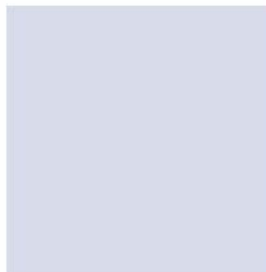
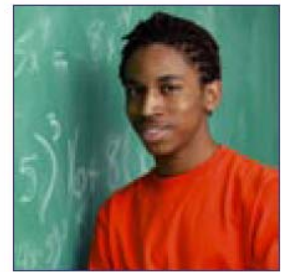
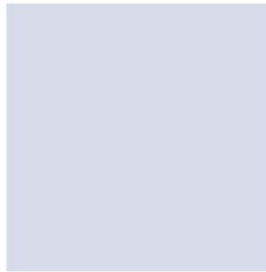


A+ Schools

*The A+ Schools
Program encourages
students to stay in school,
make career plans,
tutor younger students,
and graduate with
the skills and knowledge
required for career
success or to pursue
advanced education.*



Missouri Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS – HIGH SCHOOLS

High School Questions and Answers

General Questions	2
Program Implementation	2
Students	
Enrollment	2
Qualifications	2/3
Eligibility	
General Questions	3
Three Year Attendance	4
A+ Agreements	4/5
Grade Point Average (GPA)	5
Attendance	5
Citizenship	6
Tutoring	6
Free Application for Federal Students Aid (FAFSA)	7
Selective Services	7

General Questions:

- 1) **What A+ student records does the district need to keep and how long should they be kept?**

All records that pertain to a student's eligibility should be kept for five years from the date of graduation, including tutoring records, attendance, student grades and records relating to good citizenship.

- 2) **Must a school that is seeking designation in the future submit the student count on Core Data Screen 13?**

Yes.

Implementing the A+ Program:

- 1) **Is the Department still accepting grant applications from high schools?**

No. Funding is no longer available for A+ grants.

- 2) **Is the Department still accepting applications for designation?**

Yes. Schools interested in A+ designation should complete the designation commitment form, located on the Department's website:
<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/aplus/A+ngcommit.html>.

- 3) **Is an A+ designated high school required to employ an A+ coordinator?**

Yes, a designated high school is required to employ at least a .5 FTE A+ coordinator. The A+ coordinator must possess either a valid certificate of license to teach at the secondary level or a secondary administrator's certificate.

Students:

Enrolling in the A+ program:

- 1) **When does a student sign up for the A+ program?**

There is no specific date requirement for signing the agreement. The agreement can be signed at any time as long as the student has sufficient time to complete the eligibility requirements prior to graduation.

Qualifying for the Program:

- 1) **How does a student qualify for participation in the A+ program?**
 - a. The student and his/her parent(s) must sign an A+ participation agreement.
 - b. Attend a designated A+ high school for three years immediately prior to graduation.
 - c. Graduate with at least a cumulative 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale or 6.875 grade point average on an 11 point scale.
 - d. Graduate with a 95% attendance average over a four-year period.
 - e. Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring.
 - f. Maintain a record of good citizenship, including the avoidance of the unlawful use of alcohol and drugs, as defined by the local school district's policy.
 - g. Make a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds (PELL/SEOG) that do not require payment.
 - h. Male students must register under the United States Military Selective Service Act and show proof of such registration.

Eligibility:

General Questions:

- 1) **If a student who is eligible for A+ incentive funds graduates at the end of the first semester of the senior year, may the student access the A+ financial incentive in the semester immediately following?**

Yes, as long as the student has met all other program eligibility requirements.

- 2) **Do seniors have to meet all A+ requirements before graduation?**

Yes.

- 3) **Are data for three or four years used when determining a student's eligibility for A+ School financial incentives?**

If a student graduates in 3 ½ years, the school should use 3 ½ years of data for purposes of determining a student's eligibility. In all other instances, four years of data must be used.

- 4) **If a student is not a U.S. citizen, but meets all other program requirements, shall the student's name be placed on the eligibility list?**

Yes.

- 5) **Can a student, enrolled in classes for dual credit, be reimbursed through the A+ program for the post-secondary credit?**

No, a student's eligibility to receive A+ financial incentives becomes effective following high school graduation.

Three Year Attendance at a Designated High School:

- 1) If a student enrolls in an A+ designated high school after the beginning of the 10th grade year, is he/she eligible to participate in the A+ program?**

The A+ program requires that a student must attend a designated A+ high school for three years immediately prior to graduation.

- 2) Are students eligible for A+ incentive funds when they transfer from one high school to another?**

Yes, if both schools are designated at the time of the transfer.

- 3) May an A+ student who participates in a foreign exchange program during high school be allowed to waive the requirement that calls for A+ students to complete three years in an A+ high school prior to graduation?**

No.

- 4) Are students who attend alternative schools eligible to participate in A+?**

Yes, under the following conditions: the alternative school utilizes the same building number as the regular high school for Core Data reporting purposes; the alternative school utilizes the same curriculum as the regular high school; students attending the alternative school receive letter grades (rather than a pass/fail notation); these students receive the same diploma as regular high school students, and they meet all other requirements of the program.

A+ Participation Agreements:

- 1) What is an A+ participation agreement?**

An A+ participation agreement is a document signed by the students and his/her parents indicating an interest in the program. Once the agreement is signed by all parties, it is kept on file by the A+ coordinator. The file documents all of the pertinent information relative to the student's eligibility to receive A+ financial incentives.

- 2) Does signing an A+ participation agreement restrict a student's post-secondary choices?**

Signing this agreement does not restrict post-secondary options available to a student while in high school or upon graduation from high school.

3) Does signing the participation agreement guarantee that a student will receive the financial incentive?

No. There are at least three factors that determine whether a particular student is eligible to receive the A+ financial incentive:

- a. The high school from which the student graduates must meet and maintain all the requirements for A+ Schools designation.
- b. The student must meet all the requirements of the A+ program.
- c. State funding must be available.

Grade Point Average (GPA):

1) Does a student qualify for A+ incentive funding if his/her high school GPA upon graduation is 2.45 (on a 4.0 scale)?

No, the A+ program does not permit the rounding up of the GPA.

2) What is the policy with regard to the grade point averages figured for weighted classes and/or point scales other than 4.0?

For the purpose of the A+ program, a student's GPA must be 2.5 or better figured on a 4.0 scale. It is, therefore, the designated high school's responsibility to convert any recorded grades which include weighted classes and/or are GPA calculated on a different scale to 4.0.

Attendance:

1) In order to maintain the A+ Schools 95% attendance requirement, can students use after-school hours and Saturdays to make-up time for absences from school?

No.

2) How is the 95% attendance rate calculated for eligibility purposes?

The attendance rate is calculated over a 4-year period ([see also Eligibility – General Questions #3](#)).

3) Does a “504 Plan” override the 95% attendance requirement for the A+ Schools Program?

Not automatically – absences related to the disability or disabilities specified in a student's 504 plan should be carefully reviewed by district officials.

- 4) **What is the policy for students who may become injured in an accident or sustain a long-term illness either of which preclude the student from meeting the required 95% attendance rate?**

When students are absent for an extended period due to accident or illness beyond his/her control, it will be the responsibility of the school to make “Application for Homebound Instruction” for the student. If a student can be counted for ADA, the homebound instruction can be counted toward the 95% attendance rate.

Citizenship:

- 1) **For the purpose of the A+ program, what is meant by good citizenship and the avoidance of unlawful drugs?**

Qualities of “good citizenship” are defined by the high school’s A+ policy.

Tutoring:

- 1) **What are the guidelines for tutoring?**

- a. Tutoring should be academic in nature and be supervised by district staff.
- b. Tutoring may be for students who are older, younger or the same age as the student.
- c. Tutoring may be performed before, during or after the school day and during summer school.
- d. Tutoring must equal 50 hours.

A+ tutoring assignments and oversight reside with the A+ designated high school. The A+ high school shall develop procedures to insure appropriate documentation and supervision of all A+ tutoring. At the discretion of the A+ high school, tutoring arrangements may be made between the high school and a sending school. Tutoring shall be unpaid.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):

- 1) **What is the “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” (FAFSA)?**

According to the A+ law, eligible students must make “a good faith effort to first secure all available federal sources of funding” that do not require repayment before accessing A+ funds. This is accomplished by completing the FAFSA. Once the student completes the FAFSA form, it is submitted to the Department of Higher Education.

2) What is the Department of Higher Education’s deadline for submitting the FAFSA?

The Department of Higher Education’s deadline is April 1.

3) Is the A+ high school required to monitor the submission of the FAFSA?

A+ high schools should inform students and parents interested in the A+ program of the FAFSA requirement. A+ school personnel are encouraged to closely monitor the submission of the FAFSA as well as other criteria to insure students receive post-secondary tuition reimbursement considerations. A+ coordinators may check progress of the FAFSA requirement in one of three ways: being provided a copy of the Student Aid Report (SAR) once the FAFSA has been submitted and processed; receiving a copy of the front page of the FAFSA and the post office receipt showing it was mailed; or by checking online at: www.fafsa.ed.gov.

3) What are the consequences if a student fails to complete the FAFSA?

A student failing to file the FAFSA prior to graduation from high school jeopardizes his/her access to A+ funding. The failure to timely submit the FAFSA should not automatically result in the student being declared A+ ineligible by the high school. If all other A+ requirements have been met, the student is an eligible A+ graduate and his/her transcript should indicate such. The student’s name should be submitted on the eligibility list sent to the Department. However, if the FAFSA filing is not filed, the student should be made aware that A+ financial incentives will not be paid on their behalf.

Selective Service:

1) How is registration for the Selective Services verified?

You may verify a student’s Selective Service registration at the following website: <http://www4.sss.gov/regver/verification1.asp>.

2) Is there a specific cut-off date for verifying Selective Service registration, or does the high school simply go by whether or not the male is 18 on or before graduation?

If the student’s birthday falls after graduation, it will be the responsibility of the post-secondary institution to verify this through the FAFSA process.

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