

# Oklahoma A+ Schools: What the research tells us 2002-2007. Volume three, quantitative measures.

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## Abstract:

Researchers conducted a five-year evaluation study of how the A+ arts integrated school reform strategies (developed in North Carolina) played out in Oklahoma's growing network of A+ Schools. This volume is one of five describing the evaluation findings; it focuses on what the researchers learned through the quantitative analysis of survey data gathered from students, teachers, and professional development faculty. The study provides empirical evidence that Oklahoma's A+ Schools (OAS) outperform their counterparts on academic performance.

## Key Findings:

Survey data analyses reveal:

- Higher achievement: OAS students' performances on standardized tests generally meet or significantly exceed state and district averages, a striking finding considering that OAS schools serve a greater proportion of ethnic minorities and a greater proportion of economically-disadvantaged students.
- Better attendance for students and teachers.
- Decreased disciplinary problems in schools.
- Happier, more effective educators.
- Joyful, engaged students.
- More parent and community involvement.
- Creative, focused instruction.

- Positive student attitudes about their classroom activities. Positive teacher attitudes about art in education, arts integration, and teacher collaboration.

The researchers found that schools were functioning along a continuum of school change where teachers and administrators considered the model to be either “inform-minded” (viewing A+ as an add-on), “reform minded” (moderate engagement in process) or “transform-minded” (where there is a high engagement culture). The researchers found that the conditions for positive change to happen existed at all schools along the continuum.

## Significance of the Findings:

Through arts-integrated instruction A+ schools promote challenging learning environments, in which students gain self-confidence, enjoy school, and feel empowered by the learning process. A+ provides an effective model of professional development that positively impacts the lives of children and teachers.

## Methodology:

Four surveys were the primary tools for gathering quantitative data. A survey was given to students to gather their attitudes on and perceptions of classroom activities yielding 6,042 responses. In addition, a survey of teachers yielded 1,728 responses. Faculty fellows who had been providing professional development and guidance throughout the process were also surveyed and 96 responded. An Arts Education Perception Survey was filled out by 12,061 participants. The researchers analyzed all data using various quantitative data analyses methods. Their findings are presented in this volume and also feed the research presented in the other four volumes describing the Oklahoma A+ Schools evaluation.

## Limitations of the Research:

While the findings of the A+ research are very promising, data on what happens to students from the A+ program after graduation are needed.

## Questions to Guide New Research:

How are students who have experienced learning through the A+ model different from their non-A+ peers? What happens to these youth after high school? Are there qualities from the A+ program that have a proven positive impact on their lives?

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