

Institute for the Creative Arts Accountability Profile

Prepared by
Arkansas Department of Education
Charter School Office

Updated March 2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **Section 1: Abstract..... Pg. 03**
- **Section 2: School Summary..... Pg. 04**
 - *Background Information*
 - *Leadership Team*
- **Section 3: Student Enrollment Data..... Pg. 05**
 - *Enrollment Data*
 - *Grade Distribution*
 - *Special Populations*
 - *Student Attendance*
- **Section 4: Academic Performance Data..... Pg. 07**
 - *State Report Card*
 - *Growth and Achievement Indicators/ Comparisons*
 - *Student Support Services*
 - *Enrollment Stability Rates*
 - *Student Discipline (All Suspensions, Expulsions, Chronic Absenteeism)*
- **Section 5: Financial Performance Data..... Pg. 11**
 - *Financial Summary*
 - *Financial Metrics*
 - *Financial Data*
- **Section 6: Operational Performance Review..... Pg. 13**
 - *School Compliance Summary*
 - *Staff Recruitment*
 - *Teacher Stability Rates*
 - *Teacher Tenure Length*
 - *Teacher Certification Rates*
 - *School Improvement Plan*
- **Section 7: Executive Summary Pg. 15**

Section 1: Abstract

The Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) is an open-enrollment public charter high school located in Fort Smith, Arkansas, serving grades 9–12 and opened in 2024 with a mission to empower students through an intensive arts-integrated academic curriculum that prepares them for higher education and careers in the creative industries. As a newly established charter school, ICA is currently in its early implementation phase, with enrollment increasing from 49 students in 2024–2025 to 100 students in 2025–2026, representing approximately 20% of the school’s authorized enrollment cap of 500. Attendance outcomes are notably strong, with a reported 98.15% attendance rate during the 2024–2025 school year, exceeding the state average of 92%. Student discipline indicators also reflect a positive school culture, with no reported suspensions or expulsions.

Academically, ICA received an F letter grade in 2024–2025, reflecting significant performance gaps relative to the Fort Smith School District and the state. Growth outcomes show English Language Arts approaching standard expectations, while mathematics growth and overall achievement remain well below benchmark levels. Achievement rates in English and mathematics fall within the “Not Meeting Standard” category, and science achievement data were insufficient for reporting. Although the school’s improvement plan identifies appropriate instructional priorities—including literacy development, RTI systems, and parent engagement—it lacks measurable goals, timelines, and explicit monitoring structures necessary to ensure effective implementation.

Financial and operational indicators reveal areas of concern alongside early-stage development. Financial metrics show extremely limited reserves and negative operating margins in the projected budget year. Operational review identifies gaps in board governance transparency, staffing documentation, and recruitment planning. While the School Improvement Plan outlines appropriate priorities—such as literacy improvement, math intervention, and RTI system development, it would benefit from greater specificity, measurable benchmarks, and defined accountability structures to support effective implementation.

Section 2: School Summary

Background Information

Location	1101 Riverfront Drive, Fort Smith, AR
Year Opened	2024
Grade Levels	9 - 12
Enrollment Cap	500
Charter Type	Open Enrollment
Mission Statement	Empowering students through an intensive arts and academic curriculum that prepares them for higher education, creative careers, and to become future leaders in the performing and visual arts industries.

Leadership Team

Personnel	Title	School / Organization	Email
Rosilee Russell	Superintendent	Institute for the Creative Arts	rrussell@icafortsmith.org
Michael Johnson	Principal/ Dean	Institute for the Creative Arts	mjohnson@icafortsmith.org
Dr. David Tyson	Board Chair	Institute for the Creative Arts	davidtysonmusic@gmail.com
Amanda Strange	Board Treasurer	Institute for the Creative Arts	Amanda.strange2024@yahoo.com

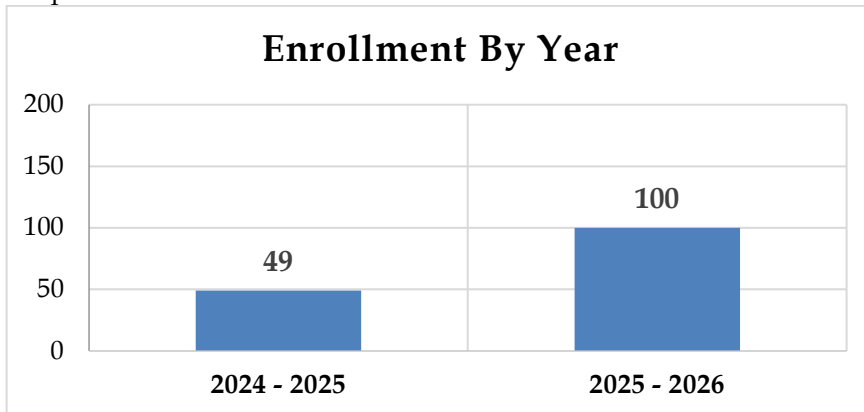
Section 3: Student Enrollment Data

Table 3.0 - 2025 - 2026 Enrollment

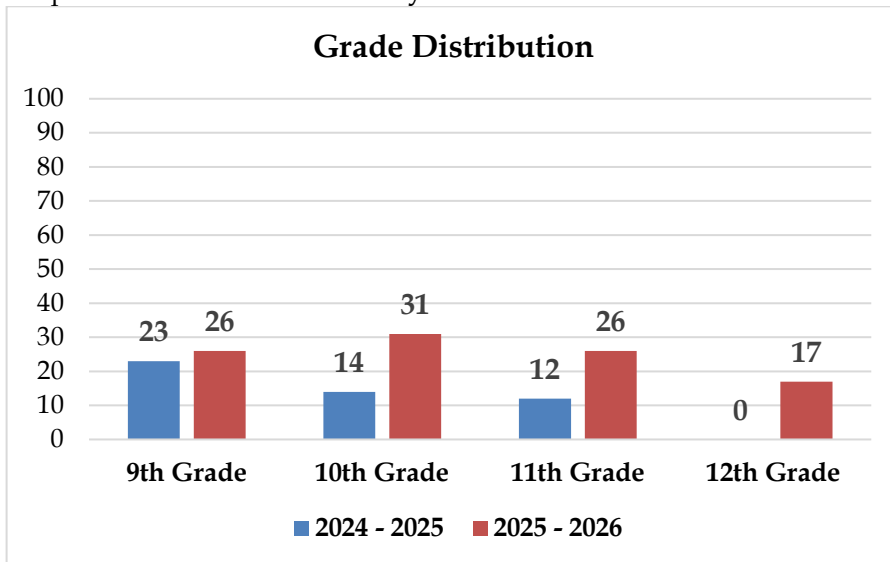
2025 - 2026 Enrollment	Enrollment CAP	Percent of Cap
100	500	20%

Graph 3.0 reports the total enrollment count by year; **Graph 3.1** shows student enrollment by grade; **Graph 3.2** shows student demographics. The data reported was captured from the Arkansas Department of Education's Data Center.

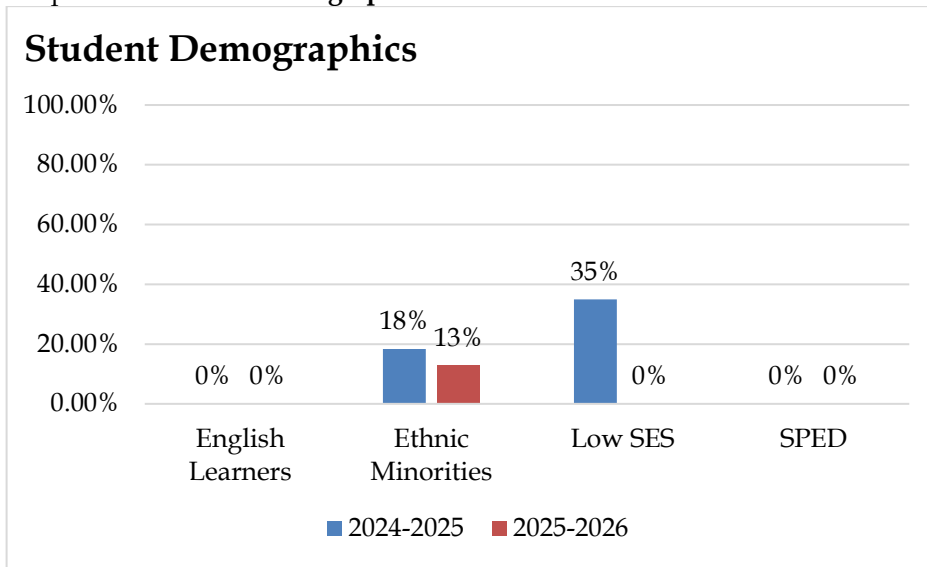
Graph 3.0 - School Enrollment



Graph 3.1 - Student Enrollment by Grade



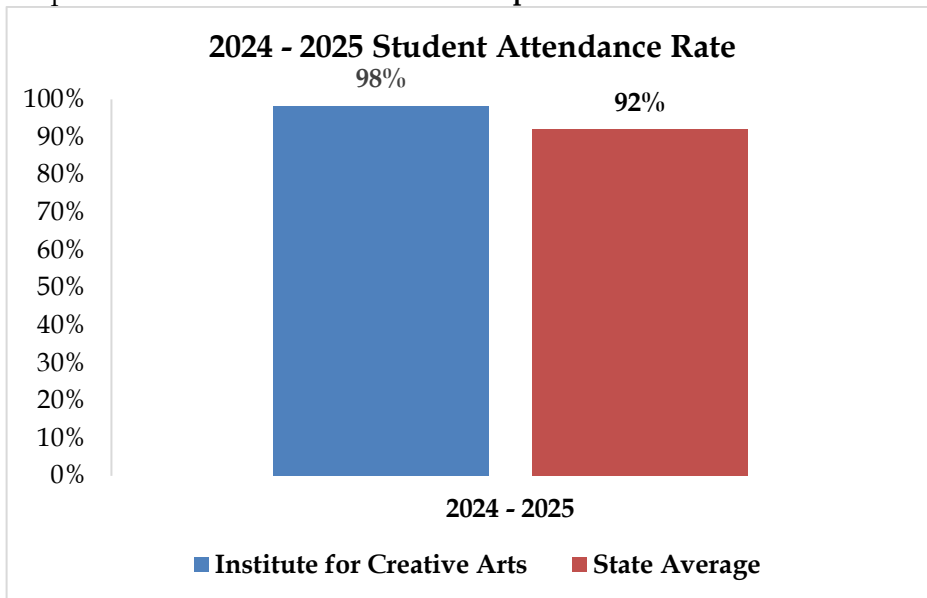
Graph 3.2 - Student Demographics



Student Attendance Rates

Graph 3.3 presents student attendance rates along with a comparison to the state average attendance rate.

Graph 3.3 - Student Attendance Rate Comparison



Section 4: Academic Performance Data

In 2013, the Arkansas legislature passed A.C.A 6-15-2105, requiring the state to implement an A-F grading scale for schools as an indicator of a school’s overall academic health. **Table 4.0** the school’s letter grade compared to the Fort Smith School District and state.

Table 4.0 - Letter Grade Comparison

School	2024-2025
Institute for the Creative Arts	F
Fort Smith School District	C
State average	C

Growth and Achievement Indicators

Growth scores show how many students met their **individual growth goals** on the end-of-year tests. It highlights how well a school helps **all students make progress**, no matter where they start.

Achievement scores show the percentage of students who met or exceeded grade-level expectations on the annual statewide tests in comparison to state average.

Each public charter school is responsible for educating students according to the standards set for all Arkansas public schools. As of the 2024 – 2025 school year, the ATLAS assessment is being used to track both Growth and Achievement for schools.

Table 4.1 - Growth Score Ranges for the ASPIRE and ATLAS assessments*

	ASPIRE Growth Score Ranges	ATLAS Growth Score Ranges
Exceeding Standard	85% or Higher	51% or Higher
Meeting Standard	80% - 84%	45% - 50%
Approaching Standard	70% - 79%	35% - 44%
Not Meeting Standard	69% or Lower	34% or Lower

Table 4.1.a Achievement Score Ranges

	Achievement Score Ranges
Exceeding Standard	Greater than the state average
Meeting Standard	Equal to or within 5% of the state average
Approaching Standard	6 - 10% below the state average
Not Meeting Standard	11% or more below the state average

*Team members from the Charter School Office worked with Public School Accountability team members to create estimated ASPIRE score ranges for comparison to ATLAS Growth Scores.

Table 4.2 depicts both growth and achievement scores. *There was not enough data to score Science Achievement for the school.*

Table 4.2 - Growth and Achievement Scores

Growth - English					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS		47%			53%

Growth - Math					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS			37%		52.15%

Achievement - English					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS	42%				34%

Achievement - Math					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS				13%	38%

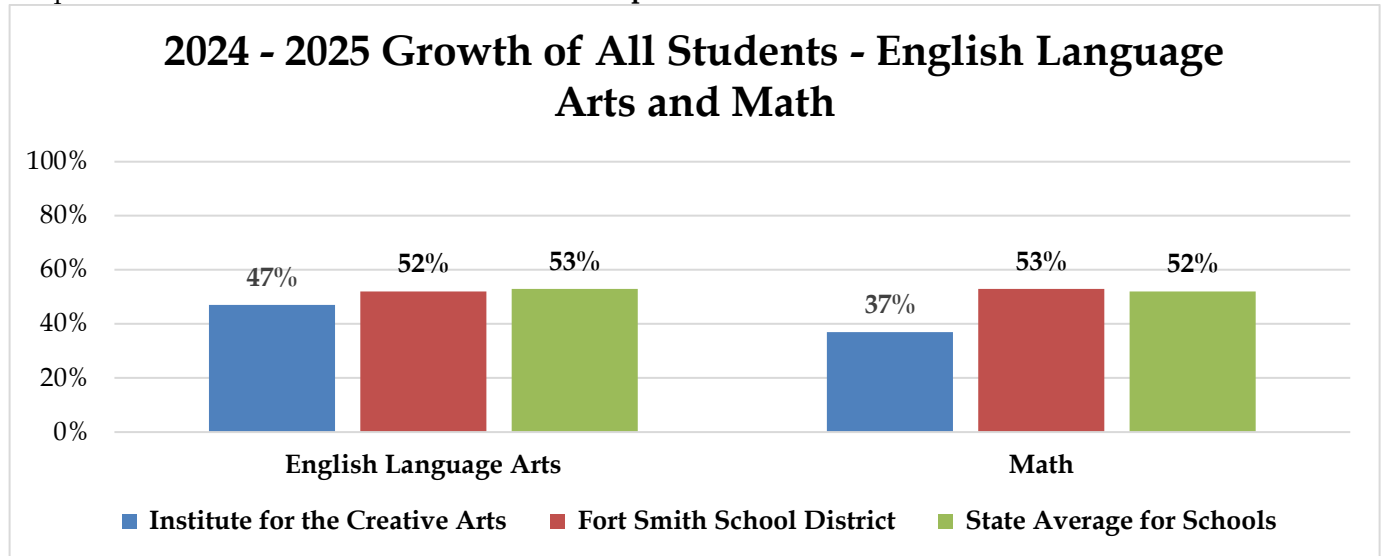
Graduation Rate

No graduation rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

School Growth Comparison Data 2024 – 2025 school year

Graph 4.0.a compares growth of all students at the charter school in English Language Arts and Math with the Fort Smith School District and state average. **Graph 4.1.b** compares growth of the lowest 25% of students at the charter school in English Language Arts and Math with the Fort Smith School District and state average.

Graph 4.0.a – 2024 – 2025 All Students Growth Comparison



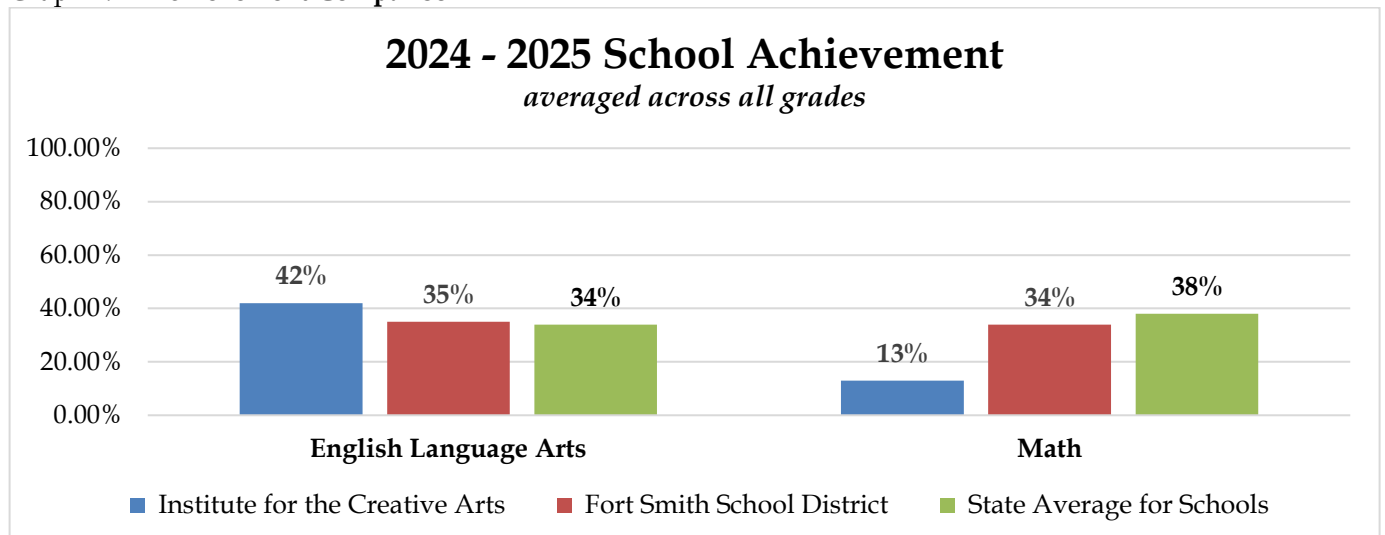
Graph 4.0.b - Lowest 25% Growth Comparison

Not enough growth comparison for the lowest 25% of students data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

School Achievement Comparison Data

Graph 4.2 presents proficiency scores, averaged across all grades, for the charter school in English Language Arts, Math, and Science for the 2024 – 2025 school year compared to the Fort Smith School District and the state average. *There was not enough data to score the school's Science Achievement score.*

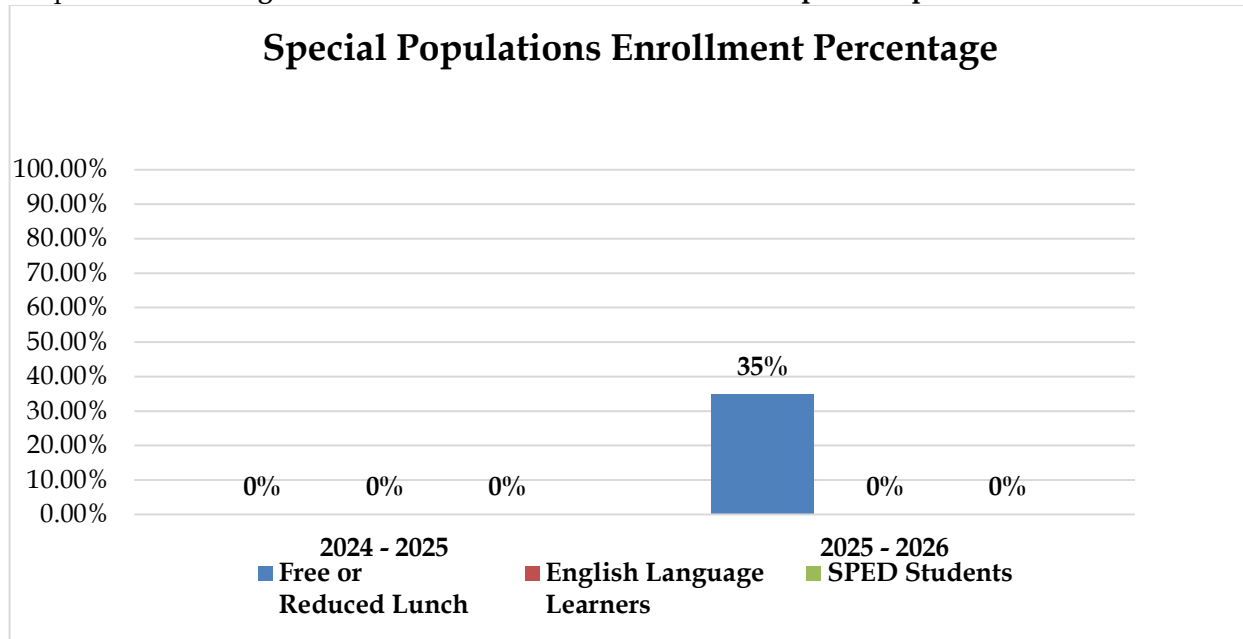
Graph 4.2 - Achievement Comparison



Special Populations

The State of Arkansas’ definition of special populations includes students who receive a free or reduced lunch, English language learners, and students identified as SPED. **Graph 4.3** provides the charter school’s enrollment percentages of students identified as part of a special population during the past three years.

Graph 4.3 - Percentage of Enrolled Students Considered Part of Special Populations



Learning Services Summary

The Institute for the Creative Arts had limited support from ADE Learning Services.

Enrollment Stability Rates

No enrollment stability rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

Student Discipline

Table 4.3 presents the school’s disciplinary history and compares it to the state average.

Table 4.3 - 3-year Disciplinary history

	The Institute for the Creative Arts Whole Number Count	State Average
School Suspensions (In & Out of school)		
2024-2025	0	96.03
Expulsions		
2024-2025	0	0.81
Chronic Absenteeism		
2024-2025	8.16%	21%

Section 5: Financial Performance Data

Financial information was provided by the Arkansas Department of Education’s Finance office in late October 2025. Board Meeting minutes found on the charter school’s website revealed that the board conducted multiple financial reviews throughout the year. The annual budget was formally approved on August 27, 2024, during a special session that included approval of Year One financials and salary schedules. Subsequent meetings in December 2024 and January 2025 included budget status reviews, cash flow projections, reserve fund planning, and review of financial management systems, demonstrating ongoing fiscal oversight.

Financial Metrics

Table 5.0 provides definitions used for categories, while **Table 5.1** provides data for the charter school based on the Financial Performance rubric sections provided by ADE Finance (1. Essential Financial Readiness, 2. General Financial Readiness, 3. Financial Sustainability).

Table 5.0 – Performance Metrics’ Category Definitions

Category	Meets	Does Not Meet	Falls Far Below
<i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i>	Greater than 8%	Between 8 - 6%	Below 6%
<i>Days Cash on Hand</i>	Greater than 60 days	30 - 60 days	Less than 30 days
<i>Operating Margin</i>	Equal to or greater than 1	Between 1 - 0.05	School demonstrates a negative Margin
<i>Unrestricted Fund Balance</i>	Greater than or equal to 8.33%	Between 8.33 - 7.33%	Less than 7.33%
<i>Enrollment Stability</i>	Greater than or equal to 90%	Between 89 - 80%	Less than 79%
<i>Fiscal Management & Oversight</i>	Yes , clear signs of the board meeting, discussing, and acting on quarterly reviews and/ or addressing financial issues. Also, a fiscal audit has been performed each operational year and is discussed within the board.		No , there are clear gaps in board meetings, no clear discussion, and/ or acting on quarterly reviews. Also, there are clear gaps in fiscal audits being performed. No clear actions or discussion have been undergone

Table 5.1 - Financial Performance for Institute for the Creative Arts

Color Legend	Meets	Does Not Meet	Falls Far Below
	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026	
<i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i>	0.01%	-1.3%	
<i>Days Cash on Hand</i>	2.85	- 4.67	
<i>Operating Margin</i>	0.00	- 0.02	
<i>Unrestricted Fund Balance %</i>	0.00%	- 1.28%	
<i>Enrollment Stability %</i>	No Data	204%	
<i>Fiscal Management & Oversight</i>	No Data	No Data	

Financial Data

Table 5.2 - Financial Data for the charter school

Topics	2024-2025 Actual	2025-2026 Budgeted
<i>Beginning Balance</i>	\$0.00	\$8,279.98
<i>Revenue</i>	\$1,067,950.78	\$2,173,689.86
<i>Expenditures</i>	\$1,059,670.80	\$2,210,264.97
<i>Ending Balance</i>	\$8,279.98	(-\$28,295.13)
<i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i>	0.01%	- 1.3%

Section 6: Operational Performance Review

This section reviews the charter school's compliance with applicable laws, enrollment and recruitment practices, and school improvement plans. The data assists in ensuring accountability and allows ADE to support continuous improvement in charter schools. Additionally, the information aids ADE's Charter School Office in deciding whether to recommend that the Charter Authorizing Panel renews the charter contract.

School Compliance Summary

Currently, the charter school has one standing flagging actions for Standard 4-D.1 (Employment of Classroom Teachers). The school provided a School Improvement Plan that included relevant strategies; however, including more specificity would strengthen the plan.

Charter School Board

As of December 2025, the Board meeting schedule for the current school year, meeting agendas and minutes were not easily accessible. Minutes were last uploaded to the website for the January 2025 meeting.

However, board meeting agendas are posted for October 2025 – the only minutes available for the current school year.

As requested by the school, a review in March 2026 revealed that the school's website has been updated, and board agendas and meeting minutes are easily found

Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan

The document outlines an extensive plan for **student** recruitment for the Institute for the Creative Arts, leveraging its strong relationship with CSA and using a wide range of outreach and marketing strategies. It describes plans for community meetings, social media engagement, print advertising, radio and television appearances, and targeted outreach to families and community groups. The Institute highlights CSA's reach into more than 30 schools as a significant advantage and identifies CSA families, donors, and stakeholders as early partners in generating interest.

While the recruitment strategy is robust for attracting students, it does not address staff recruitment or retention – elements that are essential for a complete workforce plan. No goals, actions, or metrics are included for hiring qualified teachers or administrators, supporting them once hired, or ensuring long-term retention. As written, the document functions solely as a student marketing plan.

To meet the expectations of a staff recruitment and retention plan, substantial additions would be needed to outline staffing goals, recruitment sources, professional supports, staff culture, compensation strategies, and mechanisms for evaluating progress. Without these components, the document does not address the core functions required to attract and retain a strong, stable educator workforce.

Teacher Retention Rates

No teacher retention rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

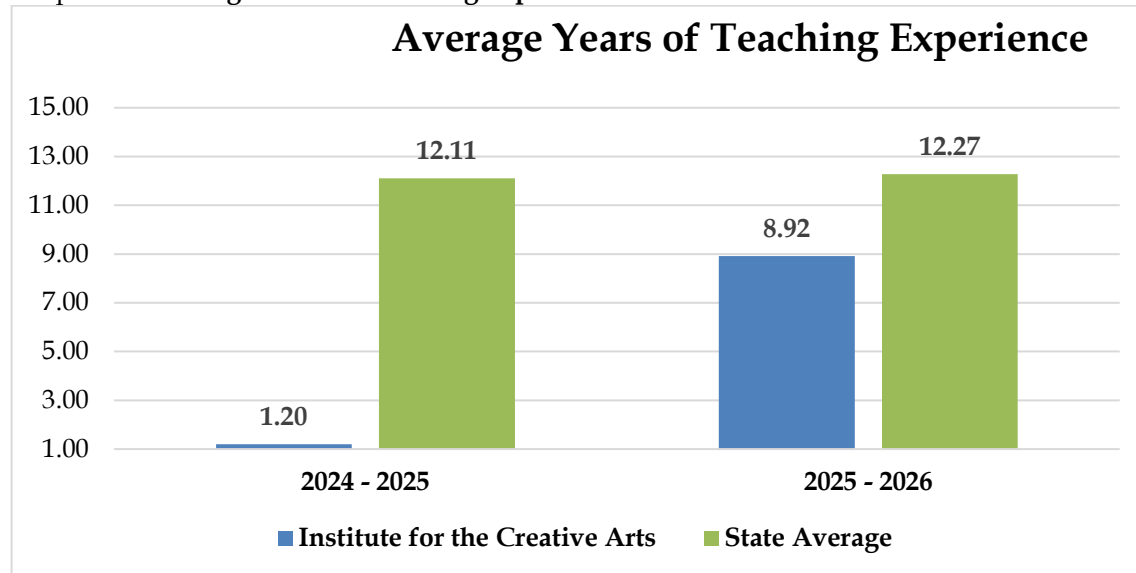
Teacher Certification Rates

No teacher certification rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

Average Teaching Experience

Graph 6.2 presents the charter school's average years of teaching experience compared to the state average.

Graph 6.2 – Average Years of Teaching Experience



School Improvement Plan

The School-Level Improvement Plan for the Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) outlines a clear vision and mission centered on preparing students for success through rigorous academics and arts integration. The plan identifies key student needs using assessment and attendance data and pairs these needs with appropriate initial actions, such as enhanced monitoring, targeted interventions, and teacher collaboration. Schoolwide priorities include improving literacy through Science of Reading strategies, strengthening math and science achievement, developing a robust Response to Intervention (RTI) system, and increasing parent involvement. These priorities are aligned with AdvancED standards, emphasizing continuous improvement and data-driven practices.

The plan provides a variety of actionable steps supported by instructional tools, structured team meetings, and specialized supports for struggling learners. It also highlights efforts to improve communication and parental engagement through meetings, surveys, and expanded PTA involvement. The inclusion of the DESE Plan of Support (page 5) demonstrates a commitment to leveraging external expertise to improve instruction, reading interventions, and dyslexia services.

However, while the plan contains meaningful actions, it would be strengthened by incorporating specific, measurable goals, clearly defined timelines, and designated personnel responsible for each action. Establishing explicit benchmarks for reading growth, math proficiency, RTI progress, parent participation, and student engagement would increase the plan's effectiveness. Adding monitoring and evaluation procedures would also ensure that ICA can track progress and adjust strategies as needed. Overall, the document provides a strong foundation but needs greater specificity to function as a fully developed school improvement plan.

Section 7: Executive Summary

Academic Performance

Academic performance at the Institute for the Creative Arts currently reflects early-stage implementation challenges typical of newly opened charter schools. The school received an F rating for the 2024–2025 school year, compared with a state and district average rating of C. Growth results show English Language Arts growth at 47%, slightly below the state average of 53%, while Math growth is significantly lower at 37%, compared with a state average of approximately 52%. Achievement outcomes show English proficiency at 42%, exceeding both district and state averages, but Math achievement at 13%, well below district (34%) and state (38%) averages.

Because the school opened recently, several accountability indicators – including science achievement, graduation rates, enrollment stability, and lowest-quartile growth – do not yet have sufficient data. Positive indicators include a strong attendance rate and zero disciplinary incidents. Continued academic improvement will require targeted math interventions, stronger instructional monitoring, and systematic implementation of Response to Intervention and literacy strategies identified in the school’s improvement planning.

Financial Performance

Financial performance indicators present significant risk. Financial metrics reported by ADE show extremely low liquidity and limited financial reserves. The school reported an ending balance of \$8,279.98 (0.01% of revenue) for 2024–2025, far below recommended financial thresholds. Budget projections for 2025–2026 indicate a negative ending balance (-\$28,295) and negative operating margin. Additional financial indicators, including days cash on hand and unrestricted fund balance, fall well below recommended benchmarks for fiscal stability.

Board meeting minutes indicate that the governing board has conducted financial reviews, including analysis of budgets, cash flow projections, and reserve planning. However, the financial metrics suggest that the school remains in a financially vulnerable early-growth phase, requiring close monitoring of enrollment growth, expenditures, and revenue sustainability.

Operational Performance

Operational performance shows mixed compliance with several areas requiring improvement. The school currently has a flagging action under Standard 4-D.1 related to classroom teacher employment, and limited staffing data is available regarding teacher retention or certification rates. Board governance documentation was initially difficult to locate, though the school later updated its website to improve access to board agendas and meeting minutes.

A major operational deficiency involves the Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan, which functions primarily as a student recruitment and marketing strategy rather than a workforce development plan. The document lacks defined goals, strategies, or metrics related to hiring, supporting, or retaining educators. The School Improvement Plan outlines appropriate priorities – including literacy development, math improvement, RTI systems, and parent engagement – but lacks detailed timelines, measurable performance targets, and assigned responsibilities. Strengthening governance transparency, staffing strategy, and improvement plan accountability structures will be essential to support the school’s long-term stability and academic progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS DEFICIENCIES

Academic Recommendations

- **Implement a targeted mathematics intervention plan.**
Math performance is significantly below both district and state averages. The school should implement structured Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, including high-dosage tutoring, intervention blocks during the school day, and frequent formative assessments aligned to ATLAS standards. Data from common formative assessments should be reviewed in PLC meetings at least biweekly to identify students requiring additional support and adjust instruction accordingly.

- **Strengthen instructional monitoring and accountability systems.**
The School Improvement Plan should include measurable benchmarks for growth and achievement, such as quarterly targets for ELA and math proficiency, student growth percentages, and RTI progress indicators. Clear roles should be assigned to leadership and instructional coaches to ensure fidelity of implementation, with monitoring tools such as walkthrough protocols, data dashboards, and coaching cycles.
- **Expand early literacy and academic support systems.**
The school has identified literacy development and Science of Reading alignment as priorities. Implementation should include structured reading interventions, diagnostic screening, and progress monitoring tools. Additionally, extended learning opportunities – such as after-school tutoring or summer bridge programs – should be introduced to accelerate student progress.

Financial Recommendations

- **Develop a multi-year financial sustainability plan.**
Given the low ending balance and negative projected margin, the school should implement a three-year financial stabilization plan that includes enrollment growth targets, cost control measures, and contingency planning. Budget projections should incorporate conservative revenue estimates and clearly identify priority expenditures tied to instructional improvement.
- **Build financial reserves and improve liquidity.**
The school should adopt a board policy establishing minimum financial health benchmarks (e.g., 60 days cash on hand and at least 8% unrestricted fund balance). A reserve-building strategy should be implemented through phased spending adjustments and increased enrollment revenue.
- **Strengthen financial monitoring and reporting.**
The governing board should review detailed financial reports monthly, including budget-to-actual comparisons, cash flow projections, and enrollment-driven revenue updates. The board should also establish a finance committee to provide additional oversight and ensure early identification of fiscal risk.

Operational Recommendations

- **Develop a compliant Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan.**
The current document focuses primarily on student recruitment and does not address educator workforce development. A revised plan should include measurable goals for teacher recruitment, retention, and diversity; defined recruitment sources (universities, alternative certification pathways, industry professionals); mentoring and induction programs; and staff retention supports such as professional development, leadership pathways, and teacher satisfaction monitoring.
- **Strengthen the School Improvement Plan implementation structure.**
The existing plan identifies appropriate priorities but lacks specificity. The plan should be revised to include SMART goals with baseline data, measurable targets, timelines, and responsible staff members. Monitoring checkpoints – such as quarterly data reviews and progress reports to the board – should be incorporated to ensure accountability.