

DE SOTO HIGH SCHOOL A+ PROGRAM



HANDBOOK

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PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a clear understanding of the various aspects of the A+ School Program as established by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. There are many aspects of the law that established the A+ School Program that require De Soto High School to establish guidelines and policies. It is the responsibility of the A+ School Coordinator to administer the A+ School Program in a fair and consistent manner.

The first step of participation in the A+ School Program is the signing of the A+ School Participation Agreement by the student and the parent. After all signatures are obtained the student is considered to be an A+ Student at De Soto High School. It is then the responsibility of the student to continue to meet the requirements to be certified as an A+ Student upon graduation.

De Soto School District has a responsibility to maintain its status as an A+ School. It is the responsibility of the A+ School Coordinator to certify to the State of Missouri the students who have achieved this status upon graduation. It is realized that some students will not be able to meet the requirements as set forth in the A+ School Program. It will be the responsibility of the A+ School Coordinator to notify the student and parents if it is determined that a student is not eligible for A+ School status. This manual is designed to present in a clear and consistent manner the guidelines and policies to be followed by the A+ School Coordinator.

Please read this information carefully. It is provided for students, parents and employees of the De Soto School District so that a clear understanding of the requirements for becoming an A+ Student is achieved.

Any questions about this handbook or the A+ Program should be directed to the A+ School Coordinator at De Soto High School, 636-586-1060.

MISSOURI'S A+ SCHOOL PROGRAM

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 the program's goals are met in their high schools. 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 grant award 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 schools, 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.

De Soto High School was awarded an A+ Schools grant in each of the school years, 1999, 2000, and 2001. De Soto High School became a designated school on April 17, 2002. The students who graduated from De Soto High School in 2002 and each succeeding year will be eligible to participate in the A+ Schools Financial Incentive Program.

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

The student financial incentive part of the A+ Schools Program provides for applicants who meet the A+ requirements to be eligible for state reimbursement for the cost of tuition while attending any Missouri public community college or post-secondary vocational or technical school as a full-time student. These costs will be reimbursable only after secured federal financial assistance funds that do not require repayment have been applied. The incentive will be available for up to two years of attendance during the 4-year period following high school graduation.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ATTENDING AN A+ SCHOOL?

The A+ concept started with the graduating class of 2002 at De Soto High School. De Soto High School is an A+ designated school by the state of Missouri, and therefore, graduating students will be eligible for the following:

- Tuition, (subject to legislative appropriation) to a community college or public vocational/technical school of their choice in Missouri. In addition, many 4-year Missouri colleges are offering scholarship money to students who have completed the A+ Program. A list of some of the participating schools is listed in appendix F.
- 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. (All students must fill out the FAFSA form the second semester of their senior year). You can go to <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> after January 1st of your student's senior year to fill out the FAFSA form.

The student financial incentive may be available for a period of four years after high school graduation. To maintain eligibility during that time, each participating student must enroll and attend a Missouri public community college or vocational school on a full-time basis and maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher.

AM I ELIGIBLE?

A student who qualifies according to the following criteria and continues an education at a Missouri public community college or vocational-technical school may be eligible for state reimbursed tuition, subject to legislative appropriation. To be eligible for the A+ Scholarship, each student must:

- Enroll in the A+ Program prior to graduation (preferably before their senior year in order to get 50 hours of mentoring or tutoring completed).
- Attend a designated A+ School for three consecutive years prior to high school graduation.
- Graduated from high school with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or greater on a 4.0 scale.
- Maintain at least a 95% attendance record for all four years of high school.
- Must score proficient or advanced on the Algebra I End-of-Course Exam.
- Performed 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for other students.
- Maintained a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs.
- Registered with the Selective Service. *Males only (www.sss.gov/)
- Made a documented, good faith effort to secure available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require payment (FAFSA application must be completed and mailed to the school that the student is planning to attend).

The student financial incentive may be available for a period of four years after high school graduation. To maintain eligibility during that time, each participating student must enroll and attend a Missouri public community college or vocational school on a full-time basis and maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher. The program is currently funding 105% of credit hours required for a student to receive their degree and/or certificate. Funding is always subject to change pending legislative approval.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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

A student may enter into the agreement at any time before graduation. Due to the requirement to accumulate 50 tutoring/mentoring hours, it is recommended that the agreement be signed as early as possible. Transfer-in students should enter into the agreement at enrollment. A+ agreement forms will be mailed home to students and are always available in the Guidance Office.

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

A student must attend an A+ Designated High School during his/her sophomore, junior and senior years. If a student withdraws or transfers from De Soto High School after the beginning of their sophomore year, the student will not be considered eligible for the A+ School Program, even if that student re-enrolls at De Soto High School before graduation unless the school they transferred to was an A+ designated school. Transfer students from other schools must meet the De Soto School District requirements and should enter into the agreement at enrollment or no later than the end of their first quarter with the district upon transfer.

Requirement 3: Graduate from high school with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

This average will represent the applicant's cumulative GPA, which includes the freshman through senior years. A student with a 2.49 or lower GPA will not be eligible.

Requirement 4: Must score proficient or advanced on the Algebra I End-of-Course Exam.

All students are required to take the Algebra I EOC. A+ students must score advanced or proficient on the Algebra I EOC. Students may take the Algebra I EOC more than once if they do not score the required score the first time. See Appendix G for alternative ways to meet this requirement.

Requirement 5: Have at least a 95 percent attendance record.

The applicant must have a 95 percent or better average attendance record for the four-year period, freshmen through senior years. A student with a 94.9 percent or lower average will not be eligible. Students are expected to attend class regularly and be on time for classes. Students with specific health histories must make sure that the medical documentation of chronic or long-term health-related problems are documented with the Attendance Office.

Absences can be documented with the following:

<u>Reason for Missing</u>	<u>Documentation</u>
1. Doctor's/Dentist's visits	Doctor's Letter
2. Hospitalization	Doctor's Letter
3. Chronic Health Problems	Doctor's Letter
4. Court Dates	Court Letter
5. Funerals	Funeral Notice
6. Personal Emergency: Flood, Fire, Etc.	Principal's Letter
7. Catastrophic Illness, Long Hospitalization or Serious Accident	Doctor's Letter

Requirement 6: Perform and document 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring.

The following guidelines should be followed in the completion of this requirement:

1. Tutoring and mentoring activities will be school-based, academic in nature, and supervised at school. A list of approved tutoring/mentoring activities is provided to each A+ applicant.
2. Students must be trained by the school before tutoring/mentoring.
3. The tutoring and mentoring activities may occur before, during, after the school day or during summer school.
4. All tutoring and mentoring must be supervised and verified by a teacher, principal, counselor, school personnel or the A+ Coordinator.
5. The A+ Coordinator will maintain records of tutoring/mentoring hours that each applicant accumulates. Only activities that have been verified with a time sheet signature by the tutoring supervisor will be counted toward the 50-hour requirements.
6. All mentoring/tutoring log sheets must be turned into the Counselor's Office.
7. All tutoring/mentoring hours must be completed by May 1st of your students' senior year.

Requirement 7: Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol.

The De Soto A+ Advisory committee believes that creditable school citizens are those citizens whose conduct, both in and out of school, will reflect positively upon themselves and school. Good citizenship includes respect for staff, peers and self, accepting responsibility, and honesty. Students who are designated A+ students should demonstrate distinctive qualities and be role models for other students. Their character and ethics should be of the highest standards.

The following 4 offenses may result in immediate removal from the A+ School Program:

1. Drugs/Alcohol/Substance Abuse

- Violation of the De Soto School District Drug/Alcohol/Substance Abuse policy outlined in the Board policy during the contract time.
- Formally charged with unlawful possession and/or selling of drugs, paraphernalia, or alcohol.

2. Violation of Local, State or Federal Criminal Laws

- Conviction /guilty plea to a felony
- Criminal activity which is formally reported to the schools by a juvenile or police officer as defined by the Safe Schools Act.

Convictions include:

- First and second degree murder
- Kidnapping
- First and second degree assault
- Forcible rape or sodomy
- First degree burglary
- Robbery
- Distribution of drugs
- First degree arson
- Voluntary manslaughter
- Involuntary manslaughter
- Felonious restraint
- Property damage, first degree
- Possession of a weapon
- Distribution of drugs to a minor

3. Acquiring 5 or more days of out-of-school suspension for any reason. Cumulative or not.*

4. Acquiring 10 or more days of ISS or 10 days of Saturday School for any reason.*

Students may also be placed on a probationary status for the following offenses:

- 1. Fighting**
- 2. Truancy**
- 3. Harassment**

If your student is placed on probation, they will remain on probation for the remainder of their schooling at De Soto High School. The A+ committee will determine if your student must complete community service to maintain their probationary status. If your child receives another discipline referral, the A+ Committee will meet to make a determination as to whether or not your student will remain on probation or be dismissed from the A+ Program.

* The administration reserves the right to administer consequences including probation as well as dismissal from the A+ program for actions not specifically covered in this manual. Violations prior to entering the program are subject to prohibiting a student from being accepted into the program.

Requirement 8: Register with Selective Service.

Effective August 28, 1999, tuition incentives will be made available only after the student has, if required to do so, registered with the Selective Service. *18-year old males only (www.sss.gov/)

Requirement 9: Make a good faith effort to secure federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds.

This section of the manual explains the requirement of parents/guardians to first make a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.

- Parents must complete and send in the Free Application for Federal State Aid. The FAFSA information must be sent to the community college or public Vocational/technical School that the student is planning to attend.
- The FAFSA application form is available in the guidance counselor office of De Soto High School. In addition, the FAFSA website is www.fafsa.ed.gov. Please visit this website for more information.
- Parents are encouraged to apply as early as possible, but not before January 1 or after April 1 of the year of the student's graduation.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T MEET ALL OF THE REQUIREMENTS?

Below is another explanation of what will happen if you do not meet requirements:

1. Failure to enroll in the A+ Program prior to graduation = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP
2. Failure to attend a designated A+ School for 3 consecutive years prior to graduation = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP UNLESS ONE OF YOUR PARENTS IS ACTIVE DUTY IN THE MILITARY
3. Failure to graduate with a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or above = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP
4. Failure to maintain a 95% attendance rate = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP
5. Failure to score Advanced or Proficient of the Algebra I EOC = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP
6. Failure to perform 50 hours of tutoring or mentoring = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP
7. Failure to maintain good citizenship/have good school discipline = PROBATION THAT MAY OR MAY NOT INCLUDE COMMUNITY SERVICE OR DISMISSAL DEPENDING ON THE SEVERITY OF THE OFFENSE.
8. Failure to register with the selective services (males age 18 only) = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP
9. Failure to fill out the FAFSA form = NO A+ SCHOLARSHIP

APPEALS

All students have the right to file an appeal if they feel they have not been deemed eligible for the A+ Scholarship in an unfair manner. If you or your student would like to file an appeal, you may do so within 10 days of receiving your dismissal letter. In order to file an appeal, please have your student obtain an appeal form from the Guidance Office and have it returned within 10 days of dismissal. The A+ committee will then have a period of 14 days to review the appeal and determine whether or not the appeal will be granted. For further questions, contact the A+ office at 506-1060.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY AFTER GRADUATION

Requirement 1: Enroll in and attend, on a full-time basis, a Missouri public community college or vocational-technical school.

Students must be enrolled for twelve credit hours to be considered a full time student for each semester. Students must be enrolled in six credit hours during summer school. Once enrolled in a community college of your choice, it is then the responsibility of you and the college's admission department to make sure you maintain A+ Eligibility.

Requirement 2: Maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

The specific guidelines outlined in this manual for De Soto High School have been developed in accordance with Missouri Senate Bill 380.

The eligibility requirement guidelines for the De Soto A+ Schools Program and this manual (student financial incentives) were approved by the De Soto Board of Education on __3/21/2014__.

A+ CHECKLIST

- Sign the A+ Agreement Form prior to graduation.
- Attend a designated A+ School for 3 consecutive years prior to graduation.
- Graduate with a 2.5 GPA.
- Graduate with a 95% attendance rate.
- Score Advanced or Proficient on the Algebra I End of Course Exam.
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring prior to May 1st of your graduating year.
- Maintain good citizenship.
- Complete the FASFA form prior to graduation. Between the dates of January 1st of graduating year and April 1st of graduating year.
- All males age 18 or older must register with the Selective Service.

Community Service

At De Soto High School, we expect our students to abide by the rules set forth in the student handbook. We understand that all students may make a mistake and would like to give those students the opportunity to still receive the A+ Scholarship if they have not met **Requirement 6: Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol.** If your student is placed on probation, they may be assigned community service. If your student is assigned community service, and you would still like to be eligible to receive the A+ Scholarship, you must follow the following procedure:

1. Obtain the Community Service Form from the A+ Coordinator in the Guidance Office.
2. Contact and secure a place in the community that will be willing to allow you to perform community service. (you may not do community service for a family member).
3. A+ Coordinator MUST approve where you will be doing community service prior to beginning hours.
4. Complete your assigned hours of community service by May 1st of your senior year.
5. Turn in your Community Service log sheet to the A+ Coordinator in the Guidance Office prior to May 1st of your senior year.

SETTING YOUR SIGHTS ON THE FUTURE Where Will You Go?

Eligible A+ Community Colleges and Vocational Technical Schools

Arcadia Valley Career Technical Ctr
Boonslick Technical Educ. Center
Brookfield Area Career Center
Cape Girardeau Car & Tech Center
Car. & Tech. Center At Ft. Osage
Carrollton Area Career Center
Carthage Technical Center
Cass Career Center
Clinton Technical Sch.
Columbia Area Career Center
Crowder College
Current River Career Center
Dallas County Career Center
Davis H. Hart Career Center
East Central College
Eldon Career Center
Excelsior Springs Career Center
Four Rivers Career Center
Franklin Technology Center
Gibson Technical Center
Grand River Technical Sch.
Hannibal Career & Tech. Center
Herndon Career Center
Hillyard Technical Center
Kennett Career & Tech. Center
Kirksville Area Tech. Center
Jefferson College
Lake Career & Technical Center
Lamar Area Voc.-Tech. Sch.
Lebanon Tech. & Career Center
Lewis & Clark Career Center
Lex La-Ray Technical Center
Linn State Technical College
Macon Area Voc. Sch.
Metropolitan Community College
Mineral Area College
Missouri State University - West Plains
Moberly Area Community College
Moberly Area Technical Center
Nevada Regional Tech.-Ctr.
New Madrid R-I Tech Skills Ctr
Nichols Career Center
North Central Career Center
North Central Missouri College
North Technical
Northland Career Center
Northwest Technical Sch.
Ozark Mountain Technical Center
Ozarks Technical Community College
Pemiscot Co Career & Tech Ctr

Perryville Area Car & Tech Ctr
Pike/Lincoln Technical Center
Poplar Bluff Tech. Career Center
Ranken Technical College
Rolla Technical Inst.
Saline Co. Career Center
Sikeston Career & Tech. Center
South Central Career Center
South Technical
Southwest Area Career Center
St. Charles Community College
St. Louis Community College
State Fair Community College
Three Rivers Community College
Unitec Career Center
Warrensburg Area Career Center
Waynesville Technical Academy

Qualifying Scores for ACT and COMPASS Alternatives to the A+ Algebra I End-of-Course Exam Requirement

The Coordinating Board for Higher Education at its February 2014 meeting approved the following qualifying scores for the ACT and COMPASS exam alternatives to the A+ Algebra I End-of-Course Exam requirement. The CBHE is charged with establishing these minimum scores annually. The graduating class of 2015 must achieve one of these scores if they do not score proficient or advanced on the Algebra I or a higher level math end-of-course exam.

Exam	Minimum Score
ACT Math Sub-score	17
COMPASS Pre-Algebra	43
COMPASS Algebra	1

*COMPASS will be phased out in November 2016 and another options will take its place. Students will be notified.

The Algebra I end-of-course exam requirement is intended for students to demonstrate a mastery of Algebra I skills and knowledge as an indicator of college preparedness. In keeping with that intent, these minimum scores were set to reflect a student's ability to understand and use basic algebraic concepts for placement into a remedial math course requiring skills that correlate to Algebra I skills learned in the eighth or ninth grade.

The scores were set based on an analysis of placement score information from Missouri's community colleges and placement score examples provided by ACT. They are intended to represent real-world college placement practices rather than an equivalency, or concordance, between the scores. The scores are also intended to strike a reasonable balance between the requirements intent and the reality of diversity in the developmental coursework available at postsecondary institutions.

Prior to the CBHE's approval, the scores were vetted with the A+ community, including high school counselors, postsecondary financial aid professionals, community college presidents, and the State Student Financial Assistance Committee. The majority of the feedback received was supportive of the established score levels.

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 this 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 a 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 retake all of these exams in an effort to achieve a qualifying score.

1. Achievement of a score of proficient or advanced on the Algebra I end-of-course exam requirement
2. Achievement of a score of proficient or advanced on any DESE-authorized mathematics end-of-course exam that is at a higher level than Algebra I
3. Achievement of one of the scores listed above for the ACT math subtest or COMPASS Pre-Algebra or Algebra exam while in high school
4. 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.