

FOREWORD

In an effort to enhance educational opportunities for high school students, the Missouri State Legislature established the Outstanding Schools Act (OSA) of 1993, which includes the provisions of the A+ School Program. The Outstanding Schools Act requires that the Salem R-80 School District establish specific guidelines and policies in order to be designated as an A+ School. Salem High School graduates who meet specific A+ criteria are eligible to receive scholarship funds for tuition and general fees at participating Missouri public community colleges, vocational schools, and select private two-year vocational schools. The purpose of this manual is to provide all stakeholders with the guidelines and policies of the A+ Schools Program in a clear and consistent manner. It is the responsibility of Salem R-80 Schools to follow these guidelines to assure that A+ designation is maintained; likewise, it is the responsibility of participating students to follow these guidelines in order to maintain eligibility in the program.

The first step of participation in the program is the signing of the A+ Schools contract by the student, parent, and A+ coordinator. After the agreement, it is the responsibility of the student to continue to meet the requirements of the program in order to be certified as an A+ Student upon graduation. If students are unable to meet the requirements of A+ graduate status, the A+ Coordinator will notify students and parents immediately of ineligibility.

It is the responsibility of the student and parent to read the information in this manual carefully. It is provided for parents, students, and employees of the district so that a clear understanding of the requirements for becoming an A+ graduate is achieved.

Direct any questions concerning this program to the A+ School Coordinator at Salem High School, 573-729-6641. For the most up to date guidelines regarding eligibility and benefits please refer to the Missouri Department of High Education website: <https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/grants/aplusscholarship.php>

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Table of Contents

Foreword.....1

Goals of the A+ Schools Program.....3

Benefits for Students..... 3

Good Faith Effort to Secure Funding.....4

Student Eligibility.....4

Enrollment Requirement..... 5

Grade Point Requirement..... 5

Tutoring/Mentoring Requirement.....5-6

Citizenship Requirement.....6-7

Appeal for Waiver of Absences.....7

Appeal Process for Citizenship Certification.....7-8

Scholarships Available for A+ Students.....8

GOALS OF THE A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM

As outlined by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the three primary goals of the A+ Schools Program are as follows:

1. All students will graduate from high school.
2. All students will complete a selection of high school studies that is challenging and for which there are identified and measurable learner expectations.
3. All students will proceed from high school graduation to a traditional college or postsecondary vocational or technical school or high wage job with workplace skill development opportunities.

This last goal, perhaps more than any other, exemplifies the basic purpose of the A+ Schools Program. It is essential that every student graduates from high school with the skills and tools required to pursue whatever educational and career goals the student and his/her parents select. The A+ Schools Program will provide information to assist in making those decisions and will provide for the development of educational programs that more fully meet the needs of all Salem High School students.

The A+ Schools Program is a joint project between the state education department and local district.

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Salem High School graduates that meet the requirements of the A+ program will be eligible for the following:

1. Partial or free tuition and general fees to a participating public community college or vocational/technical school, or certain private two-year schools of their choice in Missouri.
2. Reimbursement of funds for dual credit enrollment tuition of classes taken during high school.

The tuition incentives will be available only after the student has made a documented effort to first secure all available post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. Students must use their A+ tuition reimbursement within 48 months of graduation. Graduates can apply for deferment of eligibility if they are entering into active service to any branch of the armed forces. These students would receive their 48 months of eligibility at the end of their military service.

A+ scholarship funding is directly dependent upon the availability of state appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly. A+ funding is not the responsibility of the Salem R-80 School District.

GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO SECURE FUNDING

The A+ Schools Program requires students/parents to first make a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

- Parents must complete and send in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- You can complete the form online at www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Parents are encouraged to apply as early as possible, but not before October 1 or after June 30 of the year of the student's graduation.
- The school where the student is attending must have verification of submission before any A+ money would be available.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program, a student must be certified as an A+ Student by Salem High School. The A+ Coordinator has the responsibility to certify whether the Salem High School graduate has met the criteria of the program. The A+ Coordinator will check progress of students each semester and send a summary to parents.

To be certified as an A+ student, an individual must do the following:

- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
- Sign an A+ Student Contract.
- Attend an A+ designated high school two years prior to graduation.
- Graduate from an A+ designated high school with an overall unweighted grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.
- Maintain a 95% attendance record throughout grades 9-12.
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for other students of which up to 25% may include job shadowing prior to graduation.
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs.
- Make a good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.
- Males must register for Selective Service.
- Students must earn either an advanced or proficient score on either the Algebra I end of course exam or higher level DESE approved end-of-course exam in the field of mathematics.

Refer to <http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/grants/aplusscholarship.php> for the most up to date standards.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

In order to obtain financial incentives, the students are required to attend an A+ designated school for 2 years prior to graduation.

-A student who drops and/or transfers to another school but re-enrolls at SHS within 15 school days will still be eligible for the A+ financial incentive. Any absences during this time will be added to the student's absenteeism total.

GRADE POINT REQUIREMENT

To receive financial benefits, a student must graduate with a cumulative unweighted grade point average of 2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale. The following statements are intended to help clarify the A+ School policies concerning grade point average.

- The cumulative grade point average is for all four years.
- The student's official transcript will serve as evidence of grade point average for admission to a public community college or public vocational/technical school.

TUTORING/MENTORING REQUIREMENT

The criteria of the A+ Schools Program requires that students seeking A+ status must perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for other students. Listed below are the A+ Schools guidelines concerning tutoring or mentoring.

- Tutoring/mentoring must be school sponsored.
- The student must go through an orientation/training before the mentoring/tutoring will begin.
- The official time sheet will be picked up in the A+ Coordinator's office and should be returned weekly.
- The official time sheet must be signed and dated by the school sponsoring official in charge of that tutoring or mentoring activity.
- Tutoring/mentoring may be done during the school year or during summer school.
- All tutoring/mentoring must be done on school premises.
- All tutoring/mentoring experiences must begin before February 2nd in the year the student will graduate.

-The student is expected to be present at the agreed upon day and time for tutoring/mentoring.

-If an absence must occur, the student is expected to notify the adult in charge of the tutoring/mentoring experience.

The following list contains possible opportunities that will count toward the 50 hours of unpaid tutoring/mentoring requirement of the A+ Schools Program:

Upper and Lower Elementary School Tutoring/Mentoring
Middle School Tutoring/Mentoring
High School Tutoring/Mentoring
Math Tutoring
Approved Rural Schools Program
Summer School Assistant
Opportunities as approved by the A+ School Coordinator

A current list of approved tutoring/mentoring activities and the contact person for these activities will be posted in the A+ Coordinator's Office.

CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

Participation in the A+ School Program is an honor and unique privilege for Salem High School students. Students pursuing the A+ incentive must maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs/alcohol.

Any student wishing to be eligible for the A+ financial incentives will not sell, possess, or use any controlled substances as defined by law unless prescribed by a licensed physician. Any involvement will have been established when the student is disciplined for a drug or alcohol offense at school or when the student is charged and pleads no contest, receives a suspended imposition of sentence, or is found guilty of crimes that relate to the use, manufacture, possession, transportation, distribution, or sale of a controlled substance, including alcohol. The student will be removed from the A+ Schools Program. Students who violate the Safe Schools Act will be removed from the A+ Schools Program. An infraction of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism or cheating will result in expulsion from the A+ program.

A student receiving OSS of any length will be removed from the A+ Schools Program. Any student receiving ISS for a violation not related to drugs, alcohol, or the Safe Schools Act will be held to the following standards:

- An accumulation of 3 days of ISS in one semester will result in that student being placed on probation for the remainder of that semester and the entire following semester.
- If a student receives a 4th day of ISS within the two semesters of probation, then the student will be removed from the A+ Program.

- Days of ISS only accumulate during each school year and any semester during which the student is on probation. They do not accumulate over the course of grades 9-12.
- For example: As a freshman, Student A receives 3 days of ISS in March for a violation of school rules. Student A is then on probation for the rest of that semester and for the fall semester of the following school year.
 - Student A receives a 4th day of ISS during one of the semesters of probation. That student is disqualified from the A+ program.
 - Student A receives a 4th day of ISS during their Junior year after the probation has ended, that student is not disqualified.

To be an A+ student, you must be a credible school citizen. Credible school citizens are those students whose conduct both in school and out of school will reflect positively upon themselves and their school. Credible citizens adhere to all school policies in addition to all local, state, and federal laws. Any incident that takes place during grades 9-12 will be considered in evaluating the student's citizenship.

APPEAL FOR WAIVER OF ABSENCES

A+ participants are expected to attend school regularly. A+ participants must graduate with a minimum cumulative (grades 9-12) attendance rate of 95%. Students and/or parents may appeal absences in special circumstances. These circumstances may include conditions that require on-going doctor visits and/or hospitalization. A doctor's note for an excused absence does not automatically qualify a student for an A+ attendance waiver. Absences that occur because of school-sponsored activities are not counted against attendance. Attendance waivers will not be granted for absences that are due to ordinary colds, flu, or similar short-term illnesses (even with a doctor's note), truancy, vacations, transportation problems (except when riding the school bus), and suspension from school. If you have attendance questions, please contact the A+ Coordinator. All attendance waivers will be considered and decided on a case-by-case basis by the A+ Attendance Appeal Committee. A parent, guardian, or student should contact the A+ Coordinator and request an Appeal of Absence Form, if the attendance rate is less than 95%. The A+ Attendance Appeal Committee will meet at the end of each senior year. Parents will be notified by letter of the committee's decision. Appeals of the committee's decision may be made to the Superintendent and the Board of Education in writing within 14 days of notification.

APPEAL PROCESS FOR CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATION

If the appeal deals with ISS or OSS (not involving drugs, alcohol, or the Safe Schools Act), students and/or parents will have 15 days to appeal the decision to the A+ Appeals Committee. The basis of the appeal must be submitted in writing through the office of the A+ Coordinator using a designated form. The students and/or parents may make the appeal in writing or make a presentation before the A+ Appeals Committee.

Upon receiving the written appeal, the A+ School Coordinator will convene with the A+ Appeals Committee. The A+ Schools Appeal Committee will meet to determine the certification of the A+ student involved in the review. After the committee has reached a decision, the A+ Schools Coordinator will notify the parents in writing. If the appeal is granted, the student will remain on probation for the remainder of that semester and the following semester. If the appeal is not granted, the student may then appeal to the Board of Education through communication with the superintendent.

Any appeal involving drugs, alcohol, or Safe School violations, must be made to the Superintendent/Board of Education within 15 days of notification. If a student appeals and that appeal is granted, the student will be placed on probation for the remainder of his/her high school career. If a student appealed before the Board of Education, any subsequent appeal must be made to the Board of Education.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR A+ STUDENTS

Several non-A+ colleges in Missouri offer scholarships for certified A+ graduates.

If you are an A+ student who is not planning to attend a Missouri community college or post-secondary technical school, your A+ status can still earn you substantial financial benefits if you attend one of the colleges offering A+ scholarships.

Many colleges and universities in Missouri also offer substantial transfer scholarships to students who have used A+ benefits to attend a community college for two years. Those students should check with the individual Missouri colleges they are interested in attending after two years in a community college.

A+ eligible colleges and technical programs along with contact names/numbers:
<http://www.dhe.mo.gov/documents/EligibleAplusPostsecondarySchools.pdf>