

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Handbook

Program Overview

Missouri's Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 established provisions for the implementation of a grant award program to institute A+ Schools and improve the education of high school students within the State of Missouri. Beginning in 1994, the A+ Schools Program has provided grant awards to Missouri's public school districts that demonstrate a commitment to ensure that program goals are met in their high schools. On August 28, 2016, Senate Bill 638 took effect and allowed nonpublic schools in Missouri to apply to the state board of education for certification and have its students eligible on an equal basis as public school students.

The goals are that all students:

1. Graduate from high school.
2. Complete a selection of high school classes that is challenging and for which there are identified learner expectations.
3. Proceed from high school to a college, technical college, or a high wage job with workplace skill development opportunities.

High schools that apply for the A+ status must outline a plan that includes innovative activities to make progress toward achieving these three goals. Activities include: building partnerships that include the high school, post-secondary school, businesses, industries, community organizations, parents, and students; providing students with the motivation, skills, and knowledge to graduate from high school; integrating academic and vocational learning; and preparing students to select a career path focus and a program of study designed to meet academic standards established by the local school district.

The St. Joseph Christian High School applied for A+ Schools designation October 2016 and each succeeding year may be eligible to participate in the A+ Schools Financial Incentive Program.

The funding for the financial incentives is dependent upon St. Joseph Christian High School maintaining its A+ Schools status and the availability of state appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly.

Program Benefits

The first St. Joseph Christian High School class eligible to receive A+ Program financial incentives will be the Class of 2017. Those 2017 graduates who meet the A+ certification guidelines may receive financial incentives to attend a public Missouri community college or vocational/technical school of their choice.

These incentives may be made available by the State of Missouri only after the student has made a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. A student must be considered a full-time student by the post-secondary institution and maintain a 2.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale to continue receiving the incentive.

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Handbook

These incentives may be available for four years after the student's date of graduation from St. Joseph Christian High School, pending continued appropriations by the Missouri General Assembly.

Although the actual A+ financial incentive appropriated by the General Assembly can only be used at a public Missouri community or vocational/technical school, some 4-year colleges and universities offer scholarships to their institutions as a means of recruiting A+ certified graduates.

Program Requirements

A part of the A+ Schools program is that a student who qualifies according to the following criteria and continues his/her education at a Missouri public community college or public vocational-technical school may be eligible for state reimbursed tuition.

These costs may be reimbursable only after secured federal financial assistance funds that do not require repayment have been applied. The incentive, offered by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, may be available for up to six semesters of attendance during the 4-year period following high school graduation.

Requirement 1 - Enter into a written agreement with the high school to participate in the A+ Schools Student Financial Incentives Program.

A student may enter into the agreement at any time during his/her four years of high school prior to graduation. The agreement simply states that the students and parents are aware of the A+ Program requirements and incentives. Due to the requirement to accumulate tutoring/mentoring hours, it is recommended that the agreement be signed as early as possible. Signing an A+ Participation Agreement in no way obligates the student to adhere to the A+ guidelines, but is a necessary step to participate.

Requirement 2 - Attend a designated A+ School for three consecutive years prior to high school graduation.

A student must attend a designated A+ School during his/her sophomore, junior, and senior years. The student financial incentive is dependent upon St. Joseph Christian High School being designated as an A+ School before the applicant graduates and the availability of state appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly. Earliest possible recipients will be students who graduate in 2017.

If a student withdraws from St. Joseph Christian High School or transfers to a non A+ school, the student will not be considered eligible for the program. If a student transfers to St. Joseph Christian High School after the beginning of their sophomore year, the student may only participate in the program if the school from which the student transferred was a designated A+ school.

Requirement 3 - Graduate from high school with a non-weighted cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale (no rounding).

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Handbook

This average will represent the applicant's cumulative GPA that includes the freshman through senior years. A non-weighted 2.499 or lower will render the student uncertified.

Requirement 4 - Have at least a 95 percent attendance record for the four-year period (no rounding).

The applicant must have a 95 percent or better average attendance record for the four-year period, freshman through senior years.

1. A cumulative attendance record will be kept from the beginning of the A+ student's freshman year until graduation.
2. The official record of attendance is kept in the high school office. Students attending Hillyard Technical Center will have that attendance reported monthly and transferred to high school records.
3. Cumulative attendance information will be accessed by the A+ Coordinator at the end of each semester.
4. Each semester parents, guardians and students will be provided information regarding the student's attendance record.
5. The A+ Program does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.

The A+ Program differs from the regular school attendance rules. A+ attendance waivers are only for serious, long-term illness, treatment of chronic health conditions, or homebound instruction approved by the principal. A Waiver Application must be filed within 10 school days after returning to school.

Absences that occur because of school sponsored activities or exam exemption are not counted against attendance. Attendance waivers would not usually be granted for:

- Doctor/dentist visits
- Court dates
- Funerals
- Family vacations
- Transportation problems
- Employment

Please contact the A+ coordinator with attendance questions. All requests for waivers will be considered on a case by case basis by the A+ Advisory Committee (High School Principal, Guidance Counselor, and three high school teachers).

Requirement 5 - Perform and document 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for younger students during the four years of high school – 25% of which may be job shadowing and 10% may be with a religious organization.

Tutoring and mentoring activities will be school-based, approved by the A+ Coordinator, academic in nature, and under the auspices of school. A list of approved tutoring/mentoring activities will be provided to each A+ applicant. All tutoring and mentoring must be supervised and verified by a teacher, principal, counselor, or the A+ Coordinator.

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Handbook

The A+ student will maintain records of tutoring/mentoring hours and the log must be signed by the supervising teacher, A+ Coordinator, or principal. The log must be turned in quarterly to the A+ Coordinator. (See Appendix for copy of tutoring log.)

Students will behave responsibly while tutoring. This includes notifying the tutoring supervisor before absences when possible.

The student may receive no financial compensation for A+ tutoring.

Requirement 6 - Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol.

Definition of Citizenship: Students who are to receive the financial incentive are expected to be good citizens. The state of Missouri, which funds the A+ Schools Program, and the St. Joseph Christian School District both expect a high standard of behavior.

A good citizen will approach school as a medium to acquire educational skills that will be essential to the individual's success in post-secondary life. As a result, the A+ participant must endeavor to make the most of his or her time at school. Students who find themselves in violation of the St. Joseph Christian High School discipline code and are consequentially assigned disciplinary action should be aware those actions could jeopardize A+ incentive eligibility.

A student will immediately be removed from the program for drugs, alcohol/substance abuse, possession of drug paraphernalia, or conviction of a violation of Safe Schools Act. This applies to a student's entire high school career including nights, weekends, and summers.

Determination of offense may come from:

- Observation and mandatory report by a sponsor, certified staff member, or other school personnel.
- Admittance by individual
- Judgment by the principal that unquestionable proof exists
- Legal conviction or deferred prosecution

Requirement 7 - Make a documented good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

During the applicant's senior year, he/she will be required to complete an application for securing federal post-secondary financial assistance. Reimbursement from the state may be given only after federal funds that do not require repayment have been applied.

Parents must complete and file the free application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA summary report must be sent to the community college or public vocational technical school the student is planning to attend.

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Handbook

The FAFSA form is available online. Parents are encouraged to apply as soon as possible after October 1 of that school year. Tuition incentives may only be awarded to reimburse the unpaid balance of the cost of tuition and general fees after available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment have been applied to these costs.

Requirement 8 - Achieve the academic requirement.

Score proficient or advanced on a high school math standardized test. Additional alternatives may include minimum score of 17 on ACT Math Sub-score, 43 on Compass Pre-Algebra or 1 on Compass Algebra I.

Requirement 9 - Register with Selective Service, if required.

Effective August 28, 1999, all individuals required to register under the United States Military Selective Service Act (all males age 18) must show proof of registration to be eligible for state-supported scholarships, programs for financial assistance for post-secondary education or loans insured by any state agency.

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Handbook

*The financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program are dependent upon St. Joseph Christian High School's continued designation as an A+ School and state appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly. They are not the funding responsibility of St. Joseph Christian School.

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Citizenship Agreement

Students participating in the A+ Schools Program must maintain a record of "good citizenship" to qualify for post-secondary financial assistance. Good citizenship is demonstrated by respect for school, community, and self. Any student who participates in the A+ Schools Program must be a creditable citizen and be judged so by the proper school authority certifying the list of students for participation. A student whose character or conduct reflects credit upon him/herself and/or his/her satisfactory in accord with the standards of good discipline.

During second semester of the student's senior year, a "Citizenship Eligibility Report" will be presented to the appropriate principal. The principal will determine eligibility by indicating on the form whether or not the student has maintained "good citizenship." If the student's citizenship record is acceptable, a form will be placed in the student's A+ folder. An A+ Citizenship Appeals Committee will be assembled to rule on exceptions or unique situations.

DISCIPLINARY APPEAL PROCESS:

The following process may be used by students/parents to appeal a disciplinary decision that may affect the student's A+ qualification:

1. Students/parents may appeal a disqualification decision that is made dealing with discipline or probation.
2. The basis of the appeal must be submitted in writing through the office of the A+ Schools Coordinator. The students/parents may make the appeal in writing or make a presentation before the A+ Advisory Committee.
3. Upon receiving a written appeal, the A+ Schools Coordinator will convene the A+ Advisory Committee composed of the following:

- Guidance Counselor
- Principal
- Teachers (3) from the high school

The A+ Coordinator will act as facilitator and a non-voting member of the A+ Advisory Committee unless the decision results in a tie vote. After the A+ Advisory Committee reaches a decision, the A+ Schools Coordinator will notify the parents in writing. If the appeal decision is not acceptable to the parent, additional appeals must be in writing to the Superintendent and then to the Board of Education.

CITIZENSHIP AGREEMENT FOR A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM

All A+ Schools participants must sign and return this acknowledgement of the A+ Schools Program Citizenship Guidelines to the A+ Schools Office.

We have received, studied, and understand the A+ Schools Program Citizenship Guidelines.

Student Signature: _____

Student Name (printed) _____

Parent/Guardian: _____

St. Joseph Christian High School A+ Program Handbook

Student Signature: _____

Final form must be turned in by May 1 of the senior year.