

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The information and format of this handbook are adapted from work by Roma Lee France, A+ Coordinator at Camdenton High School.

Revised 2005 from work by Greg Swanson, Salem High School A+ Coordinator (1996-1999)

2<sup>nd</sup> revision, August 2006.

3<sup>rd</sup> revision, June 2011.

4<sup>th</sup> revision, July 2013.

5<sup>th</sup> revision, August 2014.

## **FORWARD**

The A+ Handbook has been written to provide you with information concerning the various aspects of the A+ Schools Program as the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 established it. This legislation requires that the Salem R-80 School District establish specific guidelines and policies in order to meet the stipulations of the program. It is the responsibility of the A+ School Coordinator to administer the A+ Schools Program in a fair and consistent manner.

The first step toward participation in the program is the signing of the A+ Schools contract which requires the signatures of student, parent, and A+ Coordinator. It then becomes the responsibility of the student to continue to meet the requirements of the program as outlined in this handbook in order to be certified as an A+ Student upon graduation.

It is realized that some students will not be able to meet the requirement as set forth in the A+ Schools Program. It will be the responsibility of the A+ Coordinator to notify students and parents immediately if it is determined that a student becomes ineligible for A+ graduate status. This manual is designed to present in a clear and consistent manner the guidelines and policies to be followed by students and the A+ Coordinator.

Please read the information carefully. It is provided for parents, students, and employees of the district so that a clear understanding of the requirements for becoming an A+ graduate is achieved.

Direct any questions concerning this program to the A+ School Coordinator at Salem High School, 573-729-6641

Sheila Wigger, A+ Coordinator

## **THE A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM**

The A+ Schools program is a comprehensive program of curricular, instructional, and technological developments and improvements 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 seek employment immediately out of high school.

The program provides for extensive curricular development, staff development, career guidance, activities designed to address the needs of at-risk students, articulation agreements with postsecondary institutions, and the development of applied courses that provide learning in a more real-world context.

### **GOALS OF THE A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM**

As outlined by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the three primary goals of the A+ Schools Program are as follows:

1. All students will graduate from high school.
2. All students will complete a selection of high school studies that is challenging and for which there are identified and measurable learner expectations.
3. All students will proceed from high school graduation to a traditional college or postsecondary 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 tools required to pursue whatever educational and career goals the student and his/her parents select. The A+ Schools Program will provide information to assist in making those decisions and will provide for the development of educational programs that more fully meet the needs of all Salem High School students.

The A+ Schools Program is a joint project between the state educational department and local district. State grant monies funded most of the project during its first three years of implementation.

### **BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS**

All students will benefit from the infusion of technology into the curriculum, the development of more effective instructional techniques, clearly stated and measurable learner expectations and graduation performance standards, more extensive career exploration and guidance activities, and the development of courses with a more real-world focus.

Each student can be assured that he or she will be required to complete a rigorous academic program that is more closely geared to his or her individual needs and interests.

## **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program, a student must be certified as an A+ Student by Salem High School. The A+ Coordinator has the responsibility to certify whether a graduate of the Salem High School has met the criteria of the program. The A+ Coordinator will check progress of students each semester and send a summary to parents.

To be certified as an A+ student, an individual must do the following:

- Sign an A+ Student Contract.
- Attend Salem High School three years prior to graduation.
- Maintain at least a 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale.
- Maintain a 95% attendance record.
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for other students.
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs.
- Make a good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.
- Males must register for Selective Service.
- Students must earn either an advanced or proficient score on either the Algebra I, Algebra II, or geometry EOC test. If a student does not meet the EOC requirement, he or she can become eligible by achieving a minimum score on the COMPASS Pre-Algebra test, COMPASS Algebra I test, or ACT math subtest. Refer to <http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/grants/aplusscholarship.php> for current standards. This option is available to students before or after high school graduation.

## **ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS**

In order to obtain financial incentives, the requirements are for a student to attend Salem High School for three years prior to graduation.

- The student must enroll in Salem High School no later than 3 weeks after the beginning of the fall term of the student's sophomore year.

-A student who drops and/or transfers to another school but re-enrolls at SHS within 15 school days will still be eligible for the A+ financial incentive. Any absences during this time will be added to the student's absenteeism total.

### **GRADE POINT REQUIREMENT**

To receive financial benefits, a student must graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale. The following statements are intended to help clarify the A+ School policies concerning grade point average.

- The cumulative grade point average is for all four years.
- The student's official transcript will serve as evidence of grade point average for admission to a public community college or public vocational/technical school.

### **GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO SECURE FUNDING**

The A+ Schools Program requires students/parents to first make a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

- Parents must complete and send in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). After about four to six weeks, the information will be received that must be sent to the community college or public vocational/technical school which the student is planning to attend.
- The FAFSA form is available in the Guidance Office of Salem High School. You can also complete the form online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- Parents are encouraged to apply as early as possible, but not before January 1 or after June 30 of the year of the student's graduation.
- The school where the student is attending must have verification of submission before any A+ money would be available.

### **APPEAL FOR WAIVER OF ABSENCES**

A+ participants are expected to attend school regularly. A+ participants must graduate with a minimum cumulative (grades 9-12) attendance rate of 95%. Students and/or parents may appeal absences in special circumstances. These circumstances may include conditions that require on-going doctor visits and/or hospitalization. A doctor's note for an excused absence does not automatically qualify a student for an A+ attendance waiver. Absences that occur because of school-sponsored activities are not counted

against attendance. Attendance waivers will not be granted for absences that are due to ordinary colds, flu, or similar short-term illnesses (even with a doctor's note), truancy, vacations, transportation problems (except when riding the school bus), and suspension from school. It is not possible to list every situation. If you have attendance questions, please contact the A+ Coordinator. All attendance waivers will be considered and decided on a case-by-case basis by the A+ Attendance Appeal Committee. A parent, guardian, or student should contact the A+ Coordinator and request an Appeal of Absence Form, if the attendance rate is less than 95%. The A+ Attendance Appeal Committee will meet at the end of each senior year. Parents will be notified by letter of the committee's decision. Appeals of the committee's decision may be made to the Superintendent and the Board of Education in writing within 14 days of notification.

### **TUTORING/MENTORING REQUIREMENT**

The criteria of the A+ Schools Program requires that students seeking A+ status must perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for other students. Listed below are the A+ Schools guidelines concerning tutoring or mentoring.

- Tutoring/mentoring must be school sponsored.
- The student must go through an orientation/training before the mentoring/tutoring will begin.
- The official time sheet will be picked up in the A+ Coordinator's office and should be returned weekly.
- The official time sheet must be signed and dated by the school sponsoring official in charge of that tutoring or mentoring activity.
- Tutoring/mentoring may be done during the school year or during summer school.
- All tutoring/mentoring must be done on school premises.
- All tutoring/mentoring experiences must begin before February 2<sup>nd</sup> in the year the student will graduate.
- The student is expected to be present at the agreed upon day and time for tutoring/mentoring.
- If an absence must occur, the student is expected to notify the adult in charge of the tutoring/mentoring experience.

The following list contains possible opportunities that will count toward the 50

hours of unpaid tutoring/mentoring requirement of the A+ Schools Program:

Upper and Lower Elementary School Tutoring/Mentoring  
Junior High School Tutoring/Mentoring  
High School Tutoring/Mentoring  
RTI Tutoring/Mentoring  
D.A.R.E.  
Mu-Alpha Theta-Tutoring  
F.T.A. Cadet Teaching  
Approved Rural Schools Program  
Summer School Assistant  
Opportunities as approved by the A+ School Coordinator

A current list of approved tutoring/mentoring activities and the contact person for these activities will be posted in the A+ Coordinator's Office.

## **CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT**

This section of the handbook explains the A+ Schools requirement of maintaining a good citizenship record and avoiding the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol. The list below lists the guidelines to be used to determine citizenship requirements.

Any student wishing to be eligible for the A+ financial incentives will not sell, possess, or use any controlled substances as defined by law unless prescribed by a licensed physician. Any involvement will have been established when the student is disciplined for a drug or alcohol offense at school (this includes the discipline, athletic, and random drug testing policies) or when the student is charged and pleads no contest, receives a suspended imposition of sentence, or is found guilty of crimes that relate to the use, manufacture, possession, transportation, distribution, or sale of a controlled substance, including alcohol. The student will be removed from the A+ Schools Program.

Any student who pleads no contest or is convicted of a felony that is verifiable and either a matter of public record or communicated to school officials in compliance with the Safe Schools Act will be removed from the A+ Schools Program.

The Assistant Principal will determine citizenship certification. The criteria for certifying good citizenship will be the following:

### **1. Character**

- Demonstrates a distinctive quality of being a role model for other students.
- Displays a courteous, positive, and cooperative manner toward fellow students, parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Is honest in completion of school activities, assignments, and tests.
- Shows respect for others and their property.

### **2. Ethics**

- Demonstrates the ability to make responsible, mature decisions.
- Displays characteristics that are based upon accepted ethical standards.

### **3. Responsibility**

- Demonstrates responsible behavior by completing assignments, arriving to class on time, and being prepared.

### **4. Discipline**

- Any student receiving OSS of any length will be removed from the A+ Schools Program. Any student receiving an accumulation of 2 days of ISS will be placed on probation for the remainder of the semester and the following semester. A third day of ISS during the probation period will result in the student being removed from the A+ Schools Program. If a student has to appeal and is reinstated, probation will continue through the end of the following semester.

To be an A+ student, you must be a credible school citizen. Credible school citizens are those students whose conduct both in school and out of school will reflect positively upon themselves and their school. Credible citizens adhere to all school policies in addition to all local, state, and federal laws. Any incident that takes place during the time enrolled at Salem R-80 will be considered in evaluating the student's citizenship.

## **APPEAL PROCESS FOR CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATION**

If the appeal deals with ISS or OSS (not involving drugs, alcohol, or the Safe Schools Act), students and/or parents will have 15 days to appeal the decision of the A+ Coordinator. The basis of the appeal must be submitted in writing through the office of the A+ Coordinator using a designated form. The students and/or parents may make the appeal in writing or make a presentation before the A+ Appeals Committee.

Upon receiving the written appeal, the A+ School Coordinator will convene with the A+ Appeals Committee. The A+ Schools Appeal Committee will meet to determine the certification of the A+ student involved in the review. After the committee has reached a decision, the A+ Schools Coordinator will notify the parents in writing. **Any appeal involving drugs, alcohol, or Safe School violations, must be made to the Superintendent/Board of Education within 15 days of notification.** If a student appeals and that appeal is granted, the student will be placed on probation for the remainder of his/her high school career. If a student appealed before the Board of Education, any subsequent appeal must be made to the Board of Education.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR A+ STUDENTS**

Several non-A+ colleges in Missouri offer scholarships for certified A+ graduates.

If you are an A+ student who is not planning to attend a Missouri community college or post-secondary technical school, your A+ status can still earn you substantial financial benefits if you attend one of the colleges offering A+ scholarships.

Many colleges and universities in Missouri also offer substantial transfer scholarships to students who have used A+ benefits to attend a community college for two years. Those students should check with the individual Missouri colleges they are interested in attending after two years in a community college.

A+ eligible colleges and technical programs along with contact names/numbers:  
<http://www.dhe.mo.gov/documents/EligibleAplusPostsecondarySchools.pdf>