



## The A+ Schools Program and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

Since 1995, The A+ Schools Program has promoted and applied strategies including **classroom-based arts integration** and **integrated arts classes** taught by certified arts specialists to develop **creativity, imagination and innovation** in *all* students. In 2008, these and other strategies incorporated in the Program continue to address the needs of North Carolina's students, and prepare them for **21<sup>st</sup> Century workplaces and communities**.

### So, *why* the arts?

- There is sufficient research from the public and private sectors, and most economists seem to agree, that the industrial economy and the information age are giving way to the **creative and innovative economy** as America's response to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace, communities and families.
- The Harvard Business Review and others have referred to **the M.F.A as the new M.B.A.**
- As early as 1995, the year A+ began, the CEO's of several of the U.S.'s largest corporations identified **ten essential skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace**: communication/speaking, listening, observing, critical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking, collaboration/teamwork (interpersonal skills), reading, writing, using numbers. The A+ Schools Program was developed with these 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills in mind.
- Today, the multiple lists of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills for the workplace haven't changed much, though **more specific skills** also include: digital-age literacy; visual literacy (creating/using media and visual products that advance critical thinking, decision making, communication, and learning); curiosity; risk-taking; managing and completing complex projects; the ability to produce relevant, high-quality products; and **personal, social, and civic responsibility**.
- There is also sufficient research to support our commonsense observation that the **arts, as separate courses and integrated with other subjects, teach all of these 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills**, which are often not addressed elsewhere in the curriculum.
- In a recent study conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, researchers found that **the arts helped students develop "mental habits"** not always emphasized in "academic" classes: visual-spatial abilities, reflection, self-criticism, willingness to experiment and learn from mistakes, persistence, envisioning, and making clear connections between schoolwork and the real world.