music at school with students while following mandated health protocols and reported low self-efficacy with virtual teaching. Few were re-assigned to teach in non-music areas. 67% did not receive modified music curriculum documents and resources to guide the continuation of singing in schools during COVID-19. Many music teachers spent at least four additional hours each week on non-teaching related tasks and/or planning new approaches for teaching and learning to respond to COVID-19. Few were compensated with increased prep time or funds. Most teachers spent up to \$400.00 of their own money on instructional materials and professional development. Less than half participated in choral/music professional development or stayed connected to choral/music education organizations. Small numbers of teachers had opportunities to host pre-service music teachers completing university practicum courses.

Music teachers' free-text comments yielded valuable, nuanced insights into the impacts of the pandemic crisis on them personally and professionally. The most prevalent concepts evident in the written responses revealed the following: high levels of teacher frustration with singing restrictions, perspectives on how mandated health restrictions and the loss of designated music classrooms hampered both music teaching and students' learning, notable downward enrollment trends for choirs and choral ensemble courses, and alarming decreases in opportunities for extra-curricular singing-related ensembles. Teachers wrote freely about well-being concerns, offered explanations about the challenges they faced implementing health and safety measures at school, shared ideas for re-imagining music programs, and put forward their worries about decreases in student engagement. Details were gleaned about teachers' experiences with inconsistent health and safety directives, the reasons why some music teachers support singing restrictions, teachers' concerns about how to recover singing in schools, and some glaring differences they noted regarding health and safety restrictions placed on music and singing at school and those applied to physical education and sports at school.

#### ***Recommended Actions***

*It is recommended that...*

- Moving forward educational authorities and music education leaders reassess risk and intentionally take steps to cautiously bring singing safely back into

schools and music programs. Naturally, the health and safety of students is the highest priority for all leaders, educators, and families.

- Division/district administrators, school leaders, and choral/music education organizations make efforts to provide mental health and well-being supports for music educators who have been impacted by the pandemic.
- Provincial/territorial governments take stock of what has been done in their jurisdictions, and if necessary, move ahead quickly with curriculum modifications that accommodate singing, adapted assessment tools and requirements, and related resources for music teachers who using singing. Inequities were found between educational jurisdictions across the country regarding the provision of these supports for music teachers. Some provincial/territorial governments have been slow to respond and innovate.
- Given the additional stresses and changing workloads reported by music teachers, division/district administrators acknowledge music teachers' needs for increased planning and scheduled prep time during the school day and take action to provide it. Such actions could go a long way to counter teacher fatigue and job dissatisfaction in a complex pandemic environment.
- Education authorities contemplating recovery efforts heed the voices and experiences of music teachers in Canada, and those of their students. Relevant and creative strategies to improve the working/teaching conditions of music teachers are needed to resurrect teachers spirits and restore their well-being and work-life balance.

#### **4.7 Recovery and Rebuilding Music Programs with Singing**

Music teachers identified several concerns in relation to rebuilding their music programs involving singing in Canada's schools including: how to recoup gaps in students' music learning, particularly those linked to singing, vocal, and choral skill development; recruitment of new and returning students into music/choral courses and programs; reduced student participation levels in music/choral courses and programs; loss of access to music performance spaces and/or dedicated music rooms; personal capacity and energy needed for rebuilding efforts; elimination or reduction of school-based singing programs; loss of scheduled preparation time, rehearsal time, and/or funding for singing programs; and job security.

Music teachers' free-text comments generated further descriptive thoughts about the rebuilding process for music programs involving singing. The dominant themes offered detailed writings about regaining singing-related losses, health and safety restrictions, the fear of singing, regaining music learning losses, and music program cuts. Also offered in the comments were embellishments connected to program recovery efforts, concerns about declining enrollments and recruitment into singing/choral programs, equitable access to music for all students, worries about the loss of designated music teaching spaces, and declining administrative support. Less often teachers wrote comments associated with job security, and their hopes and optimism about the future.

### ***Recommended Actions***

***It is recommended that...***

- Provincial/territorial education authorities in collaboration with division/district administrators and music educators shift from emergency response planning to recovery planning for the 2021-2022 school year and onward. The core goal should be to return music programs involving singing normal states as soon as possible. A key priority in recovery planning is to ensure that schools are safe spaces for all music educators and students so protocols that address music learning through singing should continue to be implemented as deemed necessary by public health authorities, but more balance is needed. Music learning and skill loss particularly as it relates to singing will be significant for many students and requires remediation.
- Action planning be undertaken at all levels of the education system (provincial/territorial, divisional/district, school, community) to return school music programs using singing to pre-pandemic states and increase supports for music/choral teachers who will be on the front lines implementing these plans. Such efforts require adequate funding for remedial music learning, enabling singing, modification of music curricula, assessment requirements and strategies, music teacher professional development, and supports for music teacher and student well-being. Available funds should be distributed equitably among all curriculum areas, including music.
- Provincial/territorial education authorities in collaboration with division/district administrators and music educators weigh the risk-benefit ratio that music and singing-related programs make to students' social and emotional growth and well-being as they engage in recovery planning. Singing at school, especially in groups provides important social opportunities for students and fosters vital relationships that have been decimated during the pandemic. Shutting down music programs that could help students overcome isolationism and rehabilitate their well-being seems counter-productive to education recovery efforts.

#### **4.8 Positive Outcomes and Opportunities for Music Teachers and Students**

Music teacher respondents identified a range of positive outcomes and opportunities that resulted from their pandemic teaching experiences for music teaching and learning more generally as well as for teaching singing more specifically. This “silver lining” also included a list of benefits and opportunities for music teachers themselves and another list for their students. Looking ahead, music teachers are very eager to sing again with their students, and once they can, they will take along a plethora of new music pedagogies, resources, and experiences that they can consider for enhancing school music programs in the continuing or post-pandemic context.

### ***Recommended Actions***

#### ***It is recommended that...***

- Division/district administrators, music education leaders, and music teachers participate in professional conversations to identify music pedagogy innovations and other positive outcomes that emerged from their pandemic teaching experiences and consider ways that these can be used to enhance school music education and singing-related programs moving forward.
- Leaders at all levels in the music and education system use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity to re-think school music education and the unique role it can play in education recovery and rebuilding efforts. The unique values of music and singing in education need to be shared in convincing, comprehensive, and compelling ways in ongoing advocacy initiatives to ensure that K-12 music programs across the country are resurrected, strengthened, and championed.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

Navigating the terrain of recovery and rebuilding educational programs from times of disruption and uncertainty presents the field of music and choral education with unique challenges. Choral Canada and its national partners have taken the first critical step in the process by conducting this unique and timely study that offers the profession valuable insights into the impacts of the current pandemic situation on the teaching of singing in K-12 school music education across Canada. Findings reveal deep and comprehensive understandings of several adverse impacts, as reported by 944 music teacher participants across the country. A key message is encapsulated by one teacher who offered a comment using a lyrical line from a popular song—*that you don't know what you've got till it's gone* (Mitchell, 1970).

Indeed, the experience of the current crisis is a powerful reminder of how important music and singing are to the lives of students, schools, families, and communities at large. The attention of all stakeholders in music and education must now shift to what needs to be done in a timely manner to ensure that music learning through singing resumes safely in school music programs. Recommended actions suggest next steps for provincial/territorial education authorities, music education and community leaders, and music/choral teachers interested in resurrecting and advancing singing in K-12 music education once again for all students in Canada, both in the short-term and moving forward into the post-pandemic era.

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## Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

### Singing in Canadian Schools: COVID-19 Impact Survey

**Choral Canada** and its partner organizations, the **Canadian Music Educators' Association**, **Coalition for Music Education in Canada**, **Kodály Society of Canada**, are conducting an online survey to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the teaching of singing in K-12 school music education in Canada.

Singing is a core component of the music curriculum across Canada, as well as a tool for instruction and musical expression and discovery. The perspectives of Canadian music educators who use singing as a core component of their music programs are particularly important to capture during this unprecedented time.

Survey findings will be summarized in aggregate form and presented in a final report for use by Canadian music educators and choral communities.

#### Informed Consent

We are inviting you to take part in this study by completing *The Singing in Canadian Schools: COVID-19 Impact Survey*, an anonymous online survey that takes approximately **25 minutes** to complete.

Your responses will be saved each time you complete a survey question. You have **14 days** to complete the survey by returning to the link provided.

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. There is the potential for you to benefit directly from participating by sharing the final report with colleagues and educational decision makers. It will contain information to help advocate for adapting K-12 school music programs to the pandemic environment so that singing can remain core to achieving the music learning goals of K-12 schools, and meaningfully accessible to students.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You can choose to participate or not to participate. There is no compensation for your participation. You can begin the survey and decide to withdraw at any time by simply exiting the survey. Once your responses are submitted, you will not be able to withdraw, and your responses will be used in the study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality. We are using *Qualtrics* to administer the survey which offers high security. Your responses will be protected and stored confidentially on the *Qualtrics* server located in Toronto using encryption. Access is password protected and restricted to specific individuals serving as data analysts bound by confidentiality. Comments for open-ended questions will be scanned for identifiers and removed or masked if necessary, before publicly reporting results. Data will be permanently deleted from the server by the end of February 2022.

Dissemination. Public reporting of the findings will take different forms, including a national level report, executive summary, journal articles, presentations, and upon request, provincial level reports. Direct quotations will be used with identifiers removed or masked.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Meghan Hila, Executive Director, Choral Canada at: [info@choralcanada.org](mailto:info@choralcanada.org).

### **Instructions for Completing the Survey**

1. The survey should be completed by K-12 school music educators who teach general music using singing, choral ensembles, or singing related courses.
2. Music educators who teach in more than one school should select the school at which they spend the most time and complete the survey based on their music and singing teaching experiences at that one school.
3. Survey responses should be based on your perspectives and experiences teaching music and singing in school contexts, not other subjects or in community contexts.
4. Survey responses asking about your experiences during the pandemic should reflect your current context (in-person, hybrid, or online) at the time you are completing the survey. Shifting contexts can be discussed in the open-ended questions at the end of the survey.
5. By completing the survey, you are consenting to participate in the study and permitting us to use your responses as outlined above.

At your earliest convenience, please complete the survey at the following link:  
[link to survey]

On behalf of Choral Canada and its partners and collaborators, thank you for considering participating in this study.

### **Acknowledgements**

*National Partner Working Group Members*  
Choral Canada: Heather Fraser, Cynthia Peyson Wahl, Meghan Hila, Sheila Aucoin, Laurier Fagnan  
*with*  
Canadian Music Educators' Association: Dr. Andrea Rose  
Kodály Society of Canada: Dr. Jody Stark  
Coalition for Music Education: Dr. Eric Favaro

### ***National Research Project Partners (Financial Contributions)***

*Choral Canada, Coalition for Music Education in Canada, Canadian Music Educators' Association, Kodály Society of Canada*

### ***Research Project Collaborators (Financial Contributions)***

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### ***Research Project Supporters***

*British Columbia Music Educators Association, Manitoba Choral Association, Manitoba Music Educators Association, Newfoundland & Labrador Music Educators Association, Ontario Music Educators Association*

*The survey used in this study was designed by Dr. Francine Morin, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.*