

A+

Handbook

Macon

R-1

School

District

In 1996, Macon Co. R-I Schools decided to seek designation as an A+ School, qualifying for a state-funded start-up grant of up to \$150,000 a year for three years. As part of the A+ process, schools must eliminate general track classes, stiffen their overall academic standards, reduce the dropout rate and expand career-exploration opportunities for all students. Schools also must establish cooperative relationships with local employers and higher education.

On April 15, 1999, the Missouri State Board of Education officially designated Macon High School as an **A+ School**. The action by the board means that qualifying seniors in each year's graduating class will be eligible for state financial assistance to attend a Missouri community college, public vocational technical school, or participating four-year institution.

A total of 138 public high schools across the state have now achieved A+ status. The first A+ Schools were approved in May 1997. State education officials estimate that over 6,000 graduates of the 138 designated schools will be eligible this year to take advantage of the state-funded tuition assistance offered by the A+ Schools program. This assistance will cover that full cost of a student's tuition and books. The program benefits three major areas: 1) the students, 2) the school, 3) our community. The following represent some commonly asked questions about the A+ Schools Program.

This handbook will cover the program's history and initial implementation. Further, it will discuss purposes, rules, and processes for adaptation of the Macon R-1 A+ program.

What is the A+ Schools Program?

A+ Schools represents a comprehensive program of curricular, technological, guidance, and instructional developments designed 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 enter the labor force immediately upon graduation from high school. The A+ Program makes a particular effort to address students at risk of dropping out and those who are ambivalent about their education. Schools that achieve an A+ School designation, provide an opportunity for students who complete the program to obtain financial incentives for post-secondary education.

What led to the development of the A+ Schools Program?

The A+ Schools Program was developed to address statewide concerns about the high dropout rate in Missouri and reports from business and industry that graduates are not equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills for the workplace. Four broad solutions were provided by the State of Missouri: 1) establish knowledge and skill standards of accountability for all courses; 2) schools must develop partnerships with the local businesses and community members to provide solutions; 3) provide more extensive career guidance; and 4) provide incentives for students to pursue post-secondary education.

What are the goals of the A+ Schools Program?

As outlined in the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 and defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the three primary goals of the A+ Schools Program are:

- All students graduate from high school;
- All students complete a selection of high school studies that is challenging and for which there are identified learning expectations;
- All students proceed from high school graduation to a college or post-secondary 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 knowledge and tools required to pursue whatever educational and career goals the student might select. The A+ Schools Program will provide information to assist students in making those decisions, and will provide for the development of educational programs that more fully meet the needs of **all** Macon High School Students.

What must a school do to maintain status as an A+ School?

As an A+ School, the district must meet and make progress toward achieving the following:

- Establish measurable district performance standards which evaluate achievement of A+ Program goals.
- Develop knowledge and skill standards for all high school courses that lead to graduation.
- Develop career pathways which lead to a high school diploma.
- Provide rigorous coursework with standards of competency in basic academic subjects for students pursuing vocational and technical education.
- Develop and execute a partnership plan with the community to advise and develop programs to reach A+ Program goals.

What differences will students notice as a result of the A+ Schools program?

The A+ Program will not create significant changes in the mission and goals of Macon High School. This program and the accompanying money will assist Macon in

achieving its current purposes. Over time curriculum, instruction and assessment changes, which comply with current state education initiatives, will become more noticeable as they become more pervasive in the school. Career guidance programs will also be expanded.

How will students benefit from Macon High School becoming an A+ School?

All students at Macon High School will benefit from the raising and identification of educational standards, the development of more effective instructional techniques, the infusion of technology into the curriculum, the identification and delineation of course level and graduation performance standards, more extensive career exploration and guidance activities, and the development of courses that are geared toward work related experiences. Each student can be assured that he or she will complete a rigorous academic program that is more closely geared to his or her individual needs and interests.

Will I have to take any extra classes?

The A+ Program will create six career pathways, based on career clusters (examples: Health Sciences and Human Services), which are designed to prepare students for a possible post-secondary career. A career pathway identifies a focused yet flexible and variable four year course schedule. The direction provided by a pathway is intended to keep students from “wandering” through a shopping list of courses and the opportunity for mastery and integration of skills and knowledge. All students will select a career pathway before their freshman year. Students are able to change career pathways at a future time. In short, a student will not be required to take additional classes.

What financial incentives are available through the A+ Program?

All Macon High School graduates can qualify for two years of tuition to any public community college, vocational, technical school or participating four-year college in the state of Missouri. Student financial aid will be available for a period of four years after high school graduation. In an age of soaring post-secondary education costs, this represents a tremendous opportunity for the young people of our community. Each graduate beginning with the Class of 1999 shall be eligible to participate in the reimbursement program. All funds, however, are to be distributed by the Department of Higher Education and are, thereby, subject to yearly budget deficits and surpluses.

What is meant by good citizenship and the avoidance of unlawful drugs?

Guidelines for citizenship were developed by the A+ Partnership-Advisory Committee at the conception of this program. The guidelines are included in this handbook.

How can a student qualify for the A+ School Program?

To qualify a student must have attended a designated A+ School for three consecutive years prior to graduation, and:

- Be a U.S. Citizen, permanent resident, or lawfully present in the United States.
- Enter into a written agreement with the school prior to graduation.
 - This document is available through the Counseling Office and the online enrollment process.
- Graduate with at least a 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 point scale.
- Graduate with a 95% attendance (average 8 absences annually).
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid job shadowing, mentoring, or tutoring.
 - Job shadowing may include up to 25% of the 50 hours.
- Maintain a record of good citizenship.
- Avoid the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol.
- Documented good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.
 - This is completed by filling out a FAFSA.
- Beginning with the class of 2015, students must score advanced or proficient on the Algebra 1 EOC.
 - If you meet all 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 the ACT, Inc. or the mathematics component of the ACT test. You may achieve the qualifying score as a high school student or a 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 current passing scores for the year of 2015-2016 are as following:
 - ACT math sub-score of 17
 - Starting for the Seniors of 2018, students may meet the math requirement through the following alternative means:
 - ACT Math score of 17 and 2.5 GPA
 - ACT Math score of 16 and 2.8+ GPA
 - ACT Math score of 15 and 3.0+ GPA

Completion of requirements is based on cumulative student performance. These incentives are available for two years during the four year period immediately following graduation in which the student must be a full-time student and maintain a 2.5 GPA (4.0 scale).

What if I sign the Participation Agreement but decide not to attend a community college or vocational-technical school?

Signing the Participation Agreement will in no way restrict a student's' post-high school career or educational options. It is simply a funding resource for college education should you choose to utilize it. The current trend on college applications ask for community service/volunteer activities performed, so this would serve as an excellent opportunity to complete these requirements. In addition, someone once said, "It is better to have it and not need it, than need it and not have it."

What if I choose to attend a four-year University or college that does not honor the A+ incentives directly out of high school?

Many students will develop plans to attend a four-year institution upon graduation from High School. The tuition reimbursement provided through the A+ Program does not apply to all four-year colleges or universities. Qualifying students, however, may choose to attend a community college for two years, earn an Associate's Degree, or simply earn basic credit hours and then transfer those credits to a four-year college at the end of those two years. As the cost of college education continues to rise, more and more students are beginning their college careers in this manner. The A+ Schools Program will provide financial assistance in this process.

What does signing the "A+ Participation Agreement" mean?

By signing and submitting the A+ Participation Agreement, a student and his/her parents are simply indicating an interest in participating in the A+ Financial Incentive Program, and that they understand the requirements that will qualify the student for that program.

Does signing this agreement restrict a student's choices?

Signing the agreement does NOT in any way restrict a student's' educational choices. The A+ Schools Program is designed to provide greater opportunities for our students. Signing this agreement will not restrict the options available to a student while enrolled at Macon High School or upon graduation from Macon High School.

What will happen when I sign this agreement?

When the 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 and SIS. This file will denote the student's active participation in the A+ Program and will

contain all pertinent information relative to his/her qualification to the tuition reimbursement program. Students and parents will also be informed of A+ Program developments, student progress in the A+ Program and information on post-secondary education issues.

When do I have to sign up for the program?

Typically, the vast majority of students will want to sign their agreement form and get started with the tutoring and mentoring activities immediately upon beginning their freshman year. A student may, however, sign up at any time and begin to meet the requirements. There are no specific windows for signing the agreement; however, the state is coming up with a more definitive deadline. As of now it can be done at any time, as long as the student realizes that time must be available to meet the qualifications, specifically, completing 50 hours of job shadowing, tutoring, or mentoring.

Does signing this agreement guarantee that I will receive the tuition reimbursement?

There are at least three factors that will impact the availability of tuition reimbursement to a particular student. First, Macon High School must meet and maintain all the requirements for continued designation as an A+ School. Second, state funding must be available. As with any state program, it is subject to the political process of developing and adopting a state budget. This point should not be discounted; furthermore, the state funding is outside the auspices of Macon High School, and thusly any and all concern on this point should be directed to the Missouri Department of Higher Education. Third, the student must meet all the criteria as outlined in the A+ Program and agreed to upon signing the participation agreement.

If an A+ student receives other national, state or institutional financial aid, will the A+ financial incentive be reduced?

As stated in the Missouri Student Loan Program, “The A+ regulations do not prohibit a student who is eligible to receive the A+ financial incentive from also receiving state-funded assistance. For example, a student could theoretically receive the A+ incentive, a Missouri Student Grant, and a “Bright Flight” scholarship if he or she is eligible for all three programs.”

The A+ regulations state that...“the financial incentives will be made available only after the student has made a documented good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. The financial incentive will only be made available to reimburse the unpaid balance of tuition, books and fees after all the federal student financial assistance funds have been applied to the cost at the school the student plans to attend.” A “good faith” effort can be reached by completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

“A Federal Pell Grant recipient, therefore, would have to first apply the Pell funds to the cost of tuition, books and fees. **The A+ incentive would then cover the remaining cost of tuition, books and fees.**”

What if I enrolled at Macon High School after the beginning of my 10th grade year?

As written, the rules and regulations of the A+ Program state that a student must attend a designated A+ school for three consecutive years prior to graduation. If a student enrolls after the start of the sophomore year, the student must transfer from an A+ designated school to be eligible for the financial incentive.

What if my GPA upon graduation is 2.474 and/or my rate of attendance average is 94.9%, will I still qualify?

No. All requirements are set at the State level, and thusly, Macon High School must comply to each and every stipulation exactly less the program as whole be called into question.

What are the guidelines for job shadowing, tutoring and mentoring? When can I begin? Do I have to tutor only at school?

The guidelines for tutoring and mentoring are included in this handbook. Tutoring should be academic in nature and supervised. Tutoring is available during the school year and summer school. All activities are to be unpaid. Verification of activities is required; completion of all forms is the responsibility of the student.

A+ Tutor, Mentor, and Job Shadowing Guidelines

The A+ Schools Student Requirements include that the participant performs fifty (50) hours of unpaid job shadowing, tutoring, or mentoring for younger students. The following will hopefully serve as a set of guidelines for the completion of this requirement. Should questions or other circumstances arise, do not hesitate to contact the A+ Coordinator.

1. Tutoring activities **MUST** be academic in nature.
 - a. For an activity to be considered tutoring, it must involve the tutor helping students in school related areas.
2. Tutoring must be discussed with the A+ Coordinator prior to performance if it is not a pre-approved tutor activity.
3. Pre-approved tutor opportunities have historically and presently included:

- . Tutoring before and after school
- a. Gender Equity Team
- b. Mu Alpha Theta
- c. Exploring Childhood
- d. Breakfast Club
- e. Being scheduled during school hours to tutor students in classes designated by the A+ director.
- f. Libraries within the district
- i. Libraries outside the district fall under the auspices of Job Shadowing
 4. Tutoring activities must occur within the school setting.
 5. Job shadowing may only occur with approval of the A+ Director, the place of work, and a building level administrator.
 6. Tutoring activities may occur within or outside of the school day.
 7. All tutoring must be supervised by an adult (teacher, principal, or counselor) who will verify all activities.
 8. Students are responsible for maintaining records of tutoring activities and securing the verification. (Log sheets are available from the A+ Coordinator, and should be returned by the student to the A+ Coordinator's office upon completion.)
 9. A student must complete at least 50 hours of tutoring during their last four years prior to graduation.
 - . Only 25% of the hours may be constituted by job shadowing.
 10. All activities are to be unpaid.
 11. Tutoring may include younger students or students of the same age group.
- 12. All tutoring log sheets must be verified and turned in to the A+ Coordinator's office by **MAY 1** of their senior year.

Citizenship Requirement for the A+ Schools Program

Student eligibility for A+ School Program financial incentives from the state of Missouri is based on their ability to meet five requirements. One of those being "a student must maintain a record of good citizenship and the avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs". The following criteria and procedures have been established to determine student compliance with the A+ Program citizenship requirement.

1. Any student guilty of unlawful use of drugs or alcohol at school or in the community will not be eligible for A+ financial incentives.
2. Any student guilty of an offense identified in the Safe Schools Act, in or out of school, will not be eligible for A+ financial incentives.
3. Students suspended or expelled for reasons other than those stated in requirement #1 and #2 must prepare a written statement to the A+ Coordinator. The Citizenship Committee will review the case to determine eligibility standing. Students who fail to comply will lose eligibility.

4. A year-end review of student citizenship will be conducted. Students guilty of numerous minor offenses could be declared ineligible by the Citizenship Committee.
5. All students will be notified in writing or verbally if they become ineligible and why they are ineligible. The parents will also be notified.
6. Students have the right to appeal their loss of eligibility. The student must notify the A+ Coordinator in writing within 10 days after they were notified. The A+ Coordinator shall convene a Citizenship Committee meeting for consideration of the appeal within 10 days. The Committee shall hear the appeal and return its decision to the student within 5 days.
7. Citizenship Committee shall be composed of the following:
 - Macon High School Administrator
 - School Counselor
 - A+ Coordinator
 - High School Teachers (2)

Students must remember that state financial incentives are not a *right* or *entitlement* but a reward which must be merited. Good citizenship is important and essential. Anything less than meritorious behavior will result in the loss of the financial reward.

** An authorization for release of records from the Office of Juvenile Court Services must be signed and will be kept on file in the A+ Director's office.

Macon High School A+ Program Attendance Policy

Students must graduate from Macon High School with a ninety-five percent attendance rate to be designated an A+ student and be eligible for the post-secondary financial incentive. The attendance rate is calculated from the time the student enrolls at Macon High School until they graduate. For the majority of the students, this means four years from grades nine through twelve. A student must be enrolled at Macon High School for three school years. If a student enrolls after the start of the sophomore year, the student must transfer from an A+ designated school to be eligible for the financial incentive.

Attendance rate for student eligibility will be based on student absences from school. Absences will be calculated by subtracting the exempt absences from a student's total absences from school. The following list identifies exempt absences (Documentation by a physician must support all exempt absences.)

- Long Term (3+ days) illness until homebound instruction is in place (documented by a physician)
- Hospitalization (documented by a physician)
- Chronic illness requiring treatment
- Funeral for immediate family (documented by parents or guardian)
- School sponsored activities

Students who have an A+ Agreement will be notified of their status at the end of each school year. Seniors will be notified at the end of the first semester of their senior year. Students who exceed the absence limit may appeal to the Attendance Review Committee. The appeal must be made in writing within thirty school days after the attendance notice is sent by the A+ Coordinator. The Attendance Review Committee will include:

- High School administrator

- A+ student's counselor
- Student's choice of high school teacher
- A+ Coordinator

A student will not receive a waiver if any absence is due to any of the following:

- Truancy
- Skipping classes
- Personal/family vacations
- Transportation problems (unless on a late school bus)
- Suspended from class or school for any reason
- The A+ Coordinator will act as facilitator and a non-voting member of the Review Committee. After the Student Review committee reaches a decision, the A+ School Coordinator will notify the parents by letter.

Any and all additional appeals will be conducted following policies set by the Board of Education.

The policy will commence with the graduating class of 1999.

Eligible A+ Community Colleges and Vocational Technical Schools

Arcadia Valley Career Technical Ctr

Boonslick Technical Educ.

Center Brookfield Area Career Center

Cape Girardeau Car & Tech Center

Car. & Tech. Center At Ft. Osage

Carrollton Area Career Center

Carthage Technical Center

Cass Career Center

Clinton Technical Sch.

Columbia Area Career Center

Crowder College

Current River Career Center

Dallas County Career Center

Davis H. Hart Career Center

East Central College

Eldon Career Center

Excelsior Springs Career Center

Four Rivers Career Center

Franklin Technology Center

Gibson Technical Center

Grand River Technical Sch.

Hannibal Career & Tech. Center

Herndon Career Center

Hillyard Technical Center

Kennett Career & Tech. Center

Kirksville Area Tech. Center

Jefferson College

Lake Career & Technical Center

Lamar Area Voc.-Tech. Sch.

Lebanon Tech. & Career Center

Lewis & Clark Career Center

Lex La-Ray Technical Center
Linn State Technical College
Macon Area Voc. Sch.
Metropolitan Community College
Mineral Area College
Missouri State University - West Plains
Moberly Area Community College
Moberly Area Technical Center
Nevada Regional Tech.-Ctr.
New Madrid R-I Tech Skills Ctr
Nichols Career Center
North Central Career Center
North Central Missouri College
North Technical
Northland Career Center
Northwest Technical Sch.
Ozark Mountain Technical Center
Ozarks Technical Community College
Pemiscot Co Career & Tech Ctr
Perryville Area Car & Tech Ctr
Pike/Lincoln Technical Center
Poplar Bluff Tech. Career Center
Ranken Technical College
Rolla Technical Inst.
Saline Co. Career Center
Sikeston Career & Tech. Center
South Central Career Center
South Technical
Southwest Area Career Center
St. Charles Community College
St. Louis Community College
State Fair Community College
Three Rivers Community College
Unitec Career Center
UMKC - \$1,500 per year
Warrensburg Area Career Center
Waynesville Technical Academy