# A+ Essentials: A Set of Commitments

**A+ Essentials** revised and adopted by the National A+ Schools Consortium, October 2016.

## Arts

In A+ Schools the arts are:

- experienced daily through instruction, integration and exposure
- inclusive of drama, dance, music, visual arts, creative writing and media arts
- included in curriculum planning and design
- integrated in all content areas
- valued as essential to creativity, learning and personal experiences
- a part of the school's internal and external identity

## Curriculum

In A+ Schools curriculum is addressed through:

- developing teacher skills in creating effective and engaging instruction
- ongoing curriculum exploration and planning
- intentional two-way integration of the arts and other disciplines
- horizontal and vertical alignment of standards
- enhanced conceptual connections
- collaborative development of integrated lessons and units

## Multiple Learning Pathways

In A+ Schools multiple learning pathways include:

- Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory and practice
- brain research and brain-based philosophies
- a focus on building 21st century and higher order thinking skills
- creating and balancing learning opportunities that support the whole child
- intentional opportunities for students, families, community to develop understanding of how people learn

## Experiential Learning

In A+ Schools experiential learning:

- creates student engagement
- is grounded in arts-based and hands-on learning experiences
- provides integrated and authentic connections to real-life application
- models the creative process and inquiry-based instruction
- allows for understanding of entry points and differentiated instruction
- provides multifaceted assessment opportunities

## Enriched Assessment

In A+ Schools enriched assessment is:

- a reflective practice that is designed for learning
- inclusive of arts and multiple learning pathways
- ongoing, integrated, experiential and collaborative
- used both as a self-assessment tool by teachers and students and to help meet school system requirements
- instrumental in creating a comprehensive picture of student understanding

## Collaboration

In A+ Schools collaboration is:

- valued and intentional
- fostered by administration and faculty
- prioritized through designated time for classroom and special area teachers to plan together
- experienced throughout the day and in many ways
- utilized to build relationships within and outside the school community

## Infrastructure

In A+ Schools infrastructure:

- supports the A+ philosophy
- fosters supportive and shared leadership
- addresses daily logistics to allow for collaboration
- provides time, space and resources to support implementation
- continually maintains a shared vision and develops faculty commitment
- provides relevant professional development and mentoring
- is reflected at all levels

## Climate

In A+ Schools climate is enhanced through:

- building collaborative skills that create an environment of respect and support
- developing a creative community that is fun and engaging for teachers and students
- focusing on lifelong learning for the entire school community
- working towards a common vision and shared decision making
- sharing and celebration

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