

Southwest Livingston County R-I Student A+ Handbook 2016-2017

Approved by the Southwest Livingston Co. R-1 Board of Education
July 18, 2016

Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to provide students, parents, faculty and staff with a clear understanding of the guidelines and policies of the A+ Schools Program as established by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993.

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

The A+ Schools Program is designed to achieve the three basic goals set forth in the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993.

1. All students will graduate from high school.
2. All students will complete a rigorous and meaningful path of studies with specific learning outcomes.
3. All students will proceed to college or technical school or vocational school or job opportunities with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful.

Southwest R-1 School District Performance Standards

A critical component of the A+ School plan for the Southwest R-1 School District is the establishment of district-wide performance standards that reflect the needs of the students and the community. These standards will ensure that students will demonstrate measurable proficiencies in knowledge, skills, and content as expressed in the subject-level performance outcome.

Graduates of Southwest R-1 Schools will Demonstrate:

1. Proficient Communication Skills
 - Read and evaluate a variety of materials effectively.
 - Write clearly and accurately for various audiences and purposes.
 - Speak effectively to a variety of audiences.
 - Listen effectively for information, understanding, and enjoyment.
 - Use technology to enhance communication.

- Use and identify non-verbal clues.
2. Applications of Changing Technology
 - Define and evaluate technology.
 - Identify and use a variety of technologies to solve problems, accomplish daily tasks, and access and/or manage information.
 3. Global Perspectives and Civic Responsibility
 - Identify and practice appropriate social behaviors which foster concern, tolerance, and respect for others in a multi-cultural society.
 - Display knowledge of geographic, economic, and historical perspective and applying them to the future.
 - Value and practice the democratic process and accept responsibility as a law abiding, productive member of society.
 - Acquire, analyze, and evaluate information about situations involving the governance of groups and public policy.
 - Determine which branches of government are responsible for specific matters of public policy on local, state, and national levels.
 - Assess involvement and stake in issues, decisions, and policies related to the governance of groups.
 - Explain thoughts and feelings, and recognize differences in points of view.
 4. Interactive Skills
 - Demonstrate the ability to interact with, work with, and be supportive of others.
 - Demonstrate the ability to initiate action toward tasks.
 - Accept the consequences/praise for their own actions.
 - Exhibit self-respect, self-reliance, and self-esteem.
 5. Problem Solving and Critical Thinking Skills
 - Identify the problem.
 - Develop independent and creative strategies to predict, prevent, and solve the problem.
 - Divide the strategy into logical steps to reach a solution.
 - Collect and interpret data/information.
 - Use available resources to work toward a solution.
 - Communicate the problem solving approach to others.
 - Verify and interpret whether the solution reached is logical and/or sensible.

- Evaluate and/or compare the effectiveness of the chosen strategy to alternative strategies.
6. The Ability to Be Self-Directed, Life-Long Learner
 - Identify own abilities, interests, and aspirations and apply those to options for the future.
 - Develop, implement, and evaluate personal goals.
 - Utilize available resources, technologies, and information to solve problems, accomplish tasks, and make sound decisions.
 - Recognize and act upon the need for continued learning in an ever-changing world.
 7. Physical Fitness and Knowledge of a Healthy Lifestyle
 - Understand and identify ways in which physical fitness can enhance mental awareness, reduces stress, and alleviates illness.
 - Identify and support how the use of technology can be used for fitness activities and to measure fitness levels.
 8. An Appreciation for Creative Expression
 - Identify elements of the creative process.
 - Describe how elements are combined to produce a creative work.
 - Evaluate own skills in creative expression to produce creative work and in responding to the creative works of others.
 - Make and defend judgment about creative works.

Benefits of an A+ School for Students

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 a good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

Students will receive this incentive for **TWO** years or **SIX** semesters. A student must be considered a **FULL-TIME** student by the post-secondary institution maintaining a grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Students must complete the **SIX** semesters of **FULL-TIME** enrollment at the institution within **FOUR** years after graduation from Southwest R-1 High School. *Tuition reimbursement is contingent upon availability of state funds.*

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 4.0 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.
- Make a good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. Students need to fill out Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by April 1.
- Register for Selective Service (for Males 18 and over).
- Not be enrolled or intend to use the award to enroll in a course of study leading to a degree in theology or divinity.
- A+ Candidate have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on the official Algebra I End of Course exam.

With these alternatives, students now have at least four opportunities with which to meet the A+ Scholarship's college preparedness criterion. Once a student meets one of the following criteria, the student is considered to have met the requirement regardless of previous or subsequent scores received on any of the other options. For example, a student that scores basic on the Algebra I EOC, scores proficient on the Algebra II EOC, and scores 16 on the ACT math subtest is eligible based on the Algebra II EOC score even though previous EOC and subsequent ACT scores did not meet the eligibility threshold. Students can also re-take all of these exams in an effort to achieve a qualifying score.

- Achievement of a score of proficient or advanced on the Algebra I OR Algebra II end-of-course exams.
- Achievement of a minimum score of 17 on the ACT math sub-test or minimum score of 43 on the COMPASS Pre-Algebra or minimum score of 1 on the COMPASS Algebra exam while in high school.
- Achievement of one of the scores listed above for the ACT math subtest or COMPASS Pre-Algebra or Algebra exam while in college. Students in this category will not be eligible for A+ reimbursement until a qualifying score has been achieved. Until eligibility is established, students can seek assistance to remediate their math deficiencies, including taking developmental coursework at their own expense.
- To maintain eligibility a student must attend a public community college or career/technical school on a full-time basis. While attending, they must maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA to be eligible for the financial incentive. Students must also

continue to make a good faith effort each year to first secure all available federal financial aid (FAFSA).

A student's eligibility for the A+ Scholarship expires at the earliest of the following, except a student who is eligible at the beginning of a term may receive A+ tuition reimbursement for the full term in which the expiration criterion is met:

1. Forty-eight (48) months after completion of high school coursework.
2. Completion of 105% of the hours required for the program in which the student is currently enrolled.
3. Receipt of an associate's degree.

A+ Program Enrollment

A+ participation is voluntary. Students may participate in the program by completing and returning an A+ agreement. Students will have on file by the end of their sophomore year a signed A+ Participation Agreement in order to be in the A+ program. In the event that a student moves in from a designated A+ school, they will be given one semester to get an A+ Participation Agreement signed. Enrolling in the program early allows students and parents to focus on the goals of the program.

Grade Point Requirement

Eligible participants must graduate with a cumulative minimum 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. However, a summary sheet advising the student and parent(s) or guardian of the student's progress toward A+ status will be mailed after each semester. Final determination of eligibility cannot be made until an A+ participant graduates and his/her final GPA is calculated.

The student's official transcript will serve as evidence of grade point average for admission into a public community college or public vocational or technical school.

Attendance

A+ students are required to have a 95% attendance rate at the time of graduation. Any student who does not meet the 95% attendance requirement **will not** be eligible for the A+ financial incentive. The following guidelines for attendance are in effect for all students participating in the A+ Schools Program:

- Accumulative attendance record will be kept from the beginning of the freshman year until graduation.
- Accumulative attendance information will be gathered from the official computerized information system used by the district.

- For students who attend Tech School for part of the school day, attendance information will be obtained from the Tech School and sent to the District Office which will add this information to the Southwest R-1 records.
- Every semester A+ students and their parents or guardians will be provided information of the student's status with regard to the A+ requirements. This information includes attendance information on the form of number of hours absent and the cumulative attendance percentage.
- Rounding up of percentages is not allowed.
- After receiving this information, the student will have 30 days to file an absence appeal with the A+ Coordinator. If an appeal is not filed within 30 days of notification, a waiver for days missed will not be considered.

When filing an appeal, the student must do so using the A+ Attendance Appeal Form. This form can be obtained from the A+ coordinator.

Students in the A+ Program who feel they have been declared ineligible unfairly may appeal to the A+ Schools Appeals Committee.

A+ Tutoring Guidelines

The A+ Schools Student Requirements include the participant perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring.

- Tutoring activities may occur within or outside of the school setting.
- Tutoring activities may occur within or outside of the school day.
- All tutoring must be supervised by an adult (teacher, principal, counselor, parent, etc.) who will verify all activities were done on school grounds.
- 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.
- A student must complete 50 hours of tutoring during their four high school years.
- All activities are to be unpaid.
- Tutoring may include younger students, students of the same age group, or older students.
- Mentoring activities must be academic in nature and should be discussed with the A+ Coordinator prior to their performance.

Citizenship

Student eligibility for the A+ School Financial Incentives is based on their ability to meet five requirements during a four-year period prior to graduation with one of those requirements being: "a student must maintain a record of good citizenship and must have NO incidents of drug or alcohol use/abuse." Any infraction of this sort will result in automatic removal from the A+ Schools Program.

In an effort to set forth the parameters of good citizenship, Southwest R-1 A+ participants should understand that the following guidelines will be followed in establishing good standing.

1. Any student guilty of criminal actions that result in a felony conviction will not be eligible for A+ incentives. Other criminal actions for which legal information is available to the school district will be evaluated by the Citizenship committee, which shall meet annually for the consideration of information on this requirement of the program.
2. Activities within the school setting are an equally important part of determining good citizenship. Students who are suspended or expelled for activities set forth in the discipline policy are not eligible for the A+ Financial Incentives. Students are expected to demonstrate patterns of good behavior that would include but are not limited to cooperation, respect for one's self and others, respect for property, punctuality, and leadership.

Citizenship Committee

The Citizenship committee shall be composed of the following:

- Guidance Counselor
- 1 High School Teacher
- 3 A+ Advisory Committee Members

First ISS—The student will automatically be put on A+ probation by the A+ Coordinator and their parents will be notified of that action.

Second ISS—If a student receives a second ISS during the same year, then the student and their parents will be asked to meet with the Citizenship Committee. The A+ Coordinator will also attach an amount of extra tutoring hours to be done before or after school.

Third ISS—If a student receives a third ISS during the same school year, the student will be expelled from the A+ program with the opportunity to appeal. In cases of appeal, the student must notify the A+ Coordinator in writing of their intent to appeal within 30 days. (Appeal forms are in the A+ Coordinator's office). The A+ Coordinator shall then convene a committee meeting for consideration of the appeal within 10 days. The committee shall hear the appeal and return its decision to the student within five days. If the student is still unsatisfied with the committee's decision he/she has the opportunity to appeal to the Southwest R-1 School Board and to DESE. Once the school year is over, if student has one or two ISS's then the student's slate is wiped clean and they start over the following year with zero ISS's.

OSS—A student receiving an OSS is automatically expelled from the A+ program with an opportunity to appeal to the School Board. The committee is trying to be fair, but we do expect good citizenship from our A+ students.

Any action that would result in an unacceptable citizenship evaluation for a student will automatically terminate the student from the A+ Schools program. The school district reserves the right to remove a student from the A+ Program who has been charged, convicted, or pled guilty in a court of general jurisdiction (Missouri Circuit Court or Federal Court) for the commission of a felony violation of state or federal law.

FAFSA

The State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education says: **IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR A+ FUNDING AT ALL**, Students must apply for any non-repayable federal student financial aid -- **EVEN IF THEY DON'T PLAN TO USE A+ RIGHT AWAY**. *Those who do NOT complete the FAFSA will NOT be A+ eligible.*

If a student does NOT qualify for any federal funds, the student IS still eligible for A+ funds. The student still must apply. A+ is a program funded by the Missouri legislature. Before the legislators spend *state* money on the education of A+ qualified students, they want to make sure that the students are not eligible for other "free" money from the *federal* government. That is why they made it a requirement to apply for any non-repayable federal aid.

To meet this A+ Schools Program requirement, SENIORS must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form *regardless of whether they think they will qualify for federal funds or not.*

FAFSA forms are available in the guidance office beginning in January of the senior year. If you have access, you may also complete the FAFSA online at the following web site: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. The site also allows you to check the status of your application.

FAFSA information is based on income tax information from the year prior to enrollment in a postsecondary school. For example, if a student wants to enroll in summer or fall courses in 2010, the FAFSA information would come from the 2009 tax return.

Many types of financial aid (scholarships, grants, and loans) use FAFSA information to determine a student's financial need. Some of these forms of aid are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Because of this, it is a good idea to fill out the FAFSA form as soon as possible rather than waiting for the federal income tax deadline in April.

Selective Service

The State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has ruled that all males age 18 or over at the time of graduation must register for the selective service in order to be declared A+