

Blue Springs R-12



School District

A+ Program Student Manual

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Purpose of the Manual

In an effort to make college or vocational education available to every Missouri high school graduate, the Missouri General Assembly established the A+ Schools Program as part of the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993.

Graduates of designated A+ schools who successfully complete the requirements of the program may be eligible to receive two years of free tuition to a designated public community college, vocational or technical institution in Missouri. **All funds are subject to Missouri General Assembly allocating monies for the A+ Program and the Blue Springs passing the onsite review during the 2007-2008 school year.**

The purpose of this manual is to provide students, parents and staff with information about the guidelines and policies of the A+ Program in the Blue Springs R-IV Schools. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that designation is achieved and maintained. It is the responsibility of students and parents to read, understand and comply with program requirements.

Goals of the A+ Program

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

Participation Requirements

- * The high school from which the student graduates must meet and maintain all the requirements for A+ schools designation.
- * State funding must be available. As with any State program, the A+ Schools Program is subject to the political process of sustaining and maintaining a budget.
- * The student must meet all the criteria outlined in the A+ Schools Program and the participation agreement in which the student and parent/guardian will sign.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the A+ tuition benefit, students must be certified by the high school. To qualify for certification, students must sign an A+ agreement and successfully complete the following requirements:

- *Attend an A+ designated school for three years (grades 10, 11, 12) prior to graduation
- *Graduate with an unweighted, unrounded cumulative GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale
- *Graduate with a minimum 95% ADA (Average Daily Attendance) record (over 8 semesters)
- *Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring to other students in the district
- *Model good citizenship at school and in the community
- *Avoid the use of illegal drugs and alcohol
- *Register with the selective service, if required by law
- *Apply for non-payback scholarships by completing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

To maintain A+ eligibility:

- *Attend a Missouri Community college or post-secondary vocational/technical school on a full-time basis and maintain a GPA of 2.5 or higher.

A+ Program Enrollment

A+ participation is voluntary. Students may participate in the program by completing and returning an A+ Agreement to the A+ center. Agreements are available in the A+ center.

Students should try to begin their participation in the A+ Program at the beginning of their freshman year. Enrolling in the program early allows students and parents to focus on the goals of the program.

A file of active and inactive A+ Participation Agreements is maintained in the A+ center.

There is no specific deadline for enrolling in the A+ Program. A student can enroll at any time as long as the student realizes that he/she must complete all program requirements, including the 50 hours of tutoring and mentoring.

Tuition Benefits

Students who successfully complete the requirements of the program are eligible to receive two years (six semesters) of free tuition at a designated community college or vocational/technical (state funded) school in Missouri.

Early graduation is discouraged. A+ participants who elect to graduate early are not eligible to access A+ tuition benefits until their respective class has graduated. To maintain eligibility (at college) students must be enrolled as full-time students as defined by the post-secondary institution, enrolled in an approved program, and maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.

Participants are under no obligation to use the A+ tuition incentive. The tuition incentive is earned by each individual and is not transferable to any other student.

Receipt of private scholarships will not affect any student's eligibility to participate in the A+ program.

A "good faith" attempt has been made when the student has completed and filed a copy of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid with the college or vocational/technical institution.

Financial need is not a factor in determining student eligibility for the A+ tuition incentive. Participants will have up to four years (from the date of high school graduation) to access the A+ tuition incentive.

State funding must be available. As with any State program, the A+ Schools Program is subject to the political process of sustaining and maintaining a budget.

Grade Point Requirement

Eligible participants must graduate with a cumulative minimum unweighted, unrounded grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 grade scale. For purposes of this program, grade point average represents the actual figure and is not rounded (2.499 is not 2.5).

It is the responsibility of each participant to closely monitor his/her grade point average. Final determination of A+ eligibility cannot be made until an A+ participant graduates and his/her final GPA is calculated.

Attendance

A+ participants are expected to attend school regularly. A+ participants must graduate with a minimum cumulative (grades 9-12) attendance rate of 95%. The A+ Program makes no distinction between excused and unexcused absences.

Attendance is based upon Monday through Friday when school is in regular session. Only the days and times, which are calculated for Average Daily Attendance (ADA), will be used to determine the 95% attendance requirement.

The A+ attendance policy allows relief in cases where the absence was beyond the control of the A+ participant. Request for Attendance Waivers must be filed in accordance with the established policy guidelines. Each A+ participant should read and understand the attendance policy.

It is the responsibility of each A+ participant to closely monitor his/her attendance. Semester updates will be mailed to the homes of the A+ participants.

Attendance Wavier Guidelines

Documentation to support a request for an A+ attendance wavier must be submitted to the A+ Coordinator's Office no later than May 1st of the current calendar year.

Documentation must include specific dates accompanied by the signature(s) of the appropriate person(s).

Reason for absence

Hospitalization
Chronic health problems
Court Appearance
Funeral

Religious Holiday
Personal/family calamity

Catastrophic illness/injury

Documentation Required

Physician's letter
Physician's letter
Court letter
Parent letter and copy of
Death Certificate, obituary or
memorial pamphlet
Minister's letter
Parent and school counselor's
letter
Physician's letter

Attendance Waivers will NOT be granted for the following:

Truancy
Suspension
Personal/Family vacation
Routine Doctor Visits
Transportation (unless late bus)

A+ attendance requirements are not to be confused with the general attendance requirements as printed in the Blue Springs High Schools Handbooks.

Attendance Appeals

Students in the A+ Program who feel they have been declared ineligible unfairly may appeal to the A+ Schools Appeals Committee. In cases of appeal the student/parent/guardian must notify the A+ Schools Coordinator in writing of his/her intent to appeal within 10 days of receiving an ineligibility letter.

An A+ Appeals Committee shall hear the appeal within 10 days of receiving a written request and return its decision to the student in writing. The A+ Schools Appeals Committee will consist of the following individuals: assistant principals in charge of the A+ Schools Program at each high school, each A+ schools coordinator. The assistant principal from the school of the student who is appealing will facilitate the appeal. Appeals will be considered at semester or the end of the school year when the student is declared ineligible.

Students may appeal the A+ Appeals Committee's decision to the Director of Secondary Education.

A+ Tutoring

A+ participants must perform a minimum total of 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring. For purposes of the program, community service is not considered to be an acceptable substitute for tutoring.

Tutoring must be performed in one (or more) of the public school buildings that are part of the Blue Springs School district in an approved program. Tutoring must be performed with Blue Springs public school students.

Tutoring time must be documented on the official A+ Tutoring Log. These logs are available in the A+ center. *No other record will be accepted.*

Tutoring guidelines for the A+ Program need to be picked up in the A+ Center.

The participant is responsible for maintaining his/her tutoring log accurately, obtaining the necessary signatures and for submitting the log to the A+ center in a timely manner. No credit will be awarded for logs that are misplaced or stolen - no exceptions.

Blue Springs R-IV School District A+ Program Citizenship Policy

Blue Springs R-IV School District Citizenship Standards:

Participation in the A+ program is a privilege and not a right; therefore, the Blue Springs School District requires students to adhere to standards of behavior, which will bring credit to students, the A+ program, the school, and the community. Students who represent the Blue Springs School District must demonstrate good citizenship and conduct at all time. The Blue Springs School District requires student behavior to be in compliance with school board policy, with the school's Student Handbook Regulations, and public laws. Behavior not in compliance with these policies may result in the student's loss of eligibility from the A+ program.

I. Citizenship Requirements for the A+ Program

- A. Students who sign a contract to participate in the A+ program are to maintain good citizenship while enrolled in high school.
- B. Students who violate the district's Alcohol/Drug policy during the contract time are subject to and will automatically be removed from the A+ incentive program.
- C. Students who are convicted of a felony will not qualify.
- D. Students who commit other violations which may involve violent behavior, insubordination, failure to follow directions, use of inappropriate language, smoking, dishonesty, etc., which results in a suspension may jeopardize their A+ status and be subject to a review by the assistant principal and the A+ Citizenship Committee.
 1. The A+ Citizenship Committee will consist of the following:
 - Assistant Principal
 - A+ Coordinator
 - Counselor
- E. Any student accumulating eleven days of suspension (out of school suspension) during their high school career for offenses other than alcohol/drugs will lose A+ eligibility.

II. Citizenship Review Process

- A. Upon school suspension, students and their parents will be notified of the student's jeopardized A+ status.
- B. The Assistant Principal will provide disciplinary information and the status of contracted students to the A+ Schools Office on a semester basis. The updated information will be used to assess the citizenship requirement of each student in the Blue Springs A+ Schools Tuition Reimbursement Program.

C. Committee will respond in one of the following ways:

1. A statement will be issued to the student and parents warning them that any referrals related to the above Section I in the following semester will result in an immediate probation status. They will be informed that the status will be reviewed at the end of the semester and a decision made by the Citizenship Committee about whether the student loses eligibility in the program or is placed on probation. If students are identified by administration as chronically disruptive, they will be removed from the program. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, those listed in section I.
2. The student may be removed from the program. If the review team elects to remove a student from the program, the student has the right to appeal first to the building principal, then to the secondary director of curriculum, superintendent, and finally to the school board. This appeal may be made no later than one month following removal from the program. Seniors must appeal by March 1, regardless of when they lost eligibility from the program.



Blue Springs R-IV School District Citizenship Appeal Form

Name: _____ Grade _____

Your status as an A+ student is in jeopardy as a result of violating the citizenship policy. The citizenship review team has examined your discipline record and finds that additional information is needed in order to determine your future eligibility for the program and the incentive.

***With this form, attach a written explanation as to why you feel you should still receive the A+ incentive. In your explanation you should address the following points:**

***Describe the offense(s) for which you were suspended.**

***What will you and what have you done to avoid being in trouble?**

(Be specific)

***Why should you be allowed to remain in the A+ program?**

Return the appeal form and the written explanation to the A+ coordinator's office or mailbox by _____. After reviewing your appeal, the committee will determine whether to place you on probation or hold a parent conference to determine your status in the program. **Failure to return this appeal by the deadline will result in your loss of eligibility in the A+ Program.**

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Illegal Drugs/Alcohol

Any involvement with illegal drugs or alcohol (use, manufacture, possession, transport, distribution, under the influence, or sale) at school or in the community will result in the immediate and permanent removal of the participant from the A+ program.

Involvement will have been established when the participant is disciplined for a drug or alcohol related offense or when the participant is charged and pleads no contest or is found guilty of crimes that relate to the use, manufacture, possession, transportation, distribution, or sale of a controlled substance, including alcohol.

FAFSA

A good faith effort has been made when the participant and his/her parents have completed and filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with the U.S. Government. The information found on the FAFSA is required by post-secondary institutions to complete the enrollment process.

FAFSA forms are available in the counseling office in December or at the Mid-Continent Public Libraries in November. Application on the Internet is also available.

Participants may submit the FAFSA anytime after midnight, January 1, of the year in which they will graduate.

Selective Service

A+ participants who are required by the laws of the United States to register with the selective service system must register or forfeit their eligibility for the A+ Tuition benefit. Additional information is available in the counseling center.

Accessing Tuition Benefits

It is critical to the integrity of the A+ Program that A+ participants pay strict attention to all the guidelines, rules and policies that govern the program.

Some control is given to local school districts in establishing policy and administering the A+ Program. Most of the rules governing the administration of the program are found in state statutes and are not subject to local amendment.

The tuition benefits are not automatically bestowed on A+ participants who have successfully completed the A+ requirements. To be eligible for tuition benefits the following guidelines must be followed:

1. Graduating A+ participants must complete and submit the Request for A+ Tuition Benefits form. The window for submitting this form is May 1-15 of the year of graduation. The form is available in the A+ Office.
2. The A+ Coordinator will verify the status of each A+ participant and certify each A+ participant who is eligible for A+ tuition benefits.
3. A+ participants will be notified, in writing, as to approval or denial of their eligibility to receive A+ tuition benefits. If a participant is denied eligibility, the participant will be provided with the reason for the denial.
4. The names and social security numbers of the A+ graduates eligible for tuition benefits will be forwarded to the appropriate local and state agencies.

A+ eligible graduates must inform the post-secondary institution to which they have made application of their intent to use the tuition benefits. The institution will prepare the necessary paperwork and bill the State of Missouri.



Blue Springs Tutoring/Mentoring Agreement

The following steps must be completed to become an approved A+ tutor/mentor in the Blue Springs R-IV School District:

- Submit completed agreement, parent permission slip
- Attend A+ Tutoring/Mentoring Training
- Meet with A+ Coordinator to select tutoring/mentoring assignment

Please answer each question completely and honestly. If you need extra space to respond, attach additional paper.

1. What extra curricular activities are you involved in?

2. Please describe any special experiences or abilities you have which will assist you in working with younger students.

3. Explain how you will represent the A+ program well during your tutoring/mentoring experience.

4. List on the back any training/experience you have received in working with children. List dates, length of training/experience, place of training/experience, contact person.

I agree to participate and abide by the guidelines set up for the A+ tutoring/mentoring program. I understand the important role that good attendance and scholastic achievement play in this program and that I will be held accountable for my actions. I further understand that I can be removed at any time from this tutoring/mentoring opportunity should my attendance or behavior not meet with school policy and/or A+ Schools requirements.

A+ Participant's Signature

Date



Blue Spring A+ Schools
Tutoring/Mentoring Agreement
Parent/Guardian
Permission Slip/Recommendation

STUDENT NAME: _____

Your student is applying for the opportunity to tutor/mentor through the A+ Schools Program. As part of the process, he/she will participate in a training session conducted by Blue Springs R-IV personnel. Please provide a paragraph indicating your level of support and why you believe your student would be a good tutor/mentor in the A+ School Program.

I understand that I am responsible for my student's transportation to and from tutoring/mentoring activities. I hereby give permission and support to my student to participate in the Blue Springs A+ Schools Tutoring/Mentoring Program.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN WITH TUTORING/MENTORING AGREEMENT



Blue Springs R-IV School District
A+ Schools Program Attendance Appeal

_____	BSHS
_____	BSSHS
_____	Date Submitted

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Social Security Number: _____ - _____ - _____ (required by the State of Missouri)

Current G.P.A. _____

Number of Absences:

Grade 9 _____

Grade 10 _____

Grade 11 _____

Grade 12 _____

Total Absences: grades 9-12 _____

All information, including social security number, must be provided. Please print or type the information. Attach a list of specific date(s), the reason for the absence, the appropriate documentation and signature along with this form. ***Failure to return this appeal by the following deadline may jeopardize your A+ eligibility.**

Return to the A+ Coordinator by: _____.

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Please Note: This form is to only be used for the A+ Program and not to be used in the Appeal Process to regain eligibility.



Blue Springs R-IV School District

A+ Program

Final Senior Appeal Policy

In order to qualify for the A+ incentive, a student must meet the following requirements at graduation:

- 2.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale.
- 95 percent attendance average over the four years.
- 50 hours of unpaid tutoring/mentoring in a district approved program.
- Good citizenship standards, such as refraining from use of drugs/alcohol.
- Attend an A+ designated school for the final 3 years of high school.
- Submission of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

By the date of graduation, senior students will be informed by the building A+ coordinator as to whether they are eligible to receive the incentive according to the above qualifications. Students may appeal the decision of the A+ coordinator if they believe extraordinary circumstances entitle them to the incentive, even though the attendance and citizenship qualifications have not been met.

The appeal will be received as follows:

Step One: Review by the A+ coordinators and A+ Administrators of both Blue Springs and Blue Springs South High Schools.

Step Two: Review by the Director of Secondary Education.

Step Three: Review by the Assistant Superintendent or designee.

In order to appeal attendance or citizenship, the student must submit, in writing, an explanation of the extraordinary circumstances and the reasons why the appeal to receive the A+ incentive should be granted along with the attendance and/or citizenship appeal form(s). All appeals must be received by the tenth (10) day following the date of graduation of the student's senior year. Students will be informed promptly about the results of their appeals after each step described above. Additional information and a conference may be requested at any time by the review team or superintendent.



Blue Springs R-IV
Intent to Access A+ Tuition Benefits

LAST NAME: _____ FIRST NAME: _____
(Pls. Print)

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: _____

My signature indicates that I have met the requirements of the Blue Springs R-IV A+ Schools Program and that I intend to access the A+ tuition benefits that I earned by:

- Attending an A+ school for three consecutive years (grades 10, 11, 12) prior to graduation
- Graduating with a minimum, unweighted, unrounded cumulate 2.5 GPA
- Graduating with a minimum attendance rate of 95% over 4 years
- Performing a minimum of 50 hours unpaid tutoring/mentoring
- Maintaining a record of good citizenship
- Avoiding the use of illegal drugs and alcohol
- Completing and submitting a FAFSA

A+ Participant Signature

Date

I have reviewed the A+ participant's records and status and have APPROVED/
DISAPPROVED the participant's request for access to A+ tuition benefits.

APPROVED: The appropriate state and local agencies will be notified of the A+ participant's eligibility for tuition benefits.

DISAPPROVED: The A+ participant was denied access to A+ benefits for the following reasons(s):

A+ Coordinator

Date



Frequently Asked Questions

- * What does signing the A+ Agreement mean?

By signing and submitting the A+ agreement, students and their parents are simply indicating an interest in the students' participation in the A+ Program and that they understand the requirements that qualify the students for that program. When an agreement has been signed by all parties and returned, a file will be established for that student and will be located in the A+ coordinator's office. This file denoted the student's active participation in the A+ Schools Program and will contain all pertinent information relative to the student's eligibility for A+ funds.

- * Does participating in the A+ program restrict a student's choices?

Participating in the A+ Program DOES NOT in any way restrict a student's educational choices. The A+ Schools Program is designed to provide greater opportunities for students. Signing up will not restrict the options available to a student while in high school or upon graduating from high school.

- * What if an A+ participant decides to attend a four-year college or university?

There are no repercussions for participating in the A+ Program and completing the student eligibility requirements. Many students will develop plans to attend a four-year college or university following high school. The A+ Schools Scholarship incentive MAY NOT be applied to costs associated with a four-year college or university. Students eligible for A+ tuition benefits may choose to attend a community college for two years, earn an Associates Degree, or simply earn basic credit hours; then transfer those credits to a four-year college/university. If for whatever reason an A+ eligible student should withdraw from the four-year institution with at least a 2.5 GPA he/she could enroll at a Missouri public community college or vocational-technical school and be eligible for A+ tuition benefits. A+ tuition benefits are available to students for up to four years after the date of their graduation from high school, provided state funds are appropriated by the legislature.

- * What if an A+ participant decides not to attend a community college or vocational or technical school?

Participation in the A+ Program in no way restricts a student's post high school career or educational opportunities. It is simply a funding resource for post secondary education should the student choose to utilize it. A student who participates in the A+ Program, is NOT required to attend a community college or vocational or technical school.

* Does participating in the A+ Program guarantee that students will receive the tuition benefits?

There are at least three factors that will impact the availability of tuition benefits to a particular student. First, the high school from which the student graduates must meet and maintain all the requirements for A+ Schools designation. Second, State funding must be available. Third, the student must meet all the criteria outlined in the A+ Schools Program and the participation agreement, which the student signed.

* Does a student qualify for A+ tuition benefits if his/her average daily attendance is 94.8 or his/her grade point average is 2.47 on a 4.0 scale upon graduation?

No – The A+ Schools Program does not permit rounding up of GPA percentage. The average daily attendance rate must be figured over a four-year period and must be a solid 95%.