

A+ Program



Rockwood School District

We do whatever it takes to ensure all
students realize their potential.

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INTRODUCTION

The A+ Scholarship is a merit-based scholarship that provides scholarship funds to eligible graduates of A+ designated high schools who attended participating public community colleges or vocational technical schools.

Rockwood School District high schools are A+ designated high schools.

A+ scholarship funds can only be used in the state of Missouri.

Eligible students graduating from an A+ designated high school may qualify for the student financial incentives of the A+ Scholarship Program. All reimbursements are dependent upon Rockwood School District high schools maintaining their status as an A+ designated high school and the availability of state appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly. Reimbursement is not the funding responsibility of the Rockwood School District

The purpose of this manual is to provide students, parents, and staff with information about the guidelines and policies of the Rockwood School District's A+ Scholarship Program. It is the responsibility of each high school to make sure that designation is maintained. It is the responsibility of the students and parents to read, understand, and comply with the program requirements for eligibility. Please direct any additional questions concerning this program to the A+ Coordinator at your high school location.

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GOALS OF THE A+ PROGRAM

The A+ Schools Program is a school-improvement initiative established by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. The primary goal is to assure that all students are prepared to pursue advanced education and employment. The program provides incentives for local high schools to:

- Reduce the dropout rate
- Raise academic expectations and eliminate "general track" courses
- Provide better "career pathways" for all students
- Work more closely with business and higher-education leaders

BENEFITS OF A+ PROGRAM

Qualifying graduating students will be eligible for the following:

- Tuition to attend any Missouri public community college or public vocational or technical school.
- Tuition incentives which will be made available after the student has made good faith effort to first secure all available federal postsecondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Rockwood high school students meeting the following requirements may be eligible for financial reimbursement. Participating in A+ can provide a benefit and impact post-secondary options.

Impact of Participating in A+

A+ can fully fund two years of education at a Missouri career or technical school where you can earn certificates or qualifications to jump right into the workforce.

A+ can allow you to start one or two years of education at a Missouri community college for free and then transfer to a four-year school.

A+ can provide a backup plan if you begin at a four-year school and later decide it is not for you.

A+ can also provide a backup plan if you begin at an out-of-state school and decide you want to return to Missouri for your education.

HOW DO YOU BECOME A+ ELIGIBLE?

- Be a **U.S. citizen** or permanent resident.
- Students must enroll in the A+ program no later than **January 31st of their senior year**. Seniors who have received approval to graduate early must enroll no later than September 30th.
- Graduate from an A+ designated high school and attend an A+ designated high school for **two years prior to graduation**.
- Graduate from high school with a GPA of **2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale** (*un-weighted, un-rounded, cumulative GPA. A GPA of 2.49 will not be rounded.*)
- Maintain at least **95% cumulative attendance** record for the 4-year period. (*An attendance rate of 94.9% will not be rounded*)
- Achieve the math proficiency requirement with a score of **advanced or proficient on the Algebra I End of Course Exam** or **qualifying ACT score** with sliding GPA combination.
- Graduate with **50 documented hours of unpaid mentoring/tutoring** with Rockwood students under Rockwood staff supervision.
- Maintain a **record of good citizenship** and avoid unlawful use of drugs and alcohol.
- Have **less than 6 days** of school suspension.
- Make a good faith effort to **apply for non-payback financial assistance** funds by completing the Free Application for Student Assistance (FAFSA) during the last semester of student year. www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Register for Selective Service, if applicable. www.sss.gov

MAINTAINING A+ ELIGIBILITY AT POST-SECONDARY

To maintain A+ eligibility at the post-secondary level, students must:

- Enroll and attend on a full-time basis at a participating Missouri community colleges or vocational/technical schools.
- Be seeking a degree or certification at the institution at which you are enrolled.
- Must meet the GPA and credits earned requirement requirements defined in your school's satisfactory academic progress policy.
- Make a good faith effort each year to secure all available federal financial aid by completing the FAFSA.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT

Students must graduate with a **cumulative 95% attendance percentage** to meet the A+ attendance requirement. This means a student **may not miss more than 7 to 8 school days** per year. If a student misses days due to hospitalization, prolonged illness, family emergencies, etc., bring in a doctor’s note or other documentation upon the student’s return to school . Not only should the documentation be on file in the Attendance office, but a copy needs to be made for A+. This documentation will be kept in the student’s A+ file in the event he/she needs to appeal for A+ attendance senior year. Any senior student that falls below the 95% threshold **MUST** fill out an appeal **by May 1st**, whether or not they submitted medical documentation at the time of the absence, or not.

Students & families are encouraged to keep up with their A+ status in SchoolLinks. Each A+ participant should read and understand the attendance policy.

Anytime an A+ student is absent for one of the “Eligible Exceptions” the student must bring required documentation to be filed in the event an attendance review needs to be made. This precaution will ensure that required documentation is already gathered and on file. Documentation may be accepted at any time, but attendance will not officially be adjusted in Infinite Campus and linked to SchoolLinks until final A+ verification at the end of the senior year.

If you have any further questions, please become familiar with your school’s A+ website and contact your student’s A+ Coordinators.

ABSENCE ELIGIBLE FOR REVIEW	DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED
Hospitalization, Chronic health condition, extended illness or injury	Physician’s Letter or Documented 504
Court Appearance	Court Letter
Catastrophic Event	Parent AND School Counselor Letter
Religious Holiday	Letter from Clergy
Funeral	Copy of Obituary or Memorial Pamphlet
College Visit	Letter from College Admissions Office

Attendance reviews will not be granted for the following; truancy, suspension, vacation, non-school sponsored sports, transportation, absences due to final exam exemptions.

A+ attendance requirements are not to be confused with the general attendance requirements of the Rockwood School District as printed in the student handbook. All absences (excused or unexcused) count towards a student’s A+ attendance percentage. Any school sponsored activity or event is not included in this percentage.

TUTORING/MENTORING REQUIREMENT

There are many opportunities available to obtain the required 50 hours of unpaid tutoring/mentoring for the A+ Program. Please keep in mind that all approved tutoring hours **MUST** be submitted on the **A+ Unpaid Tutoring/Mentoring Log** which can be found on **SchoolLinks** in **Experience Tracking**.

For hours to count as “tutoring/mentoring” it must be **on Rockwood property AND with a supervising Rockwood staff member** within the **approved Rockwood programs**.

TUTORING/MENTORING OPTIONS

Students have several options in completing the 50 hours.

1 ENROLL IN A CLASS

First, is by enrolling in one of the classes that count towards the 50 tutoring/mentoring hours:

- Teaching Internship
- Community Service
- Teacher/Class/Office Aide
- Peer Mentoring:
 - Moving Together
 - Art Together
 - Music Together
 - Acting Together
 - FACS Together



2 ROCKWOOD APPROVED TUTORING/MENTORING PROGRAMS

Students can provide tutoring/mentoring through the following Rockwood approved programs. Please keep in mind hour hours to count as “tutoring/mentoring” it must be within one of these programs which are on Rockwood property **AND** with a supervising Rockwood staff member who can provide verification of hours.

Approved Rockwood Programs include the following:

- Link Crew
- Adventure Club Volunteer
- Summer Academy Tutoring
- Rockwood Youth Sports

3 JOB/CAREER SHADOWING AND INTERNSHIP

Students can also complete up to 12.5 of the 50 hours by participating in the Job/Career Shadowing and Internship program through the Rockwood’s Partner’s in Education (PIE) Department.

When completing tutoring/mentoring hours with one of the Rockwood Approved Programs or through Job/Career Shadowing and Internship, students must complete the A+ Unpaid Totoring/Mentoring Log which can be found at SchoolLinks in Experience Tracking in order for those hours to be counted towards the expected 50 hours. Failure to submit these hours could jeopardize eligibility in the A+ Program.

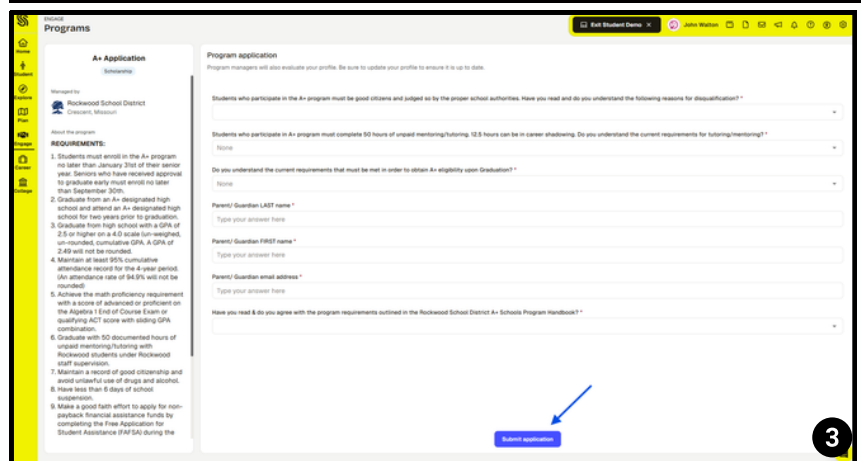
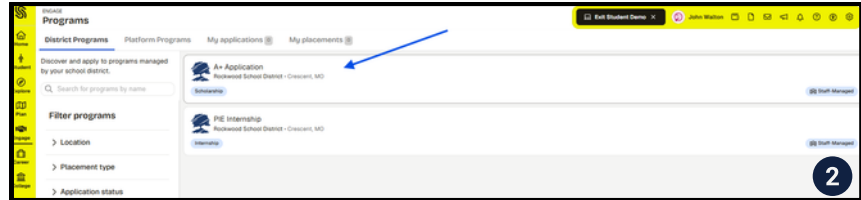
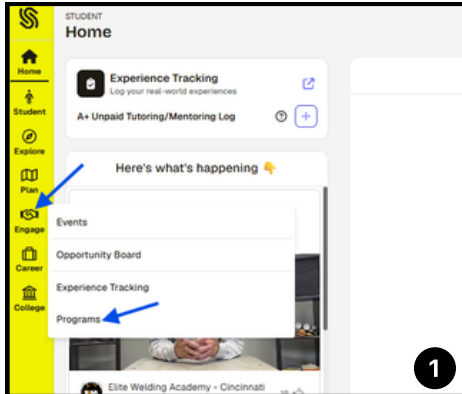
USING SCHOOLINKS TO APPLY & MONITOR A+ PROGRAM

Students will use SchoolLinks to complete their A+ application, submit tutoring/mentoring hours and to monitor their progress.

APPLY FOR THE A+ PROGRAM

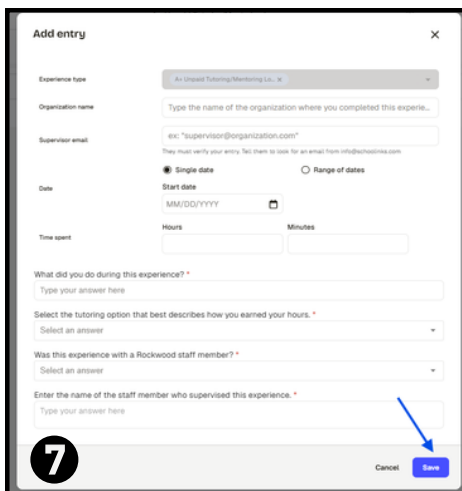
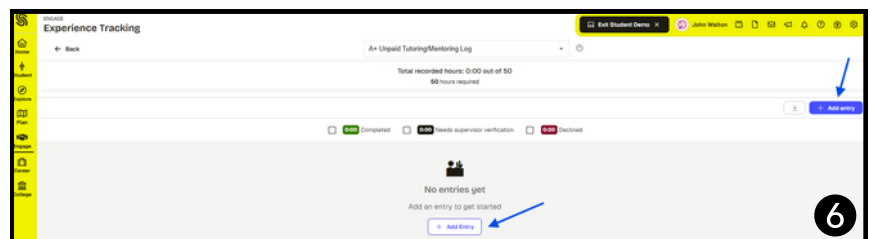
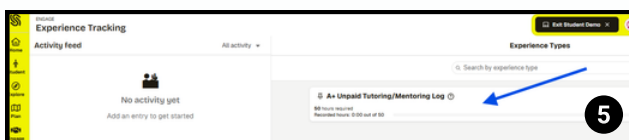
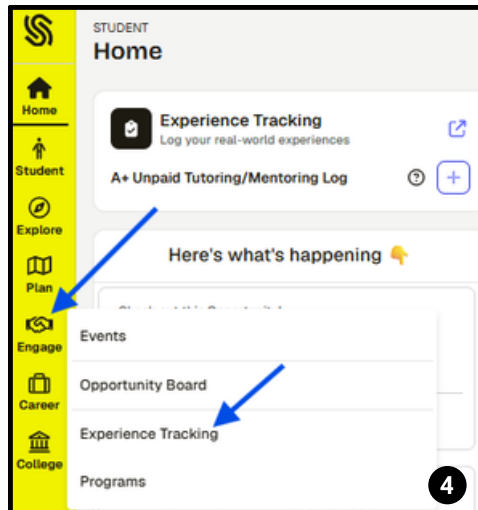
The A+ Application & Agreement is on SchoolLinks. To apply:

1. Go to the **SchoolLinks.com** website
2. Click on the **Engage** icon on the left side and click on **Programs**.
3. Select A+ Application & Agreement and complete and submit application.



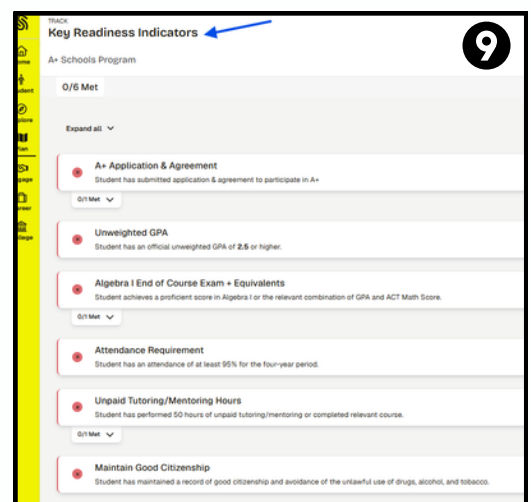
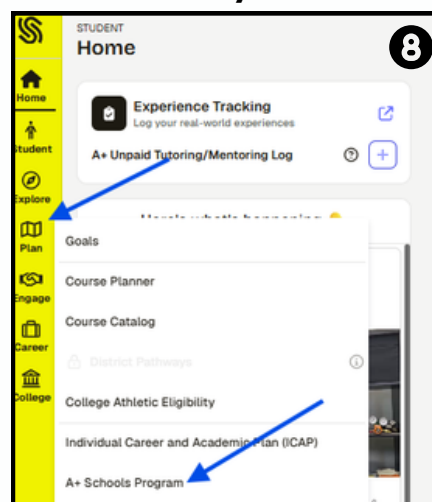
SUBMIT TUTORING/MENTORING PROGRAM HOURS

4. Go to the **SchoolLinks.com** website
5. Click on the **Engage** icon on the left side and click on **Experience Tracking**.
6. and 7. Select **Unpaid Tutoring/Mentoring Log**, complete and save.



MONITOR A+ PROGRAM STATUS

8. Select **Plan** icon and A+Schools Program
9. Monitor **Key Readiness Indicators**



MATH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT

Students must demonstrate math proficiency prior to graduation to be A+ eligible. Students can demonstrate proficiency in at least **ONE** of the following ways:

- Achieve a score of advanced or proficient on the Algebra 1 end of course (EOC) exam or a higher level DESE approved exam in the field of mathematics.
- Achieve a combined Pre-ACT or ACT math score and high school GPA in accordance with the following scale:

PRE-ACT OR ACT MATH SCORE	AND	HIGH SCHOOL GPA
17 or greater	AND	2.5 or greater
16 or greater	AND	2.8 or greater
15	AND	3.0 or greater

Students who took the Algebra 1 EOC exam while enrolled in the course and scored below proficient will have ONE opportunity to re-take the Algebra 1 EOC exam.

The Testing Coordinator must be notified that a student wishes to re-test no later than November 15th of the re-test year. Testing will take place in December of each calendar year.

If you meet all the A+ Eligibility requirements upon graduation except the math proficiency requirement, you may establish eligibility by achieving a qualifying score on the ACT math test as a postsecondary student.



GRADE POINT REQUIREMENT

A+ participants must graduate with a cumulative minimum unweighted, unrounded, grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. (A GPA of 2.49 will not be rounded). The cumulative GPA will be computed over a period of four years in high school.

The student’s official transcript will serve as the basis for computing the cumulative GPA.

It is the responsibility of the A+ participant to closely monitor their grade point average through, Infinite Campus portal and/or SchoolLinks.

Final determination of A+ eligibility cannot be made until an A+ participant graduates and their final GPA is calculated.

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID REQUIREMENT

A+ Participants and their parents are required to complete and submit the FAFSA as a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. Information reported on FAFSA is required by post-secondary institutions to complete the enrollment process.

The A+ Scholarship will reimburse the unpaid balance of your tuition and general fees after all available, non-loan federal financial assistance, such as the federal Pell Grant (FAFSA), has been applied to your account. This may result in a zero award if your Pell Grant is sufficient to cover all tuition and general fees.

- Parents must complete and submit the online FAFSA form. The FAFSA information must be available to the public community college or career/technical school that the student is planning to attend.
- FAFSA information is available in the School Counseling Office. Parents of seniors are encouraged the FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1. The FAFSA can be completed online at www.fafsa.ed.gov , and families should submit their application by the applicable federal and state deadlines.
- The Rockwood School District does not have access to personal information submitted with the FAFSA.
- FAFSA must be completed each year the student is enrolled at a community college or career/technical school and receiving A+ funds.



CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

Student who participate in the A+ Scholarship Program must be good citizens and judged so by the proper school authorities.

- The student must have no involvement with drug or alcohol possession and/or abuse during any activity associated with a Rockwood School. A violation will result in automatic removal of the student from the Rockwood A+ Program.
- The student must adhere to a code of behavior that will demonstrate respect for authority, faculty, school property, and fellow students. The school's printed discipline policy will serve as the definition of appropriate behavior. Specific information can be found in the school handbook and district policy manual.
- Students who receive consequences for a violation of the Safe Schools Act will be removed from the A+ Program (including but not limited to: assault, weapons, and drug distribution).
- Students who are convicted of a felony will not qualify.
- Students will lose A+ eligibility if they accumulate more than five days of in or out of school suspension during their high school career.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Students who graduate from an A+ designated high school may qualify for state-paid financial incentives to attend any public community college or career/technical school in Missouri if the students successfully meet the requirements. In addition, some four-year institutions may offer financial incentives for students who meet A+ criteria.

- A+ students are under no obligation to use the A+ financial benefits. The benefits are earned by each individual student and are not transferable to any other student.
- Receipt of private scholarships will not affect an A+ participant's eligibility for benefits.
- Financial need is not a factor in determining an A+ participant's eligibility for A+ benefits. However, an A+ participant is required to complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to determine eligibility for non-payback financial aid (federal and state grants). Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov for details.
- A student who graduates at the end of the first semester of their senior year is eligible to receive A+ funds for the semester immediately following as long as the student has met all program eligibility requirements. Educational incentives will be provided as long as state funds are appropriated by the legislature.

In order to use A+ incentives, students must meet criteria established by the A+ Schools Program and the participating post-secondary institutions. Students are encouraged to check with the admissions office of their school of choice for any criteria in addition to the general guidelines.

- Enrolled as a full-time degree seeking student
- Maintain the school's satisfactory academic progress policy
- Incentive is good for the completion of 105% of credit hours
- Must be used within forty-eight months of high school graduation date documented on your high school transcript



ACCESSING TUITION BENEFITS AND MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

A certified A+ student who has graduated from a Rockwood High School has forty-eight months after the graduation date documented on your high school transcript to take advantage of the financial incentives. To be eligible for incentives, participants must:

- Be verified by the A+ Coordinator and certified as eligible for A+ incentives.
- Be notified in writing as to approval or denial of their eligibility to receive A+ incentives. If denied, the participant will be provided with reason for the denial.
- Inform the post-secondary institution to which they have made application of their intent to use the financial incentives. The institution will prepare the necessary paperwork and bill the State of Missouri.
- Enroll and attend on a full-time basis at a Missouri public community college.
- Be seeking a degree or certificate from the institution at which you are enrolled. May not be pursuing a degree or certificate in theology or divinity.
- Not have a criminal record preventing receipt of federal student financial aid.
- Maintain the school's satisfactory academic progress policy while attending any post-secondary institution. Students do not have access to funds while academic progress is below the school's satisfactory standards.
- If renewal criteria is not met, the student may receive the scholarship award in the following term when the school determines the standard have been regained.
- Complete and submit the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) for each year the student is enrolled in school.

PARENT REMINDERS

Rockwood College & Career/A+ Coordinators do their best to keep families and students informed of any new information that is received from MDHEWD regarding the A+ Program Eligibility Requirements. Do consider and keep the following as important reminders:

- Upon enrollment, immediately contact the financial aid office of the school of choice for assistance.
- It is highly recommended that you encourage your student to attend the A+ orientation meeting that is sponsored by the college.
- If you have questions or concerns, please contact the financial aid office at your student college immediately.
- Become familiar with the MDHEWD A+ site for any additional information at <https://dhewd.mo.gov/ppc/grants-scholarships/a-plus>

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

A student may sign up for the A+ Schools program at any time between grades nine and eleven. It is important that Seniors enroll by January 31st of their senior year; to complete fifty hours of Approved Rockwood tutoring/mentoring. In all cases, however, we encourage 9th grade students enroll in the A+ Program as part of their Individual Career & Academic Planning (ICAP), since attendance, GPA, and discipline records dating back to the first day of the freshman year are used to determine successful completion of the A+ Schools program requirements. Below is a suggested timeline for involvement in the A+ Schools Program.

FRESHMAN

- Complete the A+ Application as part of their responsibility with the Individual Career & Academic Plan (ICAP).
- Establish GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements

The A+ Application can be found in SchoolLinks - Engage - Programs

SOPHOMORE

- Connect with your High School Counselor and/or College & Career/A+ Coordinator regarding selecting courses that match the tutoring/mentoring requirements for the 50 hours
- Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements

If providing tutoring/mentoring through one of the approved Rockwood programs, regularly complete the A+ Unpaid Tutoring/Mentoring Log in SchoolLinks at Engage - Experience Tracking

JUNIOR

- Continue tutoring/mentoring hours and completing the A+ Unpaid Tutoring/Mentoring Log in SchoolLinks
- Consider applying for Job/Career Shadowing or Internship through Rockwood Partners in Education Department program
- Maintain & Monitor GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements

1ST SEMESTER

- Last opportunity to enroll – Applications due no later than the September 30th for Early Grads; for all other Grads, applications are due January 31st.
- Complete tutoring/mentoring hours
- See the A+ Coordinator if you intend to graduate at semester and enter the post-secondary institution immediately upon graduation (or if you plan to attend summer session)
- Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements
- Must notify A+ Coordinator no later than November 15th to re-test to meet the math proficiency requirements; testing will take place in December

2ND SEMESTER

- Submit FAFSA
- Maintain & monitor GPA, attendance, tutoring/mentoring hours, and citizenship.
- Register for Selective Service when applicable

SENIOR