

OMEA 2026 Election & Poll Preview

Welcome to the OMEA 2026 Election. To learn more about the OMEA election process, please view Section Two of our [Internal Policies and Procedures](#).

Voting for the Election will commence on Tuesday, November 3rd, 2026.

In order to register to vote in the Election, you must have an OMEA Membership that is valid at the time of the election start time. For Example: If the election begins on Tuesday, and you purchase a membership on Wednesday, you will not be eligible to vote in the election.

Voting for the Election will close at 12:00pm on Friday, November 6th.

This document is divided into three portions.

PORTION 1: Executive

Our Executive consists of 4 returning members, and one acclaimed member. As such, the Executive does not require a vote.

PORTION 2: Returning Directors

This section consists of Directors who have renewed for an additional term. Directors may serve up to three terms. A term is defined as consisting of 2 years.

PORTION 3: Election Candidates

10 candidates are running for 6 available Board of Directors positions. Each OMEA member is entitled to one vote per available position. You may select up to 6 candidates when voting.

PORTION 1: OMEA EXECUTIVE

Michelle Naarden was the only OMEA Director nominated for the presidential track in the election. This role consists of vice president (2 years), president (2 years), and past president (2 years). Because she is the only person nominated for the role, she is acclaimed, and no vote is needed. In accordance with the election policy posted above, executive members of the OMEA must be elected from the Board of Directors.



Katie Nicholl

President

2 years, followed by 2 as Past Pres.

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate Independent School

Katie Nicholl is the Music Department Head at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener where she teaches grade 7-9 vocal programs and grade 7-12 wind ensemble programs. In 2020, she graduated from the Masters of Community Music program at Laurier. Katie enjoys teaching people of all ages the joys of music. She is a qualified kindermusik teacher, and conducts a senior adult handbell choir. In her spare time, she enjoys playing clarinet in local bands, reading and spending time with her husband and 2 children.



Michelle Naarden

Vice President (Acclaimed)

2 years, followed by 2 as President, and 2 as Past Pres

Thames Valley District School Board

I am a music specialist with Thames Valley District School Board teaching grades 4-8 music, as well as Primary Learning Support with Special Education. I have been a part of OMEA for 15 years in some capacity from student, membership, committees, and board of directors. I have taught Voice, Recorder, Ukulele and Winds while exploring the world through music in my program. I have written and supported with music resource development around Indigenous Music, as well as music from around the globe. As Vice-President I hope to continue to guide our organization in an equitable approach to music through advocacy and leadership, while building on the great work we have already done. I hope to continue to push for what seems impossible, by guiding those visions to the practical and probable.



Lynn Gracey

Past President

2-year Term

Thames Valley District School Board (retired)

Lynn Gracey is a recently retired elementary music teacher formerly with the Thames Valley District School Board in Ontario. She served as a mentor and coach to music teachers in Thames Valley and has served on several working committees to advocate for quality music programs for all students. After graduating from The University of Western Ontario (B.MusEd, B.Ed), Lynn spent five years teaching music in secondary schools in Huron County, Ontario and for the last several years has taught band, vocal, and recorder music to grades 4-8 students in West Lorne and London, Ontario. She was the co-founder of the TVDSB Junior Honour Band for students in grades 7-9. When there is a pause in her busy life, Lynn likes to travel and care for her garden.



Alycia Pindar

Treasurer

Returning for Term 2 of 3

Durham District School Board

Alycia Pindar has served your OMEA in various roles on the board and now currently serves as the Treasurer. Alycia has taught K-12 Music in the Durham District School Board for her entire career beginning in 2007. She currently teaches Primary Arts at Fallingbrook Public School in Whitby.



Lesley Pontarini

Secretary

Returning for Term 3 of 3

Peel District School Board

Lesley Pontarini is a Vocal and Instrumental Music Specialist who teaches K-8 Music in the Peel District School Board. She has served on the OMEA board since 2017. Her love of teaching began when she attained her first position as a Royal Conservatory of Music piano and theory teacher. Currently, she teaches instrumental band, keyboard, guitar, ukulele, recorder, and leads a steel pan band, Orff ensemble, and two choirs. She co-chaired the OMEA conference, "Con Fuoco", in Niagara Falls.

PORTION 2: RETURNING DIRECTORS

OMEA Directors have the option to serve up to 3 terms. A term is defined in the election policy as two years per term. A director may hold their position for a maximum of six years prior to running in the election or being nominated for an executive position.

	Mark Della Torre Returning for Term 3 of 3 Ontario Regional Manager, Long & McQuade Mark is the Ontario Regional Manager, Educational Services for Long and McQuade and serves as the Canadian Music Industry Education Committee President and representative on the OMEA board. He also sits as the Industry Rep on the CMEA Board of Directors. Mark has been involved with OMEA Conference site selection and contracts since 2006 and received the OMEA Award of Commendation in 2019.
	Makiya Hughes Returning for Term 2 of 3 Ottawa Carleton District School Board Makiya is a Western graduate (B.Mus.2018), currently teaching music in Ottawa, absolutely loving life! While working on the website at OMEA, she is busy preparing a concert band and a jazz band for festivals and concerts in our upcoming season, as well as assisting in the vocal training of the school musical.
	Jeannie Hunter Returning for Term 2 of 3 Ottawa Carleton District School Board An award-winning teacher with close to 30 years of experience, Jeannie Hunter is the Head of Special Education and Fine Arts at Nepean High School in Ottawa. In addition to degrees in music and education, she holds a certificate in Arts Administration. Jeannie has taught instrumental music, percussion, vocal music, band, choir, guitar, piano, orchestra, jazz and music for community living. In her additional capacity as a community music educator, she has worked with students aged 5-80. A career-long advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion, Jeannie was the founding director of Brookfield High School's 'World Voices Choir' which partnered with social justice organizations to use music as a tool for social change.



Iris Janssen

Returning for Term 2 of 3

Teacher Candidate, Western University

Iris Janssen is currently finishing her program as a Teacher Candidate in I/S Vocal Music and English at Western University. She has completed a concurrent degree program in a Bachelor of Music and a Bachelor of Arts, followed by a Masters in Music Education. After finding her passion with community ensembles and music in school, Iris has been dedicated to learning and teaching to continue that passion for future generations. She teaches private studio lessons in voice and piano, and conducts and sings in choirs in the London and Perth County area.



Kelly Lin

Returning for Term 2 of 3

Toronto District School Board

Kelly Lin is an elementary teacher with the Toronto District School Board. She currently serves as one of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Directors with the OMEA.



Laura Lee Matthie

Returning for Term 2 of 3

Simcoe County District School Board (retired)

Laura Lee Matthie retired in 2025 after 30 years teaching secondary school music with the Simcoe County District School Board. During her time she led various levels of concert and jazz bands, guitar, percussion, and chamber ensembles, while championing inclusive, community-focused learning.

A respected workshop facilitator, Laura Lee presents across Ontario on assessment, music technology, guitar instruction, and curriculum implementation. Her provincial and national leadership includes long-standing service

	with the Ontario Music Educators' Association as Treasurer, President, and Advocacy Director, as well as work with the Coalition for Music Education and has presented a few times at ISME on assessment and creative guitar projects. Her contributions to music education have been recognized with the MusiCounts Teacher of the Year Award (2018), Beckwith Educator Award (2021), SCDSB Trustee Tribute (2021), and Orillia Community Builders Award for Education (2024).
	Carolyn Otto Returning for Term 3 of 3 Rainbow District School Board (retired) Carolyn has served on the OMEA board of directors in a variety of roles since 1999. She retired in 2016, following a 31-year career teaching secondary school instrumental, vocal music and guitar. She is a saxophonist and drummer who regularly performs in the Sudbury area. Depending on the season, Carolyn is often outdoors, enjoying some travel, hiking, camping, paddling, gardening or photography.



Jane Saunders

Returning for Term 3 of 3

Lakehead Public School Board (retired)

Dr. Jane Saunders has now retired after completing a 35 year teaching career in her hometown of Thunder Bay. After 28 years with Lakehead Public Schools as a classroom band, orchestra, jazz, vocal, and guitar teacher, Jane taught and supervised music teacher candidates at Lakehead University from 2018 to 2025. She continues to support music education in Thunder Bay as a supply teacher, volunteer, mentor, and instrument repair person. Jane completed her music education studies at The University of Western Ontario (H.B. Mus.Ed.1988), The University of Windsor (B.Ed.1989), The University of Minnesota (M.A.1994) and Lakehead University (Ph.D. 2004). She is a member of the Canadian Music Festival Adjudicators' Association, and has worked with students and teachers at festivals across Canada for the past 17 years. For musical fun at home, Jane conducts the Thunder Bay Community Band, a 50-piece adult concert band. Outside of the world of music, she plays with her dog in and around Lake Superior.



Lauren Simmons

Returning for Term 3 of 3

Toronto District School Board

Lauren Simmons is Assistant Curriculum Leader for Equity, Assessment & Evaluation, Student Voice & Student Leadership at Leaside High School in the TDSB, where she has taught Music and English for over twenty years. A contributor to *The Recorder* and recently-published *The Why and How of Popular Music Education*, Lauren is a frequent presenter at OMEA conferences and presented at ISME 2026 in Montréal.

Lauren has served on the OMEA Board since 2022, holding portfolios including Webmaster and Intermediate/Senior Resources and Workshops. She previously co-chaired Pulse 2026 and Vibrations 2012, attended the 2019 OMEA Leadership Retreat, and contributed to several curriculum writing projects. She is also a workshop presenter for provincial OSSTF equity workshops and a TDSB Arts Mentor and Digital Lead Learner. Her music education work focuses on non-traditional approaches that centre student voice, contemporary music, technology, and creative practice, all in the framework of joy.

	Outside of school, Lauren is a marathon runner, traveller, concert-goer, reader, podcast listener, devoted Blue Jays fan, and parent of a theatre kid.
	Danny Vaz Returning for Term 2 of 3 Simcoe County District School Board Danny Vaz is the Music Teacher & Director of Triton Music at Nantyr Shores Secondary School. He graduated from York University in 2017, and spent the following year teaching music in Northampton, England. His experiences in the classroom made him fall in love with Band, & the transformational effect it has on everyone involved. Community, memories, learning experiences, & joys that come from being in an ensemble can't be found elsewhere. He considers his students as some of his best teachers, & when he isn't conducting & talking about music, he likes to ride his motorcycle, paddle a canoe, & watch Liverpool FC.

PORTION 3: ELECTION CANDIDATES

10 candidates are running for 6 available Board of Directors positions. Each OMEA member is entitled to one vote per available position. You may select up to 6 candidates when voting.

	Daniel Baerg Daniel Baerg is a music educator, professional drummer, and private music teacher whose career has spanned classroom music, performance, and community music-making. Daniel holds a Bachelor of Music in Percussion Performance (2009) and a Master of Music in Percussion Performance (2011) from Western University, as well as a Bachelor of Education (2018). He has taught with the Thames Valley District School Board since 2018, working with students from Kindergarten through Grade 8. His classroom experience includes concert band, string orchestra, strings, ukulele, recorder, Orff-based music, and
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	vocal music. He also maintains a private studio, teaching piano, ukulele, drums, and percussion. Daniel has been a professional drummer since 2007, performing in a variety of musical settings throughout his career. He brings his experience as a working musician into the classroom, including inviting professional musicians from his performing world to perform for students and help them see the possibilities of music beyond school. At the heart of Daniel's teaching philosophy is a belief that music should be fun and accessible to every student, while also building toward high standards of musicianship and performance. At Lambeth Public School, he made a particular effort to ensure that all students had opportunities to perform for an audience. When he began teaching strings at Lambeth, he learned string pedagogy specifically to meet the needs of the position. For Daniel, being a music educator means continuing to learn, adapting to the needs of students and programs, and finding meaningful ways for students to experience success through music. Daniel is interested in serving OMEA because he believes strongly in the importance of advocating for music education and supporting music educators. His experience as both a classroom teacher and working musician has given him a broad perspective on music education, and he would be excited to bring that perspective to OMEA while continuing to learn from and contribute to the wider music education community.
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Sarah Lovering-Stallard

Sarah Lovering-Stallard works for NNDSB. She holds a B.A. with a minor in Music and a B.Ed. with a music teachable from Nipissing University. Sarah is an arts prep teacher for students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a rural school, where she is passionate about fostering creativity, confidence, and a lifelong appreciation for music. She directs a school musical each year and works to provide meaningful performance opportunities that allow students to develop their musical skills and showcase their talents.

Beyond the classroom, Sarah is an active member of the broader music community. She conducts The Huntsville Community Band and plays clarinet with The Muskoka Concert Band. Through her involvement with community ensembles, she has developed valuable connections with musicians and music educators of all ages and backgrounds, strengthening her commitment to music education and lifelong learning.

Sarah is a regular attendee of OMEA conferences and values the opportunities they provide for professional growth, networking, and inspiration. She recently led a workshop at ROOTS in London, sharing ideas and resources with fellow educators.

As a dedicated music educator and active member of the music community, Sarah is seeking election to the OMEA Board of Directors to advocate for music teachers, support meaningful professional learning opportunities, and promote accessible, high-quality music education for all students. She is committed to supporting rural music programs and ensuring that educators and students in smaller and geographically dispersed communities have equitable access to resources, opportunities, and musical experiences. Through collaborative leadership and active listening, she hopes to contribute to a strong, inclusive, and supportive professional community. She looks forward to meeting more incredible music educators at Pulse this year.



Brian Frank Malito

Bryan Frank Malito was born in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He is the son of Patrick Malito, a music educator and pianist born in Grimaldi, Italy. Throughout his early years, Bryan performed in local concert bands, orchestras, and contemporary ensembles. Malito attend the University of Western Ontario and began teaching music for the London District Catholic School Board in 1995.

While being a music educator, Bryan Malito continued to study and perform. He studied percussion with D'Arcy Gray (Orchestra London), Salvatore Rabbio (DSO), Louis Charbonneau (MSO), Charles Dowd (ESO), Jean Norman Deluca (Hamilton Phil.), and Russell Hartenberger (Nexus). Bryan has performed with Orchestra London, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, National Academy Orchestra, Brassroots, Intrada Brass, and the London Symphonia. In addition, Bryan worked with the London Youth Symphony, training future orchestral musicians, and he earned a doctorate in music education at Boston University.

While teaching, Malito published resources. He created a resource for the Ontario College of Teachers, examining the ethical standards through music education (2017). He published percussion resources for the Recorder (2004). During his doctoral studies, Bryan investigated the possibilities of critical thinking within the context of world percussion music education. During his research, he identified the phenomenon of conscientization through the pedagogical concepts of teaching authenticity, dialogical inquiry, dialectical thinking, and critical praxis. As a result, his dissertation forged a mid-ranged theory called Critical Multicultural Music Education (CMME), which was published in 2014.

In addition to being a music educator and researcher, Dr. Malito is a Canadian composer, producing works for percussion. While his solo compositions focus on recital performances, Malito's large percussion ensemble compositions are meant to strengthen the repertoire for festival competitions, having a full complement of mallet

	keyboard instruments (i.e., glockenspiel, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, and chimes). For educational purposes, his classroom ensemble pieces have greater utility for students of all abilities and experience. "It would be my privilege to join the Board of Directors for the Ontario Music Educators' Association. It would be exciting to collaborate with fellow music educators provincially, guiding new music teachers, inspiring new directions for student engagement, and strengthening the music teaching profession."
<i>No Image Available</i>	Shaun Mellor I was lucky enough to have someone that put me in piano lessons at an early age. Despite not being a musical family, I always had support. I was lucky enough to have a music teacher in high school who allowed me to teach myself instruments during the summer. I went through virtually every instrument my school had. As a music educator, I want music to be accessible, equitable, and enjoyable to my students. Even if my students decide not to continue with music classes, I hope they leave as life-long lovers and appreciators of music. As an elementary and secondary supply teacher for the Thames Valley District School Board, I have tried to network as I find community to be an asset for educators. I know how valuable community is between students and I know that seeing it between educators to be important as well. During my last practicum experiences at the University of Western Ontario, I was placed in a Secondary School in London. Having only a grade 7 homeroom in my first year, I was quite nervous. Over the 9 weeks in London I was given the incredible opportunity to teach a grade 9 guitar class, a grade 10-12 guitar class, and a prep for Special Education. Despite having a lot to learn when I started, I would not have changed it at all. I got great experience with the music classes and with the concert and jazz band. I also got the opportunity to teach two groups of Spec Ed both art and music and got to see their growth as well.

	I was very pleased to be nominated for the board of directors and hope to positively contribute to the values of OMEA. I would love to contribute to this organization if I were elected.
	Orko Oyon Orko Oyon (he/him) is a music educator, researcher, producer, and audio engineer whose work explores the evolving intersections of music technology, popular music, sociology, and education. He holds a Bachelor of Music and a Bachelor of Education from Western University, where he consistently served as a community music leader and conductor. He assisted with several youth ensembles, including the Beginning Band program, the Young Winds program, and the Ontario Honour Band. He was selected as an assistant conductor of the Western Youth Wind Ensemble, and he served as the Orchestral and Small Ensembles Director for Western Chamber Music. In these settings, he taught music to students of various ages and levels, ranging from Grades 6 to the university level. Orko's consistent dedication to his studies have yielded him several awards and scholarships, including the Governor General's Silver Medal and the President's Entrance Scholarship. Orko later completed his Master of Arts in Music Education at the University of Toronto, where he gained experience with academic music education research. His thesis project examined the pedagogical and sociocultural implications of streaming services. He is currently enrolled in the Master of Music in Music Technology and Digital Media program at the same institution, further expanding his expertise in digital media creation, audio production, and technologically informed music pedagogy. Throughout his graduate studies, Orko consistently served as a teaching assistant, where he helped teach courses pertaining to instrumental music education, truth and reconciliation, and computer music applications. Recently, he was awarded the SSHRC CGRS-M scholarship to partake in research related to the social dynamics of competition and collaboration during the production of a genre-fusion EP.

	With a strong foundation in research, instrumental music education, and popular music education, Orko looks forward to bringing a cross-disciplinary lens to the OMEA's Board of Directors.
	Liz Parker-Cook My name is Liz Parker-Cook and I'm going into my 19th year of teaching with the Toronto District School Board. I earned a Bachelor of Music Education at Wilfrid Laurier University, and a BEd from OISE. I have worked at 6 schools in Scarborough, North York and East York. I have taught Strings, Band, Guitar, Keyboard, Integrated Arts, Modern Rock Band, Electronic Music and Music for Creating. In 2015, I earned a Master's of Community Music, focused on gender and music. After Covid changed our profession I began embracing more non-traditional methods and began modernizing my music program. I now offer a traditional band and string a program as well as a modern rock band and electronic music program. I believe that there is space for all kinds of music programs in Ontario schools and that all school music is important. Throughout my career OMEA has been there to offer ideas, resources and mentorship and I would like to give back to others newer to the profession. I have leadership experience in my school as an ACL, mentor teacher, workshop presenter and resource writer. I am ready to take on a leadership role in the OMEA and look forward to collaborating with amazing educators across our province.



Andrew Quinn

Andrew Quinn holds a Bachelor of Music (Honors Specialization in Music Education) from the University of Western in Ontario (B.Mus'16). Under the direction of Dr. Colleen Richardson and Dr. Kevin Watson, Andrew participated in the Young Winds Program that provides students from the local community with instrumental music education. It was during this time that he truly discovered a strong passion for community-focused music.

He then earned a Bachelor of Education from York University (B.Ed '18), and now works with the Halton District School Board (HDSB). From the onset of his career, Andrew's work has always centred around fostering inclusive and welcoming environments through community-based music making. His current work at White Oaks Secondary School explores developing independent and critical thinking through student leadership initiatives and performance of wind repertoire.



Sonya Schrum

Sonya Schrum is an experienced music educator, conductor, and performer currently located in Ottawa. Sonya's experience comes from having the opportunity to teach music at all grade levels, including university, in two countries, four school boards, and five schools to many student learners from very different socio economic areas since 1991. Sonya has been conducting the bands, teaching instrumental music, and directing musical theatre production for OCDSB's Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School for the past twenty years, where she also currently serves as the Department Head of Music, Drama, and Math since 2013. She actively participates in the music education community by being the OCDSB music subject council co-chair, on the CRMF steering committee, an OMEA member, an OBA member and on the Canada Capital Cappies steering committee where she also holds the position of music director for the Cappies Gala held at the NAC. Sonya is also an active performing musician, playing flute and piccolo in the Ottawa community, most notably with the Ottawa Wind Ensemble. In her spare

	time, she can be found outside walking, hiking or paddle boarding.
	Danielle Sirek Danielle Sirek is Arts Coordinator and Associate Professor of Arts Education at Western University, Canada. Her program of research is primarily focused on teacher education in the arts and the ways in which artistic collaboration might inform pedagogical practice. Her research is published in academic and professional journals, and has been presented at numerous international conferences. Prior to her appointment at Western, Danielle taught elementary and secondary music in Ontario and Grenada, West Indies. In addition to her teaching and scholarly work, Dr. Sirek sings professionally with the JUNO-nominated Canadian Chamber Choir and is a conductor with Amabile Choirs of London. Danielle has been a member of OMEA for over 15 years and first presented at the conference in 2011. Since then, she has attended regularly as a delegate, workshop presenter, and research presenter. She has also hosted OMEA members several times at Western to provide professional development opportunities for preservice teachers. She would look forward to serving on the OMEA Board of Directors, bringing her experience in teacher education policy and practice, and board governance.
	Kelly Stronach Kelly Stronach has been a dedicated music teacher with the Upper Grand District School Board since 2012. She has taught music, dance and drama to students in kindergarten to grade 8 at Elora Public School, and is currently at Mitchell Woods Public School in Guelph. Her program includes band, choir, ukulele, recorder and rock bands, both in class and as extra-curriculars. As a member of the Upper Grand Elementary Music Teachers' Association (UGEMTA), Kelly has organized non-competitive music festivals for students of all ages

	and abilities, as well as mentored new music teachers in her board and helped to create the UGDSB's Arts Resource page for new and experienced music educators. She has facilitated workshops for new music teachers at ETFO's annual Arts Conference, and co-created a now annual community celebration for Music Monday, involving multiple schools from Upper Grand. She was honoured to be a recipient of a Musiccounts grant and was twice named as a finalist for Musiccounts' Teacher of the Year. Kelly is a passionate advocate for music education, and strongly believes in the importance of keeping music in the classroom relevant and current. She believes music educators are currently facing a number of challenges, and is keenly interested in finding ways to help teachers manage these ever-increasing demands with an ever-decreasing schedule and budget. As a member of OMEA since 2012, Kelly has attended many annual conferences, and was thrilled to be able to assist with both Roots 2024 and Harmony 2025 as a University Volunteer Coordinator. She is eager to get more involved with OMEA and learning from this group of passionate educators and advocates.
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POLL QUESTION

The OMEA Board of Directors is seeking membership input on the poll question below. This poll is for informational purposes only as we continue to look at ways to serve our membership best. This question asks for input on the current membership structure of the OMEA. Results will be shared at the AGM.

Your current OMEA membership at \$80.00 +HST (for Individual membership) also includes a CMEA membership. These fees are coupled together at a cost of: \$55.00 (OMEA) and \$25 (CMEA).

The purpose of this question is to discern if our existing membership structure is still desired by our members.

You will be asked to select an option from the list below that best describes your membership preferences.

- 1) *I like the current system where my OMEA and CMEA fees are bundled together.***
- 2) *I would prefer the option to purchase only the OMEA membership (i.e. Individual Membership at \$55) and then choose whether or not to add the CMEA membership (Individual Rate \$25).***
- 3) *I need more information on this system in order to make a decision.***
- 4) *I would like to abstain from this poll.***