

PURPOSE OF THE A+ STUDENT MANUAL

In an effort to enhance educational opportunities for high school students, the Missouri state legislature established the Outstanding Schools Act in 1993 which included the provisions of the A+ Schools Program. Knox County R-I High School graduates, who meet specific A+ criteria, may be eligible to receive the financial incentive for tuition and general fees to attend any public community college, vocational or technical school in the state of Missouri.

The purpose of this manual is to provide students, parents, faculty, and administration with the guidelines and policies of the A+ Schools Program. Accurate certification of student eligibility is crucial to the integrity of the program. **It is the responsibility of the student and parents/guardians to read this manual carefully to understand all the guidelines and requirements before signing the Student Participation Agreement.**

GOALS OF THE A+ PROGRAM

The A+ Schools Program is dedicated to the following goals:

- All students will graduate from high school;
- All students will complete high school studies that are challenging and have identified learning expectations; and
- All students will proceed from high school graduation to college, postsecondary vocational/technical school, or a high wage job with opportunities for workplace skill development opportunities.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVE BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

Graduates of Knox County R-I High School who have met the A+ Schools criteria, may be eligible for the following:

- **The cost of tuition subject to legislative appropriation paid to attend any public community college or public vocational/technical school of their choice in the state of Missouri.** These incentives will be made available only after the student has made a good faith effort to first secure all available federal postsecondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

Students may be eligible to receive this incentive for two years. A student must be considered a full-time student by the postsecondary institution and maintain a 2.5 GPA or higher. Students must complete the two years of full-time enrollment at a public community college or a public vocational/technical school within four years after graduation from Knox County R-I High School.

The financial incentives are the responsibility of the Missouri General Assembly and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and not the responsibility of the Knox County R-I School District and pending funding from the Missouri General Assembly.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

This section of the manual explains student eligibility requirements. To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program, a student must be certified an A+ student by Knox County R-I High School.

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

- Sign an A+ Student Participation Agreement. (Copy included in appendix.)
- Attend the designated A+ School for three (3) consecutive years prior to graduation.
- Have at least a 95% attendance rate for the four years of high school.
- Complete the local standards for graduation and graduate with at least a 2.5 (6.875) or higher grade point average (GPA) on a non-weighted 4.0 (11.0) scale.
- Perform fifty (50) hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for younger students.
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs/alcohol/tobacco.
- Make a good faith effort to first secure all available postsecondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. (Required submission of Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA)
- Beginning with the high school senior class of 2015, have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on the Algebra I end of course exam or higher level DESE approved end-of-course exam in the field of mathematics.
Financial incentives may be available for a period of four years after high school graduation. To retain eligibility a student must maintain a 2.5 or higher grade point average while enrolled at a Missouri public community college or vocation/technical school on a full-time basis.*

*Beginning in 2015, if you meet all of the eligibility requirements except the end of course exam requirement, you may establish eligibility by achieving a qualifying score on the COMPASS exam published by ACT, Inc. or the mathematics component of the ACT test. You may achieve the qualifying score as a high school or postsecondary student. If you achieve the score as a postsecondary student you may be eligible for an award in the same term that you take the test. The Missouri Department of Higher Education will announce the qualifying COMPASS and ACT scores annually.

MONITORING OF A+ STATUS

At the end of each semester, student/parents who are participating in the A+ Program will receive a letter reporting their progress on each requirement. The A+ coordinator will review requirements with students participating in the A+ Program each year. Any questions about the information reported should be directed to the A+ coordinator.

CERTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR A+ FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

The A+ Coordinator will review all records of students participating in the A+ Program and names of students eligible for the financial incentive will be submitted to the high school principal and the guidance counselor for official certification upon graduation.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENT

This section of the A+ Student Manual explains the requirement of enrollment to be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program.

- The student must be enrolled in a designated A+ School for three (3) consecutive years prior to graduation.
- The student must be enrolled no later than two weeks (10 school days) after the beginning of the fall term at Knox County R-I High School.
- If a student withdraws or transfers from Knox County R-I High School after the beginning of the sophomore year, the student will not be considered eligible for the A+ Schools Program, even if the student re-enrolls at Knox County R-I High School before graduation (unless the student has been enrolled at another A+ designated high school and can meet all A+ requirements).
- If a student requests participation in the program after the beginning of the freshman year, the student has to have met all criteria dating back to the beginning of the freshman year before enrollment will be completed.
- If one of your parents is a member of the military on active duty or has retired from the military and relocated to Missouri within one year of their retirement, you are exempt from this requirement. However, you must attend an A+ designated high school in the school year immediately preceding graduation and meet all of the other high school eligibility requirements.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT

This section of the manual explains the attendance requirement of the A+ Schools Program. The attendance rate must average 95% or higher for the accumulated time between the beginning of the freshman year until graduation. The following guidelines will be in effect:

- The cumulative attendance information given to the A+ Coordinator will come from the official attendance record kept by Knox County R-I High School.
- Each semester A+ students/parents will receive a status report on all the A+ requirements including attendance.
- Only actual in-school days or approved homebound instruction due to extended illness or accident will count as school attendance for A+ requirements. It is the responsibility of the parent to request of the school to make application for homebound instruction for the student at the time of the accident/illness. Approved homebound instruction counted for daily attendance can be used to meet the required 95 percent attendance rate.

GRADE POINT REQUIREMENT

To be eligible for the A+ Schools financial assistance, the student must graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale (6.875 or above on an 11.0). The following statements are intended to help clarify the A+ Schools policy regarding grade point average.

- The grade point average (GPA) is non-weighted, cumulative for all four years of high school: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior.
- The student's official transcript will serve as evidence of grade point average.
- All courses taken by the student during their four years of high school will be used to calculate the GPA. If any course is taken on a pass/fail basis, students must receive a pass grade; otherwise, a failing grade is calculated in the GPA.
- Beginning in 2015, if you do not meet the Algebra I end of course requirement, you may regain eligibility by completing your first semester at a participating institution with a minimum of 12 hours and a 2.5 grade point average.

TUTORING/MENTORING REQUIREMENT

This section of the manual explains that A+ School students are required to participate in a tutoring/mentoring program for younger students. The state requires that A+ students must perform fifty (50) hours of unpaid tutoring/mentoring for younger students. Listed below are the guidelines concerning tutoring/mentoring.

- In order to begin the tutoring/mentoring program, the A+ student must have met the following:
 1. Has earned at least thirteen credits (junior status) toward graduation.
 2. Has signed an A+ Participation Agreement.
- The following procedures will be used by the A+ coordinator in determining this requirement:
 1. All tutoring/mentoring activities will be designed to involve the A+ student with younger students in the Knox County R-I School District.
 2. Tutoring/mentoring activities will provide, as an ultimate goal, encouragement to younger students to get excited about school, stay in school, and strive for good grades.
 3. Tutoring/mentoring activities will be school-based, academic in nature and under the auspices of the Knox County R-I School District.
 4. All tutoring/mentoring must be supervised and verified by a teacher, principal, counselor or the A+ Coordinator.
 5. The A+ student is responsible for maintaining an official tutoring log sheet. Times must be exact. Only activities verified with a time sheet signature will be counted toward the 50-hour requirement. (See sample log sheet in appendix.)
 6. The A+ student or the school may terminate the tutoring/mentoring experience with the permission of the A+ Coordinator or counselor.
 7. All tutoring/mentoring experiences must be completed during the junior or senior years.
 8. A semester course is available to A+ students. Participation in this course for one semester should result in completion of the required 50 hours of tutoring/mentoring.
 - The A+ Coordinator will assign each student to a tutoring/mentoring site and students will sign a contractual agreement specifying rules and regulations for tutoring/mentoring.
 - Training and orientation will be conducted at the beginning of each semester with follow-up during the semester.
 - The A+ student is expected to be present on the assigned days and time for the tutoring/mentoring. If an absence must occur, A+ students are expected to notify the adult in charge of their tutoring/mentoring experiences, but 50 hours must be logged to meet the A+ requirement.
 - The Tutoring/Mentoring Time Log must be completed and submitted to the A+ Coordinator at the end of each month.

9. All tutoring/mentoring is to be unpaid.

CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

This section of the manual explains the requirement for good citizenship. Participation in the A+ Schools Program is an honor and unique privilege for Knox County R-I High School and Knox County R-I students. Students who are certified A+ students should demonstrate distinctive qualities and be role models for other students. Their character and ethics should be of the highest standards.

Students and parents/guardians are reminded that the financial incentives are not a right or entitlement but an incentive reward to be merited. Good citizenship is important and essential to meriting the financial incentives. Students and their parents/guardians are responsible for understanding and following the guidelines.

Student eligibility is based on their ability to meet specific requirements with one of those requirements being: “a student must maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

The following criteria and procedures have been established to determine student compliance with the citizenship requirement.

1. Any student who engages in the unlawful possession, transfer, use, or sale of drugs/drug paraphernalia or alcohol at school or in the community will be dismissed by the A+ Citizenship Committee and will not be eligible for A+ financial incentives.*
2. Any student convicted of a felony or criminal activity as defined by the Safe Schools Act will be dismissed by the A+ Citizenship Committee and will not be eligible for the A+ financial incentives.
3. Students enrolled in the A+ Schools Program must follow the Student Code of Conduct (district discipline policy) as stated in the Knox County R-I High School Student Handbook, the regulations of the Safe Schools Act Good and Creditable Citizenship Policy. The A+ Citizenship Committee will review violations on an individual basis and will:
 - Issue a verbal and/or written warning; (and/or)
 - Place the student on A+ disciplinary probation for the rest of the current semester, or for an indefinite period of time, and/or the following semester if the violation occurs during the second or fourth quarter. Students that are placed on probation twice in the same semester or more than two times within four years will be dismissed from the A+ Program; (and/or)
 - Dismiss the student from the A+ Program. The student and his/her parents/guardians will be notified by certified mail of a student’s dismissal from the program. Students/parents have the right to appeal dismissal from the program and loss of A+ eligibility.
4. The A+ Citizenship Committee shall be composed of:
 - High School Principal
 - High School Guidance Counselor
 - High School A+ Coordinator
 - Two High School TeachersThe assigned/elected teachers will serve one-year terms.

CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT (continued)

*For purposes of paragraph 1, “engages in” shall include any one or more of the following:

- a. Convictions under the criminal law applicable to adults;
- b. Adjudications of guilt under juvenile law;
- c. Any and all guilty pleas, pleas of nolo contendere (no contest) and/or Alford pleas;
- d. Any and all criminal or juvenile proceedings that result in suspended imposition or suspended execution of sentences;
- e. Admissions by students that they have engaged in the conduct prohibited in paragraph 1;
- f. Any finding or decision by the Superintendent and/or Board of Education that results in the student’s suspension or expulsion pursuant to the District’s discipline policy for conduct prohibited in paragraph 1. (Students who have been suspended by the Superintendent shall retain the right to appeal the disciplinary suspension to the Board in accordance with District policy. In the event of such appeal, the Committee’s final decision regarding A+ eligibility shall not be made until the board has issued its decision regarding suspension under the District’s discipline policy.)

STUDENT APPEAL PROCESS—CITIZENSHIP

1. The student and his/her parents/guardians will be notified by certified mail of the student’s dismissal from the program.
 - 1) The student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal the student’s dismissal from the program by submitting written notice of the appeal to the Superintendent of Schools no later than ten (10) school/business days (excluding weekends and holidays when school is not in session) of receipt of the certified letter notifying the student of his/her dismissal from the program.
 - 2) The student and his/her parents/guardians will be notified by certified mail of the Superintendent’s decision.
2. If the Superintendent upholds a student’s dismissal from the program, the student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal the Superintendent’s decision to the Knox County R-I Board of Education for a final decision.
 - 1) The student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal the Superintendent’s decision by submitting written notice of the appeal to the Board of Education no later than ten (10) school/business days (excluding weekends and holidays when school is not in session) of receipt of the certified letter notifying the student of the superintendent’s decision.
 - 2) The student and his/her parents/guardians may submit the written notice in the form of a letter. The original appeal will be submitted to the Board of Education.

- 3) The appeal will be considered at the next regularly scheduled board meeting following receipt of the written appeal. The appeal will be conducted in accordance with policies set forth by the Board of Education. The decision of the Board will be final.

GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO SECURE FUNDING

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

- Student/parents must complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The student must request that the FAFSA information be sent to the Missouri public community college or vocational/technical school that the student is planning to attend.
- The FAFSA application form is available in the Counseling and Career Center at Knox County R-I High School. Student/parents are encouraged to apply as early as possible, not before January 1st but submitted by April 1st of the year of the student's graduation.
- Students are to provide proof of attempt to secure all available federal financial assistance funds.
- Tuition incentives will only be made available to reimburse the unpaid balance of the cost of tuition, general fees, and up to fifty (50%) percent of the book cost subject to legislative appropriation paid to attend after available federal postsecondary financial assistance funds have been applied to these costs.

****Effective August 28, 1999, all individuals required to register with the Selective Service must do so to be eligible for state-supported scholarships, programs for financial assistance for post secondary education or loans insured by any state agency. This student eligibility requirement was enacted by the General assembly of the state of Missouri, 90th General Assembly, 1999 (House Bill No. 415).**

REQUIREMENTS FOR MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

It is the responsibility of Missouri public community colleges and vocational/technical schools to verify that students participating in the A+ Schools Program of financial incentives maintain eligibility after high school graduation.

Initial Eligibility

An A+ certified student must:

- Be enrolled full-time at an A+ eligible postsecondary institution. The period of eligibility is for two years during the four-year period immediately following graduation from a designated high school.

Continuation of Eligibility

An A+ student must:

- Be enrolled as a full-time student

- Maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.
- Continue to make good faith effort to secure federal postsecondary student financial assistance funds.

STUDENT APPEAL PROCESS

In cases of appeal, other than citizenship:

1. The student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal the student's loss of eligibility from the program by submitting written notice of appeal to the Appeals Committee no later than ten school/business days (excluding weekends/holidays when school is not in session) of receipt of the certified letter notifying the student of his/her loss of eligibility from the program.
2. If the Appeals Committee upholds the loss of eligibility from the program, the student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal the decision by submitting written notice of the appeal to the Superintendent of Schools no later than ten (10) school/business days (excluding weekends and holidays when school is not in session) of receipt of the certified letter notifying the student/parent of the Appeals Committee decision.
 - 1) The student and his/her parents/guardians will be notified by certified mail of the Superintendent's decision.
3. If the Superintendent upholds the loss of eligibility from the program, the student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal the Superintendent's decision to the Knox County R-I Board of Education for a final decision.
 - 1) The student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal the Superintendent's decision by submitting written notice of the appeal to the Board of Education no later than ten (10) school/business days (excluding weekends and holidays when school is not in session) of receipt of the certified letter notifying the student of the Superintendent's decision.
 - 2) The appeal will be considered at the next regularly scheduled board meeting following receipt of the written appeal. The appeal will be conducted in accordance with policies set forth by the Board of Education. The decision of the Board is final.
4. The Appeals Committee shall be composed of the following:
 - High School Principal
 - High School Guidance Counselor
 - High School A+ Coordinator
 - Two High School Teachers

The assigned/elected teachers will serve one-year terms.

GOOD AND CREDITABLE CITIZENSHIP POLICY

Because students are representatives of their school district and their community, the District requires that all students maintain themselves as good and creditable citizens.

Good and creditable citizenship requires that students agree to accept their obligations to attend school on a regular basis and to comply with the District's discipline code as set forth in Policy 2610 and Regulation 2610.

Good and creditable citizenship also requires that students accept their responsibility to contribute to providing a safe and positive school environment and community; that students fulfill their responsibilities at school and in the community in an honorable and trustworthy manner; and that students comply with standards of good discipline so as not to bring discredit to themselves, their school, or their community.

Standards of good discipline include, but not limited to: orderly, lawful conduct; self-control; honesty; integrity; and accountability. Behavior that would not conform to the standards of good discipline includes, but is not limited to; possession or use of tobacco products; possession or use of alcohol; possession or presence under the influence of a controlled substance; sale of a controlled substance or substance to be a represented controlled substance; use of physical force with the intent to do bodily harm; possession of a weapon; intentionally causing or attempting to cause a fire or explosion; unwanted physical touching of others; intimidation of others; disruptive behavior; theft; vandalism; truancy; use of obscene or vulgar language; and defiance of authority.