

STOVER HIGH SCHOOL



A+

**Financial Incentive
HANDBOOK
2009-2010**

A+ Schools Program

~A Brief Explanation~

All of the specifics are covered in this A+ Handbook and Contract.

What is A+?

- It is a program that is available to SHS graduates because SHS is an A+ “Designated School.”
- A+ is money from the Missouri government; the money comes from Missouri taxes.
- A+ pays for tuition (what you have to pay to attend a post-secondary school).
- A+ pays for general fees charged by the school.

A+ does NOT pay for transportation, room and board, supplies, and optional books or program-related fees.

What type of Schools will A+ pay for me to attend?

Schools that are

- Located in Missouri
- Public (Funded with Missouri tax money)
- Two-year community colleges, technical colleges or vocational/technical schools

A+ does NOT pay for four-year colleges or schools out of state or private schools; however, some four-year colleges may offer a scholarship to those students who successfully complete the A+ program. Check with the four-year college you want to attend.

How do I get the money?

- You do not have to have financial need. Anyone can qualify.
- You do not have to earn A+ grades.
- You do not have to compete with anyone. It is just up to YOU!

Basically, you just have to:

- Sign up;
- Have a 2.5 or higher GPA (an average of C+'s or better when your semester grades are average together).
- Have an attendance rate of 95%;
- Stay out of trouble;
- Do 50 hours of tutoring;
- Graduate

Ask your A+ Coordinator for a complete explanation.

Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide complete information about the A+ Schools Program to interested students and their parents or legal guardians.

In order to be certified as an A+ student upon graduation, it is the responsibility of the student to meet the requirements of the program as outlined in this handbook.

The A+ Coordinator will monitor student progress and notify students and parents as soon as possible if a student is in jeopardy of becoming or becomes ineligible for the A+ Financial Incentive.

Please keep this handbook. You will be informed of updated information. A copy of this handbook and enrollment forms can be found on the school web site

<http://mcr1.stovermo.com>

You may contact the school for information regarding the SHS A+ Schools Program at 573-377-2218, Ext. 260.

DESE Sites for A+ Information for Students/Parents

General information about A+

List of Community Colleges/Technical/Vocational Schools eligible for A+ Tuition

<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/aplus/>

A+ Fact Sheet

<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/aplus/proginfo/A+facts.html>

A+ Law and Rule

<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/aplus/proginfo/A+legissues.html>

STOVER HIGH SCHOOL A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM

MISSOURI'S A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM

“The A+ Schools Program encourages students to stay in school, make career plans, tutor students, and graduate with the skills and knowledge required for career success or to pursue advanced education.” (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education)

Benefits and requirements of the Missouri A+ Schools Program are subject to change at any time. All changes are made by the Missouri Department of Higher Education. A+ incentive funding is dependent upon Missouri General Assembly appropriations and is NOT the responsibility of the Morgan County R-I School District.

SHS A+ Program Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Stover High School A+ Schools Program is to prepare today's students for tomorrow's opportunities.

Goals of the SHS A+ Program

The three primary goals of the A+ Schools Program are:

1. All SHS students will graduate from high school.
2. All SHS students will complete a selection of rigorous coursework and for which there are identified learning expectations.
3. All SHS students graduating will be prepared for post-secondary education or productive occupations.

BENEFITS OF THE A+ PROGRAM

Any students who successfully completes and meets the eligibility requirements as outlined by the A+ Schools Program may receive a financial incentive for tuition and general fees to any Missouri public community college or technical or vocational school. All funding is subject to legislative appropriation.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program, a student must be certified as an A+ Student by Stover High School. The A+ Coordinator, as the official representative of the A+ Schools Program, has the responsibility to certify whether a graduate of Stover High School has met all the requirements of the program.

To be certified as an A+ Student, the individual must do the following over a four-year period:

- Sign an A+ Student Agreement.
- Attend an A+ designated high school for three years immediately prior to graduation.
- Maintain a 2.5 or higher grade point average on a 4.0 scale.
- Maintain at least a 95% attendance record for grades 9-12.
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid school-sponsored tutoring/mentoring for other students.
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Apply for federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment by submitting a FAFAS form between January 1 and April 1 of the student's senior year.
- Register with the Selective Service at age 18 for males or as required by law.
- Be a U.S. citizen.

REQUIREMENT 1 ENROLLMENT

In order for a student to meet the requirement of enrolling in and attending an A+ designated high school for three consecutive years before graduation, the following criteria must be met:

- The student may enroll in the A+ Program at any time between the beginning of his/her Freshmen year and end of the Junior year. However, the earlier the enrollment the easier it is to complete the tutoring requirements.
- The student should be enrolled and attend SHS by the 20th day of the fall term of the student's sophomore year or transfer in from an A+ designated school.
- If a student withdraws or transfers from SHS after the beginning of his/her sophomore year, the student will not be considered eligible for the A+ Schools Program unless he/she re-enroll in an A+ designated school. If a student transfers back to SHS from an A+ designated school, he/she may continue to participate in the A+ Schools Program.

REQUIREMENT 2 GRADE POINT

The A+ student must graduate with an accumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or better on a 4.0 scale. Grade point average is calculated at the end of each semester and is cumulative for all four years. Averaging or rounding up to the next highest grade point is not allowed.

The credit recovery program may not be applied toward the A+ program's GPA according to DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) stipulations. The SHS Alternative School credits may not be applied to the A+ Schools Programs.

The student's official transcript will serve as evidence of the grade point average for A+ certification and for enrollment into a Missouri public community college, vocational, or technical school. Meeting the requirements of the A+ Program does not automatically guarantee entrance into a community college and/or a vocational/technical school.

REQUIREMENT 3

Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Requirement

The State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education states: “The tuition incentives will be made available, subject to legislative appropriation, only after the student has made a documented good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.” This applies even if the student does not plan to use the financial incentive right after high school. *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 submit the completed FAFSA.

A+ is a program funded by the Missouri Legislature. Before the legislators spend state money on the education of an A+ qualified student, they want to make sure that the student is not eligible for other “free” or non-repayable money from the *Federal Government*.

To meet this A+ Schools Program requirement, the SENIOR/PARENTS 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 information is based on income tax information from the year prior to enrollment in a post-secondary 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.

FAFSA forms are available online at <http://www.fafsa.edu.gov>

It is recommended that the FAFSA be filled out as soon as possible between January 1 and April 1 of the year the senior is to graduate. Some educational institutions have an earlier cut-off date than the April 1 listed on the FAFSA form so the student should check with the post-secondary institution he/she plans to attend for the deadline date.

Many types of financial aid (scholarships, grants, and loans) use FAFSA information to determine a student’s financial need.

The student/parents or guardians must continue to fill out the FAFSA annually after high school graduation in order to continue to access A+ funds while at a post-secondary school.

REQUIREMENT 4 ATTENDANCE

A participant in the A+ Program must comply with the attendance requirement that is separate and different from the general attendance policy in the high school handbook. The A+ Program participant is required to maintain a higher standard of attendance in order to earn the privilege of continued participation in this program. **Each A+ student is expected to attend school regularly and to be on time for classes.**

Required 95% Attendance Rate

This calculates to no more than 8 days absent a year or 32 days over the four years of high school.

The attendance rate must be 95% or better from the student's freshman year until graduation. Rounding up of attendance percentage is not allowed. **Saturday School/detention or Summer School cannot be counted for attendance in the A+ program.** Partial-day absences may count toward the attendance rate calculation.

Accumulative attendance information will consist of the official attendance record kept by the high school. Parents and each student of the A+ Program will receive an attendance update at least twice annually.

Extenuating circumstances such as serious health problems or accident-related injuries may cause a student to miss long periods of school. These days may be waived with proper documentation. Students on homebound instruction are allowed to be counted for school attendance.

- Any student with specific health histories must make sure that the medical documentation of chronic or long-term health related problems are on file with the school nurse and such health related problems should be considered in a possible review situation.
- **Each student and his/her parents are responsible to document any absence which may later need to be appealed.**
- Documentation must include specific dates accompanied by the signature of the appropriate persons.

WAIVERS WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Truancy
- Skipping Classes
- Personal/Family Vacation
- Transportation problems (unless late bus is involved)
- Suspension from class or school for any reason

Absences that may be “Waived” with the approval of the A+ Attendance Review Committee

Any student submitting a request for a waiver of days missed shall provide the A+ Coordinator with official documentation of the following:

<u>Reason for Absence</u>	<u>Documentation from</u>
1. Doctor/Dentist Visit*	Doctor/Dentist*
2. Hospitalization	Physician
3. Chronic Health Problem	School Nurse
4. Court Dates	Court Official
5. Funeral	Copy of memorial & Principal or Counselor
6. Religious Holiday	Religious Leader
7. Personal/Family Calamity	Principal or Counselor or School Nurse
8. Catastrophic illness/injury	Physician or Principal or Counselor or School Nurse

*Doctor/Dentist visits must be appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of the regular school day. This allowance is not intended for routine appointments or for the student’s/parent’s convenience, but, rather, for exceptional situations.

REQUIREMENT 5 TUTORING/MENTORING REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for the A+ incentive the student must perform 50 hours of unpaid, school-sponsored tutoring/mentoring. Listed below are the A+ Schools guidelines for tutoring/mentoring.

- Complete an A+ Schools Program Agreement.
- Complete an A+ Tutoring/Mentoring Agreement
- Commit to 50 hours of service
- Complete tutor/mentoring training
- Complete a tutoring log sheet
- Turn in time sheet to A+ Coordinator in order to receive credit
- Complete tutoring/mentoring hours before the student's graduation year.

Policies of the Tutoring/Mentoring Program

- Tutoring/Mentoring must be school sponsored.
- Tutoring/Mentoring must be approved by the A+ Coordinator.
- An official time sheet must be kept by the student and signed by the school official in charge of the student. The time sheet **MUST** be turned in at the end of the semester in which the tutoring/mentoring takes place.
- Tutoring/mentoring must be completed during the school year or summer school.
- Tutoring/mentoring must be completed at a school-approved site.
- Notify the supervising teacher if unable to fulfill an assigned task.
- Work with a positive attitude and willingly assume assigned tasks.
- Wear appropriate clothing.
- Treat the students and supervisor with respect.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the students.
- Respect the principle of confidentiality
- Report any concerns to the supervising teacher or A+ Coordinator.
- Scheduled times for tutoring/mentoring are important and absences should occur in case of emergency or illness.
- **NO** financial remuneration may be accepted for tutoring/mentoring activities.
- **Inappropriate behavior may cause a student to be disciplined and/or be removed from the tutoring/mentoring assignment and/or also be removed from the A+ Program.**

Tutoring Opportunities

- Bulldog Hour—20 minute session each day, usually each Tuesday and Thursday
- A+ Class—a semester class
- Before and after school—special assignments approved by the A+ Coordinator.

As a Freshman tutoring opportunities may be limited during his/her first year in high school in order to successfully make the transition into their high school career.

REQUIREMENT 6 GOOD CITIZENSHIP

Participation in the A+ Schools Program is an honor and a privilege. A student who participates in the program is expected to conform to a higher standard of conduct than that applicable to non-participants. The student must adhere to a code of behavior (as specified in the SHS Student Handbook) which will demonstrate respect for authority, faculty, school, property, and their fellow students.

Any student pursuing the A+ Schools Program must maintain a record of good citizenship both in and out of school and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol. 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. Violation of this policy will result in removal from the A+ Schools Program. Certification of good citizenship will be based on the official discipline record of the district. Consequences for infractions of the discipline code are assigned by the Principal who is responsible for certifying the accuracy of the student's discipline record.

Loss of financial incentive eligibility will result if a student 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.

General Offenses

Realizing that students at this age are progressing toward adulthood and may make wrong choices, a "second chance" may be given. Offenses that do not require immediate removal from the program, but require disciplinary actions will result in one of the following:

- A warning may be issued to the student and the parents/guardian will be notified of the incident and stating the student has received a warning and may be placed on A+ Financial Incentive Probation if another violation occurs. This notification will be placed in the student's file.
- The student may be placed on probation and a letter of notification will be issued to the student's parents/guardian stating the student is on A+ Financial Incentive Probation for a period of 87 school days and during that time no additional violations may occur or the student will lose the A+ Financial Incentive. This 87 day period may extend into the next school year. This notification will be placed in the student's file.
- If further violations occur the student may be removed from the A+ Program and the parents/guardian will be notified in writing that the A+ Agreement is no longer in effect, and the student is no longer eligible for the A+ financial incentive. This notification will be placed in the student's file. The student/parents may file for an appeal.

REQUIREMENT 7 SELECTIVE SERVICE

All males must register for the Selective Service at the age of 18 or as required by law. To register go to <http://www.sss.gov>

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Financial incentives may be available from the state of Missouri for eligible SHS graduates beginning with the graduating class of 2010 who choose to attend a Missouri state public community college, vocational or technical school. These incentives could be for the cost of tuition and general fees. At the present time the incentive for textbooks is not available.

These incentives will only be made available to eligible students:

1. for a period of four (4) years immediately after high school graduation.
2. for up to two years (six semesters) as a full-time post-secondary student maintaining a GPA of 2.5 on a scale of 4.0.
3. after the student has made a documented good faith effort to first secure all available federal post-secondary financial funds that do not require repayment. This requires the student/parents to fill out a FAFSA form between January 1 and April 1 annually while the student is in a post-secondary school.
4. to reimburse the unpaid balance of the cost of tuition and general fees after the federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds have been applied to these costs.
5. provided state funds are appropriated by the legislature.

Stover High School is not responsible for the terms and conditions of the A+ Schools Program or any change in program content. This financial incentive is conditional upon Stover High School achieving and maintaining A+ status.

APPEAL PROCEDURES

Attendance

Appeal of Attendance Process

Parents and/or the student will have the opportunity to file an attendance appeal if it becomes evident, during second semester of the student's senior year, that the student has not met the 95% required attendance rate. After receiving notification, the parent/student will have 10 school days to file an appeal with the A+ School Coordinator. If an appeal is not filed within 10 school days of notification, then a waiver for those days missed will not be considered.

The Parents/student should use the Appeal of Absence form available in the A+ office.

The review committee for attendance appeals will be composed of the following:

- Administrator
- Guidance Counselor
- Three HS Teachers
- A+ Coordinator as a non-voting facilitator

After the review committee reaches a decision, the A+ Coordinator will notify the parents/student by letter.

If the A+ Schools Attendance Appeals Committee makes a decision adverse to the student, then the parents/student will have 10 days from the receipt of the decision to appeal the committee's decision to the Board of Education. The appeal to the Board of Education shall be in writing, and the parent or student's written appeal will be reviewed by the Board of Education in a manner determined by the Board of Education.

All appeals must be concluded by May 1 of the year in which the student graduates in order for the student to receive A+ certification.

Any student who does not have the accumulative 95% attendance rate after waivers have been adjusted will not be designated an A+ student and will not be eligible for A+ financial incentives.

Citizenship Appeal

Appeal for Waiver of Good Conduct Violation

The student/parents/guardian will have 10 days to file an appeal with the A+ Coordinator after receiving written notification of violation of the citizenship requirement. If an appeal is not filed within 10 school days of notification, it will not be considered.

The required Appeal of Good Citizenship Violation form is available from the A+ Coordinator. The student/parents may also choose to make a brief presentation to the A+ Appeals committee.

Upon receiving the written appeal, the A+ Coordinator will convene the A+ Good Citizenship Appeals Committee composed of:

- Administrator
- HS Counselor
- 3 teachers
- A+ Coordinator, as non-voting facilitator

After the A+ Good Citizenship Appeals Committee reaches a decision, the A+ Coordinator will notify the parents/student by letter. The parents/student will have 10 days from receipt of that letter to appeal the Board of Education in writing. The appeal to the Board of Education shall be conducted in a manner determined by the Board at its discretion. All probations and appeals processes must be concluded by May 1 of the year in which the student graduates in order for the student to receive A+ certification.

Parents/student should note that this review process is not intended to allow participants to avoid removal for actual violation of the program standards or to seek leniency when an appropriate consequence has been imposed for conduct that has actually occurred. The review process is simply designed to prevent removals from being based upon inaccurate or incomplete information.