

# OKLAHOMA A+ SCHOOLS®

# RESEARCH REPORT

*YEAR FOUR: 2005-2006*

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# OKLAHOMA A+ SCHOOLS®

## RESEARCH REPORT

*YEAR FOUR: 2005-2006*

*"The mission of Oklahoma A+ Schools® is to advance a quality, whole school experience to nurture the creative learner."*

Oklahoma A+ Schools® Brochure



## Introduction

*Oklahoma A+ Schools*® promotes comprehensive, whole-school reform. Eight *Essential* commitments provide the framework for an on-going process that develops in unique ways within each participating school. Those essentials include:

- Curriculum
- Multiple Intelligences
- Experiential Learning
- Enriched Assessment
- Arts
- Collaboration
- Infrastructure
- Climate

The three defining components of Oklahoma A+ Schools® are ***professional development, networking, and research***. Comprehensive, university-based research continues to be central to the A+ process. This research report is the fourth in a series (Barry, Gunzenhauser, Montgomery, & Raiber, 2003; Gunzenhauser, Montgomery, Barry, Dell, & Raiber, 2004; Barry, Dell, Raiber, & Gunzenhauser, 2005). [The previous Research Reports are available at <http://www.okaplus.ucok.edu>.] The role of the research team has been to observe, document and reflect upon the A+ process. Certainly, the research team's understandings of this very complex school-reform procedure continue to evolve, and the scope and design of the research component has been redefined and expanded in ways that parallel the complex and emerging development of the A+ Network. Therefore, the function of this report is formative. Results from analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data will be presented in order to provide a comprehensive description of how the A+ process developed in the 31 schools within the Oklahoma A+ Network during the 2005-06 academic year. Since this research study employs a descriptive, rather than experimental, design it is not appropriate to infer causal relationships from these data.

*Oklahoma A+ Schools*® was based upon the North Carolina A+ Schools Program, an initiative of the Kenan Institute for the Arts. Fourteen schools were actively involved in the initial (2002-2003) implementation of the A+ process in Oklahoma. Since that time, schools across the state of Oklahoma have continued to elect to participate in the application process each year, with 31 schools in the Oklahoma A+ Network during the 2005-06 academic year. Eight additional schools joined the Oklahoma A+ Network and participated in their first Summer Institutes during July of 2006, bringing the total number of OK A+ Schools to 39 for the 2006-07 academic year. (NOTE: This report represents only those 31 schools participating during the 2005-06 academic year.)

During the 2005-06 academic year, members of the Research Team made at least four site visits to each participating OK A+ School. Data collected during these school visits include observations of classes and other school activities; interviews with administrators, faculty, staff, and students; and student "My Class Activities" surveys. Research team members were also present to document activities during A+ events such as Summer Conferences, Retreats, and Pre-Institutes. Field notes from these site visits, interviews, and observations were then carefully transcribed and submitted to review and analysis by each member of the research team via *HyperRESEARCH™ 2.6* qualitative data analysis software

(<http://www.researchware.com>). This collaborative qualitative data analysis process involved review of thousands of pages of narrative field notes. Ultimately, the HyperRESEARCH software was used to generate 725 pages of coded narrative description and quotations that form the basis of the qualitative components of this report. These data provide comprehensive narrative documentation of the A+ process as it plays out in the context of diverse school settings across the state. Since each school and each teacher come to the A+ process at very different entry points in terms of attitudes, skills, concerns, and prior knowledge, in-depth observational and interview data are necessary in order to convey the complete A+ story accurately. This qualitative information allows for deeper understanding and interpretation of quantitative data such as school statistics (including standardized test scores) and surveys of students (*My Class Activities*), teachers (*Teacher Opinion Survey*), and *A+ Fellows* and *Faculty* (practitioner trainers) (*OK A+ Faculty/Fellow Survey*).

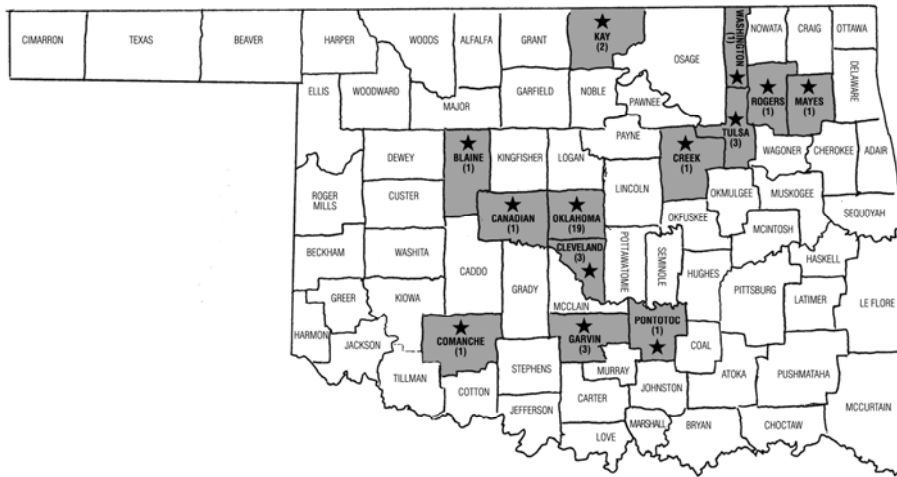


## Demographics

The 31 schools affiliated with the Oklahoma A+ Network during the 2005-06 academic year represent a broad cross section of the state, with 16 different public school districts, charter schools, and one private school participating:

- Charter Schools (Oklahoma City and Tulsa)
- Edmond
- Flower Mound
- Geary
- Millwood
- Moore
- Norman
- Oklahoma City
- Oologah-Talalah
- Pauls Valley
- Ponca City
- Putnam City
- Pryor
- Sapulpa
- Tulsa
- Yukon

**Figure 1: Oklahoma A+ Schools® Map**  
**Oklahoma A+ Schools®**



**BLAINE COUNTY**  
Geary Elementary

**CANADIAN COUNTY**  
Central Elementary

**CLEVELAND COUNTY**  
Jefferson Elementary  
Madison Elementary  
Monroe Elementary

**COMANCHE COUNTY**  
Flower Mound Elementary

**CREEK COUNTY**  
Freedom Elementary

**GARVIN COUNTY**  
Jackson Elementary  
Jefferson Elementary  
Lee Elementary

**KAY COUNTY**  
Garfield Elementary  
Washington Elementary

**MAYES COUNTY**  
Roosevelt Elementary

**OKLAHOMA COUNTY**  
Briarwood Elementary  
Britton Elementary  
Cleveland Elementary  
Del City Elementary  
Harding Fine Arts Center  
Linwood Elementary  
Madison Elementary  
Mark Twain Elementary  
Mercy School  
Millwood Arts Academy  
Millwood Pre-K – 8th  
Nichols Hills Elementary  
Putnam City Academy

**OKLAHOMA COUNTY**  
Putnam Heights Academy  
Quail Creek Elementary  
Russell Dougherty Elementary  
Sequoyah Elementary  
Van Buren Elementary  
Western Village Academy

**PONTOTOC COUNTY**  
Glenwood Early  
Childhood Center

**ROGERS COUNTY**  
Oologah Lower Elementary

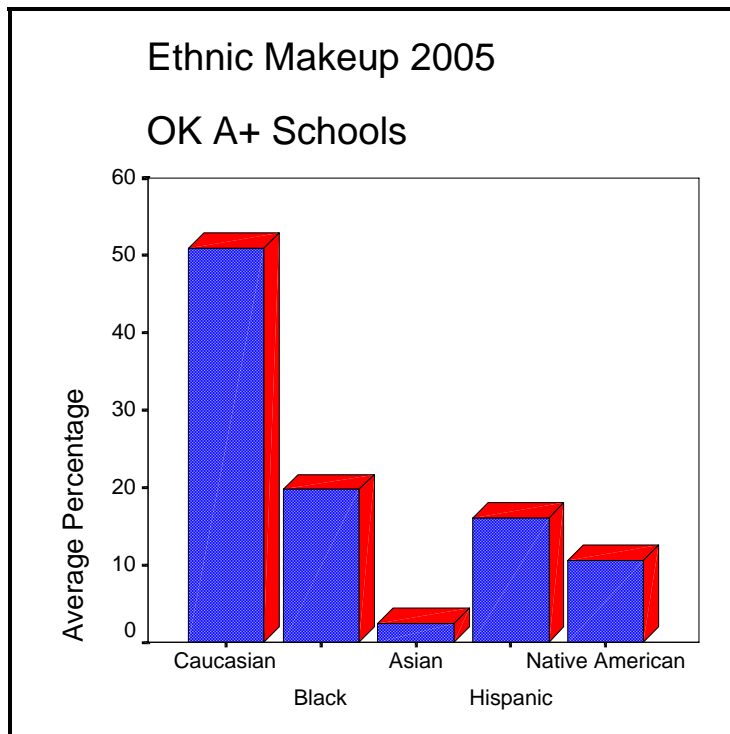
**TULSA COUNTY**  
Deborah Brown  
Community School  
Grimes Elementary  
Grissom Elementary

**WASHINGTON COUNTY**  
Wilson Elementary

August 2006

According to Oklahoma A+ Schools® data, during the 2005-06 academic year, OK A+ served 10,038 students and 857 teachers (regular FTE).

**Figure 2: OK A+ Schools' Ethnic Makeup 2005**



The 31 OK A+ Schools include an increasingly diverse array of environments ranging from small rural communities to large suburban and urban areas; including early childhood, elementary and secondary grade levels, and encompassing public, charter, and private institutions. Oklahoma A+ student demographics (see Figure 2) are very similar to state-wide averages, which are 61% Caucasian, 11% Black, 2% Asian, 8% Hispanic, and 19% Native American. The average percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch is slightly higher for A+ Schools (62%) in comparison with the Oklahoma State average (55%) (<http://www.SchoolReportCard.org>). (See Appendix A for complete SDE 2005 School Report data.)

School size also varies among OK A+ Schools with student enrollment ranging from 676 students at the largest school to 222 at the smallest.

## The Student's Perspective

### *What does A+ mean for "the child in the chair"?*

*Oklahoma A+ Fellows* (practitioner trainers), Coordinators, and Directors frequently ask workshop participants to "picture a child that you love," using an empty child's chair as a visual prompt. The "child in the chair" has become a powerful metaphor representing the goal of transforming education in Oklahoma for *all* children. The following vignette is a research-based composite profile illustrating ways that Oklahoma A+ may impact the life of a child.

Imagine entering a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom in an Oklahoma A+ School. Teams of three children are busily investigating an assortment of rocks at various stations around the room. The students discuss the observable characteristics of each rock and try to identify the type of rock: sedimentary, metamorphic or igneous. They consult their notes and a variety of resources (books, charts, etc.). Before moving on to the next station, students enter their data in a research log: one student writes her answer, another student sketches the rock, and a third student makes note of the "evidence" in support of their findings. The teacher, Ms. Jones, reminds her "science investigators" that they must also devise another way to report their findings (besides their entries in their research logs). She says they can include music, movement, drama, or art in their presentation to the rest of the class. Students are abuzz with excitement as they plan and practice their presentations.

In one team, Marcus and Pat appear easygoing, yet engaged in their tasks as they collaborate on a song that will present their findings. Sally is absorbed in making sure the poster of their rocks is accurate and attractive. She adds helpful comments as her partners struggle with the lyrics, and they offer suggestions about shading and perspective of her drawings. They are relaxed and friendly as they continue preparing their presentation. But here's the back story to the positive scene under consideration:

Marcus and Pat have been at this school since kindergarten. Both are accustomed to the Oklahoma A+ School experience and are both self-confident and supportive of each other's talents. Sally has been a student in this school for just three months. Upon arrival at the

school, her mother explained that Sally had attended her previous school since first grade but was not very happy there. The mother could not understand what had happened because "Sally loved her kindergarten, at another school." Since first grade, though, Sally gradually began to hate school and was even behind in reading!

Ms. Jones asked the mother about Sally's previous school experiences and was informed that Sally often cried in the mornings before going to school, "I don't fit in" or "I'm dumb" or "They don't like me there." The mother decided to make a change and enrolled her daughter in the A+ school "because I heard things are different here and I want her to like school."

Ms. Jones knew that it would take some time for Sally to assimilate into this new school and new classroom environment. In several conversations with Ms. Jones, Sally revealed her experiences at her former school. "We did worksheets all the time...The smart kids got to do all the fun stuff...I got embarrassed when I had to read out loud...I got in trouble for drawing when I should have been finishing my worksheets."

Over time Ms. Jones helped Sally become comfortable with her new environment. The students were given challenging assignments and encouraged to respond in creative ways. In this classroom, students' special talents and abilities were recognized and appreciated. The students were able to demonstrate what they had learned in many ways, not just by completing worksheets and tests. They even worked in teams on class projects, and paired with another third grade for a special presentation to the whole school! Sally was so proud as she joined in a skit about being "art smart" for Parents' Night! Sally even mentioned how the teachers were nice to her and the other students – and to each other!

Gradually Ms. Jones noticed that Sally was interacting with the other children, a few at a time. Sally was still a little behind in reading, but she was catching up fast. She became excited when any activity involving art was initiated. In fact, the other children soon noticed her artistic gifts and wanted to see her creations. By February, Sally's mother positively beamed as she told Ms. Jones: "Sally loves coming to school now and has developed new friends. She was so proud of her skit at Parent Night and she's thrilled when her drawings are posted in the hall. She's even starting to enjoy books again!"

***A+ helps with making activities fun so the students will learn things better. Keeping the students active results in them being more group oriented, helps them feel more a part of their class team, and helps develop their confidence and social skills.***  
(Teacher, 2006)

The scenario described above represents the type of transformation that can occur for an individual student within an A+ classroom. During the 2005-2006 school year, interviews, classroom observations, and survey data provide evidence of many positive changes occurring for "the child in the chair."

Teachers in A+ Schools describe students as more accepting and more process

oriented than they were in previous years. They also note that they can tell the difference between veteran A+ students and those new to their school because new students are "more

hesitant about trying new creative activities" (Teacher, 2005). Teachers also note that engagement with A+ enhances student confidence.

Responses from faculty at A+ Schools or from classroom observations indicated that teachers were referred to as being "kind," (Student, 2005) "patient," (Student, 2006) and "respectful" (Student, 2005). Regarding students, responses indicated that students seemed to be enjoying themselves. One principal (2006) described her students as "happy," "engaged," "they can function in cooperative learning activities," and there have been "fewer [discipline] referrals."

*...kids come to school excited about new challenges. They know they can be successful at something and often ask "What are we learning today?" (Teacher, 2005)*

Other responses suggested there were "fewer fights" (Principal, 2005), "less crying" (Teacher, 2006), "better attendance" (Principal, 2006), and "no one is throwing up during [mandated] tests!" (Teacher, 2006). Only a few teachers commented that sometimes classroom management is "tough" when students are participating in activities in which students are out of their seats, working in cooperative groups, or engaging in "non-traditional" tasks.

Responses suggested that high expectations are in place at these schools. Teachers seem to be "more understanding of individual differences" (Principal, 2005), and they are more overt in talking about differences. One principal said that because of what the teachers do in the classroom [with A+], students have fewer struggles than they would have had prior to A+ and that there are more opportunities for the students to demonstrate their strengths. Teachers are more open to the variety of ways students can demonstrate their learning. She further stated "This approach works with accelerated, middle level, and free-and-reduced lunch kids" (2005). Another principal stated that A+ has been especially beneficial for low SES, minority, and learning disabled children. "It's great to see how this [A+] affects these kids" (2006).

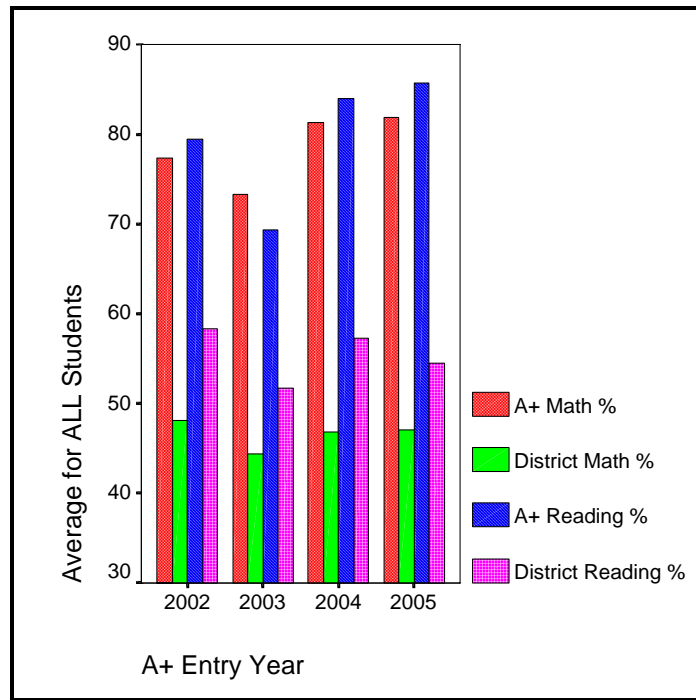
In the following sections, statistical analysis of data from several sources indicates significant differences between A+ Schools and non-A+ schools in a variety of areas. Quantitative evidence is important; but remembering the *child in the chair* is vital when judging the practical significance of the results reported in such analyses.



## Academic Performance Data

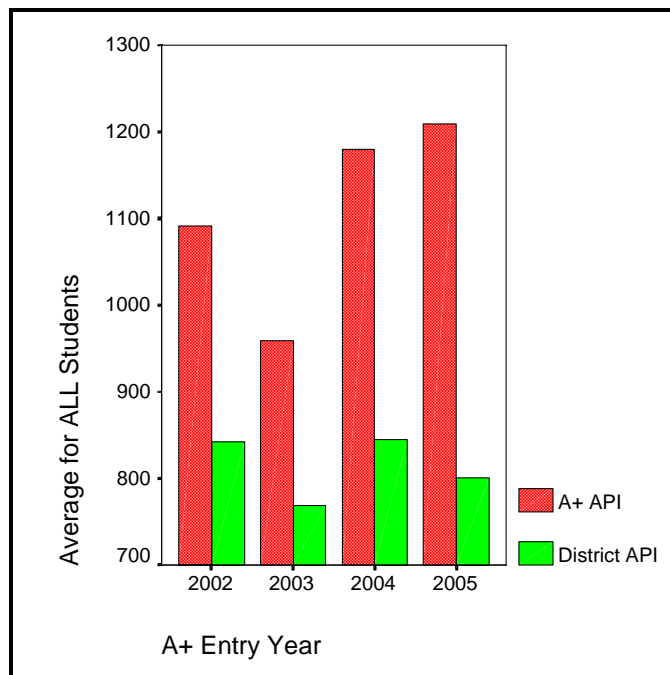
Statistical analysis of 2005 data obtained from the Oklahoma State Department of Education for Math Percentages, Reading Percentages, and Base Academic Performance Index (API) for ALL students indicate **significantly higher average scores** for students in Oklahoma A+ Schools® in comparison to their District Averages.

**Figure 3: Comparison of OK A+ Schools with their District Averages  
2005 Math and Reading Percentages for ALL students**



*I'm proud of our scores; we rival one another [OKC school] for top honors. (Principal, 2005)*

**Figure 4: Comparison of OK A+ Schools with their District Averages  
2005 Base API Scores for ALL students**



**Table 1**

**Comparison of OK A+ Schools with their District Averages  
2005 Math and Reading Percentages and API scores for ALL students**

A+ Entry Year	Math Percentage		Reading Percentage		Base API	
	A+ Schools Average	District Average	A+ Schools Average	District Average	A+ Schools Average	District Average
2002	77.39**	48.08	79.41**	58.26	1091.14**	842.71
2003	73.25**	44.38	69.40*	51.73	959.5*	769.25
2004	81.33**	46.83	83.93*	57.27	1179.33**	844.67
2005	81.92**	47.02	85.68*	54.46	1209.00*	800.40

Statistically significant difference between OK A+ Schools and their District averages: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

*She is now reading on-level to two years above.  
I wouldn't have my kids anywhere else.  
(Parent, 2005)*

Comparison of Average API scores for OK A+ Schools with state averages indicates that A+ Schools are generally performing above state averages.

**Table 2**

**Average API for OK A+ Schools and Oklahoma State Average**

Academic Year	OK A+ Schools Average*	OK State Average
2002-03	1109 (N = 22)	1046
2003-04	1135 (N = 22)	1086
2004-05	1261 (N = 26)	1159

\*API Data not available for some A+ Schools (e.g., Private Schools, Early Childhood Centers).

**Independent Analysis conducted by the Oklahoma City Public Schools Planning, Research and Evaluation Department**

In 2005, the Oklahoma City Public Schools conducted an independent analysis addressing the research question of whether students in OKCPS A+ sites outperform their demographically matched counterparts who attend other OKCPS schools (Kimball, 2006). This analysis showed that students in A+ Schools *significantly outperformed* their matched sample cohort students in non-A+ schools in **both reading and math**.

## Disadvantaged Students

During interviews, teachers and administrators talked about A+ as a way of leveling the playing field for students who are at a disadvantage in more traditional instructional settings, stating that low SES, minority, and learning disabled children thrive in an environment that celebrates individual strengths.

*The special ed students, they're really benefiting from this. . . Learning disabled students benefit especially because [with A+] they're not really disabled any more.*  
(Principal, 2006)

Qualitative and descriptive data indicating positive outcomes for disadvantaged students in A+ Schools are supported by Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) and API data revealing generally higher CRT and API averages for Free/Reduced Lunch students in A+ Schools in comparison with their District averages.

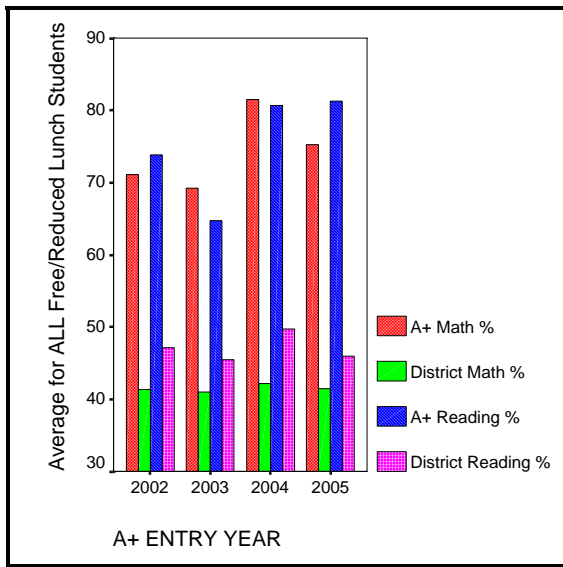


Figure 5: Comparison of OK A+ Schools with their District Averages 2005 Math and Reading Percentages\* for ALL Free / Reduced Lunch students  
\*Percentages of students at or above criterion level

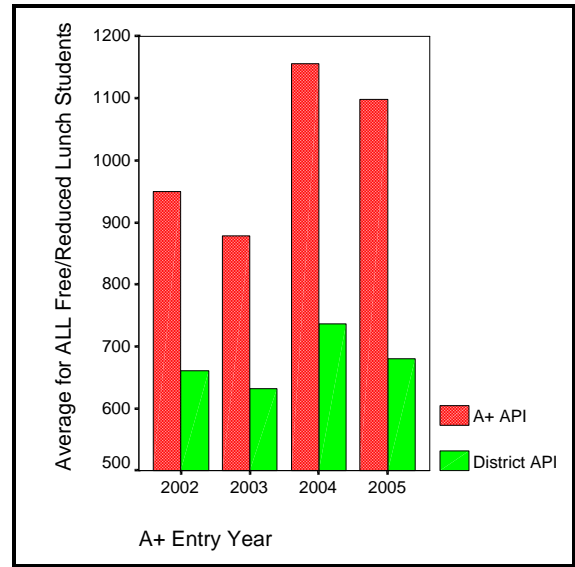


Figure 6: Comparison of OK A+ Schools with their District Averages 2005 Base API Scores for ALL Free / Reduced Lunch students

**Table 3**

### Comparison of OK A+ Schools with their District Averages

2005 Math and Reading Percentages and API scores for ALL Free / Reduced Lunch students

A+ Entry Year	Math Percentage		Reading Percentage		Base API	
	A+ Schools Average	District Average	A+ Schools Average	District Average	A+ Schools Average	District Average
2002	71.11**	41.31	73.85**	47.17	949.58**	660.83
2003	69.23**	40.95	64.75*	45.48	878.00**	632.25
2004	81.50	42.2	80.70	49.70	1155.50**	736.50
2005	75.20**	41.46	81.22*	45.90	1098.60*	680.60

Statistically significant difference between OK A+ Schools and their District averages: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$


Historically, the percentage of students needing reading remediation tends to increase as the percentage of students on free/reduced lunch increases (see .751 correlation coefficient in first column in Table 4). Additionally Oklahoma Core Curriculum (OCC) reading scores generally tend to decrease as the free/reduced lunch percentage increases (see -.593 correlation coefficient in second column in Table 4). However, it is interesting to note that as schools participated in A+, this trend reverses.

Longitudinal data for those schools participating in OK A+ since it was first implemented in 2002 indicate that the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in need of reading remediation has tended to decrease and that the gap in OCC Reading scores is smaller. (See Table 4.)

Other research studies on best practice may provide useful information for interpreting these correlations. Research has demonstrated a relationship between arts participation and general self-concept, including school-related attitudes and academic performance (Barry, 1992; Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, H. 1999; Reynolds, 1992).

**Table 4**  
**Correlation Between Free/Reduced Lunch, Reading Remediation and OCC Reading Percentages**

	2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		
	Reading Remediation	OCC Reading	Reading Remediation	OCC Reading	Reading Remediation	OCC Reading	Reading Remediation	OCC Reading	
								3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade
2002 Cohort 14 Schools	.751	-.593	.650	-.587	.368	-.318	.351	-.583*	-.471
2003 Cohort 5 Schools			.803	-.924	.651	-.918	.888	-.262	-.987*
2004 Cohort 2 Schools*					NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

 = Participation in A+ Network      \*significant at .05

*Data not available for some OK A+ Schools (e.g., Private Schools, Early Childhood Centers).*

\*NOTE: With Oklahoma SDE data available for only 2 schools, the sample ( $n = 2$ ) is not sufficient for statistical analysis.

## Student Attitudes

Qualitative data from school observations and interviews with school administrators, teachers, parents and students reveal a belief that A+ helps schools develop a climate that fosters positive student attitudes.

*Students who've been in our school for the whole time are happy students and are engaged students. Students that come in from a different school . . . they're so used to getting attention for negative behavior. . . you can tell who's been here and who hasn't. . . The ones who've been here can work in a group and can function in cooperative learning. . . I can tell you my discipline referrals have decreased.*  
(Principal, 2006)

During interviews, teachers and administrators reported that students are more motivated and engaged in the learning process.

In order to obtain a broader, quantitative perspective on students' school-related attitudes, the research team selected the *My Class Activities* (MCA) survey (Gentry & Gable, 2001). The MCA contains four subscales representing Interest, Challenge, Choice, and Enjoyment. [See Year Two Report for more information about the MCA.]



The *MCA* survey was administered to 1473 students in grades 3-8 in OK A+ Schools during the 2005-06 academic year. Researchers visited each school to administer the surveys to those students whose parents returned signed Consent Forms. Comparison of 2005-06 data with 2003-04 and 2004-05 MCA results indicate very consistent response trends.

During the 2005-06 academic year, students in OK A+ Schools continued to report *very favorable attitudes* regarding their school experiences. (See Appendices C and D for MCA item statistics.)

OK A+ students indicated that they find their schoolwork (on a scale of 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*):

- *Enjoyable* (7 item scale, average = 3.86)
- *Interesting* (8 item scale, average = 3.57)
- *Challenging* (9 item scale, average = 3.55)

Somewhat lower ratings were observed for the cluster of items relating to *Choice* in learning activities (7 item scale, average = 2.86). These results could be expected given the prescribed curriculum in place within the state and the current emphasis upon both state and federally-mandated testing.

# The Educator's Perspective

## *How do teachers and principals view A+?*



The *Teacher Opinion Survey* (TOS) was developed by the research team during the 2002-03 academic year to document and describe teachers' opinions and attitudes toward the arts in education.

The first version of the survey, administered during the 2003 Summer Institutes, contained 48 items. [See Year Two Report for more information about TOS development.]

After statistical analysis for item reliability and validity, some items were

removed, resulting in a 38-item version that was administered during the 2004 Summer Institutes. The research team continued to refine the survey by revising and adding items, resulting in a 44-item version that was administered during the 2005 Summer Institutes.

Response options for the TOS items are 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree. These 44 items are grouped into four scales. (See Appendix F for scale reliability statistics.)

TOS respondents indicated highest levels of agreement with statements about the positive impact of arts upon student outcomes. There was also general agreement with statements about the importance of collaboration in planning and implementing arts integrated curriculum, and the role of the teacher as artist. Participants tended to disagree with negative statements about the value of the arts as a separate discipline.

***Another thing that A+ has given us... is a sustainable program. So many things in education come and go, they are here one year and then next year they rename it. A+ is not different programs. It's a systematic structure for school (student) achievement, a set of principles.*** (Principal, 2006)

The *Teacher Opinion Survey* (TOS) was completed by 450 A+ teachers in 2005. Teacher opinions about curriculum and instruction have remained fairly consistent across 2003, 2004, and 2005.

Highest levels of agreement were with statements about:

- the positive impact of A+ upon teacher creativity
- the positive impact of the arts upon student outcomes

**Table 5**  
**Teacher Opinion Survey Scale Item Means**

	Scale 1: Positive Impact of Arts	Scale 2: Collaboration	Scale 3: Teacher as Artist*	Scale 4: Arts As A Separate Discipline*
2003 (N=312)	3.26	2.96	3.08	2.98
2004 (N=351)	3.15	2.92	2.98	2.93
2005 (N=450)	3.19	2.94	2.84	3.06

**NOTE:** 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

**\*Negatively-worded items in these scales were reverse coded for calculation of means.**  
 (See Appendix E for individual TOS item statistics.)

## How Do *A+ Fellows* and *Faculty* View the A+ Process?

Ongoing Professional Development is a cornerstone of the Oklahoma A+ Schools® initiative. Support systems available through the Oklahoma A+ Network include pre-institutes, Summer Institutes and Conferences, Retreats, and in-school professional development.

*A+ Faculty* and *Fellows*, comprised of teachers and artist-teachers, are the educators that provide this professional development to their teaching colleagues. Potential participants are identified through referrals. Once prospective participants are identified, there is an application process of observations and interviews during which the Program Director and Executive Director evaluate each applicant’s qualifications and philosophical fit with Oklahoma A+.



The journey toward becoming an *Oklahoma A+ Fellow* begins with an internship period of one or more years during which participants serve as *A+ Faculty*. The role of Faculty members is to serve as participant observers – attending and assisting with various professional development events.

During the 2005-06 academic year, the Research Team developed a questionnaire to survey *A+ Fellows and Faculty* about their views of their role within the A+ process, how A+ functions within participating schools, and the A+ process in general. A pool of survey items was developed through a process of soliciting both written and verbal comments from *A+*

*Fellows and Faculty* and A+ Coordinators regarding important topics. Face validity was established through a process of submitting preliminary versions of the survey to review by a panel of experienced educators and researchers as well as A+ administration. Appropriate revisions were made and the process continued until consensus was reached, resulting in the *Oklahoma A+ Schools® Faculty/Fellow Survey*.

The *Oklahoma A+ Schools® Faculty/Fellow Survey* consisted of two parts. Part I requested demographic information. Part II consisted of 20 open-ended items, calling upon respondents to provide reflective written responses regarding their experiences with A+.

Out of sixty-five Faculty/Fellows, 47 (72%) completed the survey. The 47 returned surveys represented both *Fellows* (77%) and *Faculty* (23%). The most frequently reported way of first learning about A+ was from a "school administrator" (49%). Other responses were quite varied with small numbers of participants indicating that they first learned about A+ from a teaching colleague (13%), A+ meeting or workshop (13%), or from an A+ Faculty/Fellow (11%). No one indicated that he or she first learned about A+ through "Public media (newspaper article or TV program)." It is interesting to note that, at this stage of the process, there is still relatively little dissemination of information about Oklahoma A+ Schools® to the general public.

The majority of respondents (68%) indicated that they held a traditional Teaching Certificate, 11% reported having Alternative Certification, and 21% did not report any type of teaching certification. Nineteen percent (19%) indicated that they also held National Board Certification and 9% indicated that their National Board Certification (National Board of Professional Teaching Standards) was in process. The majority (87%) had completed a Bachelor's degree or higher, 45% had completed a Masters degree, and 4% had completed a doctoral degree. In comparison, the most current available Oklahoma SDE data (2004-05 Academic Year data obtained from <http://sde.state.oki.us/publ/stats/default.html>) indicate 84.5% of all certified Oklahoma teachers had completed a Bachelor's degree or higher, 32% had completed a Masters degree, and less than 1% (.75%) had completed a doctoral degree.

The majority (66%) indicated that they were certified in all areas in which they were currently teaching and 87% indicated that they were employed as full-time (100% FTE) teachers. These 47 educators represented a broad range of teaching areas:

**Table 6**

**A+ Faculty/Fellow Teaching Areas**

<b>Teaching Area</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Artist in Residence	3	6.4
Administrator	2	4.3
N-K Teacher	8	17.0
1-3 Teacher	13	27.7
4-6 Teacher	13	27.7
Middle School Teacher	6	12.8
High School Teacher	7	14.9
Special Ed Teacher	2	4.3
Art Teacher	5	10.6
Dance Teacher	4	8.5
Drama Teacher	3	6.4
Music Teacher	6	12.8

*NOTE: Responses total more than 100% because some respondents indicated more than one Teaching Area*



Analysis of the open-ended items in Part II of the survey provides insight into *Faculty* and *Fellows'* views of A+. Given that *Faculty* and *Fellows* elect to participate in the process at this level, engagement is quite high. However, some *Faculty* and *Fellows* eventually withdraw from this process for a variety of reasons. This report only includes those individuals participating during the 2005-06 academic year.

Additional research is needed to explore differences in demographics, experience, and attitudes between those *Faculty* and *Fellows* who persist and those who eventually withdraw from this aspect of A+.

## **What is the role of the OK A+ Faculty and Fellows within the A+ process?**

Moving from *A+ Faculty* to *A+ Fellow* is a complex role-development process that begins with a commitment to improving education in Oklahoma through active participation in the OK A+ Network. *A+ Faculty* and *Fellows* function in a variety of ways within the Network and (among those who are in-service teachers) within their own schools.

As new *Faculty* enter into the process of A+ they spend their first year process observing, developing a greater understanding of A+, while examining their own strengths and weaknesses and continuing to grow professionally. They are allowed to find their own comfort level while working as a team with new schools. The structure of the program pairs them with *Fellows* with more experience, and this collaboration allows for both persons to grow: The *Faculty* member takes on new ideas and experiences, and the *Fellow* is also infused with a fresh perspective and greater enthusiasm, all within a climate of perceived *safety* that facilitates exploration and personal growth.

***A resource and a learner! I highly value the experiences within my own school as well as when I visit or facilitate workshops in other schools. Developing workshops always stretches me and I learn as much from participants as we go through the A+ process together. (OK A+ Fellow, 2006)***

*Faculty/Fellows* expressed a variety of opinions regarding the process of *Faculty* role development. Some *Faculty* members found the process to be uncomfortable and without direction, while others relished in the freedom to take on responsibilities that were within

their current comfort level. The A+ model encourages *Faculty* to process observe, seek out advice from their team members, and grow in their knowledge of the A+ process while discovering their own areas of expertise and leadership skills. This model also allows *Faculty* members to develop their own knowledge set as they process observe with their team. Many felt that the model allowed each individual to find her own entry point into A+. However, some *Fellows*, looking back upon their time as *Faculty*, felt that the process was somewhat “messy” at times due to its open-ended nature. Further, many felt that the process was more democratic now than in the past. Several indicated that effectiveness of the process depends upon the team to mentor *Faculty* members and encourage their growth throughout. The teaching roles that they take on early in the process focus more on procedural issues than new content – providing new *Faculty* members with ways in which to develop their peer teaching skills in a safe and protected environment. Although many were not sure that they were “ready” – they were moved forward (some said they were “pushed”) and rose to the occasion.

The presence of *A+ Faculty/Fellows* on a school staff generally provides an additional line of support for this school reform process. Schools with *A+ Faculty/Fellows* on their faculty enjoy an additional, direct line of communication with A+ as well as the ready, in-house availability of an A+ resource person. In some situations in which schools have experienced changes in administration and/or large faculty turnover, the enduring presence of *A+ Fellows* may have provided an important source of stability, and, in some cases, even served as a catalyst to help their colleagues persist and move forward with the A+ initiative. Since *A+ Faculty* represent a *fresh from the classroom* entry point, their role on a school staff may be an important link in terms of communication between teachers working in A+ Schools and A+ administration.

***A+ Faculty act as a bridge between teachers who are not A+ Faculty/ Fellows and A+ Fellows. They are new to A+ schools and so their questions reflect what non-A+ Faculty/Fellows want to know, while at the same time the A+ Faculty constantly gain new insight into the A+ Mission and Method. They remind A+ Fellows how inspiring and confusing the A+ Philosophy can be. A+ Faculty keep A+ Fellows relevant to our incoming and maturing A+ schools. They challenge us while connecting us to the needs of incoming schools.***  
(OK A+ Faculty, 2006)

***A+ is woven into the fabric of every day experiences.***  
(OK A+ Faculty/Fellow, 2006)

## How does A+ function within participating schools?

*A+ Faculty and Fellows* reported that within those schools with strong administrative leadership and buy in, A+ functions as both an incentive and an energizer. When A+ is no longer viewed as an add-on, the school’s emerging understanding of A+ begins to permeate every aspect of the school in increasingly seamless and subtle ways.

Not surprisingly, *Faculty* and *Fellows* reported that the main incentive for embracing A+ is the belief that this process improves the quality of education with direct and tangible benefits for the children of Oklahoma.

***A+ essentials, used correctly, guarantee an enriched environment full of creativity and thought processing. It requires thinking out of the box, using multiple intelligences, while thinking with a higher level.***  
(OK A+ *Faculty/Fellow*, 2006)

## How does the A+ process function in general?

***The network allows me to work with other teachers, artists, specialists and administrators to develop and teach practices that address the strengths and needs of every child.***  
(OK A+ *Fellow*, 2006)

*Faculty/Fellow Survey* responses revealed a generally high level of commitment to A+ and belief in the benefits of participation in the OK A+ Network.

However, some respondents also expressed concerns that things were moving forward too quickly, with many indicating a desire for more time to reflect and re-evaluate some aspects of the program.

The rapid growth of the program paired with increasing diversity among participating schools prompted some concerns among *Faculty and Fellows*. (NOTE: The 39 schools participating during the 2006-07 academic year represent pre-school through secondary grade levels and include public schools, charter schools, and a private faith-based school.) While excited about this growth, *Faculty and Fellows* also expressed concern for meeting the needs of such a vast and diverse constituency, expressing interest in having more:

- Specific professional development focused on diversity of the network
- Additional professional development for *Faculty and Fellows'* growth
- Focused professional development to meet the needs of secondary schools
- Processing time
- Artists and other resource persons available to provide professional development

***I believe in A+, but even after several years, I do not understand the commitment to give so much, so quickly. Are we growing so fast that we are forgetting to stop and just look for a year or two at what has been done, where we need to go, how to improve and what specifics things are needed to keep the schools with sustainable growth in, and ourselves understanding of A+?*** (OK A+ *Fellow*, 2006)

# The Community Perspective

## *What is the community perspective on the arts in education?*

The Arts Education Perception Survey (TAEPS) (Barry, Garrett, Clinton, 2005) polled 12,061 legislators, business people, parents, teachers, school administrators, and school board members about their views of the arts in education.

Table 7

### TAEPS Respondents

	ALL	OK A+ Schools	Not A+
<b>Overall</b>	12,061	2,308	9,753
<b>Rural</b>	5,253	637	4,616
<b>Urban</b>	6,796	1,661	5,135
<b>Legislators</b>	31	7	24
<b>Business</b>	212	86	126
<b>Parents</b>	10,532	1,921	8,611
<b>Teachers</b>	1,018	239	779
<b>Administrators</b>	115	32	83
<b>School Board</b>	88	13	75



NOTE: Some categories do not total to 100% because some people did not respond to all items on the survey.

Educators and community members affiliated with OK A+ Schools expressed **high levels of agreement** with survey items representing ways that the **A+ Essentials™** are manifested in school policy and practice.

This statewide survey revealed a number of **significant differences in attitudes** about the arts in education between people associated with OK A+ Schools and those associated with other schools.

In comparison with people associated with non-A+ schools, A+ respondents expressed **consistently higher levels** of agreement:

- about the positive student benefits of arts in education
- that arts should be “mandated in the core curriculum”
- that the arts should be “provided through outside resources”
- with items pertaining to community support for arts education
- that arts instruction should be allotted equal time to other subjects

A+ teachers reported **consistently higher** comfort in teaching the arts than faculty in non-A+ schools.

## What did we learn from The Arts Education Perception Survey?

- There were *marked and consistent differences* between responses of educators and community members associated with **Oklahoma A+ Schools®** and people not associated with A+ Schools.
- A *more favorable climate for arts education* may exist within these A+ Schools and their surrounding communities.

## The A+ Essentials™

### *How are these 8 Essentials developing within Oklahoma A+ Network Schools?*

The A+ Essentials™ continue to guide and, to a large degree, define A+ for those involved at various levels of this process. Students' understandings of A+ generally stem from the learning activities in which they participate. School personnel continue to understand and implement these *Essentials* to varying degrees within an instructional context. Community members' understandings represent the more public face of the A+ process, drawing upon school programs, displays, and media announcements. A+ administration, staff, and *Faculty and Fellows* draw upon the *Essentials* as a way of achieving group identity and solidarity through shared language and experiences via self-directed professional development. The *Essentials* also provide a convenient context for communication and collaboration within the statewide Oklahoma network as well as within the National network.

The 2003-04 research report examined the meaning and articulation of the *Essentials* and described three kinds of relationships among them: *Process Essentials* which relate most directly to cultural changes within the schools; *Curriculum and Instruction Essentials* which were embraced and applied most readily in the classroom; and one *Essential*, enriched assessment, which was identified as *Developing*, or needing greater understanding. The 2004-05 Report continued to explore the ways that these *Essentials* develop within and across A+ Schools. The present (2005-06) report goes on to address these topics with particular attention to evidence of **engagement** among the different stakeholders in the A+ Network.

## PROCESS ESSENTIALS: COLLABORATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, CLIMATE

Three of the *A+ Essentials* – **collaboration**, **infrastructure**, and **climate** – relate to the gradual and often challenging process of school-wide reform. These *Essentials* provide a useful framework for describing the complex and interrelated ways that participants *engage* with A+ within and among different schools.

### *Collaboration*

The A+ Network has provided an incentive for some schools to explore innovative approaches to collaboration. This has been accomplished in a variety of ways including

formal planning times in grade group or whole faculty meetings, informal conversations at lunch or in the hall, and use of email and notes to communicate. However, the most effective strategies include the purposeful scheduling and use of time to meet and plan.

During interviews, some administrators and teachers reported that A+ was beneficial to their schools as collaboration has increased and teachers are considering ways to develop more meaningful ways to integrate lessons including cross-curricular lessons and horizontal and vertical alignment.

As suggested previously, each school seems to be at its own entry point or point of development regarding the eight *Essentials*; this holds true for collaboration. Interview responses indicated that oftentimes collaboration at schools is “very informal” (Teacher, 2006). Teachers reported discussing curricular ideas/plans in passing, in the hall, or at lunch. Some reported using planning time to meet with grade level teachers.

***Everyone is on the same page: how to teach, how to formulate lesson plans, curriculum maps, everyone working together. There's more freedom to be creative and let the students be more creative. Teachers feel like they're on the same team, more collegiality.***  
(Teacher, 2005)

There were numerous references regarding attempts to collaborate that were not face-to-face. At some schools, the teachers claimed to rely on emails or a chart that was to be completed and submitted to a designated teacher in order to communicate the topics being taught, the types of activities being utilized, etc. in the various classrooms. Some specials teachers visited the regular teachers' classrooms to find out what was taking place. Many interviewees reported that specials teachers usually taught when the regular teachers were planning (e.g., the specials teachers taught the regular teachers' students during the grade-level planning time). When teachers (grade-level, etc.) did meet, often it was stated that they met once a week or monthly. One principal indicated that when there is a time dedicated [for collaboration], although “tensions can run a little high,” the planning is “not just cutesy but is meaningful and purposeful” (Principal, 2006). One principal claimed that previous to the school's involvement in A+, teachers would be given time to collaborate, but they were not prepared to do so. Now, the teachers are “prepared for real collaboration” (Principal, 2006).

Teacher comments also reflect this seeming change regarding collaboration. One teacher (2006) stated, “It used to be you do your thing; I'll do mine.” Another teacher (2006) asserted that since A+ training, the teachers are “more at ease to share.” Reported examples of collaboration provided evidence that teachers were beginning to “share a common language” (Principal, 2006). Numerous schools expressed that teachers collaborated to develop school themes and that teachers would return to school after attending training and were willing to disseminate information gained in the workshop (Principal, 2006). Overall, teachers' and principals' comments reflect that collaboration ranges from being one of the greatest challenges to, in some cases, being one of the greatest strengths of the school.

Time and scheduling issues continue to pose barriers to the collaborative process, especially in regard to horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment. "I know they want to do a lot more collaboration - and try to help when they can - but it's still a lot for them to do. They've been very supportive and have even attended the A+ workshops in the summer - on their own time ... Big collaboration efforts with whole staff are difficult due to the schedule" (Principal, 2005). Another principal (2005) stated, "The biggest challenge [for collaboration] is time. Everyone's on a different planning [agenda]; it's a hindrance to get vertical alignment." These barriers are more pronounced in those situations lacking assertive administrative leadership from the building principal.

Barriers to collaboration continue to be particularly acute in regard to planning time with specials teachers (e.g., art, media, music, PE). Although several schools reported that time was consistently built into the schedule for specials teachers to meet with grade-level teachers (Principal, 2006) or during faculty meetings, the majority of teachers commented that specials teachers were only on their campus part-time and/or that they seemed to be "stretched" between the demands of teaching numerous students, not to mention the expectations of meeting with numerous teachers. One teacher (2006) expressed reluctance to approaching an art teacher because she was aware of her time demands. On the other

*I know teachers want to ask me [to collaborate] but hesitate because they know I'm stretched so thin. (Arts Teacher, 2005)*

hand, one art teacher (2006) expressed that collaboration with other arts teachers in the A+ Network was particularly helpful. This may be true as those in like-jobs can empathize with the challenges and may share strategies for developing collaboration.

Varieties of ways of addressing these challenges have emerged. Many mentioned having formal planning times in grade group or whole faculty meetings. "What has worked well for us is to have our grade level teachers' weekly meeting. Before we were doing it monthly. It is a lot better; we have communication between all the arts and the grade level teachers, and the A+ [coordinator]" (Teacher, 2006). Informal conversations are also mentioned quite often as a planning source. One A+ Teacher (2006) stated, "We do not meet every day, it's kind of a random way but actually we always are talking during our planning times after or before school. It all depends." Email is also mentioned as a source for virtual planning time. "[coordinator's name] actually through email sends us a collaboration sheet she has set up and we filled it up for her, as a matter of fact I have to fill one right now, so she asks us what are we doing in each subject, we tell her and then she works with us. In fact she is really good in collaborating with us." The most effective strategies, however, involved the purposeful use of dedicated time to meet and plan. Some mentioned having scheduled times for collaboration throughout the school year. "We have site improvement day every year. This is the day after Labor Day and the whole day is on collaborating, we do vertical meetings and we do just our team. That's where we make our team meetings and then we come back together and we discuss what went on, and then we do the same thing on February when we have a day off" (A+ Coordinator, 2005).

Collegiality among faculty has been a positive by-product in those schools that have successfully incorporated more collaboration time for faculty due to more shared understandings. When asked what they have gained from the A+ process one teacher (2006) replied "Teambuilding. What we needed to do to collaborate more." Several teachers and principals mentioned the initial 5-day institutes as a real catalyst to collaboration, due to the opportunity to get to know each other during the week-long training.

## ***Infrastructure***

***Leadership*** continues to emerge as an important theme in relation to infrastructure. Observational and interview data reveal greater frequency of examples of implementation and (according to interviews) greater perceived magnitude in terms of ongoing advancement of the A+ process within those schools with evidence of consistent and overt principal buy-in. While the A+ process has demonstrated (and continues to demonstrate) great ***resilience*** to the many barriers to reform that exist within all schools such as budget limitations, scheduling challenges, and faculty (and especially) administrative turnover, those schools with enthusiastic and assertive support of the building principal along with support from their central administration seem to truly thrive as they move forward with the process. Certainly, ***engagement*** on the part of school administrators appears to be a key component in establishing and supporting innovative approaches to scheduling, hiring, staff development, and other basic elements that promote school-wide, student-centered reform.

Specific infrastructure issues were reported from school to school that provided real examples regarding challenges for implementing A+. As shared in the previous section, lack of time was repeatedly cited as a problem. Not only did teachers and principals share frustrations with creating times conducive for teachers to collaborate, but they also shared concerns with finding the time to coordinate and to implement the multiple initiatives or programs with which they are involved (e.g., *Great Expectations*, *Reading First*, etc.) or to manage the numerous demands inherent to teaching. However, as mentioned, strong leadership seemed to mediate some of these concerns. One principal recognizing the need to adjust the length of class periods to encourage "activity-based teaching" was reported as planning to change from an eight-period day to a six-period day (Researcher Summary of Principal Comments, 2006).

Additionally, funding for specials teachers and in some cases materials necessary for arts and other types of activities was cited as a challenge. As stated by one teacher (2006), "We were led to believe that we would get more PE, music, art, full-time. That's why we bought in [to A+]. However, we have less. We were led to believe that that was something the district would try to work with us on. ... This is the reason we bought in to A+."

One other challenge referenced by multiple schools included the use of space. Comments described challenges of finding space within the school to store materials, in some cases related to enriched assessments (e.g., portfolios of students' work), or to sharing space with another school, both schools being located on the same site.

## ***Climate***

Principals, faculty, staff and students continue to report very favorable attitudes about climate within OK A+ Schools. "It's easier to define ourselves. We can be more analytic and emotive. We are thinking with more intentionality about what we do. There's more peace in the classroom; making sure we really understand why we are here" (Teacher, 2005).

***When you walk in, the children are glad to be here, and the teachers are glad to be here.***  
(Principal, 2005)

During interviews, principals and teachers stated that A+ is conducive to improved teacher morale. Structured opportunities for interaction and collaboration, such as the Summer Institutes and Conferences, were often cited as a catalyst for increased camaraderie among teachers.

***I'm very happy here. The attitude here was horrid [before A+]. There was low teacher morale, now it's better. Things have gotten better and better. A+ has fit in and made it better.*** (Teacher, 2005)

***Our attendance rates are getting better, they're higher than the overall rates in the state.*** (Principal, 2006)

A+ principals and teachers also reported that the A+ process has a positive impact on student attitudes and behavior.

Interview data also indicate that students are aware of a more positive environment in OK A+ Schools.

***Teachers are nice. Even if teachers are hard, you learn more and faster.***  
(Student, 2006).

These findings are consistent with other research such as Campbell's (1990) findings that a "multiple intelligences-based instructional model . . . increased multimodal skills, improved attitudes and behavior, and other benefits."

## **CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION ESSENTIALS: ARTS, CURRICULUM, MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, ENRICHED ASSESSMENT**

Four of the eight *A+ Essentials™* – **arts, curriculum, multiple intelligences**, and **experiential learning** – were identified in previous Research Reports as a meaningful framework for the on-going development of the A+ philosophy within the unique culture of each school. These *Essentials* provide guidelines for curriculum and instruction in OK A+ Schools. Evident through instructional practice in the classroom and through student learning activities, projects and products, these four *Essentials* are the most-readily observable manifestations of A+ in the daily activities of students and teachers. In previous reports, a fifth *Essential* related to curriculum and instruction, **enriched assessment**, was labeled as a “Developing Essential” (Barry, Dell, Raiber, & Gunzenhauser, 2005, p. 18).

### **Arts**

#### *Daily Arts Instruction*

One of the goals of the A+ process is to promote daily instruction in art, dance/movement, drama, and music. Indeed, many A+ teachers and principals have reported that the arts component was one of the primary incentives for their school's initial involvement in A+. In those schools in which a favorable

*[T]eachers' attitude and even staff. Everybody has more respect [for the arts]. . . it's not fluff anymore. . . It is valued, authentic and very necessary. . . Visual arts come to mind first and it's used more often. Movement was more difficult, and the drama. The lower grades use music the most and it lessens as you go up. (Principal, 2006)*

climate for arts instruction was already in place, A+ has served to validate the importance of arts within the curriculum. In other schools in which the arts were not a priority, A+ has helped fuel greater interest in providing students with an arts-rich educational experience. The most prevalent art form in A+ Schools is visual art, and the halls and classrooms of most A+ Schools are filled with vivid displays of student artwork. Music is also quite prevalent within A+ Schools. However, classroom teachers expressed less confidence in using drama and movement.

During interviews, numerous teachers reported that they were utilizing arts approaches more in their teaching since their school has been involved in A+. Even though observations in the halls and classrooms may suggest visual arts and music have been the most common approaches, numerous art forms have been integrated. Plenty of examples of these approaches (including visual arts, music, drama, and movement) were provided by principals, teachers, and students.

The most prominent examples of arts in the classroom relate to visual arts. One principal (2006) shared, “The kids write and draw pictures [representing each two chapters of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*] in... accordion books like the ones we made during the summer [institute]. They love to illustrate.” She continued, saying that there was a special education

student whose reading level was less than the 2nd grade level and that he "...could actually tell the whole story. He's really feeling like he's part of that 5th grade; he hasn't in the past." In another example, an art teacher (2006) shared that students created Oklahoma habitats out of shoe boxes in their classroom.

However, some examples of other arts are also present. An elementary teacher (2006) stated, "...some things you don't realize can go together... like the movement and math. We use the macarena dance all the time to count by fives. Now we're all the way to one hundred counting by fives. They can do it by themselves by now. They do it by motions. They're so far ahead [of where they are expected to be] that we are going to start counting by twos. My kids asked if we could go past 50 to do 100. Our next step is to count by twos."

The data also revealed several examples of classroom dramatics. A 5<sup>th</sup>-grade social studies teacher (2005) reported, "We are trying new things. That [drama] wasn't my deal before. It [role playing] helped a lot with social studies. The kids really like doing that; that's definitely out of my comfort zone." Yet when asked if these drama-related activities were becoming more in her comfort zone, the teacher responded "yes." Similarly, a student (2006) gave the following example, "With the Boston Massacre, we got to act it out. We had like these little scripts, and we walked around."

In yet another instance, a researcher observed (2006), "When I entered... [the students] were rehearsing for a play to be presented later that day for another class. There was a painted backdrop of the street scene, two desks and chairs for members of Parliament and the King, a spotlight (using an overhead projector) and the music was already cued for their final song. [There was] Lots of enthusiasm as the eight boys and eleven girls were in preparation. All appeared to have a role for the production. I was able to watch them rehearse a song they had just begun learning yesterday - words were projected on the wall as the CD played. [The] Song was about the Bill of Rights...then some other songs: Paul Revere, George Washington crossing the Delaware, Betsy Ross, Spirit of 76, and 13 Colonies. They showed me the various activities they had worked on during their unit (individual students came over to show me their books, agenda, etc.). Two girls told me about the nicknames used during the colonial period. There was a tax simulation on the wall with pre-charts, sample tally of what they could live without if taxed like the colonists had been, etc."

***I'm incorporating more music, and I understand that noise, at appropriate times, is okay. I've learned to loosen up. I'm highly structured, but I realize the kids need this, so I've loosened up.***  
(Teacher, 2006)

Even though numerous examples of arts-based approaches are evident in the data, there is also the indication that not all teachers are incorporating the arts daily. Numerous teachers reference using the arts in some cases "weekly," "when the lesson calls for it," or "about every nine weeks." Also one teacher's comments (2006) indicated that particular art forms were not

matches for particular subjects. Those who stated that they do not use arts daily identified time constraints, not knowing how to or not being good at using the arts, and/or concerns regarding test scores as the reasons why.

One media specialist (2005) even claimed that the arts have a positive attitudinal effect, sharing that the children *choose* to read and borrow books about artists. She also said that the students' art work is often matted and displayed - like a real gallery - in the lunchroom - "and that's unique.... Kids appreciate being treated like real artists. They value art and value themselves when their art is hanging in the 'gallery'."

***... we're looking at adding personnel. We're looking at adding a full-day music specialist instead of a half-day. . . it would be great to have music and movement together. . . I'd like to see it be a Fine Arts class. Not just a music class, but music and movement and maybe dramatics too.***  
(Principal, 2006)

Participation in the A+ Network has also prompted interest in hiring additional arts specialists in some schools. However, even though there is an interest for additional staffing, as indicated in the *Infrastructure* section, there may not be the funding to realize this interest.

Qualitative data (interviews and observations) also indicate that students in some A+ Schools are becoming more aware of the arts and of their own creative potential.

***They [the students] are more aware of the art around them and are not intimidated to try something new. They are willing to accept their efforts (successes and failures) and be creative.***  
(Art Teacher, 2006)

There are numerous statements describing the ways that students benefit from the arts. One teacher (2006) claimed "I think the arts do benefit the children. It makes the children become actively involved in the learning process," while another teacher (2006) shared this sentiment stating, "[the students] do need the artwork. It makes the learning more fun and interesting. I try to get in at least one activity a week. It's almost like it encourages abstract thinking. For those right brain kids I think it helps them learn better. I see a difference in [A+] helping some kids learn."

One avenue for achieving the goal of daily arts instruction that has been widely embraced by A+ principals and teachers is arts integration. While teachers' initial attempts at arts integration are often modest, these efforts serve as important baby steps in the learning process.

The A+ model seems to help promote a generally favorable attitude about the arts among teachers and students, validating the inclusion of arts for those teachers who were already inclined toward an arts-enriched approach to instruction, and also providing an incentive for teachers to venture beyond their personal safety zones.

## **Curriculum**

Several teacher comments may serve as the best descriptors of the A+ Essential: Curriculum. One teacher (2006) claimed, "The PASS [*Priority Academic Student Skills*] objectives are what we teach, A+ is how we teach it." Another teacher (2006) stated, "One of the most positive things is that they [A+ Directors and Fellows] were not asking us to change our curriculum; they were just helping us to teach better. It helped me teach with different approaches, but I didn't change the content."

***Most of the communication in A+ really goes straight to the teaching, to curriculum more than to the administration part of it. (Teacher, 2005)***

## **Curriculum Mapping**

One of the key components of the initial, 5-day Summer Institute is Curriculum Mapping. This process calls upon teachers to plan within and across different grade levels and disciplines. However, the continuation and actual implementation of this process varies, depending upon the level of administrative support and collaboration evident within each school.

For the past few years, A+ teachers have been trained to map curriculum using large oil pans with magnetic PASS skills cards. Schools typically spend portions of time throughout their five-day Institute determining when and how particular PASS skills should be taught, using as a point of reference what their colleagues (grade-level and vertically) are teaching and when they are doing so. This process also includes the development of overarching concepts which may serve as an *umbrella* under which the whole school or particular divisions in the school (e.g., grade levels) may envision how the curriculum aligns. As one teacher (2006) describes the process, "...[with] more horizontal and vertical planning, we are on the same page together, to see what we are doing in different classes." This approach may identify duplication of activities, ways to collaborate among faculty, or other features of the school's current approaches to curriculum.

One teacher (2006) stated, "In talking to my kids [her kindergarten students], I can now say, ...in first grade, you get to do this...."

***It's really difficult here. I can see that it could work in a self-contained classroom, but we have a tough time because her PASS objectives . . . may not coincide with mine and the same with math. (Teacher, 2006)***

This process seems to be difficult and somewhat frustrating for teachers new to A+. While numerous teachers claimed that curriculum mapping was important to them, many also stated that they felt unsure of what they were doing and that they were confused about how to make the

curriculum fit horizontally and vertically. Principals and teachers suggested that the metal oil pans used for the mapping were often not used as effectively as they could be once the teachers returned to their schools. Principals and teachers from several schools mentioned

that this was an area that they could improve, and some have begun generating other tools, such as paper or electronic charts, to map their curriculum.

One teacher (2005) said, "That [the mapping] was a real plus. The teachers who couldn't do that didn't have a plan." A veteran teacher (2006) claimed, "It is still difficult to fit it [curriculum and activities] all in. As a master teacher, if you can teach five things in one activity, you can accomplish a whole lot more, a whole lot faster. The kids [younger, newer teachers] who teach it separately do not have the creativity to come up with the rest of it [the big picture of using A+ to put the whole lesson together]."

### *Integration*

Interview responses indicated that definitions of curricular integration vary among A+ participants. Generally, teachers and principals tend to view integrated curriculum in terms of arts activities. Some teachers described integration as "arts projects," while others shared specific one-way integration approaches—pulling in music as background music or to teach a song, drawing pictures after listening to a story, etc. Few made comments that suggested two-way integration was occurring. One respondent shared that she now realizes that the use of multiple approaches to learning—including the MIs—"uses all parts of the brain" (Principal, 2006). However, in some cases, integration is viewed to be the sole responsibility of the specials teacher. At this stage of the process, the varying definitions of integration in operation in A+ Schools seem to reflect the various levels of engagement at which A+ Schools are functioning.

Perhaps it is most appropriate to think of achieving integration along a continuum ranging from *one-way* integration in which one academic subject is used in service to another discipline to a fully integrated, *two-way*, model in which the value and integrity of different disciplines are maintained.

Sue Snyder (1996) describes three levels of integration:

**1. Connections**

- Materials or concepts from one discipline are used to help teach or reinforce a concept in another curricular area.

**2. Correlations**

- A correlation is made between two or more disciplines through shared materials or topics.

**3. Integration**

- The integrity of each discipline is maintained. Application and synthesis of ideas from one discipline to another is encouraged, leading to deeper understanding and fostering critical thinking.

Lake (2006) provides a useful summary of different definitions:

*These definitions support the view that integrated curriculum is an educational approach that prepares children for lifelong learning. There is a strong belief among those who support curriculum integration that schools must look at education as a process for developing abilities required by life in the twenty-first*

*century, rather than discrete, departmentalized subject matter. In general, all of the definitions of integrated curriculum or interdisciplinary curriculum include:*

- *A combination of subjects*
  - *An emphasis on projects*
  - *Sources that go beyond textbooks*
  - *Relationships among concepts*
  - *Thematic units as organizing principles*
  - *Flexible schedules*
  - *Flexible student groupings.*
- (<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/8/c016.html>)

However, at this stage of implementation, two-way integration is still emerging within OK A+ Schools. At this point, there has been scant evidence (either observational or through surveys and interviews) of two-way integration with only a few isolated examples. Certainly, achieving two-way integration is a complex and multi-faceted challenge with both technical and emotionally charged aspects. These concerns appear to be particularly acute regarding the roles of arts specialists and grade-level teachers. At one end of the spectrum, the grade-level teacher, who may lack comprehensive and specialized training in arts may feel very intimidated at the prospect of teaching arts content. "I'm just not artsy" is a frequent comment in interviews with grade-level teachers. On the other hand, the arts specialist may also feel somewhat threatened by the notion of sharing her area of specialization with other teachers. Not surprisingly, in times of tight school budgets, the perceived possibility of sharing responsibilities for arts instruction with other teachers may give rise to concerns that the specialist could eventually be viewed as expendable.

Undoubtedly, the vast majority of references to integration by teachers reflect a one-way approach to arts integration—drawing pictures of a story that was read, listening to music in the background while completing coursework, etc. Although this is the case, several examples may tell the story of how arts integration has been used to reflect two-way integration.

***What about two-way integration? . . . I know the music teacher never has done that (telling us what she is teaching in her classroom) . . . I know that's the idea that both the classroom and the special teacher can collaborate. . . Well, this is the first step . . . I think that's where we are . . . we are still babies.***  
(Teacher, 2006)

As reported by one researcher (2006) observing a fifth-grade class, the students were "...making Kachina dolls--masking tape bodies fashioned on a wire frame--painted and decorated with feather beads, construction paper and cloth. A very articulate young man approaches me, shakes my hand and introduces himself as Cody. Cody proceeds to tell me about their Kachina dolls and all that they're learning about Hopi Indians. I ask if this is a social studies or art class--Cody replies 'Both'."

Outside of another classroom, another researcher (2005) recorded "... there were paint sample strips hanging on the wall. These strips resembled those that might be found at any paint store that provide different shades of a particular color. I noticed that on each of these strips words were written on each shade of the color. It became apparent to me that the students wrote synonymous forms of the words to reflect the different shades and hues of the colors. In other words, the words that seemed to me to have a darker connotation or tone seemed to be written on the darker shades of the color; those words with a lighter connotation or tone seemed to be written on the lighter shades. It seems the students ordered these words sequentially based on connotation."

A drama teacher (2006) who reported working with a science teacher claimed, "We gave them [the students] a chance to get out of their seats. The students were molecules, ice 'melting to liquid' then spread apart to gas. [She referenced using movement activities as part of this lesson.]"

In an elementary science class a student (2006) said, "We had to be sea creatures from the sea talking about how the order goes in the sea."

Another elementary teacher (2006) stated, "I do this art project [refers to a project she has with her] with George Washington [she pointed out cherries on trees and said that her students create this art piece, measure distance and height, and discuss history all in one lesson]. A+ has provided the terms and now the kids have fun doing this.... They were really proud of the finished project. The kids are aware of this [connection they are making with the different subjects]. On the playground they can say that tree over there is really not that small. [She was referring to them using the perspective lesson regarding George Washington.]"

## ***Multiple Intelligences***

***There is a difference in the way teachers are teaching. They make learning fun, integrate the arts.***

***(Principal, 2005)***

As observed in the Year One Report (Barry, et al., 2003), the language of Multiple Intelligences (MIs) provided an initial, and readily accessible entry point for engaging in the A+ process. By beginning to share a common language, A+ participants were able to demonstrate their membership in and allegiance to A+ [engagement]. This *Essential* also helped to spur more interest in individual student differences and encouraged teachers to adapt more diverse instructional approaches. This has been particularly evident among those teachers who came on board with some buy-in into these ideas. Certainly, for those individuals, Multiple Intelligence theory served to validate what they already believed about the most appropriate ways to help children learn.

An A+ teacher (2005) reported that A+ has helped her teach to her students' strengths through awareness of multiple intelligences. While some of the teachers reported using the multiple intelligences in their lessons and explaining them to their students, others claimed

that the multiple intelligences are not talked about with the students. Rather, MI is "...more of something for the teachers to think about in their planning" (Teacher, 2006).

One example of teachers overtly sharing the theory of multiple intelligences with students includes a fourth-grade project displayed in the hallway, titled "Connecting with Our Smarts." As noted by one researcher (2006), "It was a multiple intelligence project that the teacher had done with the students. The students used different colored pieces of paper which were shaped into squares to represent the eight different intelligences on a piece of black construction paper. Above the projects was a sign telling which of the intelligences each colored square represented."

One teacher (2006) stated, "A+ really targets multiple intelligences and leveling the playing field for everyone. Then the kids can learn and feel good about themselves. ...The kids often say 'I didn't know I was smart'" and that helps all the kids begin to value and appreciate themselves and each other. [A+] Really helps create a close-knit classroom feeling."

As schools continue to grow in their understanding and implementation of A+, there is increased interest in making parents and the community more aware of A+.

***One area we need to work on, I need to work on, we have to use the A+ language to get the word out to the community. . . Just for the average person, if I say A+, they really don't understand. (Principal, 2006)***

Sharing the language of Multiple Intelligence Theory is the way that many schools are informing parents and the community about A+. Interview and observational data reveal numerous references to different kinds of Multiple Intelligence displays in the schools: bulletin boards, posters, exhibits, etc.

Many schools are using special programs such as *informances* and *MI Nights* to make parents more aware of A+. An A+ teacher (2006) shared, "The parent nights have a theme based on Multiple Intelligences. We had kind of an informance night the first night . . . we had a theme. . . and we worked in one of the smarts. Each grade level chose a theme. . . 1st grade chose careers and demonstrated which smarts you'd use most in that career."

***Parent night is our MI night and this year we're working toward Informance. . . They pick a topic, like 1<sup>st</sup> grade has careers, and cover every MI. . . They're getting much better. (A+ Coordinator, 2006)***

### ***Experiential Learning***

***We're an A+ school. The playground. Lots of art. We get to get out of our seats. (Elementary student, 2006)***

A+ teachers and principals cited examples of *engagement in experiential learning activities* throughout the qualitative data. It appears that students engaged in this type of learning across the curriculum. Data indicate that A+ students

have engaged in experiential learning in social studies, astronomy, reading, music, physical education, library/media studies, life science, earth science and math. Most common experiences included the use of drama in the social studies class to experience different times or cultures. Other typical experiences included making working volcanoes in earth science, growing plants and studying the life cycles of chicks and caterpillars in life science, and using math manipulatives. Some more unique applications included one instance where “the kids were working on a project about weather, where they were pretending to be TV forecasters. Some were doing research at the computer, to find out how the weather was in Hong Kong, others were looking in books, others were building the sets. The teacher only supervised and helped the kids” (A+ Researcher, 2005). While this type of engagement is not exclusive to A+ Schools, the pervasiveness of this in each classroom, regardless of subject, is much greater than in schools engaged in traditional instruction. One principal (2006) goes as far to say that, “Everyone uses experiential learning.” When directly questioned about experiential learning during interviews, most principals cite this as a strength within their school. The only concerns voiced were related to funding for outside projects and trips. Most managed this concern with funds raised through PTA/PTO organizations.

### ***Enriched Assessment***

***We talk about the assessment piece and how this is critical. It may be difficult (if not impossible) for teachers to view activity-based non-traditional teaching as valid when they are operating (and may feel compelled by administration) under a very narrow, high-stakes assessment paradigm.***  
(Principal, 2005)

Oklahoma A+ teachers and principals continue to identify Enriched Assessment as one of the *Essentials* that is most challenging to implement.

The challenge is particularly acute in those schools in which A+ is viewed as an *add-on* program. In those situations, teachers may view enriched assessment as an approach that is not relevant within a school culture that is driven by state and federally mandated high-stakes testing.

However, in those schools with strong administrative support (from the Central Office and especially from the building principal) and high levels of teacher buy-in, enriched assessment is increasingly being viewed as an integral part of the instructional process.

Interview transcripts were examined to investigate evidence of use and amount of seatwork and/or worksheets. Responses revealed several trends. The most common use of seatwork was in test preparation, especially for benchmark exams. Some teachers also referenced pressure from upper administration for demonstration of *basic skills* and indicated that worksheets fit that need better than “creative learning or arts integration” (Teacher, 2006). As such, worksheets are included as a necessity, but often are supplemented with more experiential learning activities. In this role, the worksheet is used in the labeling process while debriefing after an activity. The need for improved classroom management was also mentioned as a reason for employing seatwork as an instructional strategy. Due to large class sizes, some teachers (usually with less teaching

experience) stated that they had trouble with classes during more active learning experiences. They expressed a desire to use more experiential activities, but stated that seatwork allows them to manage a more conducive learning environment.

***There are more opportunities for the kids to demonstrate their strengths and teachers are more open to the variety of ways kids can demonstrate their learning. Teachers know they have permission and expectation to evaluate student knowledge in different ways. (Principal, 2006)***

It was also found that level of teacher buy in has a direct effect on the amount of seatwork within the classroom. In schools that tended to function at a lower engagement level in terms of the *A+ Essentials™*, teachers often viewed worksheets that have been colored with markers or crayons as artwork, often displaying them in similar ways that other schools display student-generated art projects.

One other issue identified with enriched assessment is that “the teachers have a hard time with this because they need something tangible...” (Principal, 2006). This principal continued to state, “...they are becoming more comfortable with it little by little; the teachers question how to use enriched assessment and still be fair and objective.”

Compared to the other curriculum and instruction *Essentials*, data for this *Essential* revealed only a few examples of teachers’ use of enriched assessment.

***They just tell the story in pictures. When I look at the posters, I can see what is working and what is not, finding out what they are interested in the most because that's what they draw. It's a definite assessment. They...I can tell if I am touching in the correct aspect. It amazes me what they retained when they are interested, because they draw.***  
(Teacher, 2006)

One teacher (2006) claimed, “If I have keyboard lab, I do performance grades.” Other teachers reported using rubrics.

Another teacher (2006) shared, “Our 5th graders made globes and made continents; they don't know they're being assessed.”

## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

During interviews, A+ administrators and teachers consistently referenced several areas as being challenging to A+ implementation. The most common among these were collaboration with colleagues, varied definitions of integration, the presence of multiple programs within the school, and teacher/administrative buy in. However, many of the respondents also demonstrated that A+ was beneficial to their schools as collaboration has increased and teachers are considering ways to develop “more meaningful ways to integrate lessons,” (A+ Coordinator, 2006) including cross-curricular lessons and horizontal and vertical alignment.

## ***Collaboration***

Responses indicate that school-wide collaboration at most A+ Schools is “very informal” (Teacher, 2006). Teachers reported discussing curricular ideas/plans in passing (in the hall, at lunch, etc.) Some reported using planning time to meet with grade-level teachers; however, with only a few schools reporting an ongoing, frequent planning time where specials teachers met with the different grade level teachers. Occasionally, time would be given during a faculty meeting, but those specials teachers who were most persistent in their attempts to facilitate planning with grade level teachers reported relying on emails, a chart to be completed by regular teachers, etc. in order to know what is going on in the regular classrooms. Some specials teachers visited the grade-level teachers’ classrooms to find out what was taking place. However, many references indicate that specials teachers usually taught when the grade-level teachers were planning—that is, the specials teachers were teaching the grade-level teachers’ students and, therefore, were not able to participate in the planning time. Some schools additionally faced the challenge of part-time, traveling specials teacher(s). When teachers [grade-level, etc.] did meet, it was often stated that they met once a week or monthly. Dedicated collaboration time was identified as a critical need by many teachers. “We need a better schedule where collaboration time is set aside. My pullout time is different everyday, and I don’t have time to collaborate with arts, music, drama teachers, etc.” (Teacher, 2006). While achieving collaboration continues to present challenges in many schools, it is likely that additional successful models for collaboration will emerge as the A+ process continues.

## ***Integration***

Varied definitions of integration were also indicated in the data. Snyder (1996) refers to three varying levels of integration. She terms the most basic level as *connections* where simple similarities between subjects are connected in the curriculum. As connections are made at a more conceptual level within all subject matters that are being integrated, curricular connections move through the *collaboration* stage to the true *integration* stage where concepts from all the integrated subjects are related to each other in equally meaningful ways. Data indicate that there were a number of integration attempts at the *connection* level within OK A+ Schools. At this level, teachers viewed integration as “arts projects” (Teacher, 2006), while some shared specific approaches—pulling in music as background music or to teach a song, drawing pictures after listening to a story, etc. It is interesting to note that when integration was mentioned, data indicate that teachers generally viewed integration in terms of arts – no specific references to integrating two or more academic subjects were recorded in interviews. Interestingly, one respondent went as far as to state that integration was the responsibility of the specials teacher, her wording suggesting that it was solely the responsibility of the specials teacher. Few made comments that suggested either collaboration or full integration was occurring; however, one respondent shared that “It seems like there was some difficulty. . . working the math curriculum into the arts. . . When you start with math and then go into the arts, making it natural is difficult. . . but it [integration] uses all the parts of the brain . . . we’re just realizing that” (Principal, 2006). These interview responses reflect the variance in value for and definitions of integration among A+ teachers and principals.

## ***Multiple Programs***

Schools reported that engaging in numerous programs was challenging. However, many responses indicated that involvement in one program seemed to support the types of activities they might be doing in another. In particular, Core Knowledge and Great Expectations were cited as programs complementary to A+. However, Reading First was sometimes problematic as prescribed approaches in Reading First seemed to conflict with A+ approaches. In addition to the programs already referenced, responses indicated participation in *Oklahoma Energy Resource Board* activities, the *Deborah Brown Model*, and *Harweldon*. The primary conflict with multiple programs is summer training. As one respondent stated, "There's also competition with *Great Expectations* and *Core Knowledge* which both require a one-week training session in the summer" (Principal, 2006). When asked if there is any other conflict, the typical response is, "Oh no, no I think they benefit from each other, what most teachers do is they take the best, that's what I do, I use what is the best of each program, so if you can pull the best of the three programs it will make you a better teacher" (Teacher, 2006).

## ***Buy-In***

Some respondents referenced lack of consistent teacher and principal buy-in as a primary concern. Reasons cited for this concern varied among different schools. Many teachers noted that it was initially very difficult to buy into "additional work" (Teacher, 2005) obviously viewing A+ as an add-on program. Another teacher stated, "It's not the fault of A+, but too much has been put at us. We were told we had to attend a 3-year program [A+ training]. That is a lot to do, especially when you consider that the summer is our time and then they put us in a weeklong workshop" (Teacher, 2006). Others noted feeling overwhelmed at times because the process moved too quickly to know exactly what they were being asked to do. "I think they [seemingly referring to the site leaders coordinating A+] are trying to push the process too fast. I don't think everyone understands yet, so it's difficult to move along. With that not understanding it, the teachers are not buying into it. Teachers understand the bare minimum. Yeah, we're A+, but not fully A+" (Teacher, 2006).

Standardized test scores seemed to have a mixed impact on teacher buy-in. Some noted that when teachers see the benefits via improved test scores, they are encouraged and buy-in improves. Others stated that A+ buy-in at upper elementary grades is lower due to the testing pressure at these grade levels.

Interview data suggest that building principal support has the most direct impact on teacher buy-in. Interviewees in schools without perceived principal support also noted lack of teacher buy-in. These teachers indicated that this was largely due to some principals' lack of experience with and support for A+. Due to lack of principal support, some A+ Fellows (2006) decided to "back off" within their own schools and support A+ primarily by quiet example in this past year. On the other hand, some principals believed so strongly in the A+ framework that teacher buy-in was linked to actual hiring practice. One principal stated, "If I have a choice of faculty, [A+ is] the first thing I talk about" (Principal, 2006). It appears that teacher buy-in is largely a social phenomenon linked most closely to the perception of A+ as additional work or as a mandated change in instruction. These perceptions were most closely linked to the level of support given the framework from individual building principals.

## COHERENCE AND ENGAGEMENT: ROLE DEVELOPMENT

The Year Two Report identified the theme of *Coherence* (Gunzenhauser, et al., p. 12) as a way of describing specific challenges that schools face as the A+ process develops within the culture of their schools. A+ Schools have demonstrated models of coherence on a continuum ranging from: *A+ as add-on* (in which teachers view A+ as additional work and not central to their professional responsibilities), *A+ as fitting in* (in which teachers begin to explore their role identification as an "A+ Teacher" (language adoption is usually one of the first manifestations of this level of coherence), *A+ as glue* (in which teachers may view A+ as a source of connectedness -- through thematic units, and/or other types of collaborative efforts within and across grade levels and subject areas, and finally to *A+ as central focus* (a fully embedded model in which teachers view A+ as inseparable from their teaching activities). These models of Coherence, identified in previous reports, continue to serve as useful descriptors for different levels of *engagement* among A+ stakeholders.

Certainly, the cultural context of each school is unique. However, regardless of their individual entry point, the research team has observed more evidence of progress in implementing the *A+ Essentials™* within those schools with evidence of being further along in the continuum of these Coherence models.

*This is the happiest I've ever been [since becoming a teacher].*

(Teacher, 2006)

Within schools in which A+ is still viewed as *add-on*, the barriers to school reform appear to be greater and evidence of progress tends to be more isolated and usually is associated with the efforts of particular teachers as opposed to evidence of school-wide reform.

As the *Oklahoma A+ Schools®* process evolves, teachers and principals in A+ Schools are expressing greater interest in engaging parents and the surrounding community in the A+ school reform process more actively. Developing a common language centered upon Multiple Intelligences was one of the earliest manifestations of *engagement* in the A+ process that the Research Team observed among A+ teachers (see Year One Report). It is not surprising, then, to note that during the 2005-06 academic year, A+ principals and teachers expressed increased interest in educating parents about the A+ process through the language of Multiple Intelligences. The first steps toward this goal of extending the shared language of A+ to parents and the community were accomplished in a variety of ways including "MI Nights" in which one of the MIs was featured through teacher presentations (skits and reader's theatre) and/or student informances, increased emphasis in school newsletters, in-school arts and science festivals and displays, and other special events designed to inform and educate the community about the work of the school.

## LIMINAL SPACES: AHA! MOMENTS

The Year Two Report identified the importance of *liminal spaces* -- learning spaces, or *aha! moments* -- during which participants achieve a deeper (or new) understanding of the applications and implications of previously unclear aspects of A+. Support systems available through the Oklahoma A+ Network, including pre-institutes, Summer Institutes and Conferences, retreats, and in-school professional development have provided a fertile and sometimes provocative environment for stimulating these *aha! moments* among school faculty and staff. Many participants report that they feel "safe" to express themselves during A+ events. It is likely that this perception that A+ events are a "safe" environment is conducive to these *aha! moments*.

*An aha for us . . . You wonder sometimes, are you short changing something to get something else done, but it was good to see how well what we're doing fits with best practice.*  
(Principal, 2005)

The Year Three Report noted that as the Oklahoma A+ Network began to reflect more of a regional identity, *aha! moments* were taking on greater importance at different levels, with increased evidence of these significant *aha! moments* occurring among OK A+ Administration, Faculty and Fellows, as well as among teachers and principals in A+ Schools. As the Oklahoma A+ Schools® process continues to develop, profound liminal moments continue to occur within and across all levels of stakeholders within the A+ process, including students, school staff, A+ Faculty/Fellows, A+ Administration, and most certainly, this Research Team. One need only review the four Research Reports to gain insight into the

ways that our approach to data collection (including additional data collection and analysis tools) and reporting have evolved as this process continues.

Current (2005-06) data reveal that some students and teachers are recognizing that what they are doing is **A+**, whether in their own classrooms or in other contexts (such as library, or other special area classes). With a maturing understanding of the A+ framework, some have noted that they are now developing a context for what they already knew as teachers and that this knowledge is being validated, in some cases, for the first time.

As one principal explained "They didn't know how to apply," (2005) seemingly referring to teaching techniques that had been discussed or taught to them previously. Such a validation of professional practice has important implications not only for A+ teachers,

*[An] aha has been that teachers are realizing they knew, forgot, and are now revisiting what they were taught to do as teachers.*  
(Principal, 2005)

but also for those involved in teacher education. Additionally, research indicates that such empowerment of teacher knowledge may have long reaching effects on teacher efficacy and job satisfaction (Kim & Loadman, 1994). Two factors appear to have the most impact on this discovery: Those are extended engagement in the Oklahoma A+ Schools® Network and someone, usually a building principal, to facilitate the process.

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# Appendices



**Appendix A: School Report Card 2005: Descriptives for A+ Schools\***

\*Based upon OK SDE 2005 School Report Cards. Data not available for some A+ Schools (e.g., private schools, early childhood centers).

<b>Category</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Caucasian % 05	20	1.00	91.00	50.9000	26.89727
Black % 05	20	1.00	98.00	19.7500	27.09996
Asian % 05	20	.00	7.00	2.4000	2.34857
Hispanic % 05	20	1.00	69.00	16.1000	21.16825
Native American % 05	20	.00	47.00	10.6000	10.66425
Free/Reduced Lunch %	20	7.00	100.00	61.9500	27.78579
Reading Remediation %	19	10.00	51.00	32.5789	11.50515
Average Student Days Absent	20	5.90	11.40	8.5300	1.54105
Mobility Rate 05	19	.00	16.00	10.3158	4.55891
Suspensions of 10 Days or Less per number of students	17	3.70	132.40	47.8588	42.70097
Suspensions of 10 Days or More per number of students	3	205.50	422.10	296.5000	112.36886
Parents Attending Conference %	18	59.00	100.00	92.0556	10.66866
Volunteer Hours per Student 05	19	.80	54.70	10.8579	12.16371
Student Enrollment ADM 05	20	222.70	785.60	379.3250	141.99837
Regular Teachers 05 (FTE)	20	10.10	47.40	20.1900	8.51221
3rd Grade Math 05	18	50.00	95.00	79.6667	11.71224
3rd Grade Reading 05	18	67.00	100.00	90.0556	7.73436
4th Grade Math 05	19	52.00	100.00	84.5789	12.77722
4th Grade Reading 05	19	50.00	100.00	88.5789	12.34826
5th Grade Math 05	18	63.00	100.00	89.8333	10.54542
5th Grade Reading 05	18	47.00	100.00	81.8889	16.90071
5th Grade Social Studies 05	18	16.00	97.00	75.6667	21.74992
5th Grade Science 05	18	53.00	100.00	86.1111	13.87715
6th Grade Math 05	0				
6th Grade Reading 05	0				
7th Grade Math 05	0				
7th Grade Reading 05	0				
7th Grade Geography 05	1	69.00	69.00	69.0000	.
8th Grade Math 05	1	58.00	58.00	58.0000	.
8th Grade Reading 05	1	59.00	59.00	59.0000	.
8th Grade History/Const/Govt 05	1	31.00	31.00	31.0000	.
8th Grade Science 05	1	53.00	53.00	53.0000	.

### Appendix B: API Average Regular Scores for OK A+ School Cohorts and Their District Averages

	2001-2002			2002-2003			2003-2004			2004-2005		
	<i>Average</i>	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
<i>2002 Cohort (14 schools)</i>	894	339	1261	1163	791	1401	1156	637	1382	1284	932	1449
<i>2002 Cohort District Average</i>				975	753	1286	1053	854	1323	1162	928	1386
<i>2003 Cohort (5 schools)</i>				1017	819	1217	1065	595	1335	1153	799	1326
<i>2003 Cohort District Average</i>				970	671	1194	1032	674	1246	1116	811	1311
<i>2004 Cohort (3 schools)</i>							1153	1084	1226	1309	1254	1391
<i>2004 Cohort District Average</i>							1058	869	1164	1147	928	1283
<i>2005 Cohort (5 schools)</i>										1284	1130	1407
<i>2005 Cohort District Average</i>										1086	928	1300

## Appendix C: My Class Activities Student Survey 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 Data

Sex	2004	2005	2006	Grade Level	2004 N	2004 %	2005 N	2005 %	2006 N	2006 %
Female	52%	53%	53%	Grade 2			37	3.0		
Male	48%	47%	47%	Grade 3	467	31.2	355	28.9	487	33.1
				Grade 4	478	32.0	394	32.0	430	29.1
				Grade 5	452	30.2	373	30.3	457	31.0
				Grade 6					36	2.4
				Grade 7					23	1.6
				Grade 8					23	1.6
				Other	8	0.6	2	0.2		
				Not marked	90	6.0	69	5.6	17	1.2
				Total	1495	100%	1230	100%	1473	100%

	Scale 1: Interest			Scale 2: Challenge			Scale 3: Choice			Scale 4: Enjoyment		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Number of Defining Statements for Scale	8	8	8	9	9	9	7	7	7	7	7	7
Reliability of Scale (alpha)*	.82	.80	.80	.61	.63	.59	.63	.66	.67	.90	.89	.90
Scale Mean	29.6	29.3	28.6	32.6	32.4	32.0	21.4	20.5	20.0	28.0	28.0	27.0
Standard Deviation	5.78	5.74	5.60	5.02	5.15	4.92	4.97	5.19	5.11	6.28	6.07	6.48
Item Mean**	3.71	3.67	3.57	3.62	3.61	3.55	3.06	2.93	2.86	4.00	4.00	3.86

*"My Class Activities" student survey used with permission of its author,*

*Marcia Gentry, Minnesota State University*

*\*Reliability of the scale increases the closer alpha = 1.0*

*\*\*Item means are based on this scale: 1=never; 2=seldom; 3=sometimes; 4=often; 5=always*

**Appendix D: My Class Activities (MCA) 2005: Descriptive Statistics**

<b>MCA Survey Item</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
1. What I do in my class fits my interests.	1457	1	5	3.54	.914
2. I have an opportunity to work, on things in my class that interest me.	1457	1	5	3.45	1.087
3. What I do in my class gives me interesting and new ideas.	1452	1	5	3.61	1.093
4. I study interesting topics in my class.	1457	1	5	3.63	1.091
5. The teacher involves me in interesting learning activities.	1448	1	5	3.79	1.131
6. What I learn in my class is interesting to me.	1447	1	5	3.68	1.042
7. What I do in my class is interesting.	1441	1	5	3.59	1.067
8. My class has helped me explore my interests.	1442	1	5	3.30	1.289
9. The activities I do in my class are challenging.	1449	1	5	3.23	1.153
10. I have to think to solve problems in my class.	1451	1	5	4.00	1.074
11. I use challenging materials and books in my class.	1466	1	5	3.45	1.175
12. I challenge myself by trying new things.	1449	1	5	3.84	1.105
13. My work can make a difference.	1444	1	5	3.89	1.117
14. I find the work in this class demanding.	1444	1	5	3.06	1.255
15. I am challenged to do my best in class.	1442	1	5	4.34	1.049
16. What we do in class fits my abilities.	1442	1	5	3.63	1.090
17. This class is difficult.	1438	1	5	2.47	1.175
18. I can choose to work in a group.	1452	1	5	2.69	1.251
19. I can choose to work alone.	1432	1	5	3.49	1.360
20. When we work together, I can choose my partners.	1450	1	5	2.94	1.238
21. I can choose my own projects.	1445	1	5	2.27	1.205
22. When there are many, jobs, I can choose the ones that suit me.	1440	1	5	3.06	1.306
23. I can choose materials to work with in the class.	1432	1	5	3.12	1.231
24. I can choose an audience for my product.	1435	1	5	2.51	1.290
25. I look forward to my class.	1445	1	5	3.88	1.247
26. I have fun in my class.	1454	1	5	3.94	1.171
27. The teacher makes learning fun.	1445	1	5	3.93	1.227
28. I like what I do in my class.	1449	1	5	3.76	1.093
29. I like working in my class.	1444	1	5	3.77	1.188
30. The activities I do in my class are enjoyable.	1457	1	5	3.82	1.115
31. I like the projects I work on in my class.	1455	1	5	3.89	1.125

## Appendix E: Teacher Opinion Survey (TOS) 2005

### Descriptive Statistics

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
My lessons are organized according to a curriculum map	404	1	4	3.16	.696
Referring to other teachers' curr. maps assists in my teaching interrelated curr.	400	1	4	3.01	.653
I take advantage of the resources offered with this arts program	405	1	4	3.18	.564
The parents are more involved now that we are a part of this program	354	1	4	2.79	.721
Ever since I started this program, I have a renewed interest in coming to work	375	1	4	2.95	.601
Teachers are encouraged to be creative at my school	425	1	4	3.61	.520
At my school, I am not expected to conform to any particular teaching style	413	1	4	3.14	.776
There is much experimentation with different teaching approaches at my school	403	1	4	3.07	.677
The nature of this program allows for collaboration with others	429	2	4	3.51	.541
Collaborating with visiting artists is an essential part of my teaching	388	1	4	2.64	.766
I spend a large part of my planning time with other teachers	408	1	4	2.65	.885
There is adequate time for collaborating with in-school arts specialists	390	1	4	2.13	.775
Group planning time for teaching the arts is scheduled and used consistently at my school	381	1	4	2.36	.808
My prof. goal this past academic year was to work on learning to better integrate the arts into the general curr.	385	1	4	2.97	.670
I need to develop more confidence in facilitating arts experiences in my classroom	409	1	4	2.94	.764
I do not have sufficient knowledge of any art domain to ensure the success of an integrated curriculum	410	1	4	2.18	.719
Trained arts specialists are necessary to provide comprehensive arts education.	425	1	4	2.55	.860
My own participation in the arts is evident in my classroom	400	1	4	3.04	.620
My own personality and passion for the arts is shared with students daily	417	1	4	2.99	.669
Talent development in the arts is most appropriately served through extra-curricular programs	408	1	4	2.30	.749
My theoretical orientation in planning curr. is clearly Gardner's Multiple Intelligences	382	1	4	2.87	.630
Only those teachers who have artistic background and formal training have a realistic preparation for teaching the arts	426	1	3	1.87	.574
My theoretical orientation in planning curr.	414	1	4	3.26	.549

is whole child: thinking, feeling, doing, and creating					
My personal fulfillment as a teacher is enhanced by my work in the arts	410	1	4	3.00	.685
Teaching the arts is less demanding than teaching other subjects	414	1	4	2.04	.702
Students study the arts in a multicultural context in my classroom	388	1	4	2.90	.625
Teaching arts activities is too time consuming.	415	1	4	1.78	.591
Students become more self-actualized through the arts	422	2	4	3.32	.503
Most arts education should take place outside of regular class time	427	1	4	1.73	.636
All children, regardless of their interests, should have high-quality arts instruction	437	1	4	3.30	.618
Integrating the arts into the general curr. makes my teaching more rewarding to me	410	1	4	3.27	.577
I am motivated to use the arts in my classroom because of the diversity of my students	409	1	4	3.11	.630
The arts in my classroom enhance the spirit of respect and empathy	405	2	4	3.20	.549
The arts take away time from important preparation for regular curricular outcomes	414	1	4	1.76	.637
Arts integration aids in the goal of students loving to learn	425	2	4	3.40	.513
Arts specialists are not as necessary at elem. level because classroom teachers can teach the arts	418	1	4	1.86	.722
I use the arts in my classroom to emphasize curricular themes	397	1	4	3.18	.565
The purpose of high quality instruction in the arts is to prepare those who will go on to work in art-related fields	410	1	4	1.85	.666
Using the arts in my classroom reduces discipline issues for the children I teach	397	1	4	3.00	.636
Integrating the arts creates unwanted disorder in my classroom.	404	1	4	2.03	.777
At the elementary level, classroom teachers have the necessary skills to teach two-way integration of the arts with other content areas	395	1	4	2.87	.641
The arts integrated into the total curriculum promote learning across subject boundaries	419	1	4	3.32	.495
I feel uncomfortable with the disorder of the arts integrated into all subjects	408	1	4	1.90	.649
It is logical to teach concepts holistically across all subjects in the curriculum including the arts	415	2	4	3.37	.535

## Appendix F: Teacher Opinion Survey (TOS) Reliability Analysis

### Scale 1: Student Outcomes

Scale Statistics	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	Variables
	41.4543	20.7107	4.5509	13

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	3.1888	2.8833	3.4038	.5205	1.1805	.0300

#### Item-total Statistics:

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
Q7	38.2965	18.4181	.2586	.0968	.8673
Q21A	38.5710	18.6824	.3198	.1952	.8573
Q23A	38.1830	18.2955	.4399	.2622	.8493
Q26A	38.5552	17.9882	.4668	.2996	.8479
Q28A	38.1420	18.2867	.5202	.3214	.8449
Q31A	38.1546	17.0172	.7007	.5495	.8327
Q32A	38.3407	17.4342	.5692	.4669	.8412
Q33A	38.2650	17.2270	.7009	.5724	.8335
Q35A	38.0505	17.6304	.6396	.5052	.8378
Q37A	38.2524	17.7842	.5603	.4264	.8420
Q39A	38.4511	17.7864	.4767	.2774	.8475
Q42A	38.1262	17.7372	.6727	.5372	.8369
Q44A	38.0631	17.8947	.5625	.4377	.8421

Student Outcomes Scale Reliability Coefficients 13 items

Alpha = .8550 Standardized item alpha = .8651

### Scale 2: Collaboration

Scale Statistics	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	Variables
	38.1951	19.8359	4.4538	13

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	2.9381	2.1707	3.6063	1.4355	1.6613	.1678

#### Item-total Statistics:

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	35.0174	17.2270	.3893	.2278	.7329
Q2	35.1951	17.7800	.2851	.1753	.7441
Q3	35.0314	17.7927	.3910	.2203	.7343
Q4	35.4111	17.5297	.2992	.1616	.7432
Q5	35.2439	17.7655	.3420	.1872	.7381
Q6	34.5889	17.8933	.3701	.2604	.7361
Q8	35.0871	17.7162	.2940	.2186	.7432

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Q9	34.6760	17.8282	.3817	.2434	.7351
Q10	35.5331	16.6763	.4178	.2234	.7294
Q11	35.5296	15.4388	.5300	.3292	.7137
Q12	36.0244	17.0099	.3348	.3495	.7402
Q13	35.8223	16.3215	.4377	.3974	.7269
Q14	35.1812	17.3167	.3942	.2355	.7326

Collaboration Scale Reliability Coefficients 13 items

Alpha = .7502 Standardized item alpha = .7526

**Scale 3: Teacher as Artist**

Scale Statistics	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
	19.8551	8.5744	2.9282	7

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	2.8364	2.0625	3.1250	1.0625	1.5152	.1258

**Item-total Statistics:**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
Q15RE	17.7926	6.5580	.3601	.1809	.7387
Q16RE	17.0284	6.1018	.5722	.3412	.6839
Q18	16.8381	6.3469	.5995	.4515	.6820
Q19	16.8835	6.0918	.6034	.4834	.6771
Q22RE	16.7301	7.5480	.2269	.0768	.7557
Q24A	16.8778	6.1417	.5703	.3778	.6847
Q41A	16.9801	7.1990	.2910	.1062	.7465

Teacher as Artist Scale Reliability Coefficients 7 items

Alpha = .7428 Standardized item alpha = .7406

**Scale 4: Arts Instruction**

Scale Statistics	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of Variables
	33.6785	15.4022	3.9246	11

Item Means	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	3.0617	2.5546	3.3245	.7699	1.3014	.0593

**Item-total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
Q17A	31.1239	15.0970	-.0662	.1844	.7664
Q20RE	30.9676	13.2268	.2963	.2548	.7018
Q25RE	30.7345	13.4974	.2586	.1288	.7071
Q27RE	30.4572	12.8347	.5228	.4843	.6710

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Q29RE	30.3835	12.6099	.5241	.4053	.6684
Q30A	30.3540	13.0341	.4376	.2391	.6813
Q34RE	30.4454	12.1649	.6103	.5637	.6544
Q36RE	30.5369	13.0127	.3478	.1651	.6934
Q38RE	30.5280	12.8535	.4421	.2636	.6796
Q40RE	30.6844	12.7847	.3625	.1584	.6913
Q43RE	30.5693	12.9382	.4362	.3094	.6808

Arts Instruction Scale Reliability Coefficients 11 items

Alpha = .7119 Standardized item alpha = .7369

NOTE: RE = negatively-worded items reverse coded for this analysis