

OKLAHOMA A+ SCHOOLS



RESEARCH REPORT YEAR TWO: 2003-2004

Michael G. Gunzenhauser, PhD
Oklahoma State University

Diane Montgomery, PhD
Oklahoma State University

Nancy H. Barry, PhD
University of Oklahoma

Charlene Dell, PhD
University of Oklahoma

Michael A. Raiber, PhD
University of Oklahoma

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PREFACE

The mission of the Oklahoma A+ Schools program is to advance the quality of the educational experience in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma A+ Schools is a comprehensive, integrated approach to teaching and learning, encompassing the idea of a whole-school curriculum. Schools participating in the Oklahoma A+ Network have made a commitment to the importance of collaboration, curriculum, multiple intelligences, the arts, and authentic assessment.

Oklahoma A+ Schools promotes professional development, networking with other A+ Schools, ongoing consultant support, and formative research. Professional development is a key component of the Oklahoma A+ Schools initiative. Prior to implementation, introductory seminars, on-site visitations, and a five-day summer residential training institute are conducted for the entire school staff. During implementation, school-based workshops, on-site visits, and seminars continue the process. The *Eight Essentials* of A+ are curriculum, multiple intelligences, collaboration, enriched assessment, experiential learning, infrastructure, school climate, and arts.

Nationwide, schools are searching for sound, research-based processes to build their capacity for student learning, an increasingly important consideration in response to *No Child Left Behind* legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Comprehensive, university-based research has been an important component throughout the A+ development and implementation process. A collaborative team of University researchers is conducting ongoing research and evaluation of the program. This is the second report in a six-year research plan. Subsequent yearly interim reports will capture the continuing process of implementation and will lead to summative reports in the fourth and sixth years of the program. (Note: The *Oklahoma A+ Schools Research Report Year One: 2002-2003* is available at <http://www.okaplus.ucok.edu>.)

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

The A+ program was implemented in 25 schools in North Carolina in 1995 as a statewide strategy for whole-school reform. A+ has been shown to succeed in encouraging schools to develop integrated, holistic curriculum while at the same time allowing most schools to meet their achievement goals. Studies of the A+ program suggest that this type of change must occur gradually over time. Teachers need time to gain confidence in planning and teaching integrated units.

Adequate professional development opportunities and collaborative planning time are important to facilitate this process of gradual school-wide change (Nelson, Wilson, Corbett, & Noblit, 2001). In addition to team planning among classroom teachers, the A+ program has found that “establishing new communications channels between classroom teachers and arts teachers is particularly crucial” (North Carolina Education and Law Project, 1996, p. 125).

Oklahoma Project History

In 1998, the Kirkpatrick Foundation in Oklahoma City invited Oklahoma educators from private and public colleges and universities to begin discussing the opportunities and resources available for improving K-12 education. The DaVinci Institute was officially recognized in 2001 (receiving 501(c)3 status) as a result of these meetings, reflecting a belief in the importance of interrelationships between learning, the arts, sciences, and other core curriculum. A joint research team from the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University was formed to identify the most successful education reform models in the United States, especially those with a strong arts integration emphasis. The North Carolina A+ Schools Program, an initiative of the Kenan Institute for the Arts, was identified as the most appropriate model for implementation in Oklahoma.

Planning for the Oklahoma A+ Schools was underway by the 2001-2002 academic year. Dr. John Clinton was hired as Executive Director and the process of informing Oklahoma educators about this new initiative commenced. Fifteen schools participated in the first series of five-day Oklahoma A+ Summer Institutes, held June 10 – June 28, 2002 at the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics. Follow-up retreats and workshops for participating schools as well as informational meetings for schools interested in joining the A+ Network continued throughout the 2002-2003 academic year. The second series of Summer Institutes and Conferences took place from June 9 through July 9, 2003 with 14 schools participating in three-day Summer Conferences and five new schools participating in five-day Summer Institutes.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, the Oklahoma A+ Schools became affiliated with the University of Central Oklahoma, John Clinton assumed full-time responsibilities as Executive Director of the Oklahoma Center

for Arts Education at the University of Central Oklahoma, and Jean Hendrickson was appointed as Executive Director of Oklahoma A+ Schools. The Oklahoma A+ Network continues to grow and a full agenda of Summer Institutes and Conferences is planned for June and July of 2004, with 14 schools participating in two-day Summer Conferences, five schools participating in three-day Summer Conferences, and three new schools participating in five-day Summer Institutes.

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of the research component of this project is to document the Oklahoma A+ Schools process. Topics under investigation include the effects of the program on students' educational experiences, teachers' instructional and curricular practices, and school involvement with community partners. Particular attention is given to how each school adopts and adapts the program to local needs and goals and how the program itself develops to serve students in Oklahoma public schools.

The Oklahoma A+ Schools research component incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Qualitative research methods allow the research team to describe the A+ process in meaningful detail (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Patton, 2002). Data from in-depth interviews of teachers, administrators, school staff, students, parents, artists, and community partners capture the processes that schools undergo. Participant observation and document analysis complement and triangulate interview data, giving researchers a fuller understanding of individual contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Quantitative measures, such as test scores, surveys, and demographic data, enable the research team to use descriptive statistics and analysis to chart the progress of the A+ Schools more broadly. This report includes results from two instruments that were not included in the Year One report: the *Teacher Opinion Survey*, developed by the research team, and the *My Class Activities* student survey, developed by Gentry and Gable (2001).

RESULTS FOR YEAR TWO: A CONTINUAL LEARNING PROCESS

The greatest challenge for public schools in 2004 is facilitating meaningful reform in light of external pressures, changing student demographics, and limited resources. The professional educators in the Oklahoma A+ Schools are using the *Eight Essentials* to create meaningful learning experiences for their students. Teachers, principals, and other members of the school communities are going through an important process of collaborating, networking, and learning. Schools call upon the resources of the A+ administrators, A+ fellows, and their A+ school colleagues to create implementation strategies that respond to the particular challenges, abilities, and resources of their school communities, districts, and school

buildings. The following summary of research data provides a description of that process.

Emerging Themes

In the 2003-2004 school year, the second year of the Oklahoma A+ Schools initiative, the 19 A+ schools continued the learning process that began in the program's first year. In this section of the report, the research team identifies and elaborates a set of themes to convey its understanding of that learning process.

The themes are ***Eight Essentials/ meanings and relationships, learning moments/ liminal spaces, coherence, topical units/integration, fellows' transition, and student population complexity.*** The themes represent both common and particular experiences among the A+ schools in order to capture the complexity of the learning process. At the end of this report, the researchers identify avenues for further exploration by schools and the research team.

Connections to the Year-One Report

These second-year themes build on the set of themes identified for the first-year research report. Those Year-One themes – **engagement with A+, curriculum planning, infrastructure, and community building** – are now reflected in more specific themes that have developed during the second year of the program. The first-year themes also provide some concepts and terminology that continue to be meaningful for explaining the A+ Schools' learning process (See Appendix A for a summary of the Year-One Report).

For example, the research team identified "engagement with A+" as a series of three "intervals of engagement" – allegiance, language adoption, and internal engagement – each reflecting some form of learning about A+ and application to professional practice. Allegiance signifies enthusiasm and optimism about A+. Language adoption signifies the use of A+ terminology and the beginning application of some of the ideas learned at the summer institutes. Internal engagement signifies schools' collaborative efforts to tie together the A+ essentials and create curricula that serve rich conceptual goals. The other first-year themes – curriculum planning, infrastructure, and community building – all speak to the significance of process; they are now reorganized into the new themes, which better reflect the progress that the A+ schools have made during the second year of the program.

Eight Essentials: Meanings and Relationships

After several years of implementing and developing the A+ Program, the North Carolina A+ Schools Network identified the *Eight Essentials*, a document that identifies a set of philosophical, cognitive, social, and instructional commitments that guide the work of the A+ network. The

Eight Essentials form the basis for recruitment of schools, professional development at summer institutes, and ongoing networking. During the second year of the Oklahoma A+ Schools, the research team examined the meaning of the essentials, their articulation in the schools, and the relationships among them (See Table 1).

Table 1: Roles and Relationships of the Eight Essentials of A+

Process	Curriculum and Instruction	Implicated Need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Collaboration</i> ❖ <i>Infrastructure</i> ❖ <i>School climate</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Arts</i> ❖ <i>Curriculum</i> ❖ <i>Multiple intelligences</i> ❖ <i>Experiential learning</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Enriched assessment</i>
<i>status after year two:</i>	<i>status after year two:</i>	<i>status after year two:</i>
<i>Schools demonstrate multiple intervals of engagement</i>	<i>Schools demonstrate multiple models of coherence</i>	<i>Further attention needed network-wide for greater understanding</i>

Three of the essentials -- collaboration, infrastructure, and school climate -- speak directly to the significance of process. Participants in the A+ network have recognized the need for a slow, patient process of cultural change. Among other challenges, teachers have to break through grade-level and disciplinary boundaries, become comfortable integrating the arts into their instruction, and expand their repertoire of instructional strategies. Additionally, principals provide visionary and/or facilitative leadership, restructure their school days to allow for collaborative planning, and network with other A+ principals.

Schools interweave four of the other essentials – arts integration, curriculum management, multiple intelligences, and experiential learning – to form the main curricular and instructional directions for the program. Together, these essentials provide the framework for a vision of priorities and educational philosophies.

Among the *Eight Essentials*, enriched assessment is identified as the area of need for greater understanding. The desire for greater understanding about enriched assessment comes from the perceived utility of alternative forms of assessment for communicating student learning and for diagnostic assistance.

When principals participated in the March 2004 A+ retreat, they requested further clarification and attention to enriched assessment, specifically in the areas of performance assessment, using enriched assessment, and designing rubrics. At the subsequent May 2004 fellows' retreat, Oklahoma A+ fellows provided professional development geared toward this area. Participants' responses to the sessions suggested additional need for understanding, dialogue, and experimentation. To engage enriched assessment, particularly in a context of increased external

THE PROCESS ESSENTIALS

Collaboration

It's going to be much better this year. Teachers are using a different vocabulary. We designed a template for the planning meetings for two-way integration. We have staff meeting once a month and I see more participation and clearer understanding of what we are trying to do here. . . I see teachers have a better understanding when they use the words "themes" or "topics" for example. You can see our curriculum map in the library.

(Interview with A+ principal, Fall, 2003)

School Climate

There is a positive feeling toward A+ . . . One of the positive changes brought about by A+ is more communication with all grade levels and a lot of different [teaching] opportunities that we didn't think about before.

(Interview with A+ teacher, 2003)

A+ has made a huge difference in our school – mostly in our communication as a staff. We pull together for a common goal. We have a school-wide focus.

(Interview with A+ teacher, 2003)

Because it's such a dangerous time for education, A+ must do well...I believe in it so much. It's good for me, good for the school, and especially, for Oklahoma as a state. With the budget cuts in education, it's more important than ever.

(Interview with A+ teacher, 2003)

accountability as Oklahoma responds to the No Child Left Behind legislation, requires a fairly deep conversation among teachers, principals, and fellows.

Particular areas of focus for ongoing conversation about enriched assessment include assessments of integrated lessons, the incorporation of assessment into the initial curriculum planning process, processes for self-evaluation of lessons and thematic units, and developing rubrics that suggest and promote creativity in outcomes. Schools have the opportunity to develop assessments that focus specifically on conceptual content that are at the foundation of curriculum planning. Teachers may also incorporate self-evaluation and collaborative evaluation into planning processes for ensuing lessons and the following school year.

The following are brief comments on schools' engagement with each of the *Eight Essentials*.

Collaboration

School-wide collaboration facilitates A+ implementation. Structures in place for regular collaboration are essential for this process. Schools also need a feedback loop and effective leadership to make the most of collaborative planning. Schools are learning the necessity of these processes, and those that have put them into place are changing the way they do things as a result of that collaboration (See Sidebar).

Infrastructure

Infrastructure within and between schools is important. A particularly interesting observation in relation to infrastructure is "networking." Through networking, principals have identified challenges they face and have shared and collaborated on solutions. Teachers are networking through formal activities, such as visits and job-alike sessions, and more informal processes. This aspect has been particularly evident among Oklahoma City area schools, which is not surprising since they are within relatively close physical proximity.

School Climate

A positive school climate can be an outcome of expertise and work in the other A+ essentials. It can also characterize a healthy existing culture, so while certain relationships between changes in school climate and the A+ process have been observed, causal relationships cannot be inferred. A prominent aspect of school climate is allegiance to A+, which has been observed to some degree in all of the A+ schools. A+ is often a source of pride in schools, allowing the climate to focus on positive views of teaching and learning and in many cases providing a remarkable source of resilience for faculty. This momentum is ongoing within A+ schools, even in situations involving budget cuts, staff reductions, and changes in administrative leadership (See Sidebar).

THE CURRICULAR ESSENTIALS

Multiple Intelligences

Multiple intelligences helps self-esteem. All students are smart in some way--if not word smart, maybe math smart or music smart. It improves their self-image. The knowledge of multiple intelligences helps the teachers reach children who are not word smart. However, students eventually need to show what they have learned on paper/pencil tests. That's just the way it is with standardized testing. That can be a challenge.

(Interview with A+ teacher, 2003)

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 A+ coordinators are preparing packages of materials with ideas to integrate MI in their lesson plans.

(Interview with A+ principal, Fall 2003)

Arts

We believe that art is not a separate thing. It is an integral part of learning.

(Interview with A+ school principal, 2003)

A+ has helped my teaching tremendously! I feel like I present... my children with a whole education now instead of bits and pieces.

(Interview with A+ teacher, 2003)

The two-way street gets tricky. [Music teachers] do have a curriculum—we are not just here for [other teachers to have] planning time. The first year of A+ may feel more one-way—this is a process. The second and third years will see more two-way – classroom teachers will get excited about it. Music teachers should take small steps; give classroom teachers ideas and encouragement. When the classroom teachers ask you to do a song, ask them, 'which activities are you doing in your class, so I don't replicate?' It's easier for kids when they have prior knowledge. Teachers should relate to other subjects—it makes your job easier too.

(Interview with music teacher, 2003)

Curriculum

[It's] great. I love it... Now we have a curriculum map. I wouldn't have thought before to integrate to the extent we have. Now I know what other teachers are doing.

Classroom teachers are saying that A+ has helped us more than any other program we've tried – and we've tried many! It is totally all-encompassing – it reaches special needs children, regular children, talented/gifted children, etc.

(Interview with A+ arts teacher, 2003)

Multiple Intelligences

Of the *Eight Essentials*, multiple intelligences was taken up most readily among Oklahoma A+ faculty and administrators. During the first year of A+ implementation, the language of multiple intelligences was frequently displayed on walls in classrooms and school hallways of all A+ schools. Multiple intelligence language was also prominent feature in transcripts of many different faculty interviews.

While initial engagement with A+ was manifested primarily through adoption of MI language, the second year of participation in the A+ process seems to be creating a “need to know” more about MI in some schools – an interest in achieving greater depth and instructional integrity.

Arts

Teachers and administrators in A+ schools generally express enthusiastic views of arts integration. This language adoption is evident throughout many interview transcripts.

As Oklahoma A+ moves into its third year, it will be important to document ways that schools begin to move toward two-way integration. [Note: Two-way integration is discussed as a separate theme later in this report.] The interview transcripts provide examples of optimism that the A+ process will facilitate deeper levels of integration.

Curriculum

Curriculum planning is a large focus of A+ institutes and retreats. Curriculum maps provide a basis for communication and instructional coherence within many A+ schools. A+ principals and teachers refined their approaches and uses of curriculum mapping during their second Summer Conferences.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is being interpreted in different ways in different schools. In interviews, teachers report a greater love of learning and enthusiasm for coming to school from their students who are engaged in experiential learning. This is especially true of experiential learning in the arts. Since arts activities have been most frequently used as experiential learning, this may lead to more comprehensive arts integration.

Enriched Assessment

The last essential – enriched assessment – is the least developed across the A+ network. The need for enriched assessment emerges as schools seek ways to expand conventional assessment systems in ways consistent with the rest of the essentials.

Learning Moments/Liminal Spaces

Underlying our discussion of themes is the notion that teachers, principals, and other members of the school communities are active learners in the implementation of the A+ essentials. Partly because of the richness and complexity of the A+ essentials, and partly because of the generative approach to professional development, the learning process is creative and open-ended. While this makes capturing and interpreting A+ implementation challenging for the research team, the complexity of the process is important to explain, so that participants may reflect upon the process, and so that new potential participants may have multiple points of entry for understanding how their schools may undertake this process.

Along those lines, the research team has documented learning moments, “liminal spaces,” or as some participants describe them, “a-ha moments,” when previously unclear aspects of A+ have been made clear and when participants come to a deeper understanding of the possibilities of A+.

Liminal Spaces at Summer Institute, Year Two

I work[ed] with classroom teachers, connecting them to community artists – helping them to integrate arts. This experience is a great connection.

Working with many talented, diverse, artistic people is wonderful ... we just shared, worked together, brainstormed and our creativity just fed off one another.

When I fall short of my own expectations, the 'process' still works.

Working with different fellows/faculty members helps to bring out our skills/strengths. It helps me to look at this process from many different points of view.

(A+ faculty and fellows, Summer 2003)

Liminal Spaces: A+ Fellows on School Faculties

We're getting two fellows in the building that go to trainings and also put trainings on. They're trainers as well, and they bring back a lot of information.

(Interview with A+ Principal, Fall 2003).

I've seen [our A+ coordinator] really take more of a leadership role with the A+... as things are coming up, encouraging them.

(Interview with A+ principal, Spring 2004)

Liminal spaces, described by anthropologist Victor Turner (1974), occur when a person is on a threshold of seeing new possibilities emerging and sees his or her prior experience in a new light. Learning moments in A+ schools happen when unexpected student outcomes occur or when teachers, through dialogue, critique their own practice. Teachers have described to researchers times when integrated, experiential lessons have led to students coming to a surprisingly sophisticated understanding of concepts. Other learning moments have occurred in teacher meetings.

In the A+ Schools, these learning moments are significant for sustaining interest in the program and moving teachers forward. While they may appear to be magical or inexplicable, they instead are the result of practice and reflection. In the A+ Schools, the learning moments seem to occur as a result of praxis – the term that Paulo Freire (1970/1990) used for a process in which action and critical reflection occur at the same time and reinforce each other. Praxis is rich practice and establishes the grounds for further reflection. These learning moments are real for teachers and are relevant for their individual settings. They cement educators' understanding of A+. The following field notes record a learning moment that a school counselor explained to the research team.

Although the counselor had pictures on the wall that illustrate the different smarts of the multiple intelligences, still she only got the idea of how to use them after attending one of the A+ sessions. There they detailed how MI teaches that everyone learns differently and how teachers need to find creative ways for all to learn and to celebrate all kinds of smarts. The counselor's own child is creative but not a "regular" student. The meeting with A+ assured her that her son is artistically creative, and that he needed nourishing and strengthening. Only then did the pictures on the wall in her office make sense, and she started using them with students who visit her due to problems with their academic preparation. She said the experience at the A+ meeting "hooked me" and "helped me understand" her son and other students.

(Researcher field notes, Spring 2004)

The A+ Schools facilitate learning moments by setting up conditions for multiple liminal spaces – pre-institutes, Summer Institutes and Conferences, A+ faculty and fellows retreats, principal/coordinator/new teacher retreats, ongoing professional development in schools, and planning meetings. For many schools, the second Summer Institute resulted in several liminal spaces. Schools that lacked collaborative structures, for instance, benefited from the fellows' collaborative exercise. In other cases, given the opportunity at the Summer Institute to evaluate their progress during the previous year, certain teachers realized that they needed to be more involved in communication with their peers. The quality of interaction in the institutes is reflected in fellows' comments about their experiences (See Sidebar).

Schools that have A+ faculty and fellows on staff have increased opportunities for learning moments. Examples of this point are found in comments from principals of schools that already have A+ fellows and A+ faculty in their buildings (See Sidebar). These learning moments are more likely to occur with greater interaction and contact. The recruitment of a

greater number of fellows during 2003-2004, including a concerted effort to expand connections for identifying potential fellows, helps this process.

The learning moments are significant for understanding how schools grow toward greater internal engagement with the *Eight Essentials*. Schools with multiple opportunities for collaboration provide themselves with more frequent and more significant learning moments. Some schools in Year Two have taken limited advantage of continuing, on-site professional development from A+ faculty and fellows. In subsequent years, the research team needs greater understanding of how this process works across the various schools and how principals incorporate the A+ essentials in their professional development plans.

Coherence

The theme of “coherence” speaks to a specific set of challenges that schools face as they undergo the learning process. As a result of schools’ experience of learning about A+ and its fit with other programs, frustration with disparate goals has prompted schools to look at the coherence of these efforts. Coherence is a particularly interesting theme for several reasons. The main reasons are its indication of teacher learning and integration and the promising connections between coherent vision and internal accountability.

Educational researchers have coined the term “internal accountability” to signify the result of processes in which all members of school communities – teachers, administrators, parents, students, community members, and others – collaborate around coherent visions for student learning (Carnoy, Elmore, & Siskind, 2003). Schools move toward greater internal accountability as they develop processes in which instruction is continually evaluated for the extent to which it contributes to student learning. Researchers recognize that internal accountability is a greater challenge for schools than external accountability, but in the long run, working toward internal accountability is more meaningful and worthwhile for its focus on community-driven definitions of student learning. In other words, schools that are internally accountable define what “student learning” means to them and develop practices that hold themselves internally accountable for students’ progress toward that definition of student learning.

Coherence and Allegiance

As mentioned above, a primary component of internal accountability is a coherent set of beliefs about education and student learning. As may be expected, the theme of “coherence” comes into play at the more advanced intervals of the three intervals of engagement. At the first interval, the *allegiance* interval, allying oneself with A+ and remaining enthusiastic suggests that schools are making choices about direction and educational commitments. This commitment is not always the case, however, because some schools are pledging allegiance to multiple, potentially conflicting programs and pursuits. Nevertheless, schools that continue their allegiance

Coherence: Arts and Core

We are partners with the John Kennedy Center concerning the arts in Washington, DC. And then we spent a lot of time getting ready for tests, and this year we were in our selecting math textbook adoption... What we're trying to do with our curriculum is use the arts to impact that core curriculum. And the arts, we've included drama, and then we have music and the visual arts and we've been working on dance, so far we've not been very successful with finding an instructor to do that. (Interview with A+ principal, Spring 2004).

Coherence and Internal Engagement

We do hang on to the bones of GE because it has really good principles. That's where we get our words of the week and quotes and expectations and a lot of really good standards to teach the kids and just a good outline. (Interview with A+ principal, Spring 2004)

with A+ provide themselves with opportunities for learning moments to engage the *Eight Essentials* at a deeper level.

Continued allegiance may also encourage resistant teachers to participate in A+, because they may have professional development experiences that eventually break down their resistance. A principal explained that her speech-language pathologist, who initially said she was not interested in attending the A+ sessions because she was "simply the speech teacher," appreciated what she learned. She now starts her lessons with music and movement and believes that her students' brains become more receptive and they become more engaged and excited. Resistance may become more problematic for some teachers as their peers work toward greater engagement with A+.

Coherence and Language Adoption

Coherence is more salient at the second interval, the language adoption interval. At this interval, coherence can mean a "coherent message," a theme that enables a school to rally its efforts for improvement, change, and/or grantseeking. The focus that A+ places on the arts, for example, has given particular schools a clear identity, which helps with public relations and facilitates obtaining grants. A coherent identity around the arts may lead a school to emphasize the arts over the other A+ essentials, or it may direct the school toward performance, but it may also lead to greater engagement with the relationships between the arts and the other A+ essentials. Coherence at this interval of language adoption is promising for future growth, because it may form the basis for the school developing more coherent engagement with A+ essentials and deeper integration.

Schools that adopt an arts theme may find themselves taking advantage of new learning opportunities. An example is the school whose principal described the school's arts connections and how the school is making connections between the arts and core areas (See Sidebar). In the principal's remarks, the juxtaposition of arts and testing makes sense in the context of the interview. As the principal explained earlier in the interview, the school has focused professional development on arts integration in other subjects, such as math.

Coherence and Internal Engagement

At the third interval, internal engagement, coherence is most salient. Schools internally engaging with the *Eight Essentials* find themselves defining student learning and adapting instructional practices. Coming to coherence is a process of making a firm philosophical commitment to the *Eight Essentials* (or more accurately, a commitment to a particular combination of the essentials) as the central theme, driving force, or integrator of all its efforts.

When schools operate at this interval of engagement, it may be as a result of finding themselves at cross-purposes when they try to implement A+ and other programs or professional development opportunities. For example, several A+ schools also are involved in Core Knowledge and Great Expectations (GE) (See Sidebar). As mentioned in the first-year

report, many schools are questioning how multiple programs cohere. At the interval of internal engagement, schools begin to make choices to accommodate, eliminate, or tolerate other initiatives.

Table 2: Four Models of Coherence

	A+ as add-on	A+ as fitting in	A+ as glue	A+ as central focus
Focus of the School	<i>School has multiple foci, A+ being one of many</i>	<i>School adapts A+ to a theme or program that has greater salience for the school</i>	<i>School has multiple programs, and A+ enables school to bind them together</i>	<i>School explores the Eight Essentials almost exclusively</i>
Coherence	<i>School is not sure how A+ fits in with other initiatives or practices</i>	<i>School sees A+ fitting in a particular way but subject to a different focus</i>	<i>School evaluates its practices for their contribution to A+</i>	<i>School actively creates practices based on its synthesis of the essentials</i>
Intervals of Engagement	<i>School pledges allegiance to A+ and may adopt some of the A+ terminology</i>	<i>School adopts whatever A+ language is consistent with or supports larger focus</i>	<i>School is moving toward greater internal engagement</i>	<i>School exhibits internal engagement</i>
Role of the Eight Essentials	<i>School makes initial attempts to address one or more essentials</i>	<i>School emphasizes essentials that fit in with larger theme and omits others</i>	<i>School seeks greater understanding and forms a combination of essentials that holds all else together</i>	<i>School explores essentials, combining and expanding them creatively.</i>
Moving forward	<i>School may experience splits in faculty; implementation may be stressful</i>	<i>School leadership may need to articulate coherent vision; school may adapt A+ to fit its larger goals</i>	<i>School will make new ideas contingent upon fit with A+; school may de-emphasize other priorities</i>	<i>School will continue to create and expand its understanding</i>

Four Models of Coherence

At the close of the second year, the A+ schools are exhibiting three models of coherence – A+ as add-on, A+ as fitting in, A+ as glue – and are working toward a fourth model, A+ as central vision (See Table 2).

A+ as an Add-On

A+ can be an “add-on” to schools’ efforts if teachers are expected to implement A+ on top of other initiatives or existing practices without modification of those prior programs and practices. At the latest, by the beginning of their second year as A+ schools, the A+ schools no longer consider A+ as an add-on and have developed models of greater coherence.

A+ as Add-On: School within a School Approach

*I know that eventually we've got to reach a point where the entire school is an A+ [school] and I think that we could do that. It is certainly attainable, but we're waiting for teacher buy in, too. So we think gradually is better than fast, and then we don't want the program to be watered down. We want the kids to think that they do have something worthwhile.
(Interview with A+ principal, Spring 2004)*

A+ may also be considered an add-on if only a portion of the school personnel are engaged in the initiative, whether formally or informally. A+ Schools take a whole-school approach to implementation, involving as many members of the school community as possible. As mentioned in the Year One report, "engagement" is a preferred term to the more dualistic "buy-in," signifying that everyone participating in the initiative goes through a process of learning, regardless of his or her level of enthusiasm for the program.

One school ran counter to the whole-school approach and experimented with a School Within a School (SWS) approach, implementing A+ more thoroughly in the SWS setting as a way of building the program in the rest of the school. The principal spoke candidly about the school's difficulties with engagement and the trade-offs associated with the SWS approach in terms of teacher and student engagement (See Sidebar).

A+ as Fitting In

A+ may "fit in" with other initiatives and practices of a school without being the central theme that drives the school. In this case, the school may have a coherent vision, with A+ (or aspects of A+) serving a supporting role. Alternatively, the principal may have a vision for the pieces fitting together, but the teachers may not see it. In other places, school personnel may adopt a philosophy that multiple initiatives provide students with multiple opportunities. In these settings, A+ may be seen as fitting in because it provides an avenue for "repetition" of subject matter.

At some schools, teachers feel pulled in multiple directions if multiple programs are not coherent (or are not made coherent through some adaptation or organization). Some programs and initiatives are less consistent with A+ than others. Scripted delivery programs are more difficult to integrate (as are programs that mandate a certain amount of time for specific subject matter, such as some of the reading programs that schools are adopting). Instead of integrating the entire curriculum in these situations, schools may plan the scripted part of the curriculum separately, or they may integrate other aspects of the same subject matter. Some schools are phasing out these programs.

At the same time, internal engagement with the A+ essentials leads some principals and teachers to make varied programs more consistent through modifications. Of the A+ Schools that also participate in Great Expectations and Core Knowledge, for example, principals may justify having all three programs as particular accommodations are made. At some point, however, teachers or principals choose which takes priority, such as when choosing which program to emphasize when hiring new teachers or choosing which summer professional development sessions to attend. Even when these modifications are made, teachers may question the multiplicity of the school's efforts.

The limitation of fitting A+ into existing initiatives is that the school lacks deeper engagement with the A+ essentials. Some of the essentials may necessarily be subjugated so that the school may pursue its central focus.

In the case of scripted learning programs, schools obscure opportunities to develop more creative ways to deliver curriculum that are more consistent with the A+ essentials.

A+ as the Glue

*The accountability with A+ is... a sense of pride, making them feel like... you're proud of us over here at A+ because you see us working to achieve in our way... [What] we want to do with GE and A+ both is, you know, providing that safe, non-threatening environment for everybody to learn.
(Interview with A+ principal, Spring 2004)*

A+ as the Glue

In other settings, A+ may co-exist with other programs, initiatives, and practices, but rather than merely co-existing, it also serves as the vision against which other efforts are measured. After schools learn about the *Eight Essentials* and put them into practice for a period of time, they will begin to make decisions based more squarely on coherence with A+.

Schools may find it possible to build a coherent vision around A+ because it is more comprehensive than most other initiatives. One principal has shifted attention away from Great Expectations (GE) and toward A+, because A+ is “more fluid” and provides the “glue” that keeps the school’s efforts together. This principal compared A+ to Great Expectations, noting the utility of the latter program but also suggesting that A+ provides the framework for creative implementation and greater possibilities for future direction (See Sidebar).

A+ as Central Theme

None of the A+ schools have reached this model of coherence yet, but several schools are quickly moving toward making the *Eight Essentials* their central organizing principles, and schools occasionally have experiences that resemble the model. Theoretically, in this model of coherence, schools actively engage the *Eight Essentials* almost exclusively, effectively eliminating other competing initiatives that detract time and attention. Because of the richness and complexity of the A+ essentials, schools that follow this model synthesize the A+ essentials and create novel structures and practices that promote their particular visions of student learning. Schools that approach this model of coherence will continue to create and expand their own possibilities.

Discipline

When researchers compared their notes on the second year of A+, discipline emerged as another, unexpected aspect of coherence. Nearly all of the Oklahoma A+ Schools have created disciplined, respectful environments for students. Arts instruction in particular is known to promote respectful environments, because it engages children more completely and contributes to a healthier and more productive school environment. However, instruction in the arts is neither a palliative for children nor a panacea for discipline problems. Arts instruction may also complicate a school’s discipline philosophy because of the potential freedom of movement and self-expression. However, discipline is part of coherence because of counterexamples, cases when observed disciplinary efforts have worked against the creation of respectful school communities.

A+ schools need philosophies of discipline and respect that are coherent with the A+ essentials. Most do, in fact. Many schools use compatible programs that promote good behavior. Aspects of Great Expectations, for

example, wherein a primary goal is establishing practices that promote kindness and a climate of mutual respect, may form a consistent philosophy of discipline when integrated with A+. However, using only selected pieces from Great Expectations – for example, the aspects that reinforce control rather than kindness – sometimes has the ironic effect of detracting from a climate of respect.

Particular situations that researchers have observed in schools need to be addressed with comprehensive solutions. In a limited number of schools, researchers have witnessed adults in some classrooms managing children's behavior harshly. In other cases, researchers observe classrooms of the same children on the same day behaving dramatically different in front of different teachers. For such circumstances, collaboration across the network will facilitate solutions, because effective philosophies of discipline that promote respect and facilitate learning have been documented at most A+ schools.

Topical Units/Integration

In the first-year report, the research team identified “multiple levels of integration” as an important aspect of curriculum planning. Schools' engagement in curriculum planning at the second Summer Institute and during the second year of A+ suggest the ongoing significance of learning about integration, field-testing its implementation, and establishing the grounds for future engagement. Building on our theme from last year about various kinds of integration, we still see quite a bit of variation in the types of integration, who does it, and how much of the curriculum gets integrated. This is a rather complicated theme. Taking the lead from the fellows' focus during the second Summer Institute and subsequent retreats, we here interpret A+ Schools' learning about integration by building on the distinctions between topical units and A+ thematic units.

Distinctions may be made between and among **enrichment**, **hands-on**, **links**, and **two-way integration**. The first three are important and valuable, but more coherent implementation of A+ will reflect the fourth, two-way integration, as the norm. A+ professional development has focused on “essential questions” and distinguishing between “thematic units” and “A+ thematic units” to help teachers engage art integration more deeply. These concepts, which have been introduced at institutes to explain integration to teachers, are difficult for some teachers to grasp. Continued engagement with these concepts will enable teachers to become more proficient and creative in two-way integration.

Enrichment

More arts activities and experiences may be added to the school day to expand the curriculum in creative ways, yet these enrichment experiences may remain disconnected from the rest of the curriculum. Visiting performers may expose students to artistic forms without curricular experience. Artists-in-residence are providing some additional arts

experiences in schools; in some places this work is integrated with the curriculum, and in other places it is not. In some places, this work also includes professional development for teachers.

Hands-on/Arts Curricula

In some places, “hands-on” learning activities count as integration. Since A+ has a separate essential for “experiential learning,” a broader concept than “hands-on,” teachers have a way to expand their hands-on activities and make them richer experiential learning opportunities for their students. Because experiential learning is a separate essential, it helps to make the distinction between hands-on and arts integration. Some teachers worried they are not “doing A+” are encouraged by their peers who affirm that even rudimentary “hands-on” efforts can be thought of as A+. As long as teachers aren’t using “ditto sheets,” as one teacher put it, they may be considered to be doing A+ teaching and learning. It is logical to assume that such efforts are at the beginning of a process that will lead to more meaningful integration as learning is sustained.

Topical Links

A major focus of professional development for the second Summer Institute and subsequent A+ retreats was making a distinction between topical and conceptual integration. In the initial learning process, much integration is “topical.” This is also evident in places where collaboration is limited to grade-level teachers telling arts specialists their topic of study and arts specialists reinforcing subject matter by singing relevant songs, drawing pictures, or acting out stories. Topical links such as these examples reinforce or repeat subject matter, which can be valuable. However, they are limited in two ways. First, such attempts at integration obscure the content of the arts curricula; second, such attempts miss opportunities to integrate at the conceptual level.

Two-Way Integration

Conceptual integration is more possible when schools exercise two-way arts integration, when concepts that cross subject matter areas are the focus of curriculum planning, and when teachers use “essential questions” to guide their goal-setting, instructional strategies, and assessment. In the second year of A+, the research team has noted facilitators and impediments to two-way integration. Facilitating grade-level teachers’ learning about the concepts in the arts curricula is a primary challenge (See Sidebar).

The single greatest facilitator of two-way integration is a planning structure that promotes ongoing, regularly scheduled collaboration between and among grade-level teachers, arts specialists, and other specialists.

Arts specialists, coordinators, and other A+ champions are key to moving from topical integration to deeper, two-way integration. Some arts specialists are serving as resources or collaborators for classroom teachers to develop arts activities that incorporate arts objectives. When these

Two-Way Integration

*They are pretty proficient in integrating curriculum into the arts as far as integrating curriculum into music and arts. We feel our next step is taking those subjects: art, music, and dance and putting them into the regular classroom.
(Interview with A+ principal, 2003)*

personnel are at the school day to day and have positive working relationships with their peers, teachers seem to be learning more about the arts curriculum and building their confidence. In the following school, the principal has structured the school day to accommodate collaboration, and arts specialists have developed extensive communication practices to make the most of these opportunities.

The visual arts teacher told me about the projects the kids are doing in the visual art class, which ties with what they are learning in the other subjects. He told me that he sits with the other subject teachers to get to know what they are teaching, and then he ties his arts activities in line with what the kids are doing in the other subjects. He showed me some of the projects the kids have done in this class.

(Researcher field notes, Fall 2003)

Structures for Two-Way Integration

We have team planning here. [The principal] has set up the infrastructure to work. We have a schedule that will allow it. Teachers make time. The climate is also good here, and it is getting better. We combine PE and music [on the planning day] and one of us goes to the meeting. We take turns and share with each other. It works if we have enough time to relay the information to each other. It would be better if we could all go.
(Interview with arts teacher, Spring 2003)

In this school, the presence of two arts specialists gives integration and the arts curriculum a higher profile. Because the arts specialists have portions of their days open for special projects, they are able to use this time flexibly; researchers observed the specialists planning curriculum at grade-level teacher meetings and co-teaching creative lessons with grade-level teachers. When possible, replicating these examples of communication and co-teaching hold great promise, because of their potential for leading to further collaborations and teacher learning about the curriculum.

There are several impediments to two-way integration. While students' exposure to music instruction from a music specialist is widespread, similarly to most Oklahoma elementary schools, the other arts forms are not as well represented. Some of the schools do not have a full-time visual art teacher, and in some other cases, only students at certain grade levels receive instruction from a visual art specialist. Instruction in dance and drama is sporadic. Due to limited resources, only one school has a full-time drama specialist, and only one school has a dance specialist. The lack of resource specialists in these areas limits the opportunities for collaborative integration.

Dance instruction is present in other schools only where the physical education teacher has adopted some movement as part of the curriculum. Little integration of dance has been reported or observed. The curriculum of physical education itself is varied in the extent of its integration into the rest of the curriculum. One of the new schools' physical education teachers had significant learning experiences at the Summer Institute, and school personnel attending retreats during the school year have identified physical education as an area that needs more attention for integration possibilities across the curriculum.

Schools have responded creatively to the challenge posed by the lack of arts specialists. Artists-in-residence, visiting artists, and parent volunteers are contributing to these areas in some locations. Small schools face this challenge particularly. One school has made extensive use of parent volunteers skilled in the arts. Such efforts would normally fall into the category of enrichment, but in this case, the parent volunteers actually integrate subject matter from other curriculum areas. This topical integration goes beyond conventional expectations of volunteer

instruction. Working toward two-way integration through this method would be an additional challenge.

Another challenge for small schools is collaborating with itinerant arts specialists who are only available on a part-time basis or who are also responsible for other schools. One school's itinerant music and visual art specialists came to the second Summer Institute and expressed their interest in collaborating more often and more effectively with grade-level teachers. The second year of the program gave these specialists the opportunity to expand their essential roles in the success of the program. A specialist said this at the Summer Institute: *I didn't do anything differently last year than had been done before. At least now I know to ask them what their themes are, so I can pull a song from that theme or that topic* (Interview with arts specialist, Summer 2003).

Fellows' Transition

Fellows' Transition/ Maturation of A+ Network

This was probably the best of all that I've been to, and the others have been good. But this one, for me, was the best spring retreat and training... [for] a combination of reasons. Number one, I think we've been together as a group.... We're beginning to build that rapport and trust.... I think another reason is, there was more opportunity for dialogue.... A lot of sharing occurred of resources and ideas and concerns.... And this time it was Oklahoma staff. And again, no comment toward the others in North Carolina, because we couldn't have done it without them.... But I think it's reached a point where we're ready to hear what we're doing now and experience that. So it was the [right] timing for that transition to occur. And the foundation was laid very well, and I appreciate that. (Interview with A+ principal, Spring 2004)

During the second Summer Institute and subsequent retreats and planning meetings during the 2003-2004 academic year, Oklahoma fellows took on increasingly greater responsibility for professional development, while the North Carolina fellows' responsibility decreased. At the beginning of the school year, the A+ professional staff planned for a transitional time, when Oklahoma fellows developed increasing responsibility, with the planned result of having only one North Carolina fellow to serve as a consultant during the third year of the program.

Oklahoma A+ professional staff developed professional guidelines for A+ faculty and A+ fellows and established clearer expectations for the process of transitioning from A+ faculty to A+ fellow and for maintaining A+ fellow status from year to year. The professional staff also expanded the number of A+ faculty and A+ fellows through systematic recruitment of educators recognized for their excellence, for their expertise in various arts forms, for their expertise in technology, and for their culturally diverse backgrounds. These concerted efforts diversified the expertise of the Oklahoma A+ fellows, increased the number of A+ faculty who are also teachers in A+ schools, and expanded the Oklahoma A+ network.

Oklahoma fellows have dramatically developed from largely imitative initial efforts to better-researched, more theoretically-grounded presentations. A clear sense of ownership and responsibility is present. Earlier senses of dependence upon North Carolina fellows have been replaced with a sense of a stronger foundation. The transition seems to be welcomed by everyone involved.

A principal commented to the research team about the success of the March 2004 retreat for principals, coordinators, and new teachers (See Sidebar). This retreat was a particularly significant milestone in the growth and development of the Oklahoma A+ fellows and for the confidence and network-building processes for the A+ principals. The principal provided three reasons for the success of the retreat which relate to the professional

development of the fellows and the maturation of the Oklahoma network. The principal speaks to themes of togetherness, dialogue, and ownership.

The growth and development of the A+ fellows is a rather significant aspect of the A+ Schools initiative, and the research team will need to devote more attention to this process in the future. The team needs to understand the ways in which working relationships with the North Carolina partners and fellows will help the Oklahoma team move forward.

Complexity of Student Populations

Complexity of Student Populations

*One of the things that I think works well here – because of the style of teaching that happens – is for those students that have learning disabilities in some way. . . . They really are able to remain in the regular classroom very significantly and be successful. Not just be in there, but they are being successful because of the style of teaching that occurs.
(Interview with A+ principal, Spring 2004)*

The research team has observed some interesting learning moments in relation to the student population complexity of the A+ Schools. The A+ Schools include several schools which have significant populations of non-white children, children with special needs, English language learners, and children who live in poverty. The composition of these schools is especially noteworthy for the project for a number of reasons. One of the most salient issues is the way in which the program provides the tools for teachers to critique deficit models of education (Valencia, 1997). The A+ essentials address all children, with various situations of abilities and learning styles, and incorporate multiple learning experiences. A principal addressed the possibilities for inclusion of students with learning disabilities (See Sidebar).

The tension between A+ and deficit models was evident in a series of discussions by a school at the second Summer Institute. In this school, teachers held two contrasting views toward students' abilities. One group expressed its resistance to A+ by expressing the view that "our kids can't do this" – an indicator of deficit thinking. The other group of A+ advocates participated enthusiastically in activities and countered deficit comments with hopeful comments about involving parents and the community in projects. The principal reinforced the second group's view, reminding the teachers that they had worked hard over several years to reverse negative attitudes toward children's abilities and their family situations.

Issues associated with teaching children with language differences, low socioeconomic status, and special needs cut across all of the other themes as well, as do themes of diversity of race and ethnicity. Further, thematic planning, community involvement, and arts integration provide promising opportunities for exploring culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). If for no other reason than the complexity of student populations, this is a topic and possibility worthy of future exploration by the A+ schools and the research team.

Descriptive Statistics

At the end of the 2003-2004 academic year, descriptive statistics and survey results are available on the 19 schools participating in the

Oklahoma A+ Schools initiative. More comprehensive, summative reporting on these data will be made at the fourth and sixth years of the research. All statistics in this section of the report are based on data available as of May 21, 2004. Some individual school information is unavailable at this time; therefore, summary statistics in the tables may be updated in subsequent reports.

Academic Performance Index (API)

The API, defined in Oklahoma state law under Title 70 O.S. § 3-150 and 3-151, is a numeric score (from 0-1500) indicating school performance based upon state-mandated tests and other factors contributing to a school's educational success. The seven educational indicators in the API formula are:

1. Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) scores,
2. Attendance rates,
3. Dropout rates,
4. Advanced Placement participation and performance (secondary schools),
5. Graduation rates (secondary schools),
6. ACT average scores (secondary schools), and
7. College remediation rates (secondary schools).

The purpose of the API is to measure success and initiate growth in school and district performance in Oklahoma. It is important to remember that because of vast differences in size, location, demographics, etc. among Oklahoma schools, the State Department of Education (2003) urges caution in comparing the score of one school or district to that of another.

Table 3: API Scores for Oklahoma A+ Schools (Original 14 Schools)

	2001-2002 (Before A+)		2002-2003 (A+ Year One)		2003-2004 (A+ Year Two)	
	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
<i>Regular*</i>	553	1300	619	1303	791	1380
<i>Male</i>	579	1410	987	1446	**	**
<i>Female</i>	547	1330	912	1331	**	**
<i>Economically Disadvantaged</i>	538	1326	816	1384	**	**
<i>All</i>	392	1285	613	1256	**	**

* Regular student scores (does not include special education students and English language learners)

** Data not available at this time

Table 4: API Scores for Oklahoma A+ Schools (5 New Schools)

	2002-2003 (Before A+)		2003-2004 (A+ Year One)	
	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
<i>Regular*</i>	436	1055	Available 11/1/04	
<i>Male</i>	406	1098	Available 11/1/04	
<i>Female</i>	482	1008	Available 11/1/04	
<i>Economically Disadvantaged</i>	384	943	Available 11/1/04	
<i>All</i>	383	849	Available 11/1/04	

**Regular student scores (does not include special education students and English language learners)*

At this time, complete API scores are only available for the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic years. Table 3 provides the minimum and maximum API scores among the first 14 schools implementing the A+ process during the 2002-2003 academic year. Table 4 provides the same information for the five new schools implementing the A+ process for the first time during the 2003-2004 academic year.

Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT/CRT)

During the 1993-94 school year, committees of Oklahoma educators established Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) as the set of academic skills and knowledge that public school students are expected to master at each grade level. All PASS clusters and skills are measured by multiple-choice items, except writing. The PASS writing skills are measured by a direct writing assessment.

As mandated by Oklahoma state law (Title 70 O.S. 1210.508) the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCTs) were developed to sample the skills and content specified in the PASS standards. Student performance on the OCCTs is classified into either Satisfactory (at least 70% mastery of content) or Unsatisfactory, or one of four performance levels (Advanced, Satisfactory, Limited Knowledge, and Unsatisfactory). The minimum requirement for a Satisfactory school rating is 70% mastery by at least 70% of the students.

Table 5: Percentage of A+ 5th Grade Students Scoring Satisfactory or Higher on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test (Original 14 Schools)

	2001-2002 (Before A+)		2002-2003 (A+ Year One)		2003-2004 (A+ Year Two)	
	Minimum %	Maximum %	Minimum %	Maximum %	Minimum %	Maximum %
Arts	36	90	61	97	61	100
Geography	23	93	24	92	26	100
Math	41	100	37	97	74	96
Reading	48	100	43	94	48	91
Science	32	100	62	97	71	94
Social Studies	14	97	43	95	52	94
Writing	50	98	61	100	*	*

*Data not available

Table 6: Percentage of A+ 5th Grade Students Scoring Satisfactory or Higher on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test (5 New Schools)

	2002-2003 (Before A+)		2003-2004 (A+ Year One)	
	Minimum %	Maximum %	Minimum %	Maximum %
Arts	61	97	*	*
Geography	24	92	*	*
Math	37	97	*	*
Reading	43	94	*	*
Science	62	97	*	*
Social Studies	43	95	*	*
Writing	61	100	*	*

*Data not available

Teacher Survey

An important component of the A+ research design is documenting and describing the opinions and attitudes of teachers toward the arts. The goal in year two was to develop a valid and reliable instrument to use over time. After a thorough review of the literature and examination of the teacher survey used by the North Carolina A+ Program researchers, the research team decided to construct an instrument specifically for Oklahoma teachers. Potential items from the literature, including existing instruments, were used to design the 48-item Teachers Opinion Survey (TOS) (See Appendix B).

Response options for these items were 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree. A+ teachers completed the survey on the first evening of their Summer Institute in 2003. There were 312 participating teachers whose surveys were analyzed for existing scales, validity (though factor analysis), and reliability (alpha).

Instead of reporting 48 separate items, the research team used statistical analysis to identify reliable groups of items, called scales, to interpret more appropriately what the 48 items measure. Scale 1 items focus on *student outcomes* and what the arts can accomplish for learning (Item Mean = 3.26). Scale 2 describes various aspects of *collaboration* that are necessary when planning arts integrated curriculum (Item Mean = 2.96). Scale 3 items relate to the *artistry of the teacher* (Item Mean = 2.86) and Scale 4 (Item Mean = 1.91) provides a view of the importance of the *arts for its own sake* of excellence.

These initial factor scores are reported here. Further analysis is not appropriate at this time, since these scores serve as baseline information for future analysis and comparisons.

Table 7: My Class Activities Student Survey

Sex	%
Female	52%
Male	48%

Grade Level	N	%
Grade 3	467	33.2
Grade 4	478	34.0
Grade 5	452	32.2
Other	8	0.6
Not marked	90	
Total	1495	

	Scale 1: Interest	Scale 2: Challenge	Scale 3: Choice	Scale 4: Enjoyment
Number of Defining Statements for Scale	7	9	7	7
Reliability of Scale (alpha)*	.7970	.6082	.6303	.9030
Scale Mean	26.1969	32.6115	21.4257	28.0177
(Standard Deviation)	(4.9965)	(5.0181)	(4.9727)	(6.2795)
Item Mean**	3.7424	3.6235	3.0608	4.0025

"My Class Activities" student survey used with permission of its author, Marcia Gentry, Minnesota State University

*Reliability of the scale increases the closer alpha = 1.0

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

My Class Activities: Student Survey

Teachers, artists, and arts educators often describe their student outcome goals as classroom variables that contribute to learning. Especially in arts integration programs consistent with the A+ essentials, goals related to the disposition of students who experience the arts in all learning are most commonly reported. Teachers seek to establish the climate and curriculum to have students who are engaged and interested in learning activities, those who enjoy the challenge of learning new knowledge or skills, and those students who would likely choose to continue to participate in the types of activities assigned.

Upon review of classroom climate instruments, the scales on *My Class Activities* (MCA) (Gentry & Gable, 2001) were determined to be the most appropriate measure of these student outcomes.

The four scales of the instrument demonstrate interest, challenge, enjoyment, and choice. The MCA was administered to students in the third grade and older. The instrument was standardized with more than 3700 students in grades 3-8 and has acceptable reliability. For validity, the MCA was developed considering motivation and learning theory, and the four scales held up with factor analysis. The MCA provides baseline information for subsequent years as schools continue with A+. These initial mean scores are reported here. Further analysis is not appropriate at this time. These scores serve as baseline information for future analysis and comparisons.

FUTURE RESEARCH

As schools continue to engage the A+ essentials, the research team will continue to address schools' learning processes. When the research team gets to the point of providing comments toward a summative evaluation of the Oklahoma A+ Schools initiative, one of the important questions to address will be the particular aspects of the A+ network that contribute to student learning. Answers to this question will undoubtedly include aspects of educational and instructional philosophy, but at this point, the learning processes that schools undergo seem to be just as important if not more so.

Schools beginning their third year of involvement as Oklahoma A+ schools are likely to begin to differentiate in their interpretations, applications, and accommodations of the *Eight Essentials*. Schools may begin to look different from each other, depending on the essentials that are emphasized, the coherence of implementation, and the elements of infrastructure that are put into place. Along these lines, the question for the research team will be to interpret how prior dispositions contribute to that differentiation and how participation in the A+ network contributes. Focusing on this theme in the future will enable the research team to explain the ways in which the A+ network provides meaningful learning experiences for school communities, how its flexibility contributes to creative implementation, and how the vitality of the A+ essentials contributes to comprehensive and robust school reform.

Current data reflect the 19 schools participating in the Oklahoma A+ network during the 2003-2004 academic year. Three additional schools have joined the Oklahoma A+ network and will begin project implementation during the 2004-2005 academic year. Baseline information is currently being collected at these schools.

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF YEAR-ONE REPORT

In the Year-One Report, the research team summarized its initial themes in the following manner:

Engagement with A+

During the first year of the A+ Program, the 14 Oklahoma A+ Schools have engaged the program with varying depth and complexity, which the research team has grouped into three intervals: allegiance, language adoption, and internal engagement. The first interval, allegiance, refers to the continued interest of the schools in the A+ Program. At each A+ School, researchers have identified enduring enthusiasm and optimism about A+, despite challenges in some places, particularly in terms of resources. As a second interval, language adoption is evident in schools that have begun using terminology associated with the A+ Program and have made initial attempts to adopt ideas such as the multiple intelligences. At some schools, language adoption is indicative of initial efforts to understand and implement the program, and in other places, it is indicative of new rationales for existing programs. Schools at times have worked at the third interval, internal engagement, wherein they tie together several A+ essentials and actively create curricula that apply to rich conceptual goals. This level of engagement provides the strongest evidence of openness to growth. The challenge for the program is to encourage this deeper level of engagement with the essential elements of A+.

Curriculum Planning

Many of the challenges of A+ implementation are associated with working as a whole school to plan for instruction that is

collaborative, thematic, and reflects two-way integration. During the first year of the program, the research team has found that (a) schools are using varied definitions of integration; (b) schools are finding that time together to collaborate and plan curriculum is a great challenge; (c) schools have used varied methods for collaboration, with face-to-face planning most effective; and (d) schools with multiple programs and curricula in place at one time have been working to coordinate these efforts.

Infrastructure

Particular aspects of infrastructure appear to facilitate implementation of the program. Most notable is (a) the presence of arts specialists on the school staff, which varies by school; (b) clear leadership roles of the principal and/or A+ coordinator are important; and (c) access to community resources makes a significant difference.

Community Building

In A+ Schools, the notion of community is significant on multiple levels. Building community within schools is important for fostering collaboration and integration, as is the making of connections to communities outside schools. The development of the network of A+ Schools in Oklahoma has facilitated professional development and problem-solving. Promising linkages between schools have emerged. The tri-state community of schools, educators, and reformers in Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Arkansas has been established to further promote linkages and collaboration.

APPENDIX B: DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER OPINION SURVEY

Oklahoma teachers in elementary schools are participating in arts integration programs to enhance teaching and learning over time by infusing the arts across all curricula. As part of the need to describe any changes, these programs required structured feedback from the teachers who were participants each year. A thorough review of literature was conducted to discover an appropriate instrument to determine the attitudes of teachers toward the arts and arts integration. Potential items from the literature, including existing instruments, were extracted and printed on cards. Approximately 380 items were identified (heterogeneity).

Validity

A panel of eight arts educators, teachers, and researchers read each item and grouped them together because they were alike in some way (similar to Taba strategies, Schiever, 1993). Over 12 categories were generated and named according to the item similarity (homogeneity) with rewording or eliminating redundancy. Several categories were discovered to identify different aspects of the same broad category and were collapsed to result in five groups of items: professional development, the arts and curriculum, arts integration, program involvement, and collaboration. There were 4-14 items in each category, which were printed and distributed to key leaders in the arts integration programs, including A+ fellows, A+ administration and Project CREATES resource coaches and researchers.

The edited items, comments, and feedback were integrated into the resultant 48 Likert-type items and five ranked items that comprise the Teachers Opinion Survey (TOS). The TOS was distributed and completed by 312 A+ teachers during their first evening session during the Summer Institutes.

Factor Analysis

These data were analyzed by exploratory factor analysis to determine the most appropriate scales for future descriptions of teacher attitudes about arts integration in the schools.

Results were evaluated for three-, four-, and five-factor solutions using .35 to determine significance for factor loading. The four-factor solution provided the greatest number of items that loaded on one of the factors, a theoretically sound description of the four scales, and relatively strong reliability for the scales. Hence, the factors are presented here, with the items that define the factor and the factor scores for all of the A+ teachers for June, 2003 (See Table 8).

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Table 8: Scale Items for Teacher Opinion Survey

Scale 1: Student Outcome	Scale 2: Collaboration	Scale 3: Teacher as Artist	Scale 4: Arts for Arts Sake
Item and factor score	Item and factor score	Item and factor score	Item and factor score
<i>I am motivated to use the arts in my classroom because of the diversity of my students.</i> .728	<i>I spend a large part of my planning time with other teachers.</i> .599	<i>My own personality and passion for the arts is shared with students daily.</i> .733	<i>The arts take away time from important preparation for regular curricular outcomes.</i> .603
<i>The arts in my classroom enhance the spirit of respect and empathy.</i> .702	<i>Group planning time for teaching the arts is scheduled and used consistently at my school.</i> .579	<i>My own participation in the arts is evident in my classroom.</i> .721	<i>The purpose of high quality instruction in the arts is to prepare those who will go on to work in art-related fields.</i> .516
<i>Arts integration aids in the goal of students loving to learn.</i> .674	<i>I take advantage of the resources offered with this arts program.</i> .516	<i>I do not have sufficient knowledge of any art domain to ensure the success of an integrated curriculum.</i> -.634	<i>Teaching the arts is less demanding than teaching other subjects.</i> .494
<i>Using the arts in my classroom reduces discipline issues for the children I teach.</i> .581	<i>Ever since I started to be involved with this program, I have a renewed interest in coming to work.</i> .502	<i>Students study the arts in a multicultural context in my classroom.</i> .465	<i>Arts specialists are not as necessary at the elementary level because classroom teachers can teach the arts.</i> .458
<i>Integrating the arts into the general curriculum makes my teaching more rewarding to me.</i> .566	<i>There is adequate time for collaborating with in-school arts specialists.</i> .493	<i>My personal fulfillment as a teacher is enhanced by my work in the arts.</i> .407	<i>I feel uncomfortable with the disorder of the arts integrated into all subjects.</i> .409
<i>I use the arts in my classroom to emphasize curricular themes.</i> .433	<i>Teachers are encouraged to be creative at my school.</i> .475		<i>Talent development in the arts is most appropriately served through extra-curricular programs.</i> .382
<i>At my school, I am not expected to conform to any particular teaching style.</i> .391	<i>My professional goal this past academic year was to work on learning to better integrate the arts into the general curriculum.</i> .447		<i>Only those teachers who have artistic background and formal training have a realistic preparation for teaching the arts.</i> .367
<i>Students become more self-actualized through the arts.</i> .366	<i>The nature of this program allows for collaboration with others.</i> .393		
<i>My theoretical orientation in planning curriculum is whole child: thinking, feeling, doing, and creating.</i> .351	<i>There is much experimentation with different teaching approaches at my school.</i> .385		
	<i>Collaborating with visiting artists is an essential part of my teaching.</i> .381		
Number of Defining Statements for Scale 9	10	5	7
Reliability of Scale (alpha) .84	.78	.49	.695
Scale Mean 29.34	29.57	17.2	13.43
(Standard Deviation) (3.45)	(3.94)	(1.72)	(2.75)
Item Mean 3.26	2.96	2.86	1.91

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RESEARCH PERSONNEL

A collaborative research team created the research design and collected and analyzed the data in this report.

University of Oklahoma

Nancy H. Barry is Professor, Chair and Graduate Coordinator of Music Education at the University of Oklahoma. She earned the MME and PhD in music education, and certificates in Electronic Music and Computers in Music from Florida State University. Barry has taught public school general music, band, and chorus in grades K-12 in Tennessee and was Professor of Music Education at Auburn University in Alabama. Dr. Barry has numerous research publications and is a frequent presenter at regional, national and international professional conferences.

Charlene Dell is Assistant Professor of Music Education at the University of Oklahoma. She received her PhD in Music Education from the University of South Carolina. She taught 15 years as a string specialist in upstate New York and has guest conducted elementary and middle school orchestras at the local and regional levels in both New York and South Carolina. Dell is a frequent presenter and clinician at regional and national professional conferences.

Michael A. Raiber is Assistant Professor of Music Education at the University of Oklahoma. Raiber received a PhD in Music Education from the University of Oklahoma. Prior to his appointment at OU, he had thirteen years of public school experience teaching in Missouri and Oklahoma and three years as Associate Director of Bands at Oklahoma State University. Raiber is an active writer and researcher who has published in state and national journals. He has presented research, clinics and teacher workshops at a wide variety of regional and national venues.

Edgar Cajas is a graduate research assistant in the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma. He is currently in the PhD Music Education program. Mr. Cajas is founder and director of the Normal School for Music Teachers in Guatemala City. He has written music education materials for a number of publications and is a frequent presenter at professional conferences.

Angela Barker is Assistant Professor of Music Education at Georgia State University. She holds a PhD in Music Education from the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Barker taught undergraduate music classes at the University of Oklahoma for three and a half years and taught general and choral music at the elementary and middle school levels for twelve years in Virginia and Texas.

Mark Lucas is a graduate research assistant in the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma. He is currently pursuing the PhD in Music Education. He has taught vocal music in grades 6-12 and was Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina, KS.

Carla Jo Maltas is Assistant Professor of Music Education at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She has completed a PhD in Kodaly Music Education from the University of Oklahoma. Maltas is a nationally certified Kodaly educator and holds a Master's certificate in Orff-Schulwerk from the University of Memphis. She taught K-12 vocal and general music for fifteen years in Nebraska and has served

as a curriculum writer, clinician and researcher for arts integration projects in Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Suzanne Schons is Assistant Professor of Music at the Crane School of Music, State University of New York at Potsdam. Ms. Schons is a PhD candidate in the Music Education program at the University of Oklahoma. She is coordinator of the Piano Pedagogy and Class Piano programs at SUNY Potsdam, and also teaches piano in her independent studio. She is a frequent adjudicator, clinician, and presenter at national and regional conferences.

Oklahoma State University

Michael G. Gunzenhauser is assistant professor of educational studies at Oklahoma State University. He teaches social foundations of education and research methodology. Dr. Gunzenhauser received his PhD in Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was on the research team for the North Carolina A+ Schools Program. With George W. Noblit, he co-authored one of the final reports for that project, *Reforming With the Arts: Creativity in A+ Classrooms and Schools*.

Diane Montgomery is professor of educational psychology in the School of Applied Health and Educational Psychology at Oklahoma State University. She directs the graduate programs in gifted education and talent development and conducts research in talent development, Native American Indian studies, creativity, and gender issues. She serves on several editorial boards and has conducted evaluation reviews of several federal and state programs on talent development.

Sibongile Mtshali-Dlamini, a doctoral student in the PhD program in Curriculum and Social Foundations with interests in gender and equity, is a graduate teaching and research associate. For several years Ms. Mtshali-Dlamini taught and directed professional development for teachers in the kingdom of Swaziland.

Najwa Raouda is a doctoral student in the PhD program in Curriculum and Social Foundations and a graduate research associate. Her interests are gender and social class dynamics in society and education, both nationally and internationally. A former teacher and administrator in Lebanon, Ms. Raouda is an international tutor and consultant.

Mark Malaby is a doctoral student in the PhD program in Curriculum and Social Foundations. At OSU, he teaches courses in teacher education and English composition. Mr. Malaby was a high school English teacher for 11 years in Tulsa.

Gina Anderson earned the EdD in Curriculum and Instruction at OSU in May 2004, with a specialization in the social foundations of education. An elementary and middle school teacher for eight years and a graduate teacher associate for more than four years, Dr. Anderson has been named assistant professor of professional studies at Texas Women's University.

P. Diane Knapp, a faculty member in humanities at Tulsa Community College, is a doctoral student in the PhD program in Curriculum and Social Foundations, and is a former graduate teaching associate for OSU. Prior to her work at TCC and OSU, Ms. Knapp had extensive experience as a music educator and arts administrator.