

A+ Schools Program



The A+ Schools Program is administered by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

While many Missourians see the A+ Schools Program as a scholarship program, it was created by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 as an incentive for improving Missouri's high schools.

The primary goal of the A+ Schools Program is to ensure that all students who graduate from Missouri high schools are well prepared to pursue advanced education and employment.

Participating high schools are encouraged to:

- reduce the dropout rate.
- raise academic expectations by eliminating general-track courses.



- provide career pathways for all students.
- work closely with business and higher-education leaders to better prepare students for their lives after graduation.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Students who graduate from a designated A+ high school may qualify for a state-paid financial incentive to attend any public community college or career/technical school in Missouri if the students successfully meet the following requirements:

- Enter into a written agreement with the high school prior to graduation
- Attend a designated school for three consecutive years immediately prior to graduation
- Graduate with an overall GPA of 2.5 points or higher on a 4-point scale
- Have an overall attendance rate of at least 95 percent for grades 9-12
- Perform 50 hours of district-supervised, unpaid tutoring or mentoring
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the use of drugs and alcohol.

The financial incentive is available only after the student has made a good faith effort to first secure all available federal financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that does not require repayment.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY

- Students who qualify for A+ financial assistance must enroll full time and attend one of the following eligible institutions:
 1. Public community college
 2. Public vocational or technical school that has received reimbursement under RSMo 160.545.7 prior to Aug. 28, 2008
 3. Private vocational or technical school that is a member of the North Central Association, is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission as of July 1, 2008, and maintains such accreditation. The school also must be designated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
- Students must maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA to be eligible for the financial incentive.
- Students must make a good faith effort each year to first secure all available federal financial aid (FAFSA).

All individuals required to register under the Military Selective Service Act must show proof of registration to be eligible for state-supported scholarships, programs for financial assistance for postsecondary education or loans insured by any state agency. This requirement is authorized pursuant to RSMo 105.1210, 105.1213 and 105.1216.

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- ▶ <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/aplus>

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Title IX Coordinator, 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-751-4212.

Missouri law prohibits any alien unlawfully present in the United States from receiving any public benefit, including postsecondary aid or scholarships. In addition, Missouri House Bill 1549 (2008) requires prospective postsecondary students to provide "affirmative proof" that they are U.S. citizens, lawful residents of the U.S. or otherwise lawfully in the U.S. prior to receiving state grants or scholarships.

A+ SCHOOLS DESIGNATION

Once a high school successfully meets the program requirements, it is formally designated by the State Board of Education. To date, the Board has designated 254 public high schools as A+ schools. (Go to <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/aplus> for a list of all designated schools.)

EVERYONE BENEFITS

The A+ Schools Program benefits students, school districts and communities. More than 90,000 students have qualified for the A+ financial incentive since the program's inception.

Subsequent to 1997, more than 38,000 eligible students have utilized at least one semester of the financial incentive. For 2008-09, the General Assembly has appropriated \$25.2 million to support the A+ Program.

