

15 October 2024

Ms Julia Finn MP
Chair

Joint Select Committee: Inquiry into Arts and Music Education and Training in NSW

**MUSIC EDUCATION: RIGHT FROM THE START
SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION**

Dear Ms Finn and Committee Members,

At the time of making our original submission to the Inquiry [25 July Submission No. 43], we provided a paper *Backing Teachers: A framework to support quality music education* as an attachment. As that paper was still in draft form, we asked that it not be released publicly at that time.

The paper grapples with a question that has arisen during the course of the current inquiry: namely, building the capacity of the primary teaching workforce to deliver quality, sequential and ongoing music education. It seeks to do so by exploring what level of competence might be required at each learning stage, whether by a generalist classroom teacher or specialist music educator.

I am pleased to inform Members that the paper has now been finalised. This follows several rounds of revisions following further consultations within our network. I am submitting the final document (attached) for your consideration. We would be more than happy for this version to be made publicly available.

I should also mention that the Survey of NSW Primary Teachers, conducted by ACER, has concluded the fieldwork, and analysis will begin immediately with a view to providing the Committee with findings in time for your consideration. You will recall that this is a collaborative effort between the Department of Education, the NSW Teachers Federation and ourselves. It is being jointly funded by Alberts and Sound NSW.

With our continuing appreciation of your efforts,

Emily Albert
Executive Director

Backing Teachers

A framework to support quality music education



Capacity-building the teaching workforce to deliver quality, sequential and ongoing music education to every Australian student.

By Dr Anita Collins
with Eric Sidoti and Emily Albert

September 2024

About Music Education: Right from the Start

Music Education: Right from the Start is a collaborative national initiative, led by Alberts | The Tony Foundation, and driven by our collective belief in the power of music to change lives. It focuses on the place and purpose of music within a quality education, and how to ensure access for all Australian primary school children. It has been developed in consultation with, and is supported by, individuals and organisations spanning the music industry, education, research and philanthropy.

About the author

Dr Anita Collins is an award-winning educator, author and researcher in music education and brain development. She advises schools, school systems and departments of education in Australia, the UK and the US on how to improve their music programs based on neuromusical research. Anita is the expert advisor to the project team behind Music Education: Right from the Start.

Acknowledgement

The Music Education: Right from the Start project team thanks our network of collaborators, in particular members of our Advisory and Knowledge Base working groups, for their input into this paper:

Advisory: Louise Barkl, Dr Rachael Dwyer, Dr Jason Goopy, Anne Frankenberg, Alex Masso, Stephen O'Doherty, Nicholas Pickard.

Knowledge Base: Louise Barkl, Dr Rachael Dwyer, Dr Jason Goopy, Julie Sonneman, Dr Tanya Vaughan.



The Issue in Context

For many decades, there has been significant tension around the questions of what type of teacher should deliver music education in Australian primary school classrooms.

At one end, we have some government education systems that have a historical preference for skilled specialist music teachers in every school; while at the other end, sit government education systems that have a history of generalist teachers delivering the full music curriculum across all primary school years.

Other government education systems, nestled somewhere in the middle, are utilising skilled specialist music teachers in schools for elements of music education delivery where the principal is willing to allocate staffing budget to such a position; while other schools, where the importance of music is not held as highly, rely on the generalist teacher to deliver the music curriculum to their students.

This patchwork of histories and approaches across the various Australian states and territories has led to inequity for Australian students when it comes to quality music education. Students in a government education school are highly likely to receive significantly different levels of music education based on the varying competence and confidence of generalist teachers.

Australian states and territories have experienced difference traditions of music education and teacher skill development. For example, QLD has a strong tradition of specialist music teachers, while NSW has elected to expect generalist primary teachers to deliver music education, with little reliance on specialist music teachers.

Recent research shows us that many generalist teachers are unlikely to have had enough

personal music experience, or professional learning, to deliver the full K-6 music curriculum with an appropriate level of confidence or competence.

However, many individual schools, government and non-government education providers are addressing this inequity through providing access to effective, capacity-building professional learning, and experiencing significant success.

Practical experience from six professional learning programs for curriculum music currently running in Australia has informed this document^[1].

The purpose here is to present a framework that could help schools and government education systems to plan effectively for the development of their teaching staff, so that every Australian student receives a quality, ongoing and sequential music education that is delivered by appropriately-skilled teachers.

This document does not argue for all specialist or all generalist teachers to deliver music education to primary school students. Instead, it presents a design framework to capacity build the current primary teaching workforce in a way that will permanently improve the delivery of quality music education to every Australian student.

.....
^[1] A selection of the professional learning programs are listed at the end of this document.



Document Scope

The purpose of the Backing Teachers document is to provide a framework to capacity build the teaching workforce to deliver quality, sequential and ongoing music education to every Australian primary school student.

Backing Teachers focuses on the ability for every primary school teacher in Australian schools to deliver the required/mandated provision for music education in the Australian curriculum.

This document takes as its focus the delivery of the music curriculum within the classroom setting, and does not seek to address at this time those music activities which may be provisioned to students outside the classroom or curriculum setting at any given school; such as opt-in band, instrumental or choir activities at school, or instrumental music lessons provided on school premises.

Backing Teachers provides a framework which a school system in any Australian state or territory could use to plan the professional learning requirements to build the capacity of their workforce to effectively deliver quality, ongoing and sequential music education to every primary school student.

Recognising the high proven value of professional learning strategies, such as mentoring, this report is designed to provide indications of the **focus and duration of the professional learning** that primary teachers would require to deliver quality, ongoing and sequential music education in light of their own personal music learning background. These indications are based on both best practice research into professional learning for generalist primary teachers in music education as well as effective and successful implementation of that research that is currently being delivered in the Australian educational context. This report does not indicate a preferred pedagogy for use within these professional learning programs.

The Backing Teachers framework is designed for in-service teachers. The workforce solutions will be impacted by a teacher's training in music education during their initial teacher education; however, this framework is designed for capacity building teachers after their initial teacher education.

For further detail on the provision for pre-service teachers in Australia with music education, please see the [Fading Notes: The state of music education for the next generation of primary school teachers report](#), commissioned by the Music Education: Right from the Start initiative.

For the purposes of this document, the term 'jurisdiction' will refer to any Australian state or territory, as well as any school system (Government, Catholic or Independent) within a given state or territory.

Backing Teachers does not favour one specific methodological or pedagogical approach to capacity building primary school teachers in music education. However, the document does provide a list of current and impactful professional learning programs that are operating around Australia. This list is intended as a reference for school system leaders to look further into, if they so wish.

.....
[1] A selection of the professional learning programs are listed at the end of this document.



The Problem

The number of teachers who have either a significant professional learning and personal confidence in music education, or a specialisation in music education in primary school classrooms, is falling rapidly around Australia.

This reduction has been caused by two factors which have occurred concurrently:

1

the significant reduction in the number of universities offering degrees to qualify teachers as primary music education specialists; and

2

the more than halving of the number of learning hours that pre-service generalist teachers receive in music education during their education degrees (i.e Initial Teacher Education (ITE)).

This represents a deteriorating situation, with an increasingly negative outcome for students and for the future of music education in primary schools in Australia. Left unaddressed, a greater number of students are likely to receive less opportunity, and more limited access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education.

This situation is at odds with the extensive research demonstrating that music learning is an effective and holistic tool for childhood brain development. Moreover, the lack of experienced music education specialist teachers will mean that early career students will have fewer and fewer mentors and role models to learn from.

Teacher Profiles

The previous music experience of generalist teachers in their own childhood is rarely taken into account when assigning professional learning options. Professional learning in this space tends to be a “one size fits all” approach.

By creating profiles for classroom teachers prior to commencing their professional learning, time and money could be saved: the teacher could have a clear idea of the capacity to which they can teach music effectively; principals would have a clearer idea of the capacity of staff in delivering music in the classroom.

The following profiles differentiate teachers by their level of music education in their own childhoods.

Teacher Profile 1

Generalist teachers who have limited personal musical experience

Teacher Profile 2

Generalist teachers with limited formal musical experience

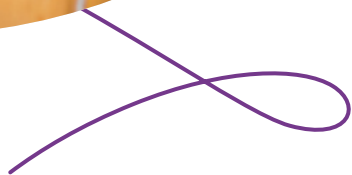
Teacher Profile 3

Generalist teachers with moderate to extensive musical experience

Teacher Profile 4

Specialist teachers with extensive musical experience





Context

Music is a core element of the Australian curriculum and its extension in every jurisdiction. Yet, there is no dispute that access to quality, sequential and ongoing music education is spread thinly at best. Consequently, a substantial number of primary school students are missing out on the many demonstrated benefits of music education.^[1] There is also the potential for students to be unable to reach the required music syllabus outcomes.

If this situation is to be addressed, it is imperative that every primary school has teachers who are appropriately skilled and supported if they are to be competent and confident in delivering quality music education – as is expected of them.

The extent to which music learning is delivered by a generalist classroom teacher or a music specialist^[2] varies from one jurisdiction to another. While this may change over time, it is expected that, in the majority of Australian states and territories, the responsibility will often remain with the generalist classroom teacher, particularly in the early years. Also, the requirements for teaching music in primary school vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

However, whether it is a generalist classroom teacher or a specialist music educator, the music knowledge and skills required increase with each learning stage.

This brief paper is offered as a contribution to tackling the teaching workforce challenges with respect to the expectations of, and the related professional learning and support needs for, teachers in the primary years in delivering quality music education.

^[1] Just which schools deliver, and how many students receive, a quality music education is unknown due to a universal lack of data. This recognised gap is now the subject of new research that it is hoped will be adopted in all jurisdictions.

^[2] It is important to note that the shift towards specialist Arts Educators can disguise the skills gap in delivering quality music education.

Towards a Solution

A potential solution is as follows: To build capacity across an entire state workforce, in the Government system, educational leaders could look at the following development strategies to maximise professional learning investment, as well as acknowledge the limitations inherent in the teaching workforce.

Development Strategy 1

Creating foundations for generalist teachers who have limited personal musical experience. If this situation is to be addressed, it is imperative that every primary school has teachers who are appropriately skilled and supported if they are to be competent and confident in delivering quality music education – as is expected of them.

Development Strategy 2

Building upon foundations for generalist teachers with limited formal musical experience (e.g. learned a musical instrument for two or less years in a group learning environment, or participated in an auditioned or performance choir at school)

Teacher profile – a generalist primary teacher who has had no significant or ongoing music education during their own childhood, nor in their ITE/professional learning.

Teacher professional learning – 24 months of music education professional learning that is based on professional learning workshops and expert support in the classroom to explicitly develop their music literacy and personal musical skills

Teacher capacity – Capacity to teach music to Australian curriculum Band 1 (K-2 or 6-8 year old) students.

Teacher profile – a generalist primary teacher who has had limited ongoing music education during their own childhood, and in their ITE/professional learning.

Teacher professional learning – 18-24 months of music education professional learning that is based on professional learning workshops and expert support in the classroom to explicitly develop music literacy and personal musical skills

Teacher capacity – Capacity to teach music to Australian curriculum Band 1 (K-2 or 6-8 year old) students' music.



Development Strategy 3

Utilising previous experience and knowledge for generalist teachers with moderate to extensive musical experience (e.g. learned a musical instrument for two or more years in an individual and group learning environment or participated in a auditioned or performance choir at school)

Teacher profile – a generalist primary teacher who has had moderate to extensive ongoing music education during their own childhood, and/or in their ITE/professional learning.

Teacher professional learning – 12 months of music education professional learning that is based on professional learning workshops and expert support in the classroom to explicitly develop music literacy and personal musical skills

Teacher capacity – Capacity to teach music to Australian Curriculum Band 2 (K-4 or 6-10 year old) students music.

Development Strategy 4

Elevating generalist classroom teachers with extensive musical experience (e.g. learned a musical instrument for five or more years with wide performance and assessment experiences) into generalist primary teachers with specialist music skills.

Teacher profile – a generalist primary teacher who has had extensive ongoing music education during their own childhood, and/or in their ITE/professional learning.

Teacher professional learning – 6-12 months of music education professional learning that is based on professional learning workshops to explicitly develop music literacy and personal musical skills

Teacher capacity – Capacity to teach music to Australian curriculum up to Band 3 (K-6 or 6-12 year old) students music.

In refining these profiles, further consideration might be given to:

- Assessing individual teachers' experience, previous PD and personal music skills in order to design personalised learning pathways
- The PD needs of teachers who have undertaken secondary school teacher education but are now teaching in a primary school setting
- The differences between the state and system in which a teacher did their own personal music learning
- A teacher's knowledge and understanding of recognised music pedagogy
- Recognising the need for ongoing PD, regardless of a teacher's level of expertise or experience.

Teacher Categories & Development Strategies

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>1</p> <p>Generalist teachers who have limited personal musical experience</p> | <p>2</p> <p>Generalist teachers who have limited formal musical experience</p> | <p>3</p> <p>Generalist teachers who have moderate to extensive musical experience</p> | <p>4</p> <p>Emerging specialist music teachers who have extensive musical experience</p> |
|--|--|---|--|

Teacher Development Requirements

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>A</p> <p>Personal music skills 12 months</p> | <p>B</p> <p>Music teaching skills 12 months</p> | <p>C</p> <p>Designing for learning skills 6-12 months</p> | <p>M</p> <p>Learning mentoring skills 6-12 months</p> |
|---|---|---|---|

| Teacher Profile | Focus for PD | Duration of PD | Post PD capability |
|--|--|--------------------|--|
| <p>1 Generalist teachers who have limited personal musical experience</p> | <p>A Personal music skills</p> <p>B Music teaching skills</p> <p>C Designing for learning skills</p> | 2 years PD | Up to Band 1 music curriculum |
| <p>2 Generalist teachers who have limited formal musical experience</p> | <p>A Personal music skills</p> <p>B Music teaching skills</p> <p>C Designing for learning skills</p> | 1.5 to 2 years PD | Up to Band 1 music curriculum |
| <p>3 Generalist teachers who have moderate to extensive musical experience</p> | <p>B Music teaching skills</p> <p>C Designing for learning skills</p> <p>M Learning mentoring skills</p> | 0.5 to 1 years PD | Up to Band 2 music curriculum and mentor less experienced teachers |
| <p>4 Specialist teachers who have extensive musical experience</p> | <p>M Learning mentoring skills</p> <p>While experienced music teachers are able to teach across all year levels, due to insufficient numbers to teach all primary levels, it is proposed the better use of their skillset is to teach latter year students and to mentor less experienced teachers for younger years.</p> | Up to 1 year of PD | Up to Band 3 music curriculum and mentor less experienced teachers |



Workforce Utilisation

The Government education system could utilise these up-skilled teachers in the following ways:

Teachers in Development Strategy 1 could deliver the Australian curriculum Band 1^[1], in conjunction with a school-based support and professional learning community leader (e.g. an Experienced teacher/mentor)

Teachers in Development Strategy 2 could deliver the Australian curriculum Band 2, in conjunction with a school-based support and professional learning community leader (e.g. an experienced teacher)

Teachers in Development Strategy 3 could deliver the Australian curriculum Band 2, and could provide school-based support and professional learning community leader (e.g. an experienced teacher)

Teachers in Development Strategy 4 could deliver the Australian curriculum Band 3, and can provide school-based support and professional learning community leader.

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^[1] While the Australian Curriculum is used as a common reference, we appreciate that state jurisdictions differ in its application.

Specialist Music Educators

Experience tells us that there are evident advantages in recognising, developing and deploying specialist music educators when it comes to ensuring student access to quality music education. This is particularly so when it comes to delivering music in Stage 2 and higher.

The use of specialist music educators has varied considerably between jurisdictions, and even within systems within each jurisdiction, over time. For example, in Queensland, there has been a history of employing music specialist teachers, while in NSW there has been a reliance on generalist teachers to deliver music education. This is an important consideration as the effective and sustainable solution to building teacher capacity in music teaching will be different in each state and system.

This solution needs to be informed by the current teaching workforce, the recent history of music education qualifications, and the current provisions around music education professional learning in each jurisdiction.

In committing to quality, sequential and ongoing music education, it is critical that the value of specialist music educators be recognised, and their intended role and contribution be articulated within a system-wide approach/strategy for quality music education.



A Way Forward

In the contemporary context, it is evident that one jurisdiction might commit to system-wide coverage of specialist music educators; another might adopt a cluster model for placing specialist music educators and making them available to all primary schools within the cluster (perhaps as a means of progressive implementation).

Another jurisdiction may determine to rely primarily on the generalist classroom teacher supported by additional teaching resources, mentoring and professional learning.

The tertiary education sector and jurisdiction may collaborate to create a pathway for highly experienced musical generalist teachers and secondary music specialists to transition to primary music specialists.

In all cases, it is to be expected that schools will continue to draw appropriately on external music organisations and music education providers to support their teachers and/or supplement their music program.

Exemplar Programs

The following are a selection of professional learning programs that are currently delivering music education capacity building programs to generalist teachers in Australia.

- Music in Schools, provided by The Song Room for the Department of Education Victoria
- Wired for Sound, provided by the CAPTIVATE unit for Catholic Education Parramatta
- Music Education Skills For The Primary Classroom, provided by Musica Viva Australia in all states and territories
- Music Education Residency Program, in collaboration with Musica Viva Australia and the Dept for Education and Music in Me in SA, and DLGSC/State Department of Education in WA.
- Music in Me (formally the National Music Teacher Mentoring Program), hosted by the Australian Youth Orchestra, and co-funded through the Australian Government and State & Territory, Catholic and independent educational partners across Australia.



Citation

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