

Oklahoma A+ Schools:  
What the Research Tells Us  
2002 - 2007

A Five Volume Research Report



# Volume Four

## Qualitative Data Analysis

### Organizational Role Transition Among Schools

*Michael Raiber, Ph.D.*

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Volume 4 of 5



Published by:  
Oklahoma A+ Schools® / University of Central Oklahoma  
January 2010  
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Oklahoma A+ Schools®

Research Report: 2002 – 2007

## Volume Four: Qualitative Data Analysis

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## Preface

Since 2002, the Oklahoma A+ Schools have gone about the work of creating professional learning communities. Building from their commitments to the arts, to high standards, and to each others' professional growth, the teachers and educators have taken responsibility for student learning, working within schools and across the A+ network to build their capacity for creative instruction. While state and national policy debates have swirled around about how to apply external pressure to make schools more accountable for student achievement, the Oklahoma A+ Schools have worked internally to clarify what is important about student learning, to develop their skills and abilities to improve instruction, and to work together to share responsibility for enacting educational experiences that reach all children and all aspects of their intelligence.

As educators know, it is a long-term process to build a school's capacity, and this volume of the Oklahoma A+ Schools research makes the process of growth its central focus. Researchers turn to qualitative methods when they want to capture process. From their extensive interviews, observations, and artifact analysis, Michael Raiber and Diane Jackson draw together what researchers and A+ educators have learned about the process of becoming a better school through A+. They name the significant antecedent conditions that led to variations in A+ engagement, and they draw themes across those stories to capture the significant transitional elements of the process that schools have undergone to enact the A+ Essentials.



The report can be appreciated in a number of ways. Raiber and Jackson provide descriptive detail that takes the reader inside various schools, making it clear to readers that important differences in these schools exist and that often, those differences have direct influence on how A+ is enacted. Teachers and administrators considering A+ for their own schools are invited to transfer the knowledge gained through this research project to their own contexts and to imagine how A+ would work in light of the characteristics and capabilities they see in their schools and in themselves.

Raiber and Jackson also place Oklahoma A+ Schools in context of how other researchers have described educational reform. Building from H. Dickson Corbett's (1990) insight that school reform is a process of renegotiating rules, roles, and relationships, Raiber and Jackson adopt a theoretical frame that addresses the significance of role transition in the reform process. The authors use the frame to portray the bigger picture. Specifically, it allows the authors to specify the importance of A+ Fellows for the network and individual schools. It places in clearer view the significance of the supportive and facilitative stance that A+ leadership cultivates with schools. And, significantly to the success and expansion of school reform, the focus on transitions helps explain why some experiences, such as principal turnover, can so effectively stall a school's momentum. Rather than just naming each of these elements, Raiber and Jackson are clear about why and how these factors play out over an extended period of time.



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As the Oklahoma A+ Schools move forward, this volume is also valuable for its attention to reform as a continual process and what it takes to deepen engagement. Particularly compelling for me are the findings about informal teacher leadership, which I suspect will resonate with many educators and researchers engaged in educational change. Raiber and Jackson describe well the care and balance it takes for teachers to become instructional leaders in their school buildings, for instance. The authors also describe how schools respond to the ongoing challenges of limited resources, time, and different priorities.

Most of all, this volume captures complexity in what it means to become great teachers in great schools. I encourage readers to read this volume as a series of stories about becoming better – of creative problem solving, of organizational learning, of a network determined to listen and learn from its component members.

-- Michael G. Gunzenhauser  
*University of Pittsburgh*



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Teacher of the Year in Moore in 2002 and was awarded the College of Education and Professional Studies' Vanderford Distinguished Teacher Award (UCO) in 2006 and the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education's Young Educator Award (OU) in 2009. Duke has published and presented research at the state, regional, and national levels.

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### School Role Transition

Schools are diverse social institutions (Ballantine, 1989). As such, they either function or fail to function due to an array of complex relationships. Many of these relationships are unique to the environment of a particular school setting and may, therefore, be of only limited help in understanding how schools take on particular roles and function within them. If, however, these relationships could be examined in broader contexts, certain trends may emerge. For this reason, the role of the school as a singular social organization will be the focus of this volume.

This is not to assert that each school in this study was standardized so all elements could be compared on an equal footing. Quite the opposite strategy has been employed. Each school site was viewed as a whole system including the organization, its environment, resources for the system, results or outcomes of the system, and formal or informal feedback mechanisms that inform the system. Employing this open systems model allows the viewing of each school as unique while providing a way to organize observations and data to better represent a generalized picture of these highly complex interactions and relationships. This is an important foundation from which to work because it respects the symbiotic relationship between the organization and its environment (Duffy, 2008). Oklahoma A+ Schools® (OAS) recognizes that each school community is a product of its culture and seeks to engage each school at that level. To be valid, it is important the research reflects this same foundation.



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The endemic structure within most schools also supports the consideration of the school as a singular entity. Organizational structure within schools is often viewed as a bureaucracy (Ballantine, 1989; Vanderstraeten, 2004). Since the industrial revolution, organizations have sought means to reach their ultimate goals of high productivity and efficiency (Ballantine, 1989). Schools have been no exception. True to its factory roots, bureaucratic influence on schools causes them to define each person's role through the division of labor, specific rules of procedure, and formalized neutral role relationships. From the school board to the superintendent to the principals, teachers, staff, and students, this top-down hierarchical system of authority is common in many school systems. Each role is defined by very specific tasks identified by the organization. People in these roles are expected to conform to a defined set of behaviors necessary to maintain the function of the organization. Relationships from one level up to the next are expected to be formal—using titles and last names—and neutral. Using this structure, schools operate as single socializing entities that define the people within them. For this reason, we have elected to discuss the whole of school and its transition process, rather than discussing the transition process of the teachers and the students.

With this broad perspective, one may question the focus of this research since schools are very different and often work toward very different goals. In fact, Ballentine (1989) reminds us that

we must keep in mind that the system is shaped and changed through interaction with the environment. Schools cannot exist independently of the purposes they serve for other structures in society. For instance, when we discuss school goals we are really discussing what is expected of



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schools by other environments and how that is reflected in school goals.

(p. 133)

It was for this reason that on-site observational data have been used as the foundation for this discussion. Each researcher spent hours on the campuses they observed developing relationships with all school community members. This process developed an open rapport with the schools that allowed environmental influences to permeate the data (Bogden & Biklen, 1998). These influences are valued as much as the descriptions, accounts, and interviews obtained through the fieldwork. Using a number of different data sources that include as many perspectives as possible allows the investigation of the school role transition process in both broad and specific terms.

Oklahoma A+ Schools® (OAS) is primarily a whole school reform and restructuring initiative. On its website, OAS provides an overview:

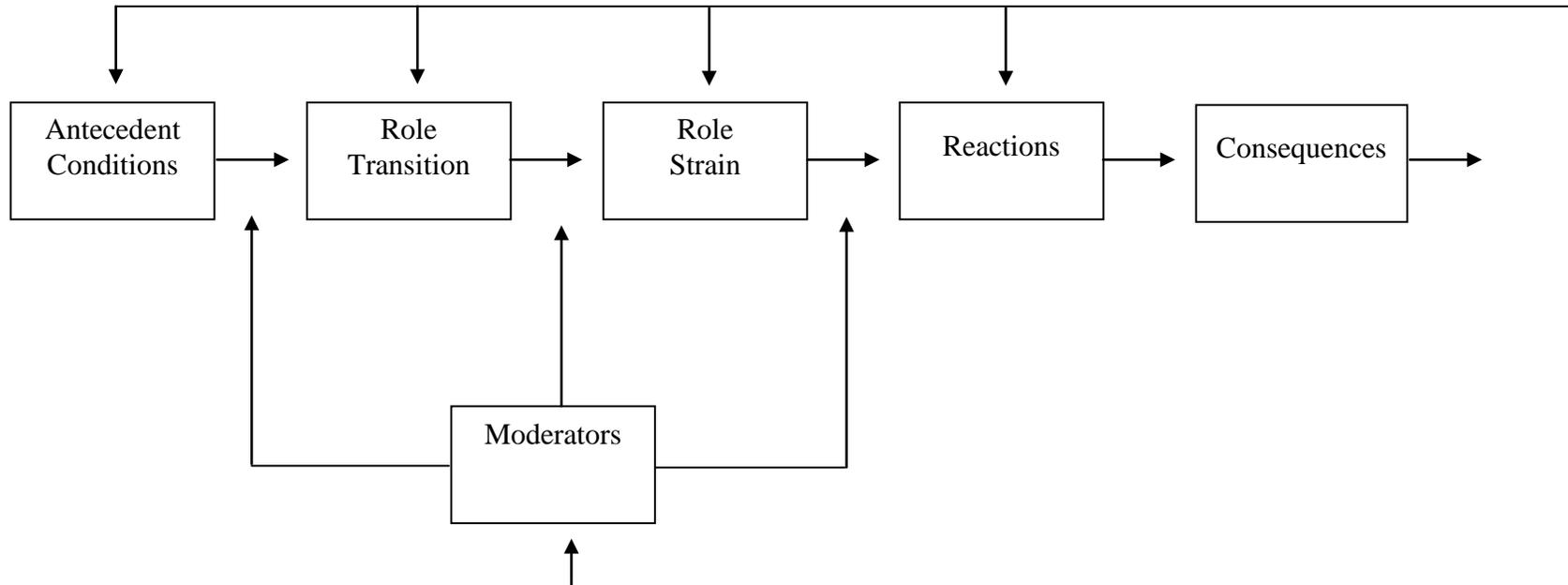
Schools commit to a set of eight A+ Essentials™ which they learn about during the initial Summer Institute and through the ongoing professional development provided by a highly-qualified, innovative group of teachers, teaching artists, and practicing artists known as A+ Fellows. The A+ Fellows, under the direction of the A+ Staff, help build the capacity of each school to collaboratively set and reach the goal of creating the schools they want for the children they love. (Oklahoma A+ Schools®, 2008)

The goals of school reform, in a general sense, are to somehow alter the school's patterns of rules, roles, and relationships (Corbett, 1990). Such alterations often lead to



role transition. Ashforth (2001) asserts “a transition occurs when an individual either moves from one role to another or changes his or her orientation toward a role already held” (p. 7). Therefore, the purpose of this volume is to investigate role transitions within the school communities of OAS that may occur as the result of whole school reform.

Theoretical models to aid in understanding the nature and potential effects of role transition do exist (Allen & Van de Vilert, 1984; Ashforth, 2001). The model proposed by Allen and Van de Vilert (1984) was selected as a framework that best examines the process and outcomes of role transition for this study (see Figure 1). The framework is comprised of a number of components. *Antecedent conditions* are the events or conditions that precipitated a potential transition. *Role transition* includes the changes that may actually occur but are mediated by three conditions: the amount of discontinuity between the old and new role expectations, the degree to which the role holder has control over the transition, and the extent to which the role transition is affected by normative governors such as graduation or promotion. *Role strain* refers to the state of mind the role holder experiences during the role transition. *Moderators* are both the individual and corporate endeavors that may intervene between the initiation of role change and its conclusion. *Reactions* refer to activities that the role holder incorporates in an attempt to reduce the amount of role strain. Finally, *Consequences* include the entirety of effects and impact of the role holder’s reactions to role strain.



**Figure 1: A Model of the Role Transition Process** (Allen & Van de Vilert, 1984)

## Method

The 2007 OAS network was comprised of 38 schools within the state of Oklahoma. Beginning in 2002 with a cohort of 14 schools, sites were added each year through an application process to reach the total number in 2007 (see Volume 2 for details). The school sites vary and include public, private, parochial, and charter schools at both the elementary and high school levels. Sites can be found in rural, urban, and suburban areas within 13 counties stretching from the northeastern to the southwestern part of the state.

Data have been collected since 2002 (the first year of implementation), and this collection has continued for five consecutive years using an ethnographic study design. The data are extensive including field notes, documents, and photographs collected through participant observation and interview. Analysis has been ongoing since year one, employing an emergent theme technique. A series of annual reports have been published (available at <http://www.aplusok.org> ) addressing the emergent themes from previous analysis and revealing new themes found in the most recent data.

To investigate the role transition process, data from the school observations were first coded using codes developed by the research team and A+ administration (see Appendix A). These codes were developed from themes in existing literature, actual observations of the A+ process, the A+ Essentials™ and discussions among the research team at regular meetings. After extensive training, research assistants coded the files via HyperResearch software. Coded files were exchanged between the coders and verified for the application of codes. After the files were verified, they were returned to the research team for analysis.

Due to the volume of data, the researchers elected to select certain groups of coded files as the data sets for the various topics in this volume. These were selected through discussion



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with the research team, revised and discussed again until a consensus was reached concerning the codes that would best extract the data addressing each topic (see Appendix B). Each data set was then extracted via the codes and analyzed according to the topic. The authors of this report then recoded the data set for *school role transition* according to the Allen and Van de Vliert (1984) model. These data are the basis for the following discussion.

### Antecedent Conditions

Data analysis revealed a number of events and conditions that contributed to potential role transition of each school. That is, how some schools either redefine their practice or rearrange their practice in terms of the OAS framework. Some events are universal (e.g., recognition as a member of the Oklahoma A+ Schools® network and attendance at an initial five-day summer workshop) and therefore do not offer insight to the unique process of role transition that each school may be experiencing. These events are recognized as contributing factors and certain specific incidents may be referenced in the data when it informs a unique understanding concerning the process a particular school may be undergoing. Events or conditions that will be discussed in this section include (a) school community members' identities, (b) infrastructure support for the full school community, (c) perceived regulatory nature of the A+ framework, (d) principal leadership, (e) participation and role of the arts specialists, (f) presence of additional school initiatives, and (g) school mission.

#### School community members' identities

For the purpose of this study, a member of the school community is defined as any adult or organization that has potential impact on a student within the school day. Some parts of this community are full-time members (i.e., teachers, administrators, and school staff), others are

part-time members (i.e., parents, tutors, and arts associations). They all, however, have influence over events or conditions that impact student learning within the school. The researchers recognize that influences outside the school setting at home and in the community do impact student learning, but these events have been outside the realm of data gathering. Certain events on some A+ School campuses may seek to impact these outside influences (e.g., parenting classes, adult study skill classes), but the extent to which they do is beyond the scope of the current study.

Oklahoma A+ Schools® states that they “build community-wide ownership of a school’s collaboratively developed goals and objectives” (A+ Schools, 2008). The extent to which this grows within a school community as a result of A+ will be discussed later in this volume, but the predisposition for the entire school community to be active participants in each child’s education is an antecedent condition. Some schools started their implementation with strong part-time community member involvement already in place. “The parents here are wonderful,” a teacher reported, “whether it was A+ years or before, I have never had any problems” (Teacher, 2004). Others claim “there was already a good climate. . .always a good parental involvement. A+ has made it more focused and deliberate. Before it was more random. Now they [the teachers] plan on it happening” (Teacher, 2003). This is often attributed to individual parent and community groups at schools, but it can also be traced to a district level approach:

Apparently, the success of this school district is attributed to the community’s support and interest in the schools. Parents play an active role in setting site goals by serving on planning committees in each of the schools. The Citizens Advisory Council, made up of apparent representatives, advises the Board of Education on



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specific items of concern. Businesses in the community participate actively in the Partners in Education Program. (A+ researcher, 2004)

As the population of schools became more diverse with the inclusion of private and parochial schools, a different predisposition for parent involvement was observed. For example, one A+ principal (2005) remarked, “Anyone can apply to come to the school, but parents must have transportation to get them to the school. There is good parent involvement at the school and good reports about the school,” suggesting parent involvement was a prerequisite for enrollment in the school.

Schools reporting high parent involvement were not, however, the majority of the sample. All the schools reporting high parent involvement since before the implementation of the OAS framework come from the more affluent communities in the population. Most come from suburban settings and are parts of large school districts. This is not an uncommon occurrence. Given the majority of low-income urban and rural schools in the study population, one would not expect high reports of parental and community involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that “middle class parents, for example, feel that they should collaborate with school efforts. But low-income families often perceive themselves as outside the school system and feel it is the school’s responsibility to do the teaching” (p. 15). In one low-income school, a teacher acknowledged, “It’s not great, you know, I mean I have some parental involvement, but not a lot” (A+ Teacher 2.14, 2004) and “the community at large [does] not understand what we’re doing and they think we’re just down here playing, and how could you possibly learn, and the parents say, where are the worksheets?” (A+ Teacher 2.15, 2004). When asked by a researcher, one teacher (3.7, 2005) expressed her frustration: “The parents have ‘zero understanding’. . .they didn’t know anything about A+, they had not heard anything about it.”

Beyond the environmental influences that affect parental and community involvement in schools, no other factors were found in the data to suggest there were any extraordinary factors influencing part-time school community members (i.e., parents, tutors, and arts associations) involvement prior to or early in the implementation of OAS framework.

Examining the antecedent conditions within the full-time community members revealed a number of factors that precipitated potential transition. The general adoption of the A+ framework within the schools and the level of buy-in within the faculties and staffs are different across the population. It should be noted that the design of the entire OAS initiative does not require each teacher to participate in the same ways or at the same levels. Schools do, however, state that they have 85 percent of the school faculty who have agreed to become an OAS site prior to their acceptance into the OAS Network. Some schools indicate that faculty buy-in is high:

I'm really excited about the fact that people have really started doing it, because in the past, we have not had everybody on board with some things, you know, um, and so, I'm really happy that it seems like everybody really is wanting to do it, they're making an effort to do it, they're making it a priority, and, you know, it's always questionable, you never know how that's going to go, even if everybody says oh yeah, we want to do it, and then you come back and you just say, well, I hope we're really going to do it, and I'm really happy with the fact that I think everybody really does like it, I think they do want to do it, and they are really making an effort to do it. (A+ Teacher 1.8, 2004)



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Some indicate that buy-in is so high that teachers do not want to relinquish A+ “even though some of the teachers are now traveling from one school to another because of budget cuts” (A+ Principal 1.13, 2003).

There are, however, equal numbers of schools indicating faculty buy-in continues to be a concern and does affect conditions leading to role transition. Some indicate that regardless of the time of implementation, buy-in is a process that simply requires time and professional development:

I think the climate is changing,,. . . .I’m hoping that A+ has a lot to do with it, the climate of the school, um, changing, but I feel like there are some other things that may stand in the way of us truly giving in and giving over to A+, the faculty buy-in. . . .is happening, slowly and surely. (A+ Teacher 2.38, 2004)

We have a couple teachers that just haven’t bought into it yet. And so, do you keep going to those teachers and you keep encouraging them, but sometimes not everybody’s going to buy into it and you’re just going to have to go on, and hopefully the majority will pull them along, or pull them into it, but I think that’s one barrier you have, but I don’t see any huge barriers cause I think we’re all, we’ve all bought into it, except for the exception of those two, so it’s just working our way along the ladder until we get to the top. (A+ Teacher 1.72, 2004)

There are also limited indications that a few schools are struggling with buy-in. Although there is very little data citing this as a concern, given the predisposition of 85 percent buy-in prior to implementation, these anomalies are worthy of discussion. Statements by teachers suggest there are places where buy-in does not appear to be part of the school culture:

I'll be honest. I'm so in to my class. I don't think the third [grade level] teacher uses it at all. I know my daughter doesn't get it at all in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I'm not hearing it or hearing about it. I'm not seeing it in the upper grades. (A+ Teacher 3.41, 2006)

Such a fragmented culture may have very different effects on role transition.

Three other factors contributing to this antecedent condition emerge from the data. It appears that teaching experience, arts integration status of the school prior to becoming an OAS member, and teacher gender identity may also affect teacher buy-in. The effects of teaching experience are viewed in two different ways. First, some state that those who have a more established approach to teaching are less likely to adopt these new methods and strategies. An A+ Teacher (2006) indicates that these teachers “see this as add-on and some of them are very textbook driven. It's just very traditional.” Others believe that it is a matter of professional socialization:

I just think that it has taken a couple of years to really understand it. At first you kind of do it. It is not that they didn't buy into it. . .they truly understand it now. First year teachers start teaching in the A+ model and do not bring other years of experience that older teachers have. They have just grown up only knowing A+. (A+ Coordinator 4.83, 2006)

Some schools accepted to the A+ Schools Network held a self-identity as an “arts integration” school prior to their admission. Their early views of the entire OAS framework were such that the arts were considered to be the central driver of the initiative. Feeling they were already “steps ahead,” the school buy-in was either advanced or retarded by how the faculty



perceived the A+ model fit their preconceptions. The following is an indication of one such school:

She tells me the problem with the teachers is “they have their own understanding of arts integration, so they are a little resistant to A+.” She mentions they were already an arts integrated school. [The principal] feels that in the beginning (when they first went A+) there wasn’t enough credit given to the fact that [this school] already knew something about arts integration, so they were “offended” and felt that if they didn’t do it the “A+” way it wouldn’t be correct. She doesn’t feel the [school] faculty was given ownership. It still is a problem, but a new coordinator and [principal] will try to help the situation. (A+ Principal 2.7, 2004)

There are also indications that teacher gender may have some effect on buy-in. The majority of schools in the OAS network are elementary or early childhood campuses, and the large majority of faculty members in those schools are female. Additionally, the entire A+ administrative team is also female. Some believe this leads to a bias in activities and approach that may not be appealing to male teachers. It is not clear from the data that the conditions stated above have led to an actual bias, but data does suggest that some believe it to be an issue:

I have maybe one [teacher] that is a little bit reluctant, and I don’t think that it’s that [he is] unwilling to participate, I just think it’s, um, maybe a comfort level, or maybe a guy thing, I’m not sure what I want to call it. (Principal 1.39, 2003)

### Faculty and staff turnover

Faculty, administration, and staff turnover emerges from the data as a condition among the full-time community membership that also contributes to role transition. While there is evidence in the previous A+ Schools Research Reports (Barry, Gunzenhauser, Montgomery, &

Raiber, 2003; Gunzenhauser, Montgomery, Barry, Raiber, & Dell, 2004) that indicate the framework is resilient and remains as part of the school culture regardless of turnover, when asked about their “greatest concerns,” some principals (2005) state that “staff turnover and the need for training new staff” is chief among them. Others indicate that this is especially acute when they lose arts specialists:

We have lost two art teachers in the past three years and two music teachers in the same amount of time. With them being a vital part of the building, the heart, losing them is like losing an organ almost. (Principal 4.8, 2006)

Others believe changes in principal leadership have an effect on the culture of the school in relation to A+:

The principal that started them in A+ here was kind of on the downside. Getting close to her retirement. She retired two, maybe three years after they became an A+ school. Then they had a principal that stayed one year and left and then now I'm here. So I think there have been some outside factors that probably hindered their growth in A+. (Principal 4.83, 2006)

### School climate

An additional condition that may have some effect on school role transition is climate. Data suggest there is a difference between schools in terms of climates that promote A+ ideas and values in some overt manner and those that do not. Some schools make efforts to ensure components of the framework are easily observed by anyone who enters the school. Support for A+ is obvious and appears to be a central theme for the entire school community. The following are common statements from these campuses:



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Upon entering the room, it was evident that A+ was being implemented. Artful depictions of every multiple intelligence hung on the wall along with many student examples. There were also numerous examples of different genres, textures and colors for the students to explore. [Overall, it was a very warm, inviting learning environment.] (Researcher 4.5, 2006)

I was very impressed with the building, the activities, the posters on the walls, the displays, the offices, and most of all, the discipline in the school. (Researcher 1.10, 2004)

[This teacher's] class is very brightly decorated. She has Blooms Taxonomy as a tree in the front of the room. . .one wall is completely covered in MI material. Each child did their own MI graph—some of them made them into pictures, some made them into graphs. (Researcher 2.2, 2004)

There is also evidence that some schools do not demonstrate overt support for the A+ framework. There is not much physical evidence of engagement in A+ and additional evidence from teacher behavior suggests a more traditional approach to the entire school community structure and roles. Researchers cite the following from these schools:

There was not much evidence of A+ in the halls or classrooms. Only one poster with MI's was near the office. (Researcher 1.1, 2004)

The A+ banner was moved from the entryway of the school. I am not sure where it is currently hanging, but I found this odd. At the very end of the hall I found some really neat art projects using altered pictures of pencil art. The climate was not warm and inviting. It was typified by me hearing "Now, if you guys want to

be a bunch of first graders, I'll treat you that way” yelled at the top of a teacher’s lungs. (Researcher 4.67, 2007)

In the third grade classroom] kids were reading. . .and some were watching a video. Last time I visited the same class they were doing exactly the same. Even the teacher (who is a pianist for a local church) asked; “Are we flunking with A+?” (Researcher 1.1, 2004)

A longitudinal review of data from both highly-engaged and lesser-engaged campuses reveals those who have observable evidence of engagement in A+ tend to continue to do so over time. It appears this becomes a common practice in the school, affecting the role transition of the entire school community. The same is true of those schools that do not show much evidence of engagement. There is no evidence suggesting any highly-engaged schools in the network fail to display overt signs of A+ practice and support. Data also indicate that if schools do not develop the overt signs of A+ engagement within the first year of implementation, it is not likely to develop in the following years. These data suggest the climate created in the first year of implementation may be a critical to school role transition.

#### Infrastructure to support the school community

Certain structures within each school community have the potential either to speed or to slow the role transition process. The data indicate three such structures exist within the A+ network.

- Collaborative planning time, both as academic teams only and with the arts specialists
- School structure in terms of single classroom versus a multiple classroom structure
- The cost of implementation and materials needed for this type of instruction



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Collaboration is listed as one of the A+ Essentials™. A primary means of teacher collaboration can be accomplished through group or community planning. There is evidence some schools make this a priority through schedules that allow teachers to gather and plan. A principal from one such school states,

Faculty have a better ideas of what we do, there's more collaboration and it's noticeable by incorporating A+ into all school events. She says the district is moving toward learning communities and the common planning periods help with all of this. (Principal 3.4, 2005)

An A+ coordinator (2.23, 2005) also noted a formal structure for collaboration that is “built in the schedule. At each grade level you have two meetings each week.” One teacher “works with art once a week” and another “works with music once a week.”

Much more common in the data, however, are references to the problems of finding common planning time. Some simply comment that “there's no time” (Teacher 2.5, 2005) for collaborative planning in teacher's schedules. One principal (4.45, 2007) stated, “Teachers view working as an A+ school as more time consuming because of the integration aspect. Teachers always complain about the lack of planning time.”

There appear to be two common strategies for addressing this issue. One is to have academic or grade-level teachers meet during the time their students are in other classes, such as art, music, or physical education. While this allows academic teams to plan together, there is no time set aside to collaborate with arts educators. Many of these teachers note the need to inform the arts teachers about common plans and devise means to communicate with them. One teacher (2.17, 2004) explained, “There's no time to plan with specials, so we just write down what we're working on, on a sheet and give it to them. . .we do it that way.” Another declared, “There is not

time for specials to plan with classroom teachers, so the teachers just give the themes to the specials” (Music teacher 2.5, 2005). To address this problem, one principal (2.15, 2005) stated, “I have to get a sub for my art teacher and music teacher to plan. We’ve done that a couple of times this year.”

A second means for finding collaborative planning time is to have teachers meet after school hours. A faculty member (3.5, 2006) in a school new to the A+ network claimed, “The biggest challenge right now is finding time for teaches to meet to discuss A+. They are trying to do it on Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30 to 4:00 PM.” Others assert that due to other after school programs, this is not an option: “We have an after school program. . .21<sup>st</sup> century school. . .I have three or four [teachers] in this after school program. A couple work the before school program. This makes it difficult for the entire faculty to meet” (Principal 4.38, 2006). Another arts teacher cites pressure for after-hours meetings:

I don’t meet with [the classroom teachers] on a regular basis, only when I see them occasionally. This has been a problem for true collaboration. Part is because the teacher’s union is not encouraging for the teachers to stay after classes without being paid. So as I said before, same level classroom teachers meet regularly, but there is no vertical planning or sharing with the two of us who teach music and the P.E. teachers. (Teacher 1.1, 2004)

Data support that those school communities having structured collaborative planning time in the school schedule meet and exchange ideas on a regular basis. Those that have attempted to circumvent a structured process either do not report collaboration as a strength within their school community or simply note teachers do not attempt to collaborate beyond occasional



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incidental meetings in hallways and other similar places. It appears that teacher collaboration is a product of the infrastructure that supports it.

School structure is also cited in the data as a factor affecting teacher collaboration. Some elementary schools in the OAS network are structured similar to a secondary setting where students physically change class for each subject. This structure appears to have a detrimental effect on implementation as the amount of collaboration necessary to integrate subjects and ideas is greatly increased. One A+ principal (2.22, 2004) reflected, “We’re not working with self-contained classrooms. . .we’re having trouble understanding how to make A+ work.” Another teacher (4.45, 2006) in a secondary school setting agreed, claiming that “collaboration is harder at the high school level.” Rotation of the “specials” classes, that often include the arts, is also seen in the data as an issue affecting implementation. There is debate among teachers and administration concerning the feasibility of an extended experience in which one or two special classes would rotate to a new grouping after several weeks. The other option is to have students rotate to a different special class each day. Beyond the logistical issues, there is concern for the integrity of integrated efforts when students are not in a particular arts class for long periods of time. Conversely, there are also concerns about students’ abilities to retain learning in the arts when they only visit each art form class once or twice a week. Data suggest that this issue is ongoing and a resolution is not readily forthcoming (Principal 4.79, 2006).

Lack of adequate funding is also cited in the data as affecting the infrastructure supporting A+ implementation. Teachers voice concern that “it is very expensive” to buy materials for the arts (Teacher 4.12, 2007) and “after time, the second largest hurdle. . .is supplying money to help supply materials for the students” (Teacher 4.5, 2006). Additionally, a principal (4.15, 2006) claimed,

I think having enough resources for the teacher to use to include arts into the curriculum [is a great challenge]. In [this district] our budget has not recovered from the budget crisis a few years ago. So I don't have a whole lot of money to buy a whole lot of materials. They [the teachers] take it out of their own pockets.

Budget appears not only to affect materials for the arts but can affect collaboration efforts as well. "One of the things that's hard for us this year," stated one principal (4.39, 2006), "is that we can't go very far because budgets were cut so we don't have a lot of money for subs and stuff like that."

#### Perceived Regulatory Nature of the A+ Framework

Many OAS schools cite the flexibility of the framework as an attractive feature. They point out that since A+ functions at a conceptual level and that implementation can take different forms on each campus, it can operate in a broad range of school settings. "A+ is fine so far. It allows us to try different things. We appreciate the broader scope rather than the very structured setting. There is room for this in our setting" (Teacher 4.5, 2005). Other schools believe that it is precisely due to the structure of A+ that the school faculty and administration are attracted to A+ Schools:

We call ourselves an A+ School because A+ is not a program, it's a system or framework and it helps us to fit everything else in there. So, for example, I've had a lot of teachers trained in [another program]. I've been trained in [that same program] and so we implement those skills and strategies, but we will probably never consider ourselves a [program name] school because it is called a program (Principal 4.72, 2006)



Evidence of the flexibility inherent in the framework using the A+ Essentials™ is apparent as data show the number of other initiatives with which OAS sites are engaged. Many schools list *Great Expectations*, *Core Knowledge*, *Reading First* and *21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools* among these. Data do show that some of these are more compatible with the A+ framework than others. This will be discussed later in this section as separate antecedent condition. The fact, however, that so many are engaged with these other programs while considering themselves an A+ School does suggest that the framework is adaptable to many different settings, and this feature is considered a strength.

Other principals find that the flexibility of the framework can be viewed as a problem. “When I got into it, I was a little overwhelmed. . .it was frustrating because I kept asking [questions about A+] and no one would tell me” (Principal 3.35, 2005). Some claim that because the process is “vague” and “fluid” (Principal 3.35, 2005), it presents obstacles and frustrations to the schools that desire a more directive approach. Still other schools report that even when the faculty, administration, and staff are more comfortable with the less prescriptive nature of the A+ framework, it is difficult to help other school community members understand the nature of what they are doing. A principal (4.83, 2006) states, “I think our challenge with parents is that A+ still seems to be pretty nebulous. Especially when new students come in; explaining that to them or trying to get them to understand what that really is [is difficult].” These issues recur throughout the data and at all levels of implementation suggesting this is more a phenomenon of the school culture than of the longevity of engagement with OAS.

### Principal Leadership

The impact of the principal's leadership on the implementation of the A+ framework is well documented in the data. Previous reports note the resiliency of the framework citing that even when there have been changes in principal leadership, the schools in the OAS Network continue to claim their OAS status (Barry et al., 2003; Gunzenhauser et al., 2004). Data do support, however, that the type and level of support given to the OAS framework by the principal does impact its implementation. Data suggest that principal support ranges from being highly directive to supportive but not directive, and then to non-support. Some also note that the general leadership qualities of the principal, regardless of their specific support for OAS, also impacts implementation.

There is evidence some principals use a very directive leadership style and communicate their support for the A+ framework in that manner. One teacher described such a directive principal:

[The principal] has made it quite clear, you know, this is going to be an A+ school and if you don't like it, then, you know, that's it, I mean, it's the way to go with it, it really is. She kind of said what I said a while ago about being ditto driven, and there's too much seatwork and not enough movement. (1.49, 2003)

It is interesting that not only the A+ framework in name is supported by this statement, but also the general idea supports more experiential learning. This demonstrates a mature level of buy-in occurring earlier than in most other schools that are new to OAS.

There are data citing principal leadership that is supportive of the A+ framework yet not as directive as discussed previously. Those who lead in this manner found ways to empower their faculty in the decisions made. They appear to have adopted a number of different strategies to accomplish this goal. Many made use of previous experiences and brought in other school



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community members to help with buy-in and increased implementation of the framework. A researcher describes one principal's efforts to assist her school in achieving A+ status:

The principal shared stories of [her other school's] experiences with her faculty. For 10 years [the current school] had been fairly elitist, but now there were some apartments and more challenges with meeting students' needs. She said it was obvious that they needed new strategies, and she supported the arts as one approach. Eventually, she said that there was relatively 100% buy-in. She stated there was "no way" that would have happened the first two years she was at [the current school]. New hires and parents who had heard of A+ were important influences on the faculty becoming A+. (Researcher 3.43, 2005)

Other principals worked to make certain their faculty knew of their support for the framework. Even in extreme cases, this strategy appears to have had some positive impact on the implementation process. A principal (4.83, 2006) in a school that had struggled with administrative turnover believed that her beliefs about A+ made a difference:

In a very short period of time, even leading up to becoming an A+ School, there had been several principals that had short tenures here. So, I think there have been some outside factors that probably hindered their growth in A+, but I know there is a core group. . .that have continued, I guess to not give up and incorporate A+ into what we do. Because I came and that's what I believe, that's been an easy transition I feel like. . .I think we're on the right track to expand and continue to grow with A+.

Principal beliefs are strong motivators for the faculty in many of these schools. The principal's priorities drive much of the faculty decision-making in terms of both curriculum and

instruction. Data from a teacher interview show how strong this influence can be. The researcher wrote, “I asked a teacher about testing and its importance and was told that the principal is not motivated toward testing and all. The faculty likes A+ she said ‘because it moves away from rote memorization and other testing problems’” (Researcher 2.31, 2004). While the principal’s statement may not be in direct support of the A+ framework, the acceptance of indicators of student achievement beyond test scores opens the door for teachers to embrace the A+ framework more completely than a school that may be totally test-driven.

There are indications in the data of principals that are not supportive of the framework or its implementation in the schools. Many of these principals are not actively challenging the inclusion of the A+ framework, but they are also not providing the necessary support for its implementation that can only come from their office. This leads to a number of issues within the faculty. A researcher (4.31, 2006) documented one teacher’s reaction during an interview to what the teacher perceived as lack of support. The researcher wrote that this teacher “expresses great frustration with the current situation at [the school]. She’s disappointed that many colleagues just won’t cooperate, especially now that there’s little overt support for A+ from the principal.” Teacher frustration appears to lead to helplessness in schools where some teachers are working to adopt the A+ framework and others are not. An A+ fellow (4.33, 2005) on regular faculty at such a school, voiced such concerns:

Some teachers have embraced A+. . .doing it naturally and seamlessly as part of their teaching process. . .others view it as something additional. . .without leadership it may be impossible to change these attitudes. They see it as separate, as an add-on, and they don’t do it.



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Others have asserted that without principal support it is difficult to operate at any level. “Last year’s principal did not buy-in. There was little leadership from the principal. It was extremely difficult for the teachers to even be able to do their jobs” (Principal 4.15, 2006).

While changes in principal leadership have not caused schools to leave the OAS network, there is evidence these changes have had detrimental effects on the implementation of the A+ framework within these schools. One teacher (4.85, 2007) stated, “We were an A+ School and these teachers were really doing great things, but then the principal changed and now they just aren’t doing it anymore.” Another teacher (4.118, 2007) had a similar response: “Under a different principal, things were different. Things might have changed with the new principal, [but] it’s not her goal or her objective.” After a change in administrative leadership, another teacher (4.84, 2007) stated, “It’s principal leadership. We just can’t move forward without her support.” Interestingly, these statements come most often from schools that have been members of the OAS network from three to five years. This suggests the schools have had time to establish a climate that supports the OAS framework through a supportive administrator. When a less supportive administrator replaces the supportive administrator, it appears that implementation is immediately affected even when the majority of the faculty is supportive of the framework. Hence, it appears principal leadership, as an antecedent condition of school role transition, should be a component of OAS implementation that must be strongly considered.

### Presence of Arts Specialists

Often when subjects are combined for instruction there is concern the integrity of one or more of the subjects will suffer in deference to the act of integration (Snyder, 1996). In terms of

arts integration, there are additional concerns surrounding the role of the arts educators within the school setting. As these teachers are often the first to suffer from faculty reductions, there can be concerns when their subject matter becomes the responsibility of all teachers on campus. Issues of subject matter integrity and marginalization of arts specialists appear as an antecedent condition in the data.

A common concern among arts specialists is that their positions will be eliminated when classroom teachers can address the arts as subject matter in the regular classrooms. Data support a quite opposite phenomenon among the majority of schools in OAS network. Many schools report an increased need for arts teachers. As one principal (1.15, 2003) reported, “It’s very difficult because we don’t have an art teacher in the building.” Another stated, “A couple of things that we see are barriers. We don’t have an art teacher. If we had an art teacher and a resource, we would be in better position. . .” (Principal 4.35, 2005). When arts teachers are present on campus part-time, many schools report they need to have them present on a full-time basis. A teacher (4.52, 2005) acknowledged her frustration with limited arts specialists’ time:

The biggest problem we have here. . .is that they don’t have full time arts teachers. There is no possible time for arts teachers to collaborate. They rush in, teach and off they go. They are not here enough on a regular basis to really help.

The arts teachers who are part-time in several schools also appear to be frustrated. They feel pressure to do more with the teachers at each school but are discouraged by the lack of time they have on each campus. One arts specialist (4.4, 2005) remarked, “I know teachers want to ask me [for help] but hesitate because they know I’m stretched so thin.”

Data also suggest that due to the increased value placed upon arts instruction, some schools are noting they need dedicated space for the arts. A principal at one OAS site proudly



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announced in an interview, “We are working with [a funding organization] to turn ground this summer to have a formal art room. We’re to the point. . .where [the art teacher] would have a room...We’ll have a science room, like labs, and an art room” (Principal 4.100, 2006). It is interesting the principal places the same importance on a dedicated space for art instruction as she does a science lab and that both will be built in the same building addition. Important also is that many of these administrators were seeking to employ full-time arts educators when there was a statewide education budget crisis and employment options were limited.

While it appears many schools seek to add additional arts educators to the staff, there is data to support that some schools are not employing full-time arts educators at all. At one school a researcher (3.5, 2005) reported “they had a parent who helps with art activities, but that has ended. So they try to bring in guests to enhance the program. Classroom teachers now have to do it all.” Another principal remarked that although there are two music teachers in the building full-time, there is no art teacher. She compensates by saying, “I have one teacher that’s a fourth-grade teacher that was an art major and she is actually a big resource for us” (Principal 4.72, 2006). Despite a few OAS sites that employ dance and drama teachers, they are much less common to find among full-time faculty. One principal (3.4, 2005) commented on this issue: “We are real fortunate. We have full-time music and art teachers. Our weakness is drama and dance. All of these activities come straight from the classroom teacher.” These differences in the presence and roles of arts educators among the schools in the A+ network will be considered as antecedent conditions affecting school role transition.

### Presence of Additional School Initiatives

Data indicate that there are other initiatives present in many of the schools within the OAS network. These take various different forms and have a wide range of objectives. The three

most often seen in the data are (a) *Great Expectations*, (b) *Core Knowledge*, and (c) *Reading First*. While others are mentioned in the data, their recurrence is not such that they could be considered outside of the unique setting of a particular school. Of concern for the present study is not the particular focus of each of these initiatives but the possible effects their presence may have on the implementation of the OAS framework and school role transition.

It appears many teachers, coordinators, and administrators believe some of the programs can work well with the OAS framework. Many teachers are in agreement that *Great Expectations* (GE) can be implemented with the A+ framework. The following statements are common in the data: “G.E. and A+ fits like a puzzle” (Teacher 3.14, 2005), “GE and A+ are so woven together” (Teacher 3.59, 2005), and A+ has “been real positive. We do a lot of Great Expectations. This goes hand-in-hand with Great Expectations. It’s added a new dimension, a deeper dimension to the arts” (Teacher 3.65, 2006). It appears some feel that GE may provide means to address parts of the A+ Essentials™ particularly in terms of school climate. When asked if they could describe the impact that A+ had on the school and if those influences could be separated from GE, two teachers responded, “[We] think of A+ as aligning curriculum and incorporating the arts. Great Expectations is classroom management” (Teacher 3.68, 2006).

There are concerns, however, with the differences in approaches to implementation between GE and A+ one principal (2.37, 2004) acknowledges:

As much as GE talks about and provides a sense of creativity in the classroom, it also does have 17 things that you go down the line and that’s what they want to see, so the accountability there is regimented, where the accountability with A+ is more of a kind of a sense of pride, making them feel like they are proud of us when they walk in rather than, you’re proud of us because we did all 17 for you



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today, you're proud of us over here at A+ because you see us working to achieve in our way.

Another teacher (4.15, 2007) also reported the difference:

GE is almost more like jumping through hoops to be what they want you to be, and again, I don't want to downplay it, I think it's wonderful and it's done great things for myself and this school, and the schools I've been in previously, but it's almost more like a hoop jumping and kind of for the masses.

The sense of doing things required from an external source is common among teachers engaged in school reform. Of interest here is that these teachers do not feel external pressure from A+. This sense of ownership within the schools implementing A+ is seen in the data and appears to be a rather unique feature of the A+ Schools framework.

Schools that are also engaged in *Core Knowledge* (CK) appear to be satisfied with the way its ideas and practices match with the A+ framework. This relationship is acknowledged through research observations: "The school is involved in other programs such as GE, and Core Knowledge. The principal said that these programs complement what A+ is trying to do" (Researcher 2.3, 2004). A principal (4.50, 2006) also claimed that these initiatives work well together: "The school also integrates Great Expectations and Core Knowledge curriculum. [I] think the teachers feel that all three enhance each other." An A+ coordinator (3.51, 2005) appears to be exceptionally supportive of the three (GE, CK, and A+) initiatives working together:

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 3 programs it will make you a better teacher.

Data reveal concerns about how *Reading First* (RF) integrates with the A+ framework. Most who speak about this seem to have reservations about RF's compatibility with A+. Apparently, some basic tenets of each initiative are in direct conflict with each other. A teacher (3.9, 2006) describes *Reading First*:

We just started Reading First, which is a grant for reading, and so, it's been a little tricky because, um, Reading First, it was a grant, and it has to be followed to the letter or it gets pulled, and one of that is 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction. . .then you have to have these intervention programs, so it ends up being almost 2 hours of your time, probably, more or less, and, um, so, it has to almost be taught in a secluded [setting], it has to be done exactly like the book.

Another teacher (2.9, 2004) described what she believed to be a conflict between A+ and RF when a RF consultant told her that an art activity she used during reading was a violation of the dedicated reading time requirement. The teacher responded, "I don't see this as art. . . .I see this as a way to teach reading. It's not art, it's not reading, it's learning art and reading together."

Another teacher (3.23, 2006) explained, "The school is a 'Reading First' school, which means they have a time set aside each day when students cannot do anything except read. The program is very demanding and makes it hard to fit everything in each day." No data can be found to support any other position concerning the A+ framework and *Reading First*.

A final concern is the amount of dedicated training time required for each of these initiatives. When asked why they were the only school in their rather large district to become an A+ School, a principal replied,

Many of [my] colleagues don't feel they can add one more program. There's also competition with *Great Expectations* and *Core Knowledge* which both require a



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one week training session in the summer. Every school can adopt their own focus.

(Principal 3.4, 2005)

That the presence of other initiatives may influence school role transition may seem obvious. However, the ways each works or does not work with the A+ framework appear to have impact on the school role transition.

### School Mission

There are some campuses within the Oklahoma A+ Network that are designed to meet special needs of the students enrolled, and this network includes both public and private schools. Some of the public schools are charter schools that have a special focus in their mission and address special populations of students. There is one alternative school whose mission is to educate high-risk students in danger of dropping out of school as well as a magnet high school with a fine arts focus.

Private schools, by nature, tend to have specific foci designed to attract particular students to their campus. The OAS network does include some private schools with religious missions and some with missions to serve underprivileged populations. These missions were disclosed prior to their acceptance to the A+ network. These differences were not seen as issues to overcome but simply as different approaches to the A+ framework. While many would support this view, role transition occurs as a result of role strain and some of these missions may not allow for a wide variety of choice as schools begin to negotiate new roles. For this reason, school mission has been considered as an antecedent condition.

### Role Transition

Role transition occurs either when a role holder moves from one role to another or adjusts orientation within a previously held role (Asforth, 2001). In the process of implementing the

OAS framework, schools were called upon to make various changes in their practices that may have resulted in role transition. Three conditions mediate the changes that occur: (a) the amount of discontinuity between the old and new role expectations, (b) the degree to which the role holder has control over the transition, and (c) the extent to which the role transition is affected by normative governors (Allen & Van deVilert, 1984).

### Discontinuity of roles

Data analysis revealed a number of factors that mediate role transition among OAS sites. The level of discontinuity between old and new role expectations emerges as a primary factor affecting a school's ability to bring about meaningful change in practice. Apparently, several different aspects of the new role tend to be a concern for those schools struggling with change: (a) the inclusion of arts instruction, (b) conflict with a previously defined role as an arts integration school prior to becoming a member of the OAS network, and (c) lack of understanding in the application of OAS strategies.

### *Inclusion of arts instruction*

According to the data, most involved in OAS implementation view the inclusion of arts instruction in every classroom as a primary component of the initiative. When asked to define A+, many teachers and administrators in the first years of implementation overwhelmingly responded that it is an "arts integration" or "arts infusion" initiative. While this may not have been the published definition and focus of OAS, it does appear to have been the definition in practice within many OAS sites. With the acceptance of this definition, the ability to include art instruction in the classroom emerged as a source of role discontinuity for some. Lack of expertise



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in the art forms and/or in ability to connect learning in the arts to other subject matters were most often cited as concerns. One researcher reported that a teacher

told me that most teachers like A+, but some of them do not feel comfortable integrating the arts into their classroom. He said that many of them go to the training sessions, but then don't always know how to apply what they learn to their classroom. (Researcher 2.14, 2004)

Citing more specific issues with art forms, one teacher commented, "I think some of them [the other teachers] still don't feel comfortable with themselves to truly get into drama, singing and dancing and that" (Teacher 1.5, 2003). Beyond finding a comfort level with instruction in the art forms, some data indicate there is a general a lack of understanding among some about how the arts can relate to other subject matter:

[A teacher] and I have an opportunity to talk. She talks about integration and how it has always "come naturally" to her. However, she feels that many of her peers are not yet comfortable with integration. She tells me that she asked another teacher to review her National Certification portfolio. She explains that he was silent at first, and then said, "I just don't get this art thing." She explained that this was typical—that most teachers just don't understand her use of arts and other integrated activities. (Research field notes 2.30, 2005)

Other data suggest some teachers still kept very clear lines between art instruction and other learning in the classroom. One researcher reported,

When the art teacher left. . .the classroom teacher told the kids: "Put away all your art materials, the time for art is over, do it now. . . .Now is time for English and Spelling" (she was remarking strongly that art is not part of other subjects). She

waited in silence until all the desks were clear of art “stuff.” (Research field notes 2.25, 2004)

While data support the effect of arts inclusion on role transition, many of those in the schools believe that much of the discontinuity can be resolved with more time in implementation. This suggests that teachers can be socialized to the new role effectively if they are given the opportunity to take on the new role incrementally. One teacher (1.24, 2004) observed this process within her school:

I think each year that we do the A+ it gets better and better, and the people that were not comfortable with it, even if they do just a little bit, just take a baby step, it's changing us, and I can see it with some of the teachers that were very scared of art or scared of music, they're using it just a little bit more, and that's what helped.

Other data may indicate that if art inclusion is simply part of the school culture and a common expectation, teachers will embrace the practice. One principal (4.8, 2006) stated, “Our teachers are comfortable with integrating the arts into the classroom. Many of our teachers, when they came on board, A+ was here, so that's all they know. It's part of our everyday life.”

*Previous identification as an arts integrated school*

Another source of discontinuity in role expectations came from some schools that identified themselves as “arts integrated schools” prior their admission to the OAS network. Since many defined the OAS framework as an arts integration initiative, this had the potential to cause significant issues for school role transition. Schools already engaged in arts integration had established bodies of knowledge that defined how they went about the process. Introduction of new ideas or processes to these bodies of knowledge often caused role conflict as the actors



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(students, teachers, and administrators) sought to negotiate the differences presented. Data show that some felt their knowledge and expertise were not valued by OAS faculty and fellows facilitating implementation, which compounded the issue of role conflict among these schools. Research field notes (2.7, 2004) record an exchange between a field researcher and site coordinator at such a school:

She [the site coordinator] tells me the problem with the teachers is “they have their own understanding of arts integration, so they are a little resistant to A+.” She mentions they were already an arts integrated school. [The site coordinator] feels that in the beginning (when they first went A+) there wasn’t enough credit given to the fact that [the school] already knew something about arts integration, so they were “offended” and felt that if they didn’t do it the “A+” way it wouldn’t be correct. She doesn’t feel the [school] faculty was given ownership.

No data were found specifically citing how these role conflicts were resolved. Examination of the data from these same OAS sites in later years of implementation suggests the issue was no longer foremost in school concerns.

### *Application of OAS strategies*

Discontinuity of role expectations was also seen in the data investigating the application of OAS strategies and concepts presented at workshops to actual classroom practice. Early in the process, some state they have not managed to make the step to direct application. They acknowledge that application is possible, but they need more help in making the transition from theory to practice:

I’m still really trying to figure out how I’m supposed to use my A+ training, besides beyond resources, if you need some art activities for social studies, you

know, I have things or I have information or I have the names of A+ fellows or faculty that you might be able to network with, and so, beyond that, I'm not quite, found out exactly what I need to do in helping out with the collaboration, helping out with the, some of the other components of A+, the essential. . . what is it, the 8 essentials? (Art Teacher 1.48, 2003)

A longer lasting discontinuous effect on role transition appears to occur in schools that view application as an additional task they must complete in the process of their teaching. Viewing “A+ as one more thing to do and burdensome” (Site coordinator 3.45, 2005) was a source of role conflict in some schools. As these data can be found in schools with varying OAS experience, years of implementation do not appear to have an effect on the discontinuity of these role expectations.

The degree to which roles are affected varies from site to site. There appear to be sites where some teachers are working to implement the OAS framework but recognize that application of the A+ Essentials<sup>TM</sup> is not endemic to the school culture. In essence, these teachers feel like they are separate from the remainder of the faculty, often using language that speaks of “us” (those who are changing practice) and “they” (those who are not changing):

She [the teacher] is disappointed that most of the teachers at [this school] tend to hold an extrinsic view A+—as an add-on—that they have not yet reached an understanding that the A+ philosophy permeates all aspects of the school experience—an intrinsic and natural way of thinking about the school experience for teachers and students. (Research field notes, 4.84, 2007)

She [the teacher] explains that some teachers at her school think A+ is too much trouble because they do not view it as fundamental to their practice as



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professional educators. “They see this as add-on and some of them are very textbook-driven. It’s just very traditional” (Teacher 3.31, 2006)

Other data suggest that even though some faculties value the potential impact of OAS implementation, change in practice is difficult:

She stated that the teachers have to commit to being “on-board” with the philosophy of A+. She added that teachers can see the benefits, “but it is much harder to put into practice.” She also acknowledged that teachers view working as an A+ school is more time-consuming because of the integration aspect.

(Research notes 4.45, 2006)

School sites that appear to have negotiated role transition more effectively view implementation as a developmental process that may not require a total change in practice. Teachers and administrators in these schools often talk about how they are making incremental progress both in terms of change and in recognizing some of what they already do supports OAS implementation:

I think the teachers are more, they feel better about what they are doing, last year it was kind of hard because we felt like it was something new that we were taking on, and then the teachers have finally figured out that we were already doing a lot of the stuff and they’re kind of learning how to name it and give it the names to see what they are actually doing. (Teacher 1.68, 2003)

One thing [I] really liked about the A+ approach is that you use what you can or want to use from it. . . .It’s not set in stone and you don’t have to set aside anything for later, it works with what you already do. (Teacher 3.5, 2005)

I think people understand A+ better. They understand it's not a separate entity than the curriculum. I have those who are good at integrating the arts and those who still feel that, they feel that they need to do book learning. I think the understanding that it [A+] is not separate [from the curriculum] is an important thing because they [the teachers] value time. (Principal 4.100, 2006)

Some in these schools also observe, "A+ has improved the organization of the curriculum so that the teachers are more aware of what each other is doing" (Teacher 2.4, 2005). Others simply declare, "A+ was helping [us] take the next step in a direction they were already going" (Principal 2.1, 2005). Others suggest that the changes in the school culture have become deeply embedded:

Some teachers don't realize how much they've evolved. . .in this building, you have to get on board. . .because [A+ is] so much of who we are, hesitant teachers have been engaging in A+ without realizing it. Most teachers realize how much fun and freedom you have in HOW you teach—you can still teach the PASS objectives—and realize how much more the kids retain. (Teacher 4.23, 2007)

Perhaps one the most clearly articulated strategies for negotiating role transition was expressed by a principal (3.4, 2005) in a school that was in the third year of implementation: "At first faculty kept asking, 'Are we doing IT (i.e., A+)?' Once we realized there is no IT and that the more relevant question was 'how does IT fit within what we do?' then we relaxed."

### Control

The degree to which the role holder has control over the transition also has an effect on role transition. Analysis of data revealed three issues that impacted school's abilities to manage



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their own role transitions: (a) demands of testing and assessment, (b) demands of other teaching and learning expectations, and (c) directive decision-making structures.

### *Testing and assessment*

The socio-political climate surrounding public education in Oklahoma at the time of OAS implementation was largely driven by standardized test scores. With federal funding directly connected to student achievement, many schools placed considerable emphasis on measurable results. One teacher (1.48, 2003) explained this clearly in an interview with a field researcher:

Most of the content of A+ when it comes to things like alternative assessments, some of that stuff we are not really accustomed to since we are such a test driven school, and if the results aren't numbers that we can see, that we can record in a grade book, we have a tendency not to go too far away from that, and so, a lot of the traditional things that go on in school, A+ is challenging us to do something that is more child oriented than institution, I guess.

The pressure to raise test scores appears to have impacted the implementation process. Especially in the early years of implementation, the concern over testing is apparent: "It's hard to do a lot because we're really concerned with testing and so it's sometimes my focus so I don't even pay attention to that stuff because I'm so concerned about testing and getting test scores up" (Teacher 1.14, 2003).

Because this concern was noted in the initial analysis of the data, field researchers began to ask direct questions of their interviewees about the effects of testing expectations on implementation. Analysis of these data continued to suggest testing concerns had some impact over the next few years. However, with the release of the quantitative data in the year three report (Barry et al., 2005), there appears to be shift in concerns among some schools. This report

revealed that, on the whole, OAS school sites were scoring higher on achievement measures than many other schools within their districts. While OAS never claimed a causal relationship between implementation and raised test scores, the fact that student achievement was up allowed the focus of implementation to change. One researcher (3.58, 2006) recorded evidence of this shift:

I asked a teacher about testing and its importance and was told that the principal is not motivated towards testing at all. “The faculty likes A+,” she said “because it moves away from rote memorization and other testing problems.” She also mentioned that the school as moving towards a portfolio system as an alternative to traditional testing.

A change in focus appears to have empowered this school to begin considering not only the impact of the current methods of instruction and assessment but also look toward more inclusive assessment systems that would not be part of the state mandated testing system. This demonstrates powerful changes concerning the perception of control in decision-making for this school site.

#### *Other teaching and learning expectations*

Data across all years of implementation indicate there are demands that limit a school’s control over their transition to a new role. Some references to this effect are very general in nature and simply assert that the process of “doing school” is extremely time consuming, leaving little room for new decision-making:

I was surprised to learn from [the principal] that they really hadn’t made much more progress with the curriculum map once school started. Despite a very strong beginning, [the principal] explained that it was difficult to keep the momentum



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going once the realities of the school year began. (Research field notes 2.34, 2004)

Data from teacher and principal interviews support the fact that the demands of teaching can overpower a desire to make changes:

Right now I'm kind of in survival mode, so I haven't really talked about integrating a lot of arts right now because I'm still trying to get everything going with reading and everything and math, which is [*sic*] our primary focuses this year. (Teacher 1.14, 2003)

Many times, me and the teachers are overwhelmed by the different things that are expected from us. Sometimes when the teachers hear or read about integrating MI into their teaching they think they can do it, but when they think about it, they can't. We need more training in this area. Our coordinators are preparing packages of materials with ideas to integrate MI in their lesson plans. (Principal 1.36, 2004)

Evidence does show that with effort, however, teachers can overcome the oppression of these demands and take more control over the role transition process. One teacher (2.37, 2004) indicated that although in the initial years of implementation she and her colleagues "felt helpless," over time a change evolved:

The majority of the classroom teachers are trying to take on integration activities. It's taking them by pleasant surprise that we're enhancing the PASS skills. . . . We do have so much to teach, so anytime someone comes in our classrooms we're nervous. (Teacher 2.37, 2004)

It appears that through persistence, some teachers have exercised control over the role transition process. As these efforts become more prevalent within the culture of the entire school, an acceptance of change begins to empower the school's ability to exercise more control in role transition process.

*Decision making structures*

Because a focus of the OAS framework is to empower teacher decision-making, data were analyzed in terms of the decision-making structures in place within each OAS site and their effects on control of role transition. Evidence shows that through the process of peer-delivered professional development, empowerment of teacher decision-making is modeled often. These models have been adopted into the structure of many OAS sites. There is, however, evidence that some structures are more directive and top-down in nature. This appears to have a detrimental effect on role transition as these teachers "say they don't want to be dictated to. . .they don't want to be told what to teach" (Teacher 3.32, 2006). Even though schools have had to document an 85 percent buy-in by the faculty before being selected as a member of the OAS network, there is evidence some schools still struggle with teacher empowerment and ownership. Research notes (1.49, 2004) from an interview with a teacher document some of this struggle:

[The teacher] feels that the morale is low right now because this is a new thing that the faculty feels they have been thrown into. She says, about her principal, that she's trying to explain to them that this is what you have asked for. She talks for quite some time about how her school was involved in so many programs and so many workshops last year that it was mind-boggling. She feels that her principal just needs to say to the faculty, "ok we're going A+ people, because it's been proven statistically."



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Some schools report that portions of the faculty do not appear to support the role transition to adopt the practices supported by OAS. Data from these schools suggest that much of the decision-making is top-down in structure. There are few administrators that claim such a structure is in place within their school, but interview data reveal that such structure may actually be in practice.

We still have a few teachers who are still not on board. It's not that they don't like it or agree with it. They agree with enriched assessment, MI's, hands-on learning, and 2-way integration. [The principal] pounds it in their heads, it's all brain-based learning. You have to do things this way. With all of the pressure of NCLB, there's no other way to do it. (Site coordinator 4.14, 2006)

It appears that in schools where the perception of teacher empowerment is greatest, faculty members are more engaged and appear to be more cohesive. Often, data from these sites refer to the process taking time and that changes occurred in small increments, but the teachers were empowered to take ownership of their practice as they adopted the OAS framework to their teaching.

### Normative governors

There appear to be few normative governors within the OAS structure. Beyond the initial application process and their acceptance, schools in their second year of implementation receive plaques and schools beyond that point receive brass plates to add to the plaques for each subsequent year they are part of the OAS network. The process of accepting schools into the network appears to have an impact on most schools. The formal application process comprises a number of steps taking place during most of an academic year. Once submitted, the applications are reviewed, and a group of schools are accepted to join the network. The selected schools

(faculty, administration, and some students) are invited to the state capitol for a formal acceptance ceremony in the rotunda, where OAS central administration, state legislators, and other dignitaries are in attendance. Each school is recognized and presented with their A+ banner declaring them as a member of the network. These banners are often found hanging in prominent places at each OAS site.

The only promotion process at work within OAS surrounds the selection of A+ Faculty and Fellows. OAS administration solicits individuals to apply for faculty. These can be teachers and/or teaching artists from the community. Consideration for admission to faculty status is not affiliated with OAS school sites in any way. In fact, a number of the Faculty and Fellows do not teach within an OAS site. There is some evidence that having school faculty selected for inclusion in this group is a source of pride for some schools:

I'm so proud to say that since we have joined forces with A+, we have two teachers, actually it's one support teacher, he's a paraprofessional who is non-certified, and one of the [school] teachers who have been asked by A+ to join them as Fellows for training, training other school personnel, and I see that as a big plus for us because we will have those people right here in house with us for when we get stuck and bogged down, and plus they will serve as role models.

(Principal 1.53, 2003)

This process of promoting school faculty members to this elevated role may have some effect on the role transition process. It appears that some schools view selection as a validation of their implementation process. As the engagement level of the school is not part of the consideration in



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the faculty selection process, this may be confounding the role definitions within the school site and affecting role transition.

### Moderators—Professional Development

Moderators are the endeavors that may intervene between the initiation of the role change and its conclusion (Allen & Van deVilert, 1984). These can take many different forms and can have either direct or indirect effect on the role transition process. Data concerning moderators among OAS sites' role transitions suggest that professional development (PD), in all its varied forms, is an effective moderator for many.

There are data that cite many of the formal professional development initiatives as helping in the role transition process. Most often mentioned are the Summer Institutes and how the activities there have had a positive impact on school role transition:

[The site coordinator] mentioned the summer institutes and said that the faculty that went was very excited and motivated to return to begin the school year and try new ideas. She also mentioned that the increased corroboration between grade level teachers has let each teacher develop their own niche in the integration process. From her point of view the faculty has become more open to the idea of the integration of A+. (Research interview notes 4.68, 2006)

I think the reaction to this past summer was more positive. The first year was hard on us. I think that this year they [the teachers] understood that there was a certain direction our school was going and A+ would work with us on that. (Principal 4.15, 2006)

There is considerable evidence that attendance at the week-long initial Summer Institute has an impact on faculty role transition. Many express “particular concern about faculty who were not able to attend the Summer Institute and difficulty in involving them in the process” (Principal 2.32, 2004). Data suggest there are recognizable differences among faculty members who have not been able to attend the summer institutes and attend a shortened version of this workshop during the fall. One principal voiced this concern for a member of her faculty during an interview. After being asked about faculty engagement, she discusses a particular teacher:

She’s made some baby steps. . .and she has a lot to offer. I think she’s supportive of the program. This teacher was on the [school] staff during their 5-day institute but she did not go. She was the one that did not go. (Principal 3.47, 2006)

These data suggest that the summer institute can be an effective moderator in the role transition process.

Conversely, there is evidence that some schools felt the activities at the Summer Institutes did not have a positive impact on their role transition. However, this may be more connected to the particular facilitators who presented the workshops at the Summer Institute rather than the content of the workshop:

I think there is skepticism [since the initial buy-in]. I think it’s because of the workshop [the Summer iInstitute]. If they would have had one leader instead of eight [she did not finish this statement]. When we asked questions [referring particularly to the curriculum mapping sessions], the leaders said, “I don’t know.” But, I know that some of my friends [who attended the institute a different week] had a good experience. (Teacher 3.65, 2006)



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These data are not pervasive—there are many more positive comments about the Summer Institute than negative—but given the demonstrated power of the summer institute within role transition process, any mention of detrimental effects may be worthy of consideration.

Some also mention the effectiveness of on-site professional development in moderating role transition. It appears that in addition to the actual training, this procedure may moderate in terms of control over the role transition process, as schools make independent decisions about what type of professional development they would like to have. One principal (4.83, 2006) explains,

You know, every time we've had one of the A+ trainers come, I've been very pleased. I think sometimes, when I look at what our staff needs, you have to make that decision. . .sometimes its best when it comes from on the outside of your faculty and comes in. That is something that's neat about A+, they've got that expertise to do that.

While it may not have been the initial emphasis for developing effective professional development, it appears that several aspects of the process are effectively moderating the role transition process.

### Role Strain

Role strain refers to the state of mind of the role holders during role transition. Variances in state of mind are to be expected in any school environment. Data analysis revealed that differences among the OAS sites occurred both between sites and within sites. Between site differences include views on (a) the impact of implementation on teaching and learning, (b) the site's commitment to the A+ Essentials<sup>TM</sup>, (c) the collaborative nature of interaction on campus, and (d) the amount of trust among site members.

Impact on Teaching and Learning

It appears that the views of OAS sites concerning the impact of implementation on teaching and learning are diametric and often at extremes. Many teachers refer to A+ implementation as “just a way of best practices teaching, teaching that’s effective” (Teacher 1.30, 2003), or they “believe that it. . .has made teachers take control of their teaching again, and put thought back into their teaching” (Principal 1.62, 2004). Still others refer to implementation as an agent of change, remarking, “A+ gets you out of your comfort zone, causing a paradigm shift” (Principal 1.46, 2004), and “A+ provided inspiration to branch out and try new things” (Teacher 2.5, 2005). There are consistent references to a shift in focus from teaching to learning citing that “you can reach more students through it, I mean, if you’re teaching to reach students, this will help you reach students” (Teacher 1.30, 2003). Others simply stated, “I believe in what we do, I believe that this is truly how kids learn” (Principal 1.62, 2004). Impact has also been referred to as liberation from other issues that may make learning less effective:

It’s really a pleasure, finally, to have someone acknowledge that that is the best way, and to be able to do that without any, um, a lot of persecution or a lot of criticism and, but, although everybody says yes, yes, that is the best way, that’s really good, you know, there’s still that overwhelming pressure of testing, yes, that’s fine and good, that was a lovely activity, but, I need to make sure that you are meeting the test objectives, that you are meeting the standards and you’re doing everything that you’re supposed to do when it comes to preparing them for the test, and so, um, A+ is challenging us to be more creative, to think outside of the box when it comes to, you can still prepare children for the test, but what you really need to do is challenge students to think beyond a sheet of paper, and so,



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finding out that most of the test skills that they're wanting kids to accomplish nowadays has a lot more to do with their thinking, their processing instead of simple recall, simple recalling of knowledge and numbers or dates and things like that. I really think that what I'm learning from A+ is allowing me to help children go beyond remembering dates and names and numbers to what was the purpose of it, things like that. (Teacher 1.48, 2003)

The positive impact of A+ implementation is referenced in this manner throughout the data, while data do not support impact at a moderate or selective level. There do not appear to be teachers, students, or administrators that believe A+ has impact on some areas but not others within a school site. This seems to affirm the whole school nature of the reform initiative.

Data show, however, that some sites have not supported implementation because “they see it as separate, as an add-on, and they do not do it” (Teacher 3.33, 2005) or that “some teacher just flat walk away from it” (Teacher 4.52, 2007). That statements of non-support exist does not come as a surprise. Of more importance, perhaps, is the vehemence with which these statements are made. There does not appear to be any room for negotiation among those who hold this view. Teachers from these same sites often make reference to a lack of administrative support for implementation. This phenomenon occurs in newer and older OAS sites, suggesting that length of implementation may not have a great effect on changing this view. There is evidence, however, that impact can be altered with a change in leadership. Interview notes from a teacher observation (2.28, 2004) reveal the following:

She [the teacher] indicated that they had not done much with A+—that they had really only had one faculty meeting since school started, and it had not been about A+. I [the researcher] asked her if she had felt that there had been any decrease in

buy-in from when [the retired principal] had been there. She said that they were really discouraged at the low turnout this summer but felt that with the turnover in administration—several of the teachers felt as if they didn't have to go—that no one was really keeping track.

The opposition of the data concerning impact suggests that leadership can have great effect on state of mind among OAS sites. Again, this may be a product of the “whole school” nature of the initiative where a supportive administration has enormous effect on the entire faculty and staff of the school.

#### Commitment to A+ Essentials™

Data concerning commitment to the A+ Essentials™ suggest this phenomenon is more fluid than views on impact. There are data that cite high levels of commitment even when other situational factors may not be conducive to implementation. In notes from an interview with a principal (1.13, 2003) new to an OAS site, a researcher observed,

She has just only been a month in the school, but she is very impressed with what she has seen of the staff and their commitment to the A+ project, and the teachers do not want to let go of A+ even though some of the teachers are now traveling from one school to another because of the budget cuts.

Another principal (3.4, 2005) responded,

A+ has truly given them [the faculty] permission to teach in philosophically compatible style. They already believe in certain methods [i.e., hands-on, MI approach], and teachers seem more excited about teaching. [We] have had some turnover in teachers at the school. New people come in and see the expected culture and are more accepting of A+ process.



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Other data suggest that high levels of commitment can be found within school sites but that it is not a constant state. When interviewed about this occurrence, one principal (4.74, 2006) replied,

The program seems to be ingrained into the teachers' actions. . .teachers need renewal about the purpose of the program to regain energy towards being an A+ school and retreats help with this. . .the faculty and [I] meet twice monthly to discuss the A+ program at [our school].

Still other data suggest that commitment to the A+ Essentials<sup>TM</sup> can be selective and perhaps misleading:

One example of where she has seen integration this year was in fourth grade. The fourth grade did an awesome integrated unit on Native Americans but she also “knew that the teachers were glad when it was over and to get back to real teaching.” (Interview notes, principal 4.74, 2006)

These data suggest it is possible to view activities that may seem to imply an OAS site is committed to implementation of certain essentials but may only be “playing the role,” suggesting the faculty is not fully socialized to their roles as OAS members. This level of commitment to the A+ Essentials<sup>TM</sup> may be a contributor to views of A+ implementation as an “add-on” to other responsibilities of the teachers.

The fluid nature of commitment may be best demonstrated in a statement made by a site coordinator (3.31, 2006) concerning previous frustration with implementation due to what she perceived as lack of administrative support and leadership. “I really think that some of the teachers that knew that it [A+] was the right way for kids took a break for awhile, but now they’re beginning to come back to it.” These data support the idea that commitment to the implementation of A+ Essentials<sup>TM</sup> may be affected by the environment and administration

within the OAS site, but the power to engage or not is still a personal decision each teacher must make. Teachers can make this decision in concert with others or individually. That those involved in implementation recognize this process is powerful. Isolation has long been recognized as a condition of classroom teaching (Cookson, 2005; Flinders, 1988). Given this condition, teachers are often left to make professional decisions on their own, believing there is little or no need for collaboration. Even though this report views each OAS site as a single social entity, the social power of individual teachers making independent decisions cannot be ignored. These individual phenomena contribute to the ebb and flow of the commitment levels among OAS sites and appear to affect each site's collective state of mind.

#### Collaborative interaction

In contrast to the isolationist view of teacher work, there are many references in the data supporting a view of OAS site members as a team. When discussing changes that have occurred since implementation, many teachers and administrators acknowledge an alteration in the way teachers interact with each other: "Since we started A+ I've seen a lot of growth in teachers willing to step outside of their classroom and work with other teachers and also work in with the special teachers also" (Teacher 1.22, 2004). A principal (1.62, 2004) noted a similar change in her school:

There's kind of a difference in we'll say, the unity issue. . .and as you walk around hopefully today, you'll see they're very much bonded, the teachers are very collaborative, work very well together, and are very excited about where we go and what we do, and, um, I think once before we had visited a little, and essentially when I came, four years ago, there were like five little schools within the school and you definitely won't feel that here.



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As discussed previously, collaborative teaching is not common in most elementary school classrooms. Data from this study support that some teachers within OAS sites are aware of the unique environment within their school and credit A+ for establishing a climate that is “nurturing and promoting unity among teachers and the rest of the staff in the building. . .something that does not exist in other buildings that are not involved in A+” (Site Coordinator, 1.13, 2003). Many others credit this change in promoting “less discord and dissention” and “more understanding about individual differences [that lead us to be] more cognizant of each other” (Principal 3.10, 2006).

It appears that collaboration impacts role strain positively. Data confirm that OAS site members often cite elements of “team-building,” (Teacher 1.12, 2004), “team planning” (Teacher 1.8, 2004) “getting us on the same page,” (Principal 1.2, 2004), or “bringing faculty together toward focus” (Teacher 1.22, 2004) as the biggest contributions of implementation to the school. One teacher (1.12, 204) stated, “It’s like a brand new school, and it [A+] brought all the people together with a common focus and a common bond. A+ is one of the reasons I had such a great year.” It appears OAS sites that experience positive collaboration as a result of A+ implementation experience role strain to a lesser degree than those sites that may not collaborate to the same extent. This can be seen in an interview with a teacher (3.40, 2006) at a site experiencing role strain to a much greater degree:

What I don’t like has nothing to do with A+. For example, you know, [waving her hand] everybody comes at different entry points. That’s frustrating to me. It’s frustrating when you have teachers in your building who don’t know what they are supposed to be teaching. I have to have a plan. I want the big picture. I see some teachers who don’t have that.

The effect of heightened role strain on role transition is evident in this statement citing different entry points as a source of frustration. Teachers that understand how the A+ Essentials™ may be implemented in their classrooms support the idea that many will engage in the process differently and begin with different entry points. This position is widely supported in the OAS literature and is modeled extensively in professional development. This data suggest that some OAS sites may have experienced delay in their role transition process due to role strain caused by their lack of understanding.

### Trust

Trust is a common state of mind found in the data among sites that are successfully negotiating role strain. They cite trust in a number of places but most often cite their trust in their colleagues at the site. This appears to often be a product of a professional development event:

I think the workshop really helped some of us come out of our shell, and be a little bit less uptight, we feel like we know each other a little better, so there is more trust, you know we feel like we can be ourselves more and not be so . . .uptight.  
(Teacher 1.8, 2004)

I like it [the workshop] very much, I always walk away with, ah,. . . .I feel so at home with those people because in a lot of those situations you really have to let down your guard and really be up front and that was so hard for me for so long until about age 50. (Teacher 1.23, 2004)

The approaches to which OAS teachers are introduced at A+ professional development also emerge from the data as a source of trust. Teachers speak about how their individual confidence



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is affected by learning how to apply new concepts at these events and then incorporating them into their classroom. One particularly powerful testimony to this effect follows:

What I see with Oklahoma A+ and the summer institute is that I have the ability, as a teacher and as a person, to explore other areas I had never, ever thought of doing, never did drama in high school, but going through the summer A+, I got the confidence I need to play on the drum and I was able to come back to my classroom and do a unit I do every year, which is family week, where my kids make instruments and I actually played the instruments with them in the classroom, we created a song and we played the story and drummed and found the rhythm of the poem, I mean, things that I did not have the confidence to do before, that I felt would be too silly, but, when I went to A+, if they can get up there in front of all grownups and be silly, I can do it, too. And my kids, I think they enjoyed the sound unit more because of the fact that I was comfortable playing with them, and I really think that they learn more about music because there was so much hands on in that unit and we took it over into the curriculum, we took it into our pronoun unit, we had “he,” and he had to play, when I say “she,” she had to play, when I say “it,” they had to put the instrument down, I mean, so, we just did all kinds of silly things with it and I know it was because I had that A+ training, it gave me a little bit more confidence. (Teacher 1.30, 2003)

Data also support previous research reports concerning the effect on confidence levels among OAS sites. Members at these sites trust the changes they are making in practice due to the documented outcomes in the research. As one principal (3.45, 2005) observed,

I'm sensing that they [the teachers] have a solid concept of the A+ philosophies.

They no longer have a fear of something that is unknown. . . .Everything from the research data to the Multiple Intelligences [gives her teachers more confidence].

Trust is also transferred to the A+ administration. That their decisions are informed by the research and they connect those outcomes to the professional development and focus of future endeavors creates a foundation of trustworthiness for many OAS site members. This translates to feelings of support allowing OAS sites to expand and explore more options in their implementation:

A+ is just uh. . .it's just such a quality program. The first time I met with [the A+ administration], I just knew that. . .they make it very obvious that if you have questions, we can answer them, if you need assistance, we can help. It just gives you a whole other avenue to. . .resources. I think that is very beneficial. (Principal 4.83, 2006)

Within site differences appear in the data, and most are related more to concerns than to affirmations. Some concerns are endemic to the culture of all schools, such as concerns about testing and accountability. Others are more specific to individual schools, such as teachers being on maternity leave and having a number of substitutes who have not been trained in A+ methodology and approach. Substantial data also supports the premise that arts educators at many sites have different concerns from those of the regular classroom teachers.

### Testing Concerns

Concerns about testing are common across most the population of A+ schools. Some of those in this population had been on the school improvement list prior to their acceptance to



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OAS. Some were very close to being placed on that list as a result of testing in previous years.

There are obvious concerns about returning to or being placed on that list:

We were a school at risk, we were on a improvement list and we finally made it off the improvement list this last school year, and so, you would think that would alleviate a lot of pressure, but it only puts more, and um, so, in that quest to master the test, to . . . just to do, to stay off the low performance list, we have a lot of tension as far as, a lot of pressure to make sure that we stay off the low performing list, and so, I think the children can sense that anxiety in the teachers, to make sure that you get it and I do believe to my soul that the teachers do, they love the thought of A+, but the pressure of the test will not somehow allow them to. (Art Teacher 1.48, 2003)

Well, I have to say that right now we're sitting in the position, um, with all the testing, that that's really starting to . . . haunt us a little bit, um, you know, if we don't show gain this year we're going to be on that dreaded list, so, right now, I would have to say that is the focus, um, we don't want to be on there, um, we may be on there, and I'm not sure even where we'll go from there. . . I don't know, of course, you're asking me this a month from testing, so, of course it's on everybody's mind. (Teacher 1.43, 2004)

The consequences for the administration, faculty, students, and community of a school being placed on the school improvement list are dire. This focus has obvious impact on everyone's state of mind particularly during a time of transition. This appears to affect OAS sites that are newer to the network much more than those that have been in the network for three or more years. Previous research on school achievement has revealed that many schools in the OAS

network are achieving at levels equal to or higher than other schools within their district (see Volume 3). These findings have been reported in earlier research reports and released to the public on the A+ website and through meetings across the OAS network. As mentioned in the analysis on trust, this information appears to be mediating the concern for some OAS sites but remains a focused concern for those OAS sites that may not have considered this information.

### Arts Educators' Concerns

Concerns voiced by arts educators within some OAS sites also emerge from the data across the entire population. These concerns are often not voiced by classroom teachers or administrators within the same school site and at times are in direct opposition to what others may have to say about the issue of arts integration within the school curriculum. There are references in the data to classroom teachers “not willing to do true integration” and that “they have a different idea of what music in the classroom really means” (Music teacher 1.31, 2004). Others state that “we just haven’t gotten to the point yet” (Music teacher, 1.49, 2003) of meaningful integration or what is defined in the A+ literature as “two-way integration.” This form of integration involves a process where each subject being integrated is informed by understanding in the other subject. One subject is not solely serving the needs of the other subject. This theme is not limited to those OAS sites new to the network or in only one art form. A researcher records the concerns of an art teacher (1.4, 2005) during an interview:

He feels that the school could be implementing A+ more effectively than they already are, but he also feels that it isn’t his place to say. He gave the example that some teachers have the students draw a picture and think that they are doing A+.



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The concerns from this teacher about the depth of art integration are obvious. The implication that he feels powerless to affect any change also emerges as a theme in this data. As many of the arts specialists are referred to as “specials” teachers, there does appear to be clear delineation between classroom teachers and the arts teachers. It is not surprising to find this difference in many schools; however, that it remains in place among a great many of the OAS sites may be of concern when considering the “whole school” nature of this reform initiative. Practice in many of the OAS sites appears to reinforce the distinction between these teachers as reports that arts teachers “don’t meet with teachers at all” or that they “find out in passing what teachers are doing in their classes” (Music teacher, 3.23, 2005).

There are references in the data that speak of progress being made in the ways integration is addressed, but scheduling appears to remain a common issue of concern. One researcher observed the following:

They [the art and music teacher] mention that they are still working on two way integration and are making progress; however, scheduling issues still preclude them from having total collaboration with the grade levels with respect to the curriculum planning. (Research field notes 4.5, 2006)

In sites that appear to have addressed the issue of collaboration and climate more completely, arts specialists tend to report more progress in the entire process of integration:

The depth of the arts with curricular ties has improved. They had always had arts integration, but the depth to which it is taken is stronger. It is not quite two-way all the time—but there is room for improvement. They are still defining what two-way integration means. The trust factor is close to being there and the validation

of each other's work is there. The climate is there that they do feel that they can share. (Interview transcript music teacher 1.56, 2004)

References to progress is not as pervasive in the data as are the concerns about the lack of two-way integration, but some sites do perceive they are making progress. When considering the effect of these concerns on role strain, it appears these concerns are largely isolated within the the arts education community alone, as there are few references of this nature among the observational and interview data from classroom teachers. Again, this phenomenon is important to consider in light of proclamations from OAS administration and the OAS literature published that define this as a "whole school" initiative. These concerns voiced by the arts educators appear to have an effect on the role transition with certain OAS sites. Successful mediation of these concerns may have a sizeable impact on the site's ability to more fully implement all elements of the A+ Essentials™.

#### Reactions and Consequences—Professional Development

According to Allen and Van de Vilert (1984), reactions include activities that the role holder incorporates in an attempt to reduce the amount of role strain and consequences include the entirety of effects and impact of the role holder's reactions to role strain. Data analysis reveals that these activities among OAS are not distinct and that these elements of organizational role transition have the greatest impact on and through professional development. There are numerous references in the data to the need for professional development:

We need professional development as working as a team, I don't know, this is one of the only schools I've been to that, um, that now everyone can work as a team. I thought everyone was getting along together at the A+ arts, but then again, it was the first time I had met everybody, and since then I've realized that some of them



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just are so set in their ways, they do the basic arts and crafts, but they're not doing arts integration. I just think that we all need to be together as a team and as a group and be able to. . .even do some arts and drama in front of the kids so they see, ok, this is what's happening, so. . .and they see that it's ok to be funny sometimes, and that it's ok to express ourselves in ways other than arts and crafts or, um, writing. (Teacher 1.4, 2003)

While this may not be unique to OAS school sites, the specificity with which the references are made suggests that some OAS sites view professional development as a consequence of their role transition in that it informs their current state and then becomes an antecedent condition of further role development (see Figure 1).

Due to the function of professional development within the role transition process, it is necessary to examine it thoroughly. What follows is an investigation of professional development within the OAS network in terms of its philosophical foundations, structure, and practice.

### Philosophy

Concern for the quality of education for children and youth in this country has resulted in a variety of reform efforts through the years. Each new reform effort is hailed as “the” answer to failing test scores, student drop-out rates, and teacher burn-out. As schools struggle to meet the demands of No Child Left Behind (2001), it is not surprising school leaders search for new solutions for the problems plaguing their schools. Veteran teachers often view such reforms somewhat cynically, as the latest “quick-fix” that will be implemented for a few years, and then tossed aside for the next panacea.

By serving to enhance teacher quality, professional development has long been a key component in various reform efforts. However, as with school reform efforts in general, professional development also comes in a variety of “flavors,” each promising a positive benefit for teachers and, ultimately, student learning. Often professional development reflects a “top-down, one-shot” approach. The school district invites an external consultant to provide a one-day workshop for everyone, usually at a district-wide meeting of teachers before school begins, after which teachers return to their classrooms and begin the school year. Next year’s expert and one-size-fits-all topic repeats the cycle. It is little wonder that teachers can become skeptical about professional development.

Sometimes professional development is interpreted as requiring all teachers to adopt and replicate a prescribed practice or intervention that has shown promising results in student achievement. Success is measured in how often and how closely the teacher adheres to the “protocol” specified in the reform, and of course, whether the test scores increase. Whether or not the protocol makes sense in a particular context is not discussed; the important matter is to implement the protocol. “Instead of building a culture of professional learning, teachers are faced with a ‘culture of compliance’” (Lieberman & Mace, 2008, p. 227). Teachers invariably begin to feel that they have no control over the learning events occurring in their classrooms. Consequently, they may resort to a “checklist” approach to comply with the district’s mandate and begin to lose their own enthusiasm for teaching as their own professionalism, creativity, and autonomy are overwhelmed by completing yet another form to document compliance with this year’s reform.

Oklahoma A+ Schools® (OAS) has provided a different perspective about the role and consequences of effective professional development. From its inception, OAS sought to support



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whole school reform, integrating the arts and creativity by means of professional development, networking, and research. Each contributes to the other to create a flexible, evolving, and sustainable model of professional development that engages and energizes members of the network.

The capability of OAS to adapt based on the needs of the individual schools is a unique element of professional development in the network. This approach reflects the philosophical framework that underpins the A+ philosophy (i.e., responsiveness to each school’s unique and self-identified needs). Schools decide for themselves what they need—and OAS tries to help them achieve their goals. This philosophy drives decision-making regarding professional development. Educators often frustrated by the “one-size-fits-all” approach to school reform admire how the flexibility of OAS has influenced school acceptance and continuity in the network. Numerous comments by teachers and administrators, even some who were initially hesitant about A+, indicate their satisfaction with the responsiveness of the professional development staff, Faculty, and Fellows in designing workshops and institutes to address their individual schools’ needs: “They just work so well with us. When it boils down to it, it is what is right for kids. It’s not a fad” (Principal, 2006). Additionally, this unique approach to professional development is a source of pride for the A+ staff, Faculty, and Fellows, as they promote and adhere to the approach.

Teacher empowerment has been widely viewed as a desirable component in any sustainable whole school reform effort. For nearly two decades, advocates of teacher empowerment have described the positive effects that result when teachers “have the autonomy to make decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment” (Wasley, 1991, p. 20). They often become risk takers and experiment with new strategies to enhance learning (McCarty,

1993). They also assume new professional roles such as teacher-trainer, team leader, action researcher, and curriculum developer (Boles & Troen, 1992). Structures developed within individual schools to support teacher participation in the decision-making activities of the school are keys to making this a reality (Marzano, 2003).

Many school reform models fail to fulfill their promise because they lack teacher empowerment and decision-making. Although sometimes consulted in the reform process, more often teachers are simply provided training to comply with the latest reform's requirements. Such an approach does not empower teachers to assist in decision-making. When empowerment is fostered, a sense of ownership develops which increases receptivity to innovation (Carr-Chellman & Almeida, 2006). Some schools in the OAS network show the emergence of such empowerment.

The nature of professional development within OAS affords teachers, principals, Faculty and Fellows the opportunity to experience what sociocultural theory characterizes as "trajectories of learning." Wenger (1998) described a trajectory as "continuous motion—one that has momentum of its own in addition to a field of influences. It has a coherence through time that connects the past, the present, and the future" (p. 154). Trajectories of learning occur in unpredictable directions, influenced by teachers' interactions with students, colleagues, professional development, and district requirements. Trajectories may evolve gradually or show sudden changes in direction, depending on changing circumstances (Levine & Marcus, 2007). Such trajectories can be applied to an entire school's unique circumstances as they enter and continue in the OAS network.

For schools new to the network, the promise of individualized professional development, provided free to their schools, is a powerful incentive to join the network. Some schools,



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however, appear to have difficulty identifying exactly what they want or need as they progress in their trajectories. This uncertainty is revealed in the length of time that passes before requesting on-site workshops. Despite repeated, cordial assurances that the workshop would be designed based on stated needs, some schools show hesitation in requesting such professional development. Gradually, most of those schools realize they can be more effective navigators, if not masters, of their own school reform, in conjunction with professional development provided by OAS. In the last few years, OAS compiled a list of available workshops to help schools who were uncertain about the kinds of training that could be facilitated.

Trajectories of learning can also be seen with individual teachers who are new to the A+ philosophy. It is the open-ended nature of these trajectories that, while liberating, can also be unsettling to teachers who may have grown accustomed to compliance rather than innovation in meeting a classroom or school challenge. During workshops in which Faculty and Fellows facilitate understanding through open-ended experiential learning, some teachers demonstrate hesitation, wishing for a “recipe.” Repeated professional development gradually reduces these inhibitions, and teachers begin to trust their own creative energies. As a result, the interactions among students, teachers, principals, parents, and community have provided more opportunities to foster increased achievement and actualization.

### Evolution of Professional Development for OAS

Numerous professional development opportunities exist for schools in the network: summer institutes, mini-institutes, on-site development, school exchanges, and state-wide annual conferences. Although not all of the schools in the network take full advantage of these opportunities, all recognize and commend the efforts to provide such individualized professional development. For some schools, OAS is their main source of individualized, ongoing, and on-

call professional development. Other schools utilize OAS professional development to individualize and complement the annual professional development provided by their districts. As one principal exclaimed, the professional development provide through “A+ is making a difference in the life of the children because it is making a big difference in the lives of the teachers” (4.58, 2006).

One measure of the success of on-site professional development is the number of workshops requested. Workshops provided at individual schools increased annually, from 12 workshops and 50 percent of schools participating the first year to 59 workshops and 95 percent of schools in year five (2006-07). The number of workshops requested varies by school, depending on contextual factors (e.g., district priorities, time, advanced planning, interest, and clear understanding of their own needs). Some schools have not taken full advantage of the on-site option. While A+ staff, Faculty, and Fellows voice concern about this issue, they respect the uniqueness of schools’ situations. They strive to remain positive and responsive to each school’s needs. This supportive attitude is evidenced in the often quoted A+ reminder: *All are at different entry points, at different places along the journey, with unique circumstances.*

The inception of an annual, state-wide OAS conference in summer 2006 served as a milestone in the evolution of the network. The annual conference was envisioned as a convocation of network participants to celebrate their common interests, successes, and commitment to “the child in the chair.” Since that summer, each conference has been held at a different university campus, with unique conference formats and creative professional activities, with emphasis on re-energizing and empowering participants. Network participants have embraced these annual events, and attendance has increased accordingly:



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The best thing I get from the training is to get with other teachers and get ideas. . . you get all these ideas! I think the networking is the most important part. We need time to share with other teachers. That reenergizes me. (Teacher 4.105, 2007)

Most of the Faculty and Fellows are themselves classroom teachers, an intentional and key component of the peer-trainer model of professional development. Classroom teachers are often more receptive to the suggestions of someone who has “been there” and more likely to understand the pressures and responsibilities teachers face. Faculty and Fellows are viewed as master teachers who are further along in their understanding of and practice with the A+ Essentials<sup>TM</sup>. Such a view does not imply negative regard and does not appear to be based on any specific tone or attitude on the part of the Faculty and Fellows; in fact, Faculty and Fellows try to inform and support from a collegial, egalitarian stance. It should be noted that the development of the Faculty and Fellows cadre was not an easy process. Much experimentation took place both in selecting individuals to be trained and in the training process itself. Through this process, many gained unique insight into OAS. Perhaps because of their insights, demeanor, and professionalism, respect for Faculty and Fellows as trainers and colleagues is a natural and positive consequence.

The notion of who has the professional skills to present workshops took an interesting, but not unexpected turn when classroom teachers in the network were invited to present lessons that had been effective in their own classrooms at the first annual OAS conference. Teachers were somewhat hesitant to respond to solicitations for workshop presentations, but those who did were well received by attendees. Teachers’ lesson submissions increased for subsequent summer conferences and have become a source of pride for teachers and principals in some schools. A certain status associated with giving presentations at the state-wide conference is apparent in

some schools, with principals and teachers viewing inclusion on the program as a validation of their success as an “A+ teacher.” Such validation reflects a growing sense of teachers’ self-efficacy as confidence in their own professional skills increases. “Teachers really enjoyed the break-out sessions. I think it’s really nice for actual teachers who are in the classrooms now to teach those sessions. It broadens your ability to teach, seeing other teachers teach. It is very valid. Teachers like that” (Principal 4.38, 2006).

Effective professional development facilitates internalizing new approaches by mastering new skills and ways of thinking. In OAS, this occurs within a collaborative group (e.g., a grade-level team, a school faculty, a workshop session) and parallels the stages of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (1978). Teachers learn new strategies and insights with the support of skilled Faculty and Fellows, supported by interaction and encouragement of their peers. With awareness, practice, scaffolding, and growing confidence, teachers can effectively internalize, use, and sustain the new strategies and ways of thinking. This occurs over time, and measures of success are unique to individual teacher and school situations. Professional development offered during summer conferences and workshops often provides participants with a common reference point, a shared experience that serves as a touchstone during the remainder of the school year:

One of the things I appreciate the most [about summer conference] is when I’ve had hesitation, we’ve talked about how we want to do something and that teacher is kind of hesitating. . . I say “Remember the conference? What was the most powerful part? It was when we were all together, singing together.” You know, the conference models the [A+] philosophy. So in turn I’m modeling best practice, when I come back to my staff and say “Okay, you were at the



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conference. You saw the power in this.” And they go “You’re right!” (Principal 4.83, 2007)

Teachers also appreciate the summer sessions as ways to gain new ideas, connect with same grade/subject colleagues, and explore their own creativity. Increased opportunities to interact within their own faculty in engaging, relevant, and creative ways helps to foster more than simply new ideas for helping students learn. Such collaborative learning facilitates connections that bring schools together:

In years past, I may not have worked with everyone. I think after you spend time with the whole faculty, you get to know them better. If we hadn’t spent time together at the A+ training, we would just stick to who we knew. It makes working with others easier. We try to work more as a group, a family of teachers. We feel more free about bringing things in to others and saying “look, I found this!” (Teacher 4.24, 2007)

### Evolution of Professional Development for Faculty and Fellows

Planning for Summer Institutes, mini-institutes, and on-site development occurs year round, with particular emphasis during the Faculty/Fellow retreats held several times a year. At these retreats, Faculty and Fellows participate in sessions which deepen their understanding of A+ philosophy, strengthen their facilitation skills, encourage their professional cohesiveness, and allow for creative experiences and team-building activities.

Collaboration with other Faculty and Fellows during these retreats assists in planning for the specialized professional development opportunities offered to each school during institutes and on-site development. Faculty and Fellows then incorporate these processes into plans for their individual school assignments, thus modeling the A+ philosophy. New Faculty attend a

special retreat which focuses more intensely on the eight essentials of A+ and helps mentor them into their new role in providing professional development to their teacher colleagues.

In the early years of OAS, training of Faculty and Fellows during institutes focused on understanding the A+ Essentials and how to be a facilitator during workshops for the schools. Faculty and Fellows participated in art, drama, music or movement experiences to enhance their own creativity and learn how to facilitate such experiences during workshops for teachers. Initial Faculty and Fellow retreats were based on the North Carolina A+ model, with Oklahoma gradually increasing responsibility.

In Years 4 and 5, institutes began to include more specific bodies of knowledge that are re-informing professional development for Faculty and Fellows. Along with the eight essentials of the A+ philosophy and their underlying research bases, research in communication theory (e.g., active listening, group dynamics), leadership theory, systems theory, and transfer theory provide additional frameworks. These facilitate new avenues for more thoughtful conversations as Faculty and Fellows design professional development for specific schools in the network. The desire for greater transfer of knowledge and skills gained in professional development activities has led to increased intentionality as Faculty and Fellows help teachers transfer their learning to their own schools and classrooms. A number of techniques have been observed, including direct questions in debrief sessions, open-ended reflections, and practical planning matrices. Additionally, Faculty and Fellows continue to model practice for attendees as they embed the A+ Essentials™ in their own professional development during retreats.

An integral part of each retreat is the emphasis on reflection and revision to ensure professional development reflects the A+ philosophy in response to the needs of the schools. Faculty and Fellows experience the same enriched assessment process that is one of the eight



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essentials of A+: assessment that is on-going, self-reflective, documents practice, and enhances the process. End-of-day reflective sessions are an integral and concrete example of this philosophy in action.

During debriefing discussions of how to assist their assigned schools, Faculty and Fellows sometimes reveal frustration in the progress made by their assigned schools. Giving voice to this feeling reflects their desire to meet the schools' needs and better assist them in meeting their school goals in A+. Gentle reminders from A+ staff and each other help them keep a positive focus: *all with different entry points, at different places along the journey, with unique circumstances*. Faculty and Fellows also are candid in expressing pride and excitement as they report successes with their schools. They are also proud when "their" school adapts something learned during a workshop to meet their school's need.

Reflections concerning specific institutes' outcomes, attention to schools' requests, and information from the A+ research reports influence adaptations in the content of professional development, both for the Faculty/Fellow retreats and events for network schools. Experience with training delivery, their own professional development, and information from annual OAS research reports have enabled Faculty and Fellows to better understand emerging "steps in the progress" and adapt to provide a deeper understanding and implementation of A+ Essentials™. For example, to help teachers better understand and implement the process, renewed emphasis on curriculum mapping focused more on the process than the product (i.e., "see the big picture in smaller windows" when planning for nine weeks instead of the whole year).

Vocabulary used as the common language of A+ has evolved to better communicate the A+ Essentials™ in language that is more meaningful to teachers in the schools. For example, during curriculum mapping sessions, use of the word "theme" and "thematic unit" had become a

stumbling block for teachers. The term was changed to “overarching theme” to distinguish this idea from a “themed” unit (on apples, dinosaurs, Shakespeare, etc.) that appeared to cause cognitive interference with the meaning intended by OAS. Eventually, “overarching theme” evolved into “overarching concept” and its understanding by teachers appears to be more widespread. This responsiveness to the nuances of communication is demonstrated in other concepts as well, and the resulting revisions are further evidence of the dynamic nature of the A+ philosophy.

### Role Transition, Ideology Acquisition, and Reference Group Development

The selection and training of Faculty and Fellows have evolved in ways that reflect the increasing growth of the network. At its inception, Oklahoma A+ relied on Fellows from their North Carolina A+ colleagues. When North Carolina colleagues left, there was an increased need for Oklahoma teachers and teaching artists to fill these roles. Additionally, as schools joined the network, increasing in five years from 14 initial schools to 38 schools (2006-07 school year), the need for more Faculty and Fellows to provide professional development also grew.

Faculty and Fellows are comprised of teachers and artist-teachers who are identified through referrals. Once the teachers are identified, an application process of observations and interviews begins during which the Program Director and Executive Director evaluate each applicant’s qualifications and philosophical fit with Oklahoma A+. For many, selection as Faculty for A+ serves as a validation of their abilities as a teacher. Several Faculty mentioned their surprising realization that they were considered *worthy* of becoming “a teacher of teachers.” Such professional “aha” moments often signal a shift in their self-concept as teachers.

Once selected as Faculty, an internship of one to two years allows them to serve as participant-observers, attending and assisting more experienced Fellows with various



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professional development events. This paired collaboration allows for the fusion of experience and fresh perspectives on the part of both Faculty and Fellow. Faculty determine when they are “ready” to move to the role of Fellow, which entails more responsibility and leadership during professional development events as well as mentoring of new Faculty. Occasionally, a Faculty is asked to be a Fellow earlier than anticipated, often resulting in heightened anxiety tinged with validation.

During the internship, Faculty transition past the initial Faculty/Fellow buy-in level where they are learning to do things “the A+ way,” to the point where A+ has become second nature to them. This changes philosophically who they are as teachers. As they model A+ and facilitate others’ professional development, their own teaching practice is enriched and strengthened. A researcher documents a new teacher’s growth:

[This new A+ Faculty member] describes the process of becoming a Fellow with excitement. She believes that her opinions are valued, but describes her primary role as that of “process observer.” She says that she has felt very comfortable throughout this process and that she’s been treated with great respect by A+ staff and Fellows. She’s very enthusiastic about A+, explaining that she’s helping develop a session for librarians for the big Conference in August. (Researcher 4.31, 2006)

Realization of their own growth is demonstrated in a greater sense of self-efficacy in their own ability to help not only the “child in the chair” at their own schools, but also the “teacher-colleague in the chair” during professional development events:

An Oklahoma Fellow shares that because her school is so “far along” in the process, she is concerned about being able to lead them beyond their present level of development in the A+ process. During our conversation, [she] reaches the

conclusion that the faculty are ultimately responsible for their own professional development and that her role, as an A+ Fellow, is to facilitate that development.

(Fellow 1.71, 2004)

Faculty who transition to Fellows incur the subsequent responsibility of mentoring new Faculty, and this further expands their own professional growth:

I think it's awesome she's [my mentor] a Fellow, I get first hand info every day, you know, I love it when she goes to those retreats and, um she comes back with really neat ideas and, of course, that just spawns other things in our minds and we're able to go, oh, what if we did this and what if we did that, so, I'm thrilled that she's in my classroom with me every day. (Teacher 1.15, 2003)

Faculty and Fellows in the network are recognized at the Oklahoma A+ level as dedicated professionals committed to assisting their teacher colleagues on their A+ journeys. A camaraderie is evident in retreats and professional development events as Faculty, Fellows, and A+ staff collaborate during planning and facilitation of institutes, on-site workshops, and conferences. The expertise of Faculty and Fellows is valued by A+ staff as they strive to meet the needs of the schools. Their shared vision, common language, and personal commitment to OAS contribute to the open, candid, and professional exchange of ideas.

Administrators at network schools who have Faculty and Fellows as part of their teaching staffs often rely on their expertise and deeper knowledge of A+ to assist their schools' progress. Such Faculty and Fellows serve as important resources and are usually lauded by their administrators as extremely valuable members of the school staff. However, Faculty and Fellows are not always publicly recognized within their own schools. In some instances, Faculty and Fellows who are also classroom teachers (i.e., not artist-teachers) are simply too humble to offer



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their expertise with their own school colleagues, especially if the school is not a member of the A+ network. In other situations, Faculty and Fellows often support the efforts of colleagues in their schools quietly, so they can remain part of the school “team” and not stand above the others. Hesitancy often reflects a desire to avoid being branded as a “know-it-all” by other teachers.

An interesting phenomenon often occurs when a group of individuals work together for a common cause over a period of time. Unofficial hierarchies emerge in which those who have “seniority” become the “wise elders” to whom newer members depend for guidance. A positive aspect to this tendency is that newer members often imitate the wise elders as they learn from and gain confidence in their new roles. However, an unintended consequence can occur in which the wise elders become so confident in their own history of successes that tolerance for adaptations wavers. Newer members struggle with the tension between “learning the ropes” and providing alternate, yet equally acceptable, ideas for implementation.

With the growth of the network, OAS has embraced both the growth pangs and challenges of meeting the professional development requests of the network. As schools began to make requests for similar professional development, as would be expected during each school’s implementation of the A+ philosophy, the catalog of available workshops for institutes and on-site development increased proportionally. Previous effective “101 workshops” are often repeated, with different Faculty/Fellow teams providing the workshop to ensure the most recent presentation of content/process in the “101” is consistent with previous presentations. Such consistency is valued as a means of helping each school in the network acquire the same common language to further their growth in the A+ essentials. As each 101 presentation is made, the “script” evolves, such that subsequent teams desiring to present the workshop now have a

detailed guide to follow. Planning meetings focus on deciding “who does what” as well as focusing on the content or sequence of the presentation.

The advantage of this practice is consistent content and reduction of energy for initial development that can be channeled towards developing new workshop sessions more uniquely fitted to the requesting school. Further, refinement of the workshops with each presentation enables Faculty and Fellows to feel more confident in the effectiveness of the workshop in meeting a school’s stated need. However, a disadvantage of this practice is that the workshop can begin to seem “canned,” as newer Faculty and Fellows may be reluctant to veer from the script, even when circumstances suggest such a detour is necessary. One teacher (3.52, 2005) observed the scripted nature of a particular presentation:

I had to pull back. Since she had already gone through a 5-day and as a fellow— she knew the answers that the others didn’t but she had to keep quiet and let them discover them on their own. She tried to throw them a bone once in a while in order to inspire them to go to the right direction. (Teacher 3.52, 2005)

One of the concerns expressed by some in OAS about their earlier experience with their North Carolina colleagues was that they felt pressure to conform to the North Carolina scripts. It is easy to understand how scripts evolve, especially during incipient efforts, but as any teacher (or dramatic actor) will agree, it is difficult to keep a good script “fresh.” As Faculty and Fellows gained more confidence in their own abilities to revise a workshop as needed, often in the midst of the workshop, the more responsive the adaptations become to the needs of the teacher-participants. This self-efficacy in their professional ability often emerges concurrently with Faculty’s and Fellow’s realization that A+ has become “who they are” and their confidence soars.



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## Challenges for the Future

Oklahoma A+ has demonstrated considerable resiliency since its inception, evidenced by the number of schools joining the network, the diversity of schools in the network (public, private, charter, PreK-12, faith-based), and the degree of support from both private and public sources. With success comes positive publicity and that in turn invites more interest and growth of the network. Challenges include maintaining high-quality professional development and elasticity to meet a larger number of diverse schools' unique interests, increasing the capacity to provide such development (staff, Faculty, & Fellows), and acquiring funding. An additional challenge includes varying the levels of training provided to schools along their OAS trajectories.

Inquiries and requests from other states for assistance in developing a similar professional development network have increased, and these raise new questions and possibilities for OAS:

- What is exportable about the network?
- How can other states' initial efforts be supported as they struggle to tailor the OAS philosophy to meet their own unique needs?
- Since A+ is not a "one-size-fits-all program," how can Oklahoma A+ support and not supplant additional variations on its theme?

While those in the OAS network desire to share their philosophy so students and teachers in other states may experience the successes of OAS, they strive to avoid the trap of becoming the "know-it-all experts from out-of-state" who want to impose an Oklahoma model of A+ on

another state. It will be interesting to follow this development as the successes of OAS continue to attract such positive attention:

The most difficult challenge is keeping the initiative going. In any new thing there is a sense of excitement and strong energy. It is always the middle mile that is the toughest on the journey. And I feel that in a lot of ways we are in middle mile while all the while recognizing there is no finish line. We are never going to have arrived, and that is the nature of our business. We are always going to be on the journey. (Principal, 2006)

## Conclusion

Ashforth (2001) states that two trends are affecting how individuals interact within organizations. The first is that new roles are emerging. Data from this report supports that such is the case among OAS sites. Once defined only as “second grade teacher,” many OAS teachers are taking on additional roles such as “mariachi music specialist” or “dance enthusiast.” Prior to the emergence of OAS in these sites, such roles were not necessary or valued. The second trend is that the rate of change is escalating. Data support that OAS sites are pressured from legislative and community sources to meet testing demands while making more with less, making fewer mistakes and doing it as rapidly as possible. With each new demand, individual role definitions within the school change. As stated in the introduction to this volume, these individual roles merge into a highly complex organizational role that defines each school as a single entity.

Understanding a school as a single social unit may help all concerned gain insight to how those within the school define and do their jobs. Identifying the multiple antecedent conditions that impacted various sites gave the researchers in this study a much different perspective from



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which to view role transition. Most agree that no two schools are the same, but many reform initiatives appear to assume that all schools start in the same place. That so many different conditions were present among the OAS population supports many OAS practices and the need to examine each school's role transition separately.

Owing to Ashforth's first trend, data supporting the discontinuity of roles among the OAS sites confirmed that organizational role transitions were taking place among these sites. The inclusion and change of position for arts instruction within the curriculum appears to have had sizeable impact on these role transitions. That some schools already defined themselves as "arts integration" schools appeared in the data to also have significant impact on the process of role transition as well. Data also support that the process of defining how schools would apply the strategies espoused by OAS had impact on the role transition process.

Ashforth's second trend is evidenced in the data concerning controls that have been placed upon the OAS sites. The rate of organizational role change among these schools has been accelerated through mandated testing demands, additional expectations placed upon the teachers by OAS and/or school administration, and decision making structures at place within each school. Some of these accelerators come from external sources – those outside the actual school building - while others are internal to the school. Data analysis supports that both have similar effects on the rate at which roles must change to support the OAS process.

The lack of normative governors that operate at the organizational level is an interesting finding. The only process found in the data that served in this capacity for the role transition process was the nomination and selection of OAS Faculty ad Fellows. There is some limited support that this impacts roles transition among some OAS sites, although it does not appear to be widespread.

Professional development (PD) among all OAS sites appears to effectively intervene between the initiation of role change and its conclusion and, as such, is a particularly strong moderator in the role transition process. Evidence supports that PD is so pervasive and effective it may be circumventing the need to have more clearly defined normative governors. Data show PD to hold a prominent place in the entire OAS implementation process. Ongoing and systematic professional development is not common among many reform initiatives after two years of implementation. Data from this study suggests that this may have particularly strong impact on organizational role change among OAS sites.

Many elements were found to impact role strain or the state of mind held by those in role transition. There is limited evidence in the data supporting individualized role strain among OAS teachers; however, the bulk of the data support considering role strain in terms of the collective mind-set held by the school. Elements affecting role strain appear to be largely centered on the school's definition of OAS implementation as integral to what the school does every day or as an "add on" that must be done in addition to other demands. The varying degree to which this is negotiated by the organization impacts the school's commitment to the A+ Essentials<sup>TM</sup>, the nature of collaboration among faculty, and the level of trust among all in the school. Two specific concerns appear in the data more prevalently than others. Those are testing concerns and concerns from arts educators that they are being asked to increase their roles within the school or that their subject matters are being diluted.

The final two stages of organizational role transition are reactions and consequences (Allen & Van de Vilert, 1984). In the model proposed for this research, these processes are considered to be separate. However, due to the extremely prominent position of professional development in the OAS implementation process, these two appear to be fused together. Because



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schools are not put on a “program of study” that is previously defined, but instead are allowed to self-define their professional development needs, their reactions are immediately moved to consequences. This is the most unique feature of the role transition process among OAS schools. While further study will be necessary, these researchers believe this to have the greatest impact on role transition among OAS sites.

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Appendix A

Initial Code Sheets



## Summer Institute Code Sheet

Code	Definition
School generated focus questions	All the self-generated focus questions for schools in a Summer Institute
A+ Faculty or Fellow Activity	Any organized activity generated by a faculty or fellow as a formal part of a Summer Institute
Pre-planning	Any reference to pre-planning activities for a Summer Institute
Personal goals	Any reference or list of personal goals generated by A+ teachers in a Summer Institute
Essentials	List all separate
Teacher deltas	Any reference to deltas from school debriefing sessions
Teacher pluses	Any reference to positives from school debriefing sessions
Faculty/Fellow deltas	Any reference to deltas from Faculty/Fellow debriefing sessions
Faculty/Fellow pluses	Any reference to positives from Faculty/Fellow debriefing sessions
School attendance	Any references to number of faculty attending Summer Institute
Professional development needs	Any reference to school's needs for professional development
Professional development structure	Any reference to how professional development is being structured by schools or by A+
Overarching concept	Any reference to overarching concept
Faculty relationships internal	Any reference to how faculty relate to one another within the school building
Faculty relationships external	Any reference to how faculty relate to any entity outside their school building
Impressions of faculty growth in A+—positive	Any reference by Faculty/Fellows about a schools buy-in, growth/acceptance in the A+ philosophy
Impressions of faculty growth in A+—negative	Any reference by Faculty/Fellows about a schools lack of buy-in, or growth/acceptance in the A+ philosophy

**General Codes**

Code	Definition
A+ is right way to teach	Any reference to A+ as a natural way or most effective way to meet student needs
Academic Improvement	Any reference to grades or testing positive or negative
CI Essential Art	All arts instruction
CI Essential Curriculum	Mapping or any other reference to curriculum
CI Essential Experiential Learning	Hands-on learning
CI Essential Infrastructure	References to schedule, physical plant, or other structural elements in the school
CI Essential Multiple Intelligence	Any reference to any of the intelligences
Classroom Description	References to the physical plant in the classroom
Coherence and Allegiance	A communal buy-in that may or may not be exemplified in actions
Coherence and Internal Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal buy-in that comes across as A+ as second nature</li> <li>• No longer an add-on</li> </ul>
Coherence and Language Adoption	Level 1 of Coherence—first observable stage of buy-in
Community Building—Community in schools	Building community among school members
Community Building—Communities of A+	Development of A+ community—Networking
Community Building—Parents in the school	References to parents working in/for the school
Community Building—Schools in communities	Anything outside the physical building
Community Resources	Any reference to support supplied the school by anyone outside the district
Complexity diversity of student populations	References to diversity in the student make-up of the school
Curriculum and Planning challenges—Curriculum mapping	The challenge of curriculum map being used as a hub—too restrictive themes as a problem.
Curriculum and Planning Challenge—Varied definition of integration	References to integration apart from two-way approach
Curriculum and Planning Challenge—Methods for collaboration	A methodological problem in collaboration
Curriculum and Planning Challenge—Time together	References to not having time to plan effectively together
Curriculum and Planning Challenges—Multiple programs and curricula	References to additional programs in the school that may impact A+ implementation.
Develop essential enriched assessment	Any reference to understanding or attempting to address enriched assessment



Disciplined, respectful environments for students	References to the impact of A+ on student discipline
Engagement with A+—Allegiance	An individual buy-in that may or may not be exemplified in actions
Engagement with A+—Internal engagement	Individual buy-in that comes across as second nature—No longer add on
Engagement with A+—Language adoption	Level 1 of Engagement—First observable stage of buy-in at individual level
Faculty target goals for school improvement	Anything suggesting there is a plan of where they want to take A+ or that it will help them reach a goal
Faculty to Fellow transition	Any reference to the process of becoming a faculty member and moving toward fellow.
Fundraising	All references to using the arts to raise money for School, A+, or general funds
Generative instruction	Instruction where students generate and drive the interactions
Implications for teacher education	Any element that can or should be addressed in teacher preparation
Integration one way only	Any activity where one subject matter is in service to another
Leadership roles	References to roles in the classroom or entire school for those in leadership
Learning modalities	Referring to students’ preferred entry points for learning
Liminal spaces	“aha’s” and learning moments
Models of Coherence—A+ as central theme	School wide A+
Models of Coherence—A+ as fitting in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing A+ before there was A+</li> <li>• Assimilation into school setup and philosophy</li> </ul>
Models of Coherence—A+ as glue	Holding classroom/school together
Models of Coherence—A+ as add-on	A+ as a separate event in addition to teaching
P Essential Collaboration	Any reference to any members of an OAS site working with another person
P Essential School Climate	References to the non-physical elements that can or are establishing state of mind in the classroom
Presence and role of arts specialists	Anyone with arts expertise

Professional support and staff development	Reference to any of activity or event related to professional development
Reason for joining A+	Reference to what the thoughts, reasons, or expectations were for an individual, a group or a school to join A+
Resilience	A+ remains regardless of faculty change, etc.
Role in A+—coordinator	Any reference to an A+ site coordinator
Role in A+—Faculty or Fellow	Any reference to a faculty or fellow member
Role in A+—principal	Any reference to a school principal and their defined position in the school as a result of A+ implementation
Role in A+—teacher	Any reference to a teacher and their defined position in the school as a result of A+ implementation
School philosophy	Any reference to beliefs that drive school decision-making
Seat work worksheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use any time worksheets are mentioned.</li> <li>• When are experiential in nature they should be double coded with experiential learning.</li> </ul>
Student characteristics morale	Any reference to how students feel about school
Supplative Instruction	Any reference to teacher driven instruction where all elements a supplied for the student
Teacher buy-in	Any reference to how a teacher or group of teachers are or are not engaging with A+
Teacher characteristics morale	Any reference to how teachers feel about school
Topical units Integration	Any example of integration either one-way or two-way in the classroom for all students
Topical units integration enrichment	Any example of integration either one way or two way that is outside the classroom or not for all students
Topical units hands on links	How overarching concepts link to and foster two-way integration
Topical units integration two-way	Any example to integration where both subjects are informed by the other
Training deltas	Any reference to problems or concerns about A+ professional development
Training pluses	Any reference to positive elements about A+ professional development



Training to get recipes	Any reference to a person engaging in A+ professional development to get specific answers or activities
Training to get strategies	Any reference to a person engaging in A+ professional development to get specific answers or activities
Validation	Any reference to a teacher noting that they have felt A+ has validated the way they have always taught or wanted to teach
Varying levels of training	Any reference to a difference in A+ training from person to person or group to group

### Student Codes

Code	Definition
Student—Description of classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student response to question to describe their classroom</li><li>• This can be a physical description or a figurative description.</li></ul>
Student—Best thing about school	Response to question concerning the best thing about school. Should also include an explanation
Student—Changes in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response to question about change they would like to make in the school</li><li>• Should also include explanation</li></ul>
Student—Learning modes	Students descriptions about how they learn
Student—Collaboration	Student descriptions about how they work with others in their classes
Student—Arts activities	Student descriptions of arts activities within their school experience
Student—Learning materials	Student descriptions of materials they use in class
Student—Favorite activities	Student descriptions of favorite activities
Student—Success definition	Student definitions of what it means to be a success as a student
Student—Important skills	Students descriptions of the important skills that are taught at their school
Student—Helps for success	Student descriptions of those who help them at school to be successful
Students—Rules	Any reference to school rules and student or teacher response to behavior related to these rules

Students—Evidence of learning	Student descriptions of how they show teachers or other adults what they have learned.
Student—School affect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student references to school being fun or not fun.</li><li>• Should include explanations</li></ul>



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## Appendix B

### Role Transition Code Sheets

**Antecedent Conditions**

Themes	Codes
School community member’s identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Building—Community in schools</li> <li>• Community Building—Communities of A+</li> <li>• Community Building—Parents in the school</li> <li>• Community Building—Schools in communities</li> <li>• Community Resources</li> <li>• Engagement with A+—Allegiance</li> <li>• Engagement with A+—Internal engagement</li> <li>• Engagement with A+—Language adoption</li> </ul>
Infrastructure to support the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CI Essential Infrastructure</li> <li>• CI Essential Multiple Intelligence</li> <li>• Coherence and Allegiance</li> <li>• Coherence and Internal Engagement</li> <li>• Coherence and Language Adoption</li> <li>• Complexity diversity of student populations</li> <li>• Curriculum and Planning Challenge—Time together</li> <li>• Models of Coherence—A+ as fitting in</li> <li>• Models of Coherence—A+ as glue</li> <li>• Models of Coherence—A+ as add-on</li> </ul>
Perceived regulatory nature of the A+ framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum and Planning challenges—Curriculum mapping</li> <li>• Curriculum and Planning Challenge—Varied definition of integration</li> <li>• Curriculum and Planning Challenge—Methods for collaboration</li> <li>• Curriculum and Planning Challenge—Time together</li> <li>• Develop Essential Enriched Assessment</li> <li>• P Essential Collaboration</li> <li>• Teacher buy-in</li> <li>• Teacher characteristics morale</li> </ul>



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Principal leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty to Fellow transition</li><li>• Leadership roles</li><li>• Role in A+—coordinator</li><li>• Role in A+—Faculty or Fellow</li><li>• Role in A+—principal</li><li>• Role in A+—teacher</li></ul>
Presence of arts specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CI Essential Art</li><li>• Presence and role of arts specialists</li></ul>
Presence of additional school initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Curriculum and Planning Challenges— Multiple programs and curricula</li></ul>
School mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A+ is right way to teach.</li><li>• School Philosophy</li><li>• Validation</li></ul>

**NOTES**





All five volumes of the research report can be found in full on the Oklahoma A+ Schools website:  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Deepest appreciation for the funding support of our generous partners including the Kirkpatrick Foundation, the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, the University of Central Oklahoma, the Oklahoma State Legislature, the Oklahoma State Department of Education and our additional foundation supporters.

Special thanks to the dedicated and talented team of scholars whose work is detailed within the five volumes of this important report.

Particular gratitude to the students, teachers, principals, OK A+ Fellows, OK A+ Advisory Board, OK A+ staff and the North Carolina A+ Schools Program without whose work this publication would not be possible.