

May 21, 2026

To: Charter Authorizing Panel

From: Dr. Rosilee Russell

Dear CAP:

On behalf of ICA, I want to thank you for unanimously approving our **School Improvement Plan** at your January 29 meeting and for hearing from us that day as to our long-range plan for grade improvement and student success. As you are aware, we take student grades very seriously and have implemented the plans we committed to with great enthusiasm and intensity.

I also want to personally thank those of you who have visited our school this spring, toured our new facility, met our students, and took the time to meet with our faculty and leadership. We enjoyed your visit and greatly appreciate your words of support and encouragement. We continue to extend an invitation to all CAP members to visit us on site and tour our amazing facility. Many folks from ADE have already come to see us, and I'm proud to tell you that our Governor and Secretary of Education have both been on site with us!

We regret not being able to attend the May 21 CAP meeting. We have a major donor event on campus that day that was planned one year ago, along with preparation for a big recruitment event on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Also, May 21 is the last day of school for ICA, so we are all going in different directions to wrap up school, meet with donors, and prepare for recruiting.

I am excited to report that our plan for improvement is working! The methods we have incorporated into helping students struggling with academic subjects are "old school" but extremely effective and, as a result, we believe our school grade will be a high "C" and possibly a "B" at the end of this school year depending upon the metrics used for the growth scores.

Our goal is to be one of the state's top academic schools due to the rigorous instruction we provide in our arts curriculum and instilled in our academic offerings. It would be an honor and our pleasure to become a model in education nationally and, indeed, provide the data which shows what an immersive arts school can do academically.

Enclosed is a report showing results of our Atlas testing along with our approved **School Improvement Plan** and ways in which we implemented that plan. We will continue to provide updates as needed and look forward to the day we reach the A grade level! Please let me know if I can provide anything further to you at this time.

Sincerely,



Rosilee

Date: May 1, 2026  
 To: Charter Authorizing Panel, May 21, 2026 Meeting  
 From: Dr. Rosilee Russell, President of the Institute for the Creative Arts  
 Re: Letter Grade

**REPORT FOR YEAR 2 ATLAS TESTING & UPDATE ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

I am excited to report that our **School Improvement Plan** is working! The methods we have incorporated into helping students struggling with academic subjects are “old school” but extremely effective.

ICA has completed year two Atlas testing and because of the **School Improvement Plan** we implemented, our grade is expected to be a high C and possibly a B grade, depending upon the metrics used in growth scores. We will, however, once again lose points because of not counting seniors. Our first senior class graduates this year. While we have doubled in enrollment this year, only 43 students were tested since testing is for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders only. This number is again not a valid number to accurately test the academic performance of a school. However, we are intent on helping struggling students and our methods have helped improve student scores.

Here’s what we do know at this point about our grade. We surpassed two of three success indicators from the **School Improvement Plan** and improved in math to 41% growth rate.

| <b>Subject</b>  | <b>%Passing</b> | <b>%Growth from Interim</b> | <b>State Passing</b> | <b>Growth From Year 1 (24-25)</b> | <b>%Passing Year 1</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Biology</b>  | <b>82%</b>      | <b>65%</b>                  | <b>38%</b>           | <b>Not Tested</b>                 | <b>Not Tested</b>      |
| <b>ELA</b>      | <b>65%</b>      | <b>65%</b>                  | <b>35%</b>           | <b>55%</b>                        | <b>42%</b>             |
| <b>Algebra</b>  | <b>43%</b>      | <b>80%</b>                  | <b>25%</b>           | <b>70%</b>                        | <b>13%</b>             |
| <b>Geometry</b> | <b>27%</b>      | <b>59%</b>                  | <b>21%</b>           | <b>35%</b>                        | <b>13%</b>             |

Enclosed is our **School Improvement Plan** (Appendix 11 from the January 29 CAP Presentation) as a reminder of what we are doing to improve academic success. Below are highlights of what we have done and will continue to do so that all students will receive the assistance they need to succeed. These items directly address the bulleted items in the **School Improvement Plan**.

- ICA established an English and Math tutor for students who have been identified as deficient in these areas. This includes students who received a level 1 or 2 score last year.
- Tutoring is one-on-one and a minimum of 30 minutes weekly. Twice weekly is required for some students along with 60-minute sessions if needed. All tutoring is done outside of regular class time.
- ICA identified Ms. Kelly Lucero, Academic Coordinator to oversee all tutoring needs and monitor progress. Dean Michael Johnson monitors all reports and progress.
- Tutoring is monitored weekly. Attendance is reported along with assessments of progress for each student. The Academic Coordinator and the Dean review these reports.

- Students spend time weekly working on Atlas skills that directly relate to the assessment including taking assessments built in the Atlas portal. The ELA Tutor along with the Academic Coordinator have developed the assessments and practices used in class.
- Two weeks prior to the Atlas assessment all students review essential skills.
- ICA has an established Assessment Coordinator; Instructor Mr. Justin Blanton.

Moving forward into the 26-27 school year (year three for ICA), we will begin the school year with assisting struggling students from the outset through our one-on-one tutoring program. Assessment and placement tests will be given as needed to monitor progress and determine the amount of tutoring necessary for growth. As I have mentioned previously, our goal is to be one of the state's top academic schools due to the rigorous instruction we provide in our arts curriculum and instilled in our academic offerings.

We are currently in the process of completing the AR APP which is due to DESE June 30. We should have that completed by the end of May. Within that document, we have goals for year three that are listed below. While predictions are not reality, we will work diligently to reach our predicted growth.

#### Goal 1

75% of students who are below grade level will increase their ELA Atlas scores by 3-5 points based upon their prior year Atlas score.

#### Goal 2

Students who are at grade level or above will remain at or above that level.

#### Goal 3

75% of students who are below grade level will increase their Math Atlas scores by 3-5 points based upon their prior year Atlas scores.

#### CONCLUSION

As the President of ICA and having been in arts education for over 40 years, I can personally attest to the fact that one-on-one study is extremely effective. My career as a concert pianist was built upon the Italian "Master-Teacher Apprentice" approach. I spent close to 30 years studying one-on-one with master teachers weekly to perfect my skills. This approach works in virtually all types of studies and career fields. The ICA tutors are master teachers who approach each student individually to help them improve, and the process is working. Our Atlas test scores are proving the success of our process and we are pleased with the growth in the scores.

In addition, the smaller class sizes of around 20 provide a much better learning environment for students. At this point in the life of ICA, we have class sizes of 15-20. I would like to recommend that the Arkansas Department of Education look at funding additional teachers for every school in order to have smaller classes along with necessary tutors, and stop spending money on large corporate educational entities that market the "latest and greatest" learning program which is typically a recreated version of a program that was offered in a previous decade.

We will continue to provide updates as needed and look forward to the day we reach the A grade level! Please let me know if I can provide anything further to you at this time.

# Appendix 11



## School Improvement Plan

This document will lay out the areas in the Institute for the Creative Arts school academic report that show low levels of academic performance. It will then address those areas of concern by providing the standard for which students should achieve, a timeline of implementation for the plan, success indicators for the plan, responsible personnel for the plan, and a way to document the monitoring of the process.

### **Academic Areas of Concern:**

Institute for the Creative Arts High School in Fort Smith, AR received an F letter grade for the 2024-2025 school year. This is based on the fact that students had low scores in Mathematics, Mathematics growth scores, and English growth scores.

### **Timeline of Implementation:**

ICA has determined the students who are at the greatest risk of not passing the Atlas assessment and have implemented the following methods to ensure students are meeting the standards and growth metrics.

- Students will spend time weekly working on Atlas skills that directly relate to the assessment. This includes taking assessments built in the Atlas portal.
- Students that are showing deficiencies are placed into targeted intervention groups.
- Students who received a level 1 or 2 score on the Math and/or the English portion have been placed in tutoring for a minimum of 30 minutes weekly.
- The administration will receive biweekly reports to see if students are growing.
- Two weeks prior to the Atlas summative assessment all students will be reviewing essential skills.

### **Success Indicators:**

The standards set by the state of Arkansas based on the Atlas assessment data are the standards ICA will use. Using our current data, we have determined the following goals to help us improve our school letter grade.

- Increase Mathematics passing from 13% to 25 %
- Increase Mathematics growth scores from 37% to 50%
- Increase English growth scores from 47% to 53 %

In addition, ICA will have data for science this school year. This data was missing from last years results due to low enrollment.

# Appendix 11



## School Improvement Plan

### Responsible Personnel:

- Mr. Michael Johnson, Dean: Oversee the staff in the implementation of the SIP.
- Mr. Justin Blanton, Assessment Coordinator: Assimilating, analyzing, organizing, and distributing the data in a workable format for all teachers
- Mr. Matthew Forester, ELA Instructor and Ms. Kelly Lucero, Mathematics Instructor: Development of assessments and practices used in class.
- Tutors: Provide a minimum of 30 minutes weekly of targeted instruction outside of class time

### Documented Monitoring Processes:

Our school Assessment coordinator, Academic coordinator, and Dean have worked to develop a documentation process. This has included collaborative input for the core teachers on who will need tutoring or targeted RTI time. From there we created a form that all teachers will have access to in order to determine what strategies to use for future tier 1 and tier 2 interventions.

This form will show students current Atlas data on the latest Atlas interim assessment. The students will be put into tutoring sessions. These students that are determined to need tutoring will be students that received a 1 or a 2 on the Atlas interim. This is based on the idea that a 1 on the Atlas is below grade level, 2 is near mastery, 3 is on grade level, and 4 is exceeding. The tutoring sessions will be based on this Atlas data and beginning assessments. Then every 2 weeks the form will be updated with student progress on the skills the student is working on. It will then be determined if the students' tutoring should move to a new topic or be continued. It will also be determined whether the student should continue with tutoring or if they have progressed enough to be removed from the tutoring program.

Students who are not determined to need tutoring but are not meeting their growth metric in some other way will be put into our RTI program to receive specific lessons too. Reasons for these students to be pulled in will be, they are close to their growth scores, they were level 3 on the interim assessment but did not grow, or they were level 2 on the interim assessment, showed growth, and were close to level 3.