



A⁺ Schools Program
of the North Carolina Arts Council



Since 1995, A+ schools have used the arts as a catalyst for creating connections and making schools engaging, meaningful and enjoyable places to teach and learn.

A+ Schools Program

The A+ Schools Program is a whole-school reform model that views the arts as fundamental to teaching and learning in all subjects. In A+ schools, teaching the state's mandated curriculum involves a collaborative, multi-disciplined approach, with the arts continuously woven into every aspect of a child's learning.

“The A+ Schools Program is the largest, longest-running, most-successful, arts-based whole-school reform effort in the nation.”

George W. Noblit, PhD, UNC-CH

*Author of **Creating and Sustaining Arts-Based School Reform***

The central vision of A+ is to build enhanced, creative, arts-integrated learning opportunities for all students. For schools, A+ gradually becomes a comprehensive education reform because other changes in school practice, in areas from assessment to scheduling and collaboration to parent involvement, radiate out to achieve this central vision. Each A+ school develops a unique school identity around the arts that deepens and enhances the educational experience and prepares each student for the challenges of today's creative and global economy.

A+ Schools Fast Facts



Established in North Carolina as a public/private partnership in 1995, A+ is now a program of the North Carolina Arts Council and serves more than 25,000 students statewide each year.



Cited in N.C. Department of Public Instruction publication *Balanced Curriculum* as an exemplary program, A+ meets N.C. curriculum accountability standards.



Researchers attribute program success to continuous practitioner-led professional development, arts integration and arts education, and the use of statewide support networks for teachers and school administrators.



A+ is featured prominently in numerous local and national publications including the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities report, *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future through Creative Schools*.



Integrating dance standards with math standards,
A+ Kindergarteners analyze, create and compare shapes.



“Our kids are smiling! You can’t qualify that with numbers, but you feel it the moment you walk in the school.”

Principal, A+ Middle School

The A+ Essentials

The key to the A+ Schools Program is our eight A+ Essentials™. Developed by the original 25 A+ schools in North Carolina, the Essentials provide a framework for developing a successful A+ school.

Arts Valuing arts integration, arts education and arts exposure as essential to creativity and learning

Curriculum Planning intentional integration of disciplines to promote enthusiasm for learning

Enriched Assessment Developing experiential, collaborative and reflective measures of mastery, beyond testing

Multiple Learning Pathways Providing many different learning opportunities to support development of the whole child

Experiential Learning Creating hands-on, real world application of learning standards to support engagement, innovation and critical thinking

Collaboration Strengthening partnerships across the school community while promoting shared leadership and intentional connections

Infrastructure Organizing school priorities and schedule to support transformative learning and shared vision

Climate Building a creative, supportive environment where teachers and students are excited about learning together

NC A+ Schools at a Glance

- A strong and growing network of A+ schools across the state are actively modeling A+ practice and philosophy, participating in high-quality A+ professional development and sharing best practices.
- Hundreds of thousands of preK – 12th grade North Carolina students and educators have been impacted by A+ since its inception in 1995.
- Title I status is not required, however the majority of our A+ schools are Title I.
- A renewed focus on both early learning and high school is helping to expand the N.C. A+ network in those areas in addition to our already strong elementary and middle school network.
- Our home in the North Carolina Arts Council, part of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, provides a wide variety of resources and opportunities to A+ network students, educators and schools.
- Partnerships with local and national groups strengthen our model and offers a rich array of connections and resources.
- As a founding member of the National A+ Schools Consortium, North Carolina continues to collaborate with and guide A+ Schools Programs in other states across the nation.



“A+ is the hardest work I have ever had the privilege of taking part in for the immediate and long term benefit for my students and myself.”

6th Grade Math Teacher, A+ Middle School

How A+ Schools Perform

Years of research and evaluation show that the A+ Schools Program has significant effects on schools, communities, teachers and students including:

+ Engaging instructional strategies that enhance learning for all students.

+ Better attendance for students and teachers and fewer disciplinary problems.

+ Development of a creative school culture that benefits all groups of students regardless of cognitive development, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

+ Stronger organizational capacity and shared leadership across the school and richer parent involvement and community engagement.

+ Enriched arts-based academic environment with more ways for students to understand and demonstrate understanding.

+ Growth in achievement measures at a level equal to or greater than other schools across the state without sacrificing a balanced curriculum that includes all disciplines.



During the study of how plants survive in the environment, A+ fifth graders create art based on a Monet masterwork.



A⁺ Schools Program
of the North Carolina Arts Council

**Transforming schools through
the arts since 1995**

aplusschools.ncdcr.gov

facebook.com/aplusnc

[@aplusschoolsnc](https://twitter.com/aplusschoolsnc)



**NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL
RESOURCES**

2,000 copies of this brochure were printed at a cost of \$0.74 per copy.