



ARTS MATTER

"The Official Newsletter of the Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba"

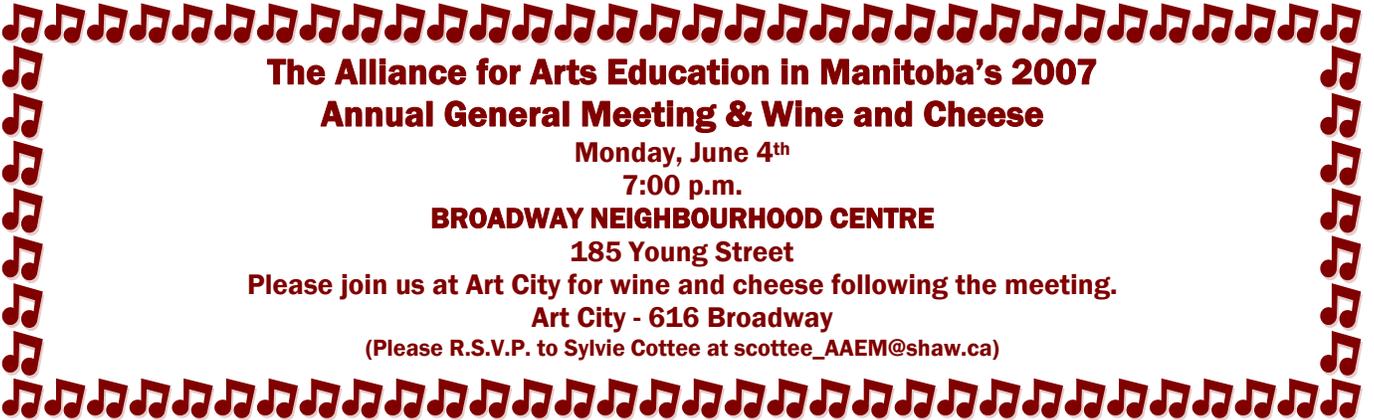
SPRING 2007

Chair's Report *By Phillip Duncan*

What an exciting time to be an arts educator! What an exciting time to be a part of the AAEM--making a difference for all of the students in this province. Since our inception the Alliance has brought many successes to the face of Manitoba arts education, including offering conferences and parent forums, developing a globally-distributed advocacy video, influencing events in our province, working in fruitful partnerships with Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth and the Manitoba Arts Council, and most importantly showcasing and celebrating young artists. This year has proven to be no different as we continue to develop our partnerships and look forward to an active year of advocacy and networking.

One of the most anticipated events for arts educators next school year is the release of the new arts curriculum for grades K-4 drama, art, and dance, and K-6 music. The quality of this online curriculum with its multimedia delivery format speaks to the leading edge work MECY is doing in this area. In conjunction with this release, the Alliance is planning its biggest advocacy campaign to date, which will include full page newspaper ads, the redevelopment and launch of our new website, and the reconfiguration of our video for use on TV and net spots. This campaign will be a call to action for all arts education supporters in our province. A call to motivate all interested parties to talk to other parents, their principals, superintendents, school trustees, MLA's and our premier to ensure they get a clear message on how we value and want to sustain high quality education both in and through the arts. MECY has also announced an important research project to ascertain a profile of arts education programs being delivered across the province. The Alliance will continue to work in partnerships with all interested parties in putting this information to good use and further advocating for comprehensive arts education for every student in the province.

As we continue our advocacy and the more voices that we have behind us, the more concrete steps we can take forward. As an Alliance member lend us a hand—convince someone new to become a member, volunteer at an event, find out where your school trustees stand on arts education, or just keep talking about the value of a quality arts education to everyone you know. Trust me, everyone who knows me believes in the value of an education in and through the arts. The more active and vocal our Alliance members are, the stronger we will become. Now is the time for action!



The Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba's 2007 Annual General Meeting & Wine and Cheese

Monday, June 4th
7:00 p.m.

BROADWAY NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE
185 Young Street

Please join us at Art City for wine and cheese following the meeting.
Art City - 616 Broadway

(Please R.S.V.P. to Sylvie Cottee at scottee_AAEM@shaw.ca)

Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba

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Strategic Brainstorming & Planning Session

By Jey Thibedeau-Silver

AAEM's "Strategic Brainstorming and Planning Session" was held on December 5, 2006. This session was facilitated by Sue Hemphill and held at Mediation Services in Winnipeg. While not all Board Members were able to attend, the 10 people who did shared their visions and strategic planning strategies as well as re-confirmed the Alliance's commitment to the importance of arts education in Manitoba.

The session began with an overview of our past accomplishments such as: conferences, videos, parent forums, showcases for established and emerging artists, newsletters, advocacy, increased membership, and continued lobbying of our elected officials and the dedicated people who work with them. All in all, we were proud of the diverse initiatives and accomplishments that we have been involved in since our inception five years ago.

We recognized that our primary roles as an organization are: Public Awareness and Advocacy; Recognition and Celebration of the Arts; Membership Building and Support; and the Development and Advancement of our amazing "Field of Arts Practitioners". To fulfill these roles, we plan to use our website, newsletters, conferences, events, videos, presentations, and publications to further inform and educate our constituents.

It was noted that our resources, albeit limited, include a part-time administrative assistant, a hard working board, our video, and the database of our members and contacts. We also identified some of the challenges we face as an organization. These are: lack of energy and focus, lack of operating funds and financial resources, a board of busy professionals, and a lack of human resources to accomplish all of our plans.

Some of our plans for the future include: re-editing and re-distribution of our video with an accompanying presenter's kit, an action planning symposium, a celebration of the arts showcase, the establishment of arts awards, website re-development, membership expansion, and ongoing information and support to the field.

The healthy functioning of our organization depends to a great extent on the participation and involvement of our members. If any of you have a particular interest in any of our future plans, please contact us to contribute to and collaborate on these important projects.

It was an excellent session that Sue Hemphill facilitated, encouraging discussion, creative thinking and concrete planning. Thank you Sue, as well as to all the AAEM board members who were in attendance.

MECY Launches Study of Arts Education in Manitoba Schools

By Francine Morin, Ph. D.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth recently launched a study aimed at developing a province-wide profile of arts education in Manitoba schools during the 2006-2007 school year. This study with its focus on arts education is the first of its kind to be completed by our ministry, and it will hopefully become a catalyst for the initiation of similar studies by other education ministries across Canada.

With the help of an advisory committee of stakeholders from the arts education community, several themes for investigation were identified including: leadership, support and policy; budgets and funding; arts curricula and programming; staffing; needs and challenges; community connections; and best practices and improvement plans. Two surveys, one directed at the division level and another directed at the school-level, have been designed to gather this range of information about school arts programs Kindergarten to Grade 12.

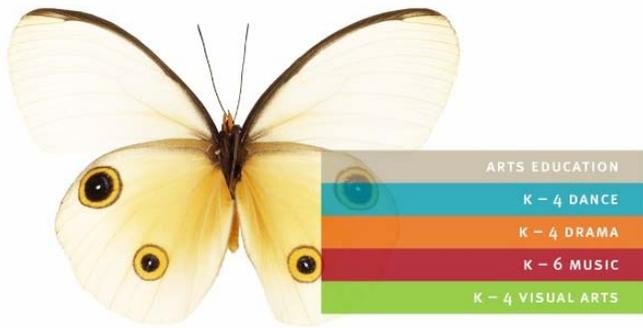
Surveys must be completed by April 27, 2007 and a comprehensive analysis of the divisional and school-based data will be undertaken during the months of May and June. The final research report is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2007. The ministry intends to use the information presented in the report to further inform the design and implementation of services to assist schools in improving or enhancing arts programs.

I am an AAEM Board Member, as well as the Principal Researcher helping MECY with this study. If you have any questions regarding the survey or study, please feel free to contact me at 474-9054 or fmorin@cc.umantioba.ca. YOU can help as well by ensuring that the surveys receive the attention they deserve and are completed and returned to MECY in a timely manner.



"Learning for Life: Why the Arts Matter"

is a video that celebrates dance, music, art and drama and informs the viewers of the many benefits of an education rich in the arts - \$15.00/copy. E-mail Sylvie Cottee at scottee_AAEM@shaw.ca.



ARTS CURRICULUM IN MANITOBA: WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Children and youth in Manitoba schools need more and better arts education opportunities, and there is no more pressing need than that of a new curriculum to lead the way! That has been the message of the Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba since its inception. It is a message which comes through loud and clear from our membership, from participants in our think tanks and conferences, and from arts educators who struggle to provide quality

programming in the absence of up-to-date curricula in the arts.

We recognize that there have been some encouraging developments in recent years. In 2003 the province posted *The Arts in Education* draft statement as a foundational starting point for the development of a new arts curriculum. In 2004 MECY established development teams to begin the writing process and in 2005 two Arts Education Consultant positions were created to manage the process. These are moves which the Alliance applauds.

However, there have also been relatively silent periods. While we presume that work on the curriculum continues behind the scenes, the only visible displays of support for arts education from the department during such periods, have come in the form of announcements regarding initiatives like ArtsSmarts Manitoba and Music Month Grants – programs which are admittedly worthwhile and support artist-teacher partnerships, but reach only a small portion of our schools. Furthermore, such programs fall far short of providing the kind of comprehensive, sequential and universal arts programming that only new curricula can spearhead. So what *is* happening with the new arts curriculum?

The AAEM expressed the above concerns and questions in a letter to Peter Bjornson, Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) last winter. We are pleased to say that Minister Bjornson has responded, and he has identified a number of positive developments.

Following is a summary of the major points:

- MECY has initiated an orientation process for Manitoba educators to introduce newly completed Manitoba Arts Education Curriculum frameworks for the following: K-4 Dance, K-4 Drama, K-6 Music, K-4 Visual Arts.
- MECY is continuing the process of finalizing new frameworks in all four arts disciplines through to Grade 12 in two phases: Grades 5-8 Dance, Drama, Visual Arts, and Grade 7-8 Music is now under way; the completion of the Grades 9-12 framework in all arts disciplines will follow.
- MECY is conceiving the new Arts Education curriculum in a user-friendly electronic format that will facilitate the inclusion of images, sound, and video as well as text-based information. In this way, MECY can begin to infuse the Arts Education framework with various supports to implementation – exemplars, demonstrations, suggested teaching strategies, and so on. Processes will be established to develop, revise, and link new resources to the framework on an ongoing basis. Print versions of the frameworks will also be available.
- As well, this year MECY will begin the process of reviewing learning resources to support the new K-4/6 arts frameworks. Subsequently, new arts education resources will be identified and made available to Manitoba teachers.
- MECY anticipates that the voluntary implementation phase for the new Arts Education frameworks in K-4 Dance, Drama, Visual Arts, and K-6 Music will begin in the 2007-08 school year.

Minister Bjornson states that “Arts Education curriculum renewal is, and will continue to be, a priority of MECY” and expresses a hope that “all students in Manitoba will indeed have rich opportunities to learn in, about and through the arts and that, in the process, schools throughout Manitoba will be energized and transformed”.

As for the ongoing practice of the department supporting artist partnerships, the minister states his belief that, “with new curricula to guide the practice of Arts Education in Manitoba, initiatives like ArtsSmarts, the Music Month Grants and the Youth Performing Arts Travel Grants, Artists in the Schools, and so on, can bring students, teachers and artists together in increasingly beneficial ways for all concerned.”

As a follow-up to the Education minister's response, Joe Halas, Arts Education consultant for MECY, presented a more detailed overview of the new Arts Education curriculum for the AAEM board. Following are some of the key points of Joe's presentation:

- Each arts discipline will have its own distinct framework of general and specific learning outcomes. The outcomes articulate expectations of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that children will learn at each grade level. The outcomes-based approach to curriculum design is new for arts curricula in Manitoba, and it needs to be understood that the framework is only the first step in a larger process. Subsequent phases will focus on the provision of implementation supports for teachers and students such as lessons, strategies, and learning resources in various media.
- A central graphic in each of new Arts Education curriculum frameworks is the *butterfly*. The butterfly functions as both a central metaphor and a visual organizer of key concepts in the curriculum. Each butterfly wing corresponds to one of the four *essential learning areas* into which the outcomes in each discipline have been organized. So, for example, in Music, the essential learning areas or "wings" are Music Language and Performance Skills (the musician's "tools"), Creative Expression (learning to apply the tools creatively through experimentation, interpretive decision making, composition, etc.), Music in Context (exploring and understanding music within a variety of personal, social, cultural and historical contexts), and Valuing Musical Experience (learning to reflect, analyze and construct meaning in response to music). In Art, Dance and Drama, learning outcomes are organized into similar essential learning areas or "wings" – in each case these have been adapted for the given discipline.
- In the centre of each arts butterfly is a unifying statement which articulates the overarching goal of the framework and presents a more holistic vision of how the four wings, working together, support student learning.
- The statement which flows out of the centre of the Visual Arts butterfly, for example, is titled "The Young Artist." Following are some of the ideas presented in this section:
 - *The overarching goal of the Visual Arts curriculum is to support, nurture and inspire the growth of the child as an artist and an artful learner.*
 - *The child is at the centre. Children's own feelings, perceptions, ideas and expressions matter immensely. It is critical that these are valued, explored and celebrated within all art learning experiences.*
 - *Every child is an artist - one whose growth and learning are best facilitated within rich, open ended, hands-on art making experiences.*
 - *Artistry is learned. All children have artistic potential. In developing the skills, understandings and values outlined within the essential learning areas or "wings" of the Visual Arts framework, children convert their potential to reality.*
 - *Young artists matter! As children become capable of perceiving, thinking and acting within the various media of visual arts, they journey into an important form of artistic literacy. In learning to communicate ideas, experience and feeling in ways that have no linguistic equivalent, children connect with the world and tap into their own creative capacities in new ways.*
- The Arts Education curriculum is being conceived as an electronic on-line document. Educators will be able to click their way through the frameworks into new layers of background information, opening text and/or media files. While the framework itself is a concise, largely textual document, the possibilities of this format to grow into a powerful implementation document for teachers throughout Manitoba are very exciting.

The Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba is encouraged by these latest developments regarding the Arts Education curriculum. However, it will be a massive challenge to realize the full promise of this initiative – of a dynamic, multi-media, electronic curriculum capable of enabling quality Arts Education throughout Manitoba.

If, as Minister Bjornson has stated, arts education truly is a priority of MECY, then we can expect the financial and human resources this initiative will require to be forthcoming in the months ahead. We must ensure that government continues to treat the Arts as a priority and, as we approach a provincial election, we must seek clarity from all parties regarding their understanding of and commitment to the ongoing challenge of actualizing this Arts Education curriculum. Quality Arts Education must remain a priority of MECY and significant resources will be required to enable the Arts curriculum to truly energize and transform our schools.

- Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Individual Membership \$15.00
Organizational Membership \$25.00
Student Membership \$5.00
(These are one-time membership fees.)

Charitable donations accepted.
Tax receipts issued.

Mail Cheque or Money Order To:

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