

# MISSOURI'S A+ SCHOOL PROGRAM

Missouri's Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 established provisions for the implementation of a grant award program to institute A+ Schools and improve the education of high school students within the State of Missouri. Beginning in 1994, the A+ Schools Program has provided grant awards to Missouri's public school districts that demonstrate a commitment to ensure that the program's goals are met in their high schools. The goals are that all students:

1. Graduate from high school.
2. Complete a selection of high school classes that is challenging and for which there are identified learner expectations.
3. Proceed from high school to a college, technical college, or a high wage job with workplace skill development opportunities.

High schools that apply for the grant award must outline a plan that includes innovative activities to make progress toward achieving these three goals. Activities include: building partnerships that include the high school, post secondary schools, businesses, industries, community organizations, parents, and students; providing students with the motivation, skills, and knowledge to graduate from high school; integrating academic and vocational learning; and preparing students to select a career path focus and a program of study designed to meet academic standards established by the local school district.

Central High School was designated as an A+ School in March 2000. Since that time, students who graduate from Central High School may be eligible to participate in the A+ School Financial Incentive Program.

The funding for the financial incentives is dependent upon Central High School maintaining its A+ School status and the availability of state appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly.

The student financial incentive part of the A+ Schools Program may provide for applicants who meet the A+ requirements eligibility for state reimbursement of tuition while attending any Missouri public community college or post-secondary vocational or technical school as a full-time student. These costs will be reimbursed only after secured federal financial assistance funds that do not require repayment have been applied. The incentive will be available for up to two years of attendance during the 4-year period following high school graduation.

# **BENEFITS OF AN A+ SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS**

The A+ concept started with the graduating class of 2000 at Central High School. In March 2000, Central High School was designated as an A+ School by the state of Missouri. Since that time, qualified students graduating from Central High School may be eligible for the following:

Tuition to a community college of their choice in Missouri.

Incentives may be made available only after the student has made a good faith effort to first secure all federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

Students can receive this incentive for TWO years. A student must be considered a FULL-TIME student by the institution. Students must complete the two years of full-time attendance at a public Missouri community college within FOUR years after graduation from Central High School.

## **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ School Program, a student must be certified as an A+ student by Central High School. As the official representative of the A+ School Program with the Department of Education of the State of Missouri, the A+ School Coordinator has the responsibility to certify if a graduate of Central High School has met the criteria of certification. To be certified as an A+ School Student, an individual must do the following:

1. Sign an A+ Student Participation Agreement with their high school prior to graduation.
2. Attend an A+ designated school for at least three consecutive years prior to graduation.
3. Maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average over four years.
4. Maintain a 95% attendance record over four years.
5. Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring before graduating.
6. Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol.
7. Make a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.
8. Register with Selective Service, if applicable.
9. Achieve a score of Proficient or Advanced on the official Algebra 1 End-of-Course Exam OR meet a specified score on the mathematics part of the ACT exam.

**Requirement 1: Enter into a written agreement with the high school to participate in the A+ Schools Student Financial Incentive Program.**

A student may enter into the agreement at any time before graduating from high school. Due to the requirement to accumulate tutoring/mentoring hours, it is recommended that the agreement be signed as early as possible. The A+ Agreement Form must be completed with all appropriate signatures and returned to the A+ Coordinator.

**Requirement 2: Attend a designated A+ School for three consecutive years prior to high school graduation.**

A student must attend a designated A+ school during his/her sophomore, junior and senior years of high school. Students transferring to Central High School from a school that is not A+ Designated **must** enroll no later than three weeks after the beginning of their sophomore year to be considered eligible.

**Requirement 3: Graduate from high school with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.**

The student must graduate from high school with a cumulative unweighted GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. The cumulative unweighted GPA is **applicable to all four years** of the student's enrollment in high school. The official transcript will document and certify that the GPA requirement has been met. A student with a 2.49 or lower GPA will not be eligible.

**Requirement 4: Have at least a 95 percent attendance record.**

To be eligible for the A+ Schools Program incentive, an A+ enrolled student must have a 95 percent or better average attendance record for the four-year period, freshmen through senior years. A student with a 94.9 percent or lower average will not be eligible. Students are expected to attend class regularly and be on time for classes. There are not excuses accepted for student absences. At the end of each semester the accumulative attendance records will be reported on the student's grade report. After receiving this information, the parent will have 30 days to file an appeal with the A+ School Coordinator. If an appeal is not filed within 30 days of notification, then a waiver for those days missed will not be considered. Anyone making an appeal should use the "A+ Attendance Appeal Form" available from the A+ Coordinator. A sample is included in the appendix. Students with specific health histories must make sure that the medical documentation of chronic or long-term health-related problems shall be considered in a possible review situation.

**Requirement 5: Perform and document 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring.**

The following guidelines should be followed in the completion of this requirement:

1. Tutoring and mentoring activities will be school-based, academic in nature, and supervised at school.
2. The tutoring and mentoring activities may occur before, during, or after the school day.
3. All tutoring and mentoring must be supervised and verified by a teacher, principal, counselor, school personnel, or the A+ Coordinator.
4. Students must provide their own transportation and waive the school district liability.
5. The A+ Coordinator will maintain records of tutoring/mentoring hours that each applicant accumulates. Only activities that have been verified with a time sheet signature by the tutoring supervisor will be counted toward the 50-hour requirement.
6. Cadet Teaching class will be offered for senior students during the school year AND all students during summer school as an opportunity to gain needed A+ tutoring hours. Students with a passing grade during one semester of Cadet Teaching during the regular school year will receive their 50 tutoring hours. Summer school students will use log sheets to log their tutoring hours.

**Requirement 6: Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol.**

Participation in the A+ School Program is an honor and a unique privilege for Central High School students. The Central A+ Advisory committee believes that creditable school citizens are those citizens whose conduct, both in and out of school, will reflect positively upon themselves and school. Good citizenship includes respect of staff, peers and self, accepting responsibility, and honesty. Students who are designated A+ students should demonstrate distinctive qualities and be role models for other students. Their character and ethics should be one of the highest standards.

**Requirement 7: Make a good faith effort to secure federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds.**

This section of the manual explains the requirement of parents to first make a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

- Parents must complete and electronically submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA information must be sent to the community college or public vocational/technical school that the student is planning to attend.
- The FAFSA application form is available electronically on the FAFSA website (<https://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.

**Requirement 8: Register with Selective Service, if applicable.**

Male students 18 years of age or older must be registered with selective service. No state or federal financial aid/grants will be awarded to those not registered.

Male students can register several different ways: through the internet, through the FAFSA process, or at the post office.

**Requirement 9: Achieve a score of Proficient or Advanced on the official Algebra 1 End-of-Course Exam OR meet a specified score on the mathematics part of the ACT exam.**

This requirement was enacted beginning with the graduating Class of 2015. All students are required by the state of Missouri to take an Algebra I End of Course Exam. To be considered eligible for A+ status, students must achieve a score of Proficient or Advanced on the Algebra I EOC. Students may also meet this requirement by having an acceptable score on the Math portion of the ACT Exam. DESE has approved a chart detailing alternatives to the Algebra I EOC A+ Requirement for 2018 Seniors. The chart is shown below:

The 2018 high school seniors who do not achieve a score of proficient or advanced on the Algebra I EOC, or a higher level math EOC approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, must have a combined ACT math score and high school GPA in accordance with the following scale:

<b>ACT Math Score</b>		<b>High School GPA</b>
17 or greater	and	2.5 or greater
16	and	2.8 or greater
15	and	3.0 or greater

This scale reflects placement practices in use by some institutions. It also recognizes that student success may be predicted by more than a single test score.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY**

The student financial incentive can be available for up to two (2) years of attendance, during the four-year period after the recipient graduates from high school. To maintain eligibility, the student must:

**Requirement 1: Enroll in and attend on a full-time basis a Missouri public community college or vocational-technical school.**

Students must be enrolled for twelve credit hours to be considered a full time student for each semester.

**Requirement 2: Maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.**

The specific guidelines outlined in this manual for Central High School have been developed in accordance with Missouri Senate Bill 380.

The eligibility requirement guidelines for the Central A+ Schools Program (student financial incentives) were approved by the Central Board of Education.