

## **SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA ABC PROGRAM**

In 1996, the North Carolina State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction began developing the ABCs Program. This shifted the entire way we look at education in our state.

First of all, this meant very specific standards. We started seeing End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) testing, first in a few grade levels and later moving to cover more grade levels. The idea was not so much to test the kids as to test the schools, to see if they were teaching at the highest standards possible.

Secondly, there was something of a power shift. Since the NC Department of Public Instruction was asking schools to be more accountable, the NCDPI also gave the schools the capacity to make more of their own decisions to make sure they were providing excellent education to all their students. We started seeing fewer top-down decisions and more “site-based management.” That meant that not only did principals govern their own schools, but teachers and parents began forming teams to figure out how they could improve their schools.

The NCDPI did retain the right to make certain decisions. DPI determined how the schools would be tested, and what would happen if the schools didn’t perform at a high enough level on these tests. Also, because only certain subjects were tested, the teaching emphasis shifted to those subjects, and untested subjects (which include all the arts), started to fall by the wayside, until people began to realize the effectiveness of teaching all subjects through the arts, and the necessity of keeping the arts in kids’ lives.

Since 2002, North Carolina has begun folding the ABC Program into the *No Child Left Behind* federal guidelines. This is not such a difficult proposition, since *No Child Left Behind* is modeled in part on the North Carolina requirements of the ABC program, and has many of the same goals and ideas for achieving those goals.

The ABCs program means that individual schools and school systems have a great deal of choice in how the arts are used within their classrooms. This creates a great opportunity for schools to partner with arts organizations, artists, artist groups and businesses to incorporate the arts into education!

For more information on the ABCs Program, see <http://abcs.ncpublicschools.org/abcs/>