

A+ Program Handbook



HERITAGE ACADEMY
A University-Model[®] School

INTRODUCTION

The A+ Schools Program was established as part of the Missouri Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 in order to provide incentives for local high schools to raise academic expectations, reduce their dropout rate, establish relationships with the business community, and provide better career pathways to students. The legislation requires Heritage Academy of Columbia to establish guidelines and policies in order to administer the A+ Schools Program in a fair and consistent manner.

Heritage Academy voluntarily chooses to participate in the A+ Program in an effort to fulfill our mission of partnering with Christian parents to prepare college-worthy character witnesses for Jesus Christ and maximize financial options for our students as they choose the college, vocational, or technical school of their choice. It is the responsibility of Heritage Academy to meet and maintain all A+ requirements. The Missouri State Board of Education designates A+ status based on program review.

Eligible students graduating from an A+ high school may qualify for the student financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program. All reimbursements are dependent upon Heritage Academy maintaining its status as an A+ School and the availability of state appropriations from the Missouri General Assembly. Reimbursement is not the funding responsibility of Heritage Academy.

The purpose of this manual is to provide students, parents, and staff with information about the guidelines and policies of the Heritage Academy A+ School Program. It is Heritage Academy's responsibility to maintain that designation. It is the responsibility of the students and parents to read, understand, and comply with the program requirements for eligibility. Please direct any additional questions concerning this program to Heritage Academy's A+ Coordinator.

For more information about the Missouri A+ Program visit:
<http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/grants/aplusscholarship.php>

Information is also available on the Heritage Academy website at
www.heritageacademyofcolumbia.com/aplus.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

In recognition that there can be no preferential treatment with God (Romans 2:11), Heritage Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic or other school-administered programs.

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GOALS OF THE A+ PROGRAM

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

- All students will graduate from high school.
- All students will complete a selection of high school studies that is challenging and for which there are measurable learner expectations.
- All students will proceed from high school graduation to college, post-secondary, career/technical school, or a high wage job with workplace skill development opportunities.

In addition, to the above mentioned goals of the state run A+ Program, the A+ Program @ Heritage seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Prepare every Heritage student to succeed academically, socially, and financially in college.
- Increase student opportunities for servant-leadership and personal development.
- Develop a culture of mentoring in the student body and school community.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Students who graduate from an A+ designated high school may qualify for state-paid financial incentives to attend any public community college or career/technical school in Missouri if the students successfully meet the requirements (see Eligibility Requirements). In addition, some four-year institutions may offer financial incentives for students who meet A+ criteria.

A+ students are under no obligation to use the A+ financial benefits. The benefits are earned by each individual student and are not transferable to any other student. Receipt of private scholarships will not affect an A+ participant's eligibility for benefits.

Financial need is not a factor in determining an A+ participant's eligibility for A+ benefits. However, an A+ participant is required to complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to determine eligibility for non-payback financial aid (i.e. Pell Grant, Missouri State Grant, Supplementary Education Opportunity Grant). Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov for details.

A student who graduates at the end of the first semester of his/her senior year is eligible to receive A+ funds for the semester immediately following as long as the student has met all program eligibility requirements. Educational incentives will be provided as long as state funds are appropriated by the legislature.

In order to use A+ incentives, students must meet criteria established by the A+ Schools Program and the participating post-secondary institution. Students are encouraged to check with the admissions office of their school of choice for any criteria in addition to these general guidelines:

- Enroll as a full-time degree seeking student.
- Maintain the school's satisfactory academic progress policy.
- Incentive is good for the completion of 105% of credit hours.
- Must be used within forty-eight months of high school graduation date documented on your high school transcript.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Heritage Academy students meeting the following requirements may be eligible for financial reimbursement (providing Heritage Academy maintains A+ status and funds are available from the Missouri General Assembly):

- Sign A+ Agreement on file at Heritage.
- Attend an A+ designated high school for three consecutive years immediately prior to
- graduation.¹

¹Transfer students who enroll in Heritage Academy after the last Wednesday of September in their sophomore year will NOT qualify to participate in the A+ Program at Heritage, unless they are transferring from another A+ designated school.

If one of your parents is a member of the military on active duty or has retired from the military and relocated to Missouri within one year of his/her retirement, you are exempt from this requirement. However, you must attend an A+ designated high school and meet all of the other high school eligibility requirements in the school year immediately preceding graduation.

- Graduate with an unweighted, unrounded cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
- Achieve math proficiency and meet the school’s academic progress policy.
- Maintain at least a 95% cumulative attendance record in grades 9 – 12.
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid mentoring and/or tutoring.
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the use of alcohol and unlawful drugs.
- Make a good faith effort to apply for non-payback financial aid by completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
- Register for Selective Service if applicable.

To maintain A+ eligibility at the postsecondary level, students must:

- Enroll and attend on a full-time basis a participating Missouri community college or post-secondary career/technical school.
- Be seeking a degree at the institution at which you are enrolled.
- Meet the GPA requirements defined in your school’s satisfactory academic progress policy.
- Make a good faith effort each year to secure all available federal financial aid by completing the FAFSA.

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

A+ enrollment is voluntary. Students may participate in the program by completing and returning a signed Program Agreement to the A+ coordinator. After all signatures are obtained by the A+ coordinator, the student will be confirmed as an active A+ student. Upon confirmation into the A+ Program it becomes the responsibility of the student to meet all the requirements of the program to become eligible for the tuition reimbursement upon graduation.

Students are encouraged to enroll in the A+ Program during their freshman year. Early enrollment in the program allows students and parents to receive regular information on the A+ Program from the A+ Coordinator. **Students must enroll in A+ Program at Heritage no later than September 1st of the student’s sophomore year or transfer from an A+ certified high school where enrollment was prior to September 1st of the student’s sophomore year.**

Students may sign up for the A+ Schools Program at any time between grades nine and eleven. Seniors must enroll no later than the last Wednesday in September of the senior year due to the need to complete fifty required hours of tutoring.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT

A+ participants are expected to attend school regularly. A+ participants must graduate with a minimum cumulative (grades 9 – 12) attendance rate of 95%. **Attendance is based upon all days when school is in regular session.** Only the days and times calculated for Average Daily Attendance (ADA) will be used to determine the 95% attendance requirement. The school office will keep the official record for each student.

Parents/guardians and students will be provided with information on the student’s attendance at the end of each semester. However, it is the responsibility of each A+ participant to closely monitor

his/her attendance. Furthermore, each A+ participant should read and understand the attendance policy.

The A+ attendance policy may provide relief in cases where the absence was beyond the control of the A+ participant via a review process.²

Any time an A+ student is absent for one of the “Eligible Exceptions,” the student must bring required documentation as soon as possible to the A+ coordinator to be filed in the event an attendance review needs to be made. This precaution will prevent delays and/or confusion during review proceedings.

Attendance review will not be granted for the following:

- Truancy
- Suspension
- Personal/Family Vacation
- Transportation
- Absences due to Final Exam Exemptions

Absences <u>Eligible</u> for Exception	<u>Review Documentation Required</u>
Hospitalization, Chronic Health problem, Catastrophic illness/injury	Physician’s letter
Court Appearance, Funeral, Religious Holiday	Court letter, Parent letter and copy of death certificate, obituary, or memorial pamphlet, Letter from clergy
College Visit	Letter from College Admissions Office

A+ attendance requirements are not to be confused with the general attendance requirements of Heritage Academy as printed in the student handbook.

CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

Students who participate in the A+ Schools Program must be good citizens and judged so by the proper school authorities. Specifically:

- The student must have no involvement with drug or alcohol possession and/or abuse during any activity associated with Heritage Academy. A violation will result in automatic removal of the student from the A+ Program.

²In the event the student is deemed ineligible after absences have been reviewed, attendance appeals may be directed to the A+ Schools Appeals Committee. To appeal, the parent/guardian must notify the A+ Schools Coordinator in writing of his/her intent to appeal within 10 days of receiving an ineligibility letter. An A+ Appeals Committee shall hear the appeal within 10 working days of receiving a written request and return its decision to the parent/guardian in writing. The A+ Schools Appeals Committee will consist of the following individuals: the school administrator, a Heritage school teacher, a member of the school board, and the A+ Coordinator (who will be a non-voting member in the appeals process). The A+ Appeals Committee’s decision is final and is not subject to further appeal.

- The student must adhere to a code of behavior that will demonstrate respect for authority, faculty, school property, and fellow students. The school’s printed Honor Code (including the Code of Conduct and Dress Code) will serve as the definition of appropriate behavior. Specific information can be found in the school’s Family Manual.
- Students who receive consequences for a violation of the Safe Schools Act will be removed from the A+ Program (including but not limited to: assault, weapons, and drug distribution).
- Students who are convicted of a felony will not qualify.
- Students will lose A+ eligibility if they receive more than one day of in or out of school suspension during their high school career for offenses other than alcohol/drugs or violations of the Safe Schools Act.

Citizenship appeals may be directed to the A+ Schools Appeals Committee when a student believes that he/she has been declared ineligible unfairly. To appeal, the student or parent/guardian must notify the A+ Schools Coordinator in writing of his/her intent to appeal within 10 days of receiving an ineligibility letter.

An A+ Appeals Committee shall hear the appeal within 10 days of receiving a written request and return its decision to the student in writing. The A+ Schools Appeals Committee will consist of the following individuals: the school administrator, a Heritage school teacher, a member of the school board, and the A+ Coordinator (who will be a non-voting member in the appeals process). The student may not appeal the A+ Appeals Committee’s decision.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE REQUIREMENT

A+ participants must graduate with a cumulative minimum unweighted, unrounded, grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. The cumulative GPA will be computed over a period of four years in high school.

The student’s official transcript will serve as the basis for computing the cumulative GPA. It is the responsibility of the A+ participant to closely monitor his/her grade point average through the school’s online portal.

In addition, updates will be provided periodically to all A+ students and parents from the A+ coordinator. Final determination of A+ eligibility cannot be made until an A+ participant graduates and his/her final GPA is calculated.

MATH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT

The Missouri Department of Higher Education will require that students demonstrate math proficiency for A+ eligibility using a sliding scale of cumulative GPA and ACT Math sub-score. Students must meet the following minimum requirements:

High School GPA	ACT Math Sub-Score
2.5	17
2.8	16

It is important for students to understand that **math proficiency** is now considered an A+ requirement, along with **GPA, attendance, citizenship and tutoring hours**. Students who do not demonstrate math proficiency prior to graduation may not be A+ eligible nor have access to A+ funds immediately after graduation.

TUTORING/MENTORING REQUIREMENTS

A+ students must verify a tutoring or mentoring assignment with the A+ Coordinator at Heritage, complete an A+ Tutoring/Mentoring Agreement, and attend a training session before they may begin accumulating tutoring/mentoring hours.

A+ students must perform fifty hours of unpaid mentoring/tutoring. All tutoring/mentoring must be:

- Pre-approved by the A+ Coordinator
- Performed under the direct supervision of an approved supervisor
- Performed at an approved location
- Accomplished during the four-year span from 9th-12th grade, whether during school year or during summer break
- Directly related to teaching skills to peers or younger children
- Completed by graduation

Tutoring/mentoring services may not be provided to family members (siblings/cousins).

Transportation to and from mentoring/tutoring service locations away from the Heritage Academy School campus is the responsibility of the A+ participant. To participate in off-site tutoring/mentoring, the student must have on file an A+ Transportation Permission Form.

The student must maintain a log sheet that includes the date, length of tutoring/mentoring sessions, and signature of the supervising employee. Log sheets will be distributed at the A+ tutor training session and available from the A+ Coordinator. Log sheets are to be turned in to the A+ Coordinator at the end of each month so that student progress can be monitored. Students will not receive credit for unverified activities or for activities verified on forms that are lost or not delivered to the A+ Mentoring Coordinator. Failure to turn in authorized log sheets could jeopardize eligibility in the A+ Program. **Up to 8 hours of the tutoring/mentoring requirement may consist of job shadowing in a career of interest to the student.** Such time will be documented on the A+ Job Shadowing Form.

Tutoring/mentoring/job shadowing activities are to be conducted in a controlled, disciplined, and orderly manner, and only for as long as the experience is productive and necessary. Participants should consider themselves as guests of the mentoring/tutoring service location and should conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the Heritage student handbook. Responsibilities of tutoring/mentoring assignments include participation at agreed upon times and dates. Advance notification should be given when the A+ participant will not be able to meet the mentoring/tutoring obligation.

The supervisor will evaluate the student's mentoring/tutoring obligation every four weeks. A+ participants who do not meet the behavioral expectations of the supervisor during any portion of the tutoring experience risk forfeiture of tutoring/mentoring opportunities.

A+ students who feel there are problems and/or conflicts with the supervisor or mentoring/tutoring assignment (i.e. teacher, student, etc.) should report the problem(s) immediately to the A+ Coordinator.

All tutoring/mentoring activities must be completed by senior's last day of attendance. This enables the A+ Coordinator to verify eligibility and file all necessary paperwork.

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) REQUIREMENT

A+ Participants and their parents are required to complete and submit the FAFSA as a good faith effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. Information reported on FAFSA is required by post-secondary institutions to complete the enrollment process.

The A+ Scholarship will reimburse the unpaid balance of your tuition and general fees after all available, non-loan federal financial assistance, such as the federal Pell Grant (FAFSA), has been applied to your account. This may result in a zero award if your Pell Grant is sufficient to cover all tuition and general fees.

- Parents must complete and submit the online FAFSA form. The FAFSA information must be available to the public community college or career/technical school that the student is planning to attend.
- Parents of seniors are encouraged to apply as soon as possible after October 1. The FAFSA may be submitted online at www.fafsa.ed.gov by the April 1st deadline.
- Heritage Academy does not have access to personal information submitted with the FAFSA.
- FAFSA must be completed each year the student is enrolled at a community college or career/technical school and receiving A+ funds.

SELECTIVE SERVICE

A+ participants who are required by the laws of the United States to register with the Selective Service must register or forfeit their eligibility for the A+ financial aid.

ACCESSING TUITION BENEFITS AND MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY

A certified A+ student who has graduated from Heritage Academy has forty-eight months after the graduation date documented on your high school transcript to take advantage of the financial incentives.

To be eligible for incentives, participants must:

- Be verified by the A+ Coordinator and certified as eligible for A+ incentives.
- Be notified in writing as to approval or denial of their eligibility to receive A+ incentives. If denied, the participant will be provided with reason for the denial.

- Have your name submitted to the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, A+ Division.
- Inform the post-secondary institution to which they have made application of their intent to use the financial incentives. The institution will prepare the necessary paperwork and bill the State of Missouri.
- Enroll and attend on a full-time basis at a Missouri public community college.
- Be seeking a degree from the institution at which you are enrolled.
- Maintain the school’s satisfactory academic progress policy while attending any post-secondary institution. Students do not have access to funds while academic progress is below the school’s satisfactory standards.
- Complete and submit the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) for each year the student is enrolled in school.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

A student may sign up for the A+ Schools program at any time between grades nine and eleven. Seniors must enroll no later than the last Wednesday of September in their senior year due to the need to complete fifty hours of tutoring/ mentoring. In all cases, however, early enrollment is encouraged since attendance, GPA, and discipline records dating back to the first day of the freshman year are used to determine successful completion of the A+ Schools program requirements. Below is a suggested timeline for involvement in the A+ Schools Program.

FRESHMAN YEAR	SOPHOMORE YEAR	JUNIOR YEAR	SENIOR YEAR (1st Semester)
Sign the A+ Schools Program Agreement	Establish GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements		Last opportunity to enroll – Applications due no later than the last Wednesday of September
Establish GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements	Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements	Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements	Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements
See A+ Coordinator for potential tutoring opportunities and associated forms (may begin 2nd semester of freshman year after completing one semester of eligibility)	See A+ Coordinator for potential tutoring opportunities and associated forms (may begin 2nd semester of freshman year after completing one semester of eligibility)	Continue tutoring/mentoring hours if not completed	Complete tutoring/mentoring hours Register for Selective Service when applicable Meet with the A+ Coordinator and Academic Advisor



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A+ Program Student Agreement

Student: _____

Year of Graduation: _____

Social Security #: _____

Heritage Academy of Columbia has been designated as an A+ school by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Financial incentives may be available from the state of Missouri for eligible Heritage Academy graduates who choose to attend a Missouri state public community college or vocational/ technical school.

Student Eligibility — In order to qualify for A+ financial incentives, a student must:

- 1) Be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or lawfully present in the U.S.
- 2) Enter into a written agreement with your high school prior to graduation.
- 3) Attend a designated A+ Program high school for 3 consecutive years prior to graduation.
- 4) Graduate with an overall grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.
- 5) Have at least a 95% attendance record overall for grades 9-12.
- 6) Perform at least 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring (up to 25% may include job shadowing).
- 7) Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol.
- 8) Beginning with the senior high school class of 2015, have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on Algebra I end of course exam or a higher level DESE approved end of course exam in the field of Mathematics.
- 9) Register of Selective Service (if applicable).

Post-Graduate Responsibilities — To maintain eligibility, each participating student (during the period of incentive eligibility) must:

- 1) Enroll and attend full time at a participating public community college or vocational/technical school.
- 2) Seek a degree or certificate at a school in which you are enrolled.
- 3) Not pursue a degree or certificate in theology or divinity.
- 4) Maintain a grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale, and otherwise maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by your school.

Program Limitations — A+ financial incentives will only be made to eligible students:

- 1) For a period of up to 48 months after high school graduation.
- 2) After a student makes a good faith effort to secure all available federal financial aid by completing the FASFA.
- 3) For reduction in the balance of the cost of tuition and general fees.
- 4) Provided state funds are appropriated by legislature.

The student and parent/guardian must sign this A+ Program Student Agreement before the student will be considered for participation in the A+ Program. By signing this agreement the student and parent/guardian certify that they have read, understand and agree to the A+ eligibility requirements listed above.

Accept I agree to participate and work to meet all the A+ eligibility requirements.

Decline I decline to participate in the A+ program.

Print Student Full Name

Print Parent Full Name

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Head of School Signature

A+ Coordinator Signature

Heritage Academy will provide information on eligibility for tuition incentives to DESE and, providing state funds are available, DESE will distribute tuition funds to the institution of student's choice.

More information about the program is provided in the A+ Program Handbook available online or from the A+ Coordinator.



A+ Program Tutoring / Mentoring Agreement

Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

_____ (student) agrees to perform _____ (# of hours) of tutoring.

_____ (student) agrees to perform _____ (# of hours) of mentoring.

_____ (student) agrees to perform _____ (# of hours) of job shadowing.

The timeframe will be from _____ to _____. The location will be _____.

The supervisor will be _____.

Description of Supervised Tutoring/Mentoring/Job Shadowing:

Student Signature

Supervisor Signature

A+ Coordinator

