

A+

Student
Handbook

Montrose High School



Revised June 2024

Rationale

***NOTICE: Any changes (temporary or otherwise) to A+ by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will supersede the information in this publication.**

The A+ Schools Program is a school improvement initiative established by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. The program is raising academic standards, opening new doors to higher education, and introducing students to the teaching profession through tutoring and mentoring activities. The program provides incentives for local high schools to:

- Reduce the dropout rate
- Raise academic expectations and eliminate “general track” courses
- Provide better “career pathways” for all students
- Work more closely with business and higher education leaders

The primary goal of A+ Schools is to ensure that all students are well-prepared to pursue advanced education and employment. The program also offers state-paid financial assistance to students who graduate from an A+ designated high school and meet specific requirements. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, seventy-five percent of our jobs require technical skills. The A+ Schools Program encourages all students to focus on a career early and set a goal that includes training beyond high school. The A+ Schools Program asks all students to select a career path, plan coursework for all four years of high school, and progress toward their goal of obtaining additional training/education at the post-secondary level and/or obtaining a high-skill, high-wage job after graduation.

It is the responsibility of the students and parents to read this manual carefully to understand the guidelines and regulations that are a part of the A+ Program.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Programs (free tuition and general fees), a student must be certified as an A+ student by Montrose High School. To qualify for certification, the student must meet the following criteria:

- Enter into a written agreement (Statement of Intent) prior to graduation and have attended an A+ designated school for at least three years;
- Graduate from high school with a cumulative unweighted grade point average of 2.5 or higher (GPA averages cannot be rounded up);
- Have at least a 95% cumulative attendance record;
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring of younger students through a school-sponsored program;
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol; and
- Make a good faith effort to secure all available federal postsecondary student financial aid funds that do not require repayment. Financial need is not a requirement for A+ eligibility; however, all students must complete the FAFSA by February 1 of the senior year, and a copy of the Student Aid Report (SAR) given to the A+ Coordinator.

Student Enrollment Guidelines

- Students are encouraged to enroll in the program at the beginning of their freshman year, but no later than the first semester of their senior year.

- An A+ Participation Agreement must be completed with all appropriate signatures and returned to the A+ Office/Counseling Office.
- Anyone requesting A+ enrollment after their freshman year must meet all criteria dating back to the beginning of their freshman year.
- Students may not request A+ financial incentives after the fifth week of the fall semester of their senior year.
- Eligible students must be enrolled in Montrose High School no later than three weeks after the beginning of the school year of the student's sophomore year.

Student Incentives

Qualified A+ graduates will be eligible to receive the following:

- Tuition and general fees to attend any public community college, or state-certified vocational or technical school in the state of Missouri for two years.
- The financial incentives will be available only after the student has made a documented effort to secure any available postsecondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment.
- Tuition incentives will only be made available to reimburse the unpaid balance of the cost of tuition after available federal financial aid funds have been applied to those costs.
- Students will be eligible to receive financial incentives for two years if they are enrolled as full-time student (12 hours or more) and maintain a 2.5 GPA in the postsecondary setting.
- Private scholarships will not affect eligibility for the A+ Program, nor will they reduce the State's responsibility to a college or technical school.
- Students must complete the two years of full time enrollment at a community college or public vocational/technical school within four years of graduating from Montrose High School.
- Financial need is not a factor in determining eligibility for the A+ Program.

Participation Requirements

- The high school from which the student graduates must meet and maintain all the requirements for A+ school designation.
- State funding must be available. As with any state program, A+ Schools Program financial incentives are subject to the political process of annual appropriation and legislative approval.
- The student must meet all eligibility criteria outlined in the A+ Schools Agreement. The form must be signed by students and parents to indicate participation in the program and must be turned in to the school's counselor to be placed in the student's file.

The chart on the following page, from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, demonstrates the current and most up-to-date requirements.

High School Students

- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
- Enter into a written agreement with your high school prior to graduation.
- Attend a designated A+ high school for 2 years prior to graduation.¹
- Graduate from an A+ designated high school with an overall unweighted grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.
- Have at least a 95% attendance record overall for grades 9-12.
- Perform at least 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring, of which up to 25% may include job shadowing prior to graduation.²
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol while in grades 9-12.
- Have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on the Algebra I end-of-course exam or a higher level DESE-approved end-of-course exam in the field of mathematics.³

Initial Postsecondary Students

- Enroll and attend full-time at a **participating public community college or vocational/technical school, or private two-year vocational/technical school.** (Students who have a disability as defined by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and are unable to enroll full-time because of their disability but are enrolled in at least six credit hours may be considered to be enrolled full-time.)
- Be seeking a degree or certificate at the school in which you are enrolled.⁴
- Not be pursuing a degree or certificate in theology or divinity.
- Not have a criminal record preventing receipt of federal Title IV student financial aid
- Make a good faith effort to secure all available federal financial aid by completing the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. If you are attending a school that does not participate in Title IV programs you must complete the **FAFSA4caster**, which is a tool for estimating your level of need for federal financial aid.
- Achieve at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point on a 4.0 scale at the end of the fall semester (or at the end of the initial payment period for non-semester-based programs) and otherwise maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by your school.
- Complete 12 semester credit hours or the equivalent (6 hours during the summer term) each term in which you receive an A+ award in order to maintain eligibility for the next term. Students in clock-hour programs must complete 90% of the clock hours required for the applicable federal payment period.

Renewal Students

- Continue to meet the eligibility requirements for initial students, except for the 2.0 CGPA fall semester requirement.
- Maintain a 2.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale and otherwise maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by your school.⁵
- Make a good faith effort to secure all available, non-loan federal financial aid by completing the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** each academic year. If you are attending a school that does not participate in Title IV programs you must complete the **FAFSA4caster**, which is a tool for estimating your level of need for federal financial aid.
- Complete 12 semester credit hours or the equivalent (6 hours during the summer term) each term in which you receive an A+ award in order to maintain eligibility for the next term. Students in clock-hour programs must complete 90% of the clock hours required for the applicable federal payment period.

¹2020, 2021, and 2022 seniors who attended an A+ designated high school for any 2 years of the 4 years prior to high school graduation have met this requirement. In addition, regardless of your graduation year, 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 their retirement, you are exempt from this requirement. However, you must attend an A+ designated high school in the school year immediately preceding graduation and meet all of the other high school eligibility requirements.

²High school policy may allow this criterion to be met up to 6 months beyond high school graduation in exceptional circumstances. Check with your high school’s A+ coordinator to see if this is an option.

³**2018 High School Seniors and Forward** - If you meet all of the eligibility requirements except the end-of-course exam requirement, you may establish eligibility by achieving a combined ACT math subscore and high school GPA in accordance with the following scale. You may achieve the qualifying score as a high school or postsecondary student. If you achieve the score as a postsecondary student you may be eligible for an award in the same term that you took the test.

ACT Math Score		High School GPA
17 or greater	and	2.5 or greater
16	and	2.8 or greater
15	and	3.0 or greater

Montrose R-XIV High School A+ Program

The education of all students is important, regardless of their plans following high school. Some high school graduates will choose to attend a four-year college or university; others may go directly into the workforce or military; and still others may seek additional training at a postsecondary career/technical school or community college. The A+ Schools Program is designed to ensure that no matter which option is chosen, all high school students will be provided selections of courses, career counseling, technology and/or workplace skill development opportunities that are appropriate to their career goals.

Montrose R-XIV High School students who meet all state-mandated A+ participation requirements may be eligible for these financial incentives, provided 1) state funds are appropriated by the legislature or 2) 5 are subject to state funding approval. If a student is a noncitizen, it is up to the post-secondary institution to determine whether they are eligible for the incentives for the A+ program. Students must meet the following requirements to be eligible for tuition and common student fee reimbursement:

- Sign an A+ Schools Agreement prior to high school graduation.
- Attend a designated A+ School for two years prior to graduation.
- Graduate from an A+ designated high school with a cumulative, non-weighted 4-year grade point average of 2.5 or higher.
- Maintain a cumulative, 4-year attendance record of at least 95 percent.
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid, school-based academic tutoring. Tutoring is usually completed during a student’s junior or senior year. Tutoring must be academic in nature and completed in the Tutoring class or by prior arrangement with the A+ Coordinator. Only A+ Office-approved tutoring will be included in the student’s A+ eligibility file.
- Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of alcohol and/or drugs.
- File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). A+ funding becomes available only after all federal aid has been determined and applied to tuition and fees.
- All individuals required to register under the United States Military Selective Service Act must show proof of registration to be eligible for state-supported financial assistance.

• If you meet all of the eligibility requirements **except the end-of-course exam requirement**, you may establish eligibility by achieving a combined ACT math sub-score and high school GPA in accordance with the scale listed above. You may achieve the qualifying score as a high school or postsecondary student. If you achieve the score as a postsecondary student, you may be eligible for an award in the same term that you take the test.

Maintaining Post-Secondary A+ Eligibility

You may renew your award annually. To renew, initial students must:

- Achieve a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average by the end of the fall term.
- Complete at least 12 credit hours in each fall and spring term in which you receive an A+ award (6 credit hours in summer).
- Achieve a minimum 2.5 cumulative grade point average by the end of the spring term.

To renew, renewal students must:

- Complete the FAFSA, or FAFSA4caster if applicable, each year in order to make a good-faith effort to secure a Pell Grant or other federal aid
- Maintain a 2.5 grade point average and otherwise maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by your school
- Complete at least 12 credit hours in each fall and spring term in which you receive an A+ award (6 credit hours in summer)

If you fail to meet the renewal criteria, you may receive the award in the term following the school's determination that the standard has been regained. Schools have different policies for how frequently they monitor satisfactory academic progress. You will need to check with your school to determine when your award might be reinstated.

Notification of A+ Status

The A+ Coordinator will review all records of A+ students, and names of eligible students will be submitted to the principal for official certification upon graduation. Students and parents will be notified and the student's transcript will reflect A+ status.

Attendance Review Process

1. Attendance appeals must be filed by students and parents/guardians by April 1 for any absences incurred during the current school year.
2. Anyone making an appeal should use the "A+ Attendance Appeal Form" available in the A+ Office. A sample is included in this handbook.
3. The A+ Coordinator will convene the Attendance Review Committee within 5 calendar days of receiving the notice of appeal.
4. An A+ Review Committee will be composed of a counselor, a building principal, and two teachers to review the stated grounds of the appeal. The A+ Coordinator will act as a facilitator and a non-voting member of the review committee.
5. After the Attendance Review Committee reaches a decision, the A+ Coordinator will notify the student and parents by letter within 3 calendar days. The decision of the Review Committee will be considered final.

Attendance Waiver Guidelines

Anyone submitting a request for an A+ attendance waiver for days missed shall provide the A+ Coordinator with the following official documentation:

- Doctor or Dentist (written excuse presented to principal)
- Chronic health problems (letter from doctor and school nurse)
- Hospitalization (letter signed by doctor)
- Court dates (court letter)
- Funeral (funeral program)
- Religious holiday (letter from minister)
- Exchange student/study abroad for one or more semesters (documentation from agency)
- Personal/family calamity such as fire, flood, etc.(letter from principal)
- Catastrophic illness—long-term (letter signed by principal and/or doctor)
- Intermittent home-bound (letter signed by principal and/or doctor)

No student will receive a waiver if the absences are due to any of the following:

- Personal/family vacation
- Suspension from school for any reason
- Truancy
- Skipping classes
- Transportation problems (unless on a late school bus)

Attendance requirements for A+ are not to be confused with general attendance requirements as stated in the Montrose High School Student Handbook.

Tutoring

In order to qualify for the A+ financial incentive, students are required to perform at least 50 hours of unpaid school-based tutoring/mentoring of younger students. The tutoring activities must:

- Involve A+ students with students from lower grades in the district;
- Provide, an ultimate goal, and encouragement to students in lower grades to get motivated, stay in school, and strive for good grades;
- Students seeking A+ financial incentives must meet the following qualifications before beginning a tutoring experience:
 1. Have a 2.5 GPA, 95% attendance, good citizenship status, and a signed A+ statement of participation.
 2. Commit to 50 hours of tutoring.

3. Sign a tutoring agreement and have a tutoring permission form on file in the A+ Office.

Policies of the Tutoring/Mentoring Program

- Tutoring must be school-sponsored.
- Students may obtain a Tutoring Log Sheet in the counselor's office. These sheets must be completed and turned into the counselor's office to receive credit for tutoring.
- Log sheets must be turned into the counselor's office before the end of the semester during which tutoring occurred to be included in the semester report to parents.
- It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her tutoring log record and turn it into the counselor's office upon completion.
- A+ students cannot tutor a sibling or family member unless in a group setting.
- Tutoring may be done during the school year or during summer school.
- Tutoring must be done on school premises.
- Failure to follow the tutoring guidelines may result in disciplinary action, and/or dismissal from the A+ Program.
- No financial compensation may be accepted for tutoring/mentoring activities.
- A+ students will be academically ineligible and not allowed to tutor if he or she has earned one (or more) grades of "F." Academically ineligible students may regain eligibility at the end of the next designated grading period (mid-term or quarter). A statement must be signed by the participant and on file in the counselor's office that the participant understands the tutoring guidelines.

Citizenship Requirement

Participation in the A+ Program is an honor and a unique privilege for Montrose High School students. Students pursuing the A+ financial incentive must maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and alcohol. Certification of good citizenship will be based on the official discipline record maintained in the high school office. The principal will assign consequences for infractions of the discipline code, and the principal is responsible for certifying the accuracy of the student's discipline record.

Code of Conduct Policy

For A+ Participation

Students should conduct themselves as responsible representatives of the school. A+ participants must always serve as exemplary examples of high ethical character. As recognized representatives of their school, members are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior on and off school grounds and to conform to and support existing state laws. All participants begin each school year with good citizen status.

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- Each disciplinary referral that results in an in-school or out-of-school suspension takes away from good citizenship status.

Chemical Abuse

- In accordance with state A+ rules, all student use of tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, or possession or use of non-prescribed controlled substances or paraphernalia for their use will not be tolerated, and the violator will be subject to removal from the A+ Program.
- Rule enforcement will be consistent and immediate. School officials are not expected to police off-campus, non-school activities unless the violation is brought to public attention by city, state, county, or federal officials.
- The Administration will be notified of all violations of the A+ Code of Conduct and the consequences of the infraction which is immediate dismissal from the A+ Program with no opportunity for reinstatement. In addition to the A+ Program penalty, such infractions will also be subject to appropriate Board of Education disciplinary policies.

Safe Schools Act

- Any violation of the Safe Schools Act is grounds for immediate and permanent dismissal from the A+ Program with no opportunity for reinstatement.

Procedures

1. All reports of violations of the Code of Conduct are to be made to the A+ Coordinator and to the Principal.
2. The A+ Coordinator will contact the student and parents/guardians to inform them on the violation and procedures to be followed. If requested, a meeting will be scheduled within 3 school days. This meeting includes the A+ Coordinator, Principal, Superintendent, the student, and his or her parents/guardians.
3. The A+ Coordinator and Principal will determine the course of action. The student and his/her parents/guardians will be notified of the decision immediately.
4. Any student who violates the guidelines will be terminated from the A+ Program with no opportunity for reinstatement.

Due Process

A student and his/her parents/guardians may appeal a decision by writing a letter to the A+ Coordinator, with a copy to the Principal, within 3 days following notification of dismissal. This letter should state a request for a hearing with the school administration.

Within 5 school days after the letter is received, the A+ Coordinator will notify the parents and the participant of the time and place of the appeal hearing. The superintendent, principal, A+ coordinator, and a board of three A+ Program committee members will hear both sides of the case and will take action, which they consider to be in the best interests of the student and the A+ Program. During the time between the original decision and the hearing, the principal has the authority to waive the action that has been taken.

Probation while part of the A+ Program

Disciplinary probation within the A+ Program is used with the understanding that even the best student makes mistakes. Probation is designed to recognize this characteristic in young people. However, receiving the A+ financial incentive is an honor and should be treated as such.

Students who are designated A+ students should demonstrate distinctive qualities and be role models for other students. Their character and ethics should meet high standards. A student will be placed on probation for the rest of the semester upon receiving:

1. More than 2 in-school suspensions in a semester.
2. Any referral of out-of-school suspension
3. Citizenship and/or Code of Conduct infractions (in or out of school)

If no further misdeeds occur, the student will be returned to full A+ status at the end of the semester. Any student who is placed on probation two times in one semester will be automatically removed from the program. A student who receives two semesters of probation during his/her high school career will have his/her disciplinary record reviewed by the A+ Review Committee for continued probation or possible dismissal from the program.

Removal from the A+ Program

A student may be removed from the A+ Program when:

- Within the semester while on probation, the student commits another offense that would result in another probationary action.
- After two semesters on probation, a review by the A+ Review Committee shows that earlier disciplinary consequences did not positively affect a student's behavior.
- Any student who commits a serious offense involving drugs or alcohol or which falls under the Safe Schools Act will be immediately dismissed from the program. Offenses that fall under the Safe Schools Act include:
 - Possession, use, sale or transfer of alcohol, drugs or narcotics
 - Possession of drug paraphernalia
 - Criminal activity as defined by the Safe Schools Act
 - Possession of a weapon (under provisions of Chapter 571 MO Rev. Statutes)
 - Assault on a student
 - Physical threat to a staff member
 - Vandalism/theft
 - False fire alarm/bomb threats and misuse of emergency equipment
 - Sexual misbehavior/exposure
 - Possession of dangerous items
 - Dangerous behavior

Unlawful use of Drugs/Alcohol

An A+ student will not sell, possess, or use alcohol, controlled substances or drug paraphernalia as defined by law and stated in the Montrose Student Handbook. The use of prescription medication is allowed under Board Policy. Students and parents/guardians are responsible for understanding and following those guidelines.

A+ Citizenship Probation Appeal Process

Students and parents/guardians may appeal a disciplinary decision using the following process:

1. Students and parents/guardians will have 5 days to appeal a decision that is made dealing with discipline or probation.
2. Anyone making an appeal should use the A+ Appeal of Citizenship form available from the A+ Coordinator.
3. Within 5 days of receiving a written appeal, the A+ Coordinator will convene the A+ Review Committee. The Committee will be composed of a guidance counselor, a principal, and two business leaders.
4. The parent/guardian and student should appear in person before the committee. The A+ Coordinator will act as facilitator and a non-voting member of the A+ Review Committee. After the committee reaches a decision, the A+ Coordinator will notify the parents/guardians by letter within 3 days. The decisions of the Review Committee will be considered final.

Montrose High School A+ Attendance Appeal Form

Student Name _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

This request is to appeal the school absences of my son/daughter for the following:

_____ 1st Semester _____ 2nd Semester _____ School Year

Appeal will be: _____ In Person _____ In Writing

In the space below, please indicate the dates of absences and the reason for the request to be reviewed. If additional space is needed, please attach another sheet of paper.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Signature

This form must be forwarded to the A+ Office by April 1st of the school year for which appeal is sought.

**MONTROSE HIGH SCHOOL
A+ SCHOOLS PROGRAM APPLICATION**

NAME _____ YEAR OF GRADUATION _____

ADDRESS _____ BIRTH DATE _____

CITY _____ ZIP CODE _____ PHONE _____

I wish _____ do not wish _____ to participate in the Montrose High School A+ Schools Program. Assuming state funds are appropriated, I will receive reimbursement for my unpaid balance of the cost of tuition after federal postsecondary financial assistance funds have been applied (pending my eligibility for such funds). I request participation in the A+ Schools college tuition program for attendance at a two-year Missouri public community college or vocational/technical school on the condition that I meet all of the following requirements:

1. Attend a designated A+ High School for two years prior to high school graduation.
2. Graduate from high school with an unweighted grade point average of **2.5 or higher** on a 4-point scale.
3. Have a **95% or higher** cumulative attendance rate for grades 9-12 upon graduating.
4. Perform at least **50 hours** of unpaid tutoring or mentoring.
5. Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoid the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol while in grades 9-12.
6. Have achieved a score of proficient on the Algebra I EOC or a higher level DESE-approved EOC in the field of mathematics. If you meet all of the eligibility requirements except the end of course exam requirement, you may establish eligibility by achieving a combined ACT math subscore and high school GPA in accordance with the following scale. You may achieve the qualifying score as a high school or postsecondary student. If you achieve the score as a postsecondary student you may be eligible for an award in the same term that you take the test.

ACT Math Score	and	High School GPA
17 or greater	and	2.5 or greater
16	and	2.8 or greater
15	and	3.0 or greater

7. Apply for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**) by **Feb 1** (for priority consideration) or by **Apr 1** (for non-priority consideration).
8. Enroll in and attend a Missouri public community college or technical school full-time and maintain a **2.5 or higher** grade point average while in college.

Financial incentives will be provided for a period of **four years** after high school graduation. To retain this eligibility, students must maintain a 2.5 or higher grade point average while enrolled and attending a Missouri public community college or vocational or technical school, on a full-time basis.

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date