

FORWARD

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 as outlined in this handbook are eligible to receive scholarship funds for tuition and general fees at participating Missouri public community colleges, vocational schools, or certain 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. 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. It then becomes the responsibility of the student to continue to meet the requirements of the program as outlined in this handbook in order to be certified as an A+ Student upon graduation. It is realized that some students will not be able to meet the requirements as set forth in the A+ Schools Program. It will be the responsibility of the A+ Coordinator to notify students and parents immediately if it is determined that a student becomes ineligible for A+ graduate status.

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 Higher Education website at <https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/grants/aplusscholarship.php>

Will Hubbs, A+ Coordinator

THE A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM

The A+ Schools program is a comprehensive program of curricular, instructional, and technological developments and improvements to better meet the needs of all students, regardless of whether they plan to attend a traditional four-year college, a community college, a vocational or technical school, or plan to seek employment immediately out of high school.

The program provides for extensive curricular development, staff development, career guidance, activities designed to address the needs of at-risk students, articulation agreements with postsecondary institutions, and the development of applied courses that provide learning in a more real-world context.

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 graduate 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 educational department and local district. State grant monies funded most of the project during its first three years of implementation.

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

All students will benefit from the infusion of technology into the curriculum, the development of more effective instructional techniques, clearly stated and measurable learner expectations and graduation performance standards, more extensive career exploration and guidance activities, and the development of courses with a more real-world focus.

Each student can be assured that he or she will be required to complete a rigorous academic program that is more closely geared to his or her individual needs and interests.

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 a graduate of the Salem High School 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 three 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 current standards. This option is available to students before or after high school graduation.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

In order to obtain financial incentives, the requirements are for a student to attend Salem High School for two years prior to graduation.

-The student must enroll in Salem High School no later than 3 weeks after the beginning of the fall term of the student's sophomore year.

-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 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.

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). After about four to six weeks, the information will be received that must be sent to the community college or public vocational/technical school which the student is planning to attend.

-Salem High School utilizes a college advisor to assist students with filling out the FAFSA form. Students can make an appointment with the college advisor if they need help with this process. The form can also be filled out 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.

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. It is not possible to list every situation. 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.

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.

RENEWAL

You may renew your award annually until your eligibility expires (see <https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/grants/aplusscholarship.php> "How long can I receive an award?")

To renew, initial students must:

- Complete the FAFSA, or FAFSA4caster if applicable, in order to make a good faith effort to secure a Pell grant or other federal aid
- Achieve a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average by the end of the fall term.
- Complete at least 12 credit hours in each fall and spring term in which you receive an A+ award (6 credit hours in summer).
- Achieve a minimum 2.5 cumulative grade point average by the end of the spring term.

To renew, renewal students must:

- Complete the FAFSA, or FAFSA4caster if applicable, each year in order to make a good faith effort to secure a Pell grant or other federal aid
- Maintain a 2.5 grade point average and otherwise maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by your school
- Complete at least 12 credit hours in each fall and spring term in which you receive an A+ award (6 credit hours in summer).

If you fail to meet the renewal criteria, you may receive the award in the term following the school's determination that the standard has been regained. Schools have different policies for how frequently they monitor satisfactory academic progress. You will need to check with your school to determine when your award might be reinstated.

CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

This section of the handbook explains the A+ Schools requirement of maintaining a good citizenship record and avoiding the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol. The list below lists the guidelines to be used to determine citizenship requirements.

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 (this includes the discipline, athletic, and random drug testing policies) 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.

Any student who pleads no contest or is convicted of a felony that is verifiable and either a matter of public record or communicated to school officials in compliance with the Safe Schools Act will be removed from the A+ Schools Program.

The Assistant Principal will determine citizenship certification. The criteria for certifying good citizenship will be the following:

1. Character

- Demonstrates a distinctive quality of being a role model for other students.
- Displays a courteous, positive, and cooperative manner toward fellow students, parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Is honest in completion of school activities, assignments, and tests.
- Shows respect for others and their property.

2. Ethics

- Demonstrates the ability to make responsible, mature decisions.
- Displays characteristics that are based upon accepted ethical standards.

3. Responsibility

-Demonstrates responsible behavior by completing assignments, arriving to class on time, and being prepared.

4. Discipline

-Any student receiving OSS of any length will be removed from the A+ Schools Program. Any student receiving an accumulation of 2 days of ISS will be placed on probation for the remainder of the semester and the following semester. A third day of ISS during the probation period will result in the student being removed from the A+ Schools Program. If a student has to appeal and is reinstated, probation will continue through the end of the following semester.

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 the time enrolled at Salem R-80 will be considered in evaluating the student's citizenship.

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 of the A+ Coordinator. 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. **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>