



Odessa High School A+ Information Guide

Odessa High School A+ Information Guide

Table of Contents

Program Goals	2
Participation Requirements	2
Student Eligibility	3
Tuition Benefits	3
Program Enrollment	4
Grade Point Average Requirements	4
Attendance Requirements	5
Algebra I EOC Requirements	5
Tutoring Requirements	6
Citizenship Requirements	6
Free Application for Federal Student Aid	7
Selective Service Registration	7
Appeals Policy and Procedure	7
Frequently Asked Questions	8
Forms	10
A+ Agreement Form	
A+ Tutoring Log	
Attendance Appeals Form	
Citizenship Appeals Form	
Resources	14
A+ Timeline	
Eligible Post-Secondary Institutions	
4-year Colleges Offering Scholarships	

Program Goals

In an effort to make college or vocational education available to every Missouri high school graduate, the Missouri General Assembly established the A+ schools program as a part of the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993.

Graduates of designated A+ schools who successfully complete the requirements of the program may be eligible to receive two years of free tuition (up to \$149/credit hour) to a designated public community college, vocational or technical institution in Missouri. All funds are subject to Missouri General Assembly allocating monies for the A+ Program.

The goals of the A+ program are:

- ❖ All Students will graduate from high school
- ❖ All students will complete high school studies that are challenging and that have identified learning expectations.
- ❖ All students will proceed from high school graduation to college, post-secondary vocational or technical school or a high wage job with opportunities for workplace skill development.

Participation Requirements

The following must be met to be eligible for program participation:

- ❖ The high school from which the student graduates must meet and maintain all the requirements for A+ schools designation.
- ❖ State funding must be available. As with any State program, the A+ Schools Program is subject to the political process of sustaining and maintaining a budget.
- ❖ The student must meet all the criteria outlined in the A+ Schools Program and the participation agreement in which the student and parent/guardian must sign.

Student Eligibility

To be eligible for the A+ tuition benefit, students must be certified by the high school. To qualify for certification, students and their parents must sign an A+ agreement and successfully complete the following requirements:

- ❖ Attend an A+ designated school for three years (grades 10, 11, 12) prior to graduation
- ❖ Graduate with an unweighted, unrounded cumulative GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale
- ❖ Graduate with a minimum 95% ADA (Average Daily Attendance) record (over 8 semesters)
- ❖ Score Proficient or Advanced on the Algebra I EOC (Class of 2015 and beyond)
- ❖ Perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring to other students in the district
- ❖ Model good citizenship at school and in the community
- ❖ Avoid the use of illegal drugs and alcohol
- ❖ Register with the selective service, if required by law
- ❖ Apply for non-payback scholarships by completing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

Tuition Benefits

Students who successfully complete the requirements of the program are eligible to receive two years (up to six semesters) of free tuition (up to \$149/credit hour) at a designated community college or vocational/technical (state funded) school in Missouri.

Reimbursement will be made for completed coursework, including remedial coursework, up to 105% of the hours required for the program. The amount of reimbursement paid for coursework for which a standard grade was not assigned (dropped coursework), including coursework in a withdrawn status, will be deducted from subsequent reimbursement request.

To maintain eligibility (at college) students must be enrolled as full-time students as defined by the post-secondary institution, enrolled in an approved program, and maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.

Participants are under no obligation to use the A+ tuition incentive. The tuition incentive is earned by each individual and is not transferable to any other student. Receipt of private scholarships will not affect any student's eligibility to participate in the A+ program. Financial need is not a factor in determining student eligibility for the A+ tuition incentive.

Participants will have up to four years (48 months from the date of high school graduation) to access the A+ tuition incentive. Students providing service to any branch of the U.S. armed forces can defer their eligibility beyond the 48 months if they return to full-time status within 12 months of the end of their military service.

The scholarship will reimburse the unpaid balance of tuition and general fees after all available, non-loan federal financial assistance, such as the federal Pell grant, has been applied to an account. As with any state program, the A+ Schools Program is subject to the political process of sustaining and maintaining a budget and award amounts may be reduced if state funding is not available.

A+ eligible graduates must inform the post-secondary institution to which they have made application of their intent to use the tuition benefits. The institution will prepare the necessary paperwork and bill the State of Missouri.

Program Enrollment

A+ participation is voluntary. Students may enroll in the program by completing and returning an A+ Agreement to the A+ Coordinator. Agreements are available in the OHS Counseling Office.

There is no specific deadline for enrolling in the A+ Program. A student can enroll at any time as long as the student realizes that he/she must complete all program requirements, including the 50 hours of tutoring and mentoring.

Grade Point Requirements

Eligible participants must graduate with a cumulative minimum unweighted, unrounded grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 grade scale. For purposes of this program, grade point average represents the actual figure and is not rounded (2.499 is not 2.5).

It is the responsibility of each participant to closely monitor his/her grade point average. Final determination of A+ eligibility cannot be made until an A+ participant graduates and his/her final GPA is calculated.

Attendance Requirements

A+ participants are expected to attend school regularly. A+ participants must graduate with a minimum cumulative (grades 9-12) attendance rate of 95%. The A+ Program makes no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Attendance is calculated in minutes therefore coming to school late will affect a student's overall attendance percentage.

It is the responsibility of each A+ participant to closely monitor his/her attendance. A+ participants can check their attendance percentage with the Attendance Secretary or the A+ Coordinator.

The A+ attendance policy allows relief in cases where the absence was beyond the control of the A+ participant. Odessa High School provides such a process for a student to submit a request for an appeal to meet the attendance requirements. (See the Appeals section for more information)

Algebra I EOC Requirements

Starting with the class of 2015, students must score advanced or proficient on the Algebra I EOC in order to be eligible to receive A+ benefits. If a student does not meet the Algebra I end of course requirement they can still become eligible for benefits by scoring a 17 or higher in the math section on the ACT exam.

Tutoring Requirements

A+ participants must perform a minimum total of 50 hours of unpaid academic tutoring or mentoring. For purposes of the program, community service is not considered to be an acceptable substitute for tutoring.

Tutoring must be performed in one (or more) of the public school buildings that are part of the Odessa R-VII School district in an approved program. Tutoring must be performed with Odessa public school students and must be supervised by a district employee. The tutoring assignment must be approved by the A+ Coordinator prior to starting. Preference will be given to teachers of core subjects before elective/special subjects.

Tutoring time must be documented on the official A+ Tutoring Log. These logs are available in the OHS Guidance Office. No other record will be accepted. The participant is responsible for maintaining his/her tutoring log accurately, obtaining the necessary signatures and for submitting the log to the A+ Coordinator in a timely manner. No credit will be awarded for logs that are misplaced or stolen - no exceptions.

Citizenship Requirements

An important component of the A+ Schools Program is the fostering of good citizenship in our district's students. A student demonstrates good citizenship by showing respect for self, law, property and the rights of others. Students have not demonstrated good citizenship if they have:

- ❖ Pled guilty or *nolo contendere* (no contest) to, received a suspended imposition of sentence or suspended execution of sentence for, or been convicted or found guilty of a misdemeanor or felony.
- ❖ Unlawfully used or possessed drugs, drug paraphernalia or alcohol on or off school property during the three-year period immediately prior to graduation.
- ❖ Had an out-of-school suspension during the three-year period immediately prior to graduation.
- ❖ Accumulated five or more days of in-school-suspension during the three-year period immediately prior to graduation.
- ❖ Violated the district's rules governing academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, etc.).

Odessa High School has an appeal process for a student to submit a request for an appeal to meet the citizenship requirements. (See the Appeals section for more information)

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

A+ eligible graduates must make a "good faith" effort to secure all available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment. A "good faith" effort has been made when the participant and his/her parents have completed and filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with the U.S. Government.

The FAFSA form is available at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Participants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible after January 1 of the year in which they will graduate.

The FAFSA summary report must be sent to the community college or public vocational technical school the student is planning to attend. The information found on the FAFSA is required by post-secondary institutions to complete the enrollment process.

Tuition incentives may only be awarded to reimburse the unpaid balance of the cost of tuition and general fees after available federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment have been applied.

Additional information regarding the FAFSA is available in the OHS Counseling Office.

Selective Service Registration

A+ participants who are required by the laws of the United States to register with the selective service system must register or forfeit their eligibility for the A+ Tuition benefit. The State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has ruled that all males age 18 or over at the time of graduation must register for the selective service in order to be declared A+ eligible. This can be accomplished online at <http://www.sss.gov/>.

Appeals Policy and Procedures

In accordance with Missouri state guidelines, the Odessa R-VII Schools provides a process for a student to submit a request for an appeal to meet one of the following A+ requirements: Attendance or Citizenship.

There is no state appeal process. The State of Missouri will not address any local school issues regarding a student's A+ eligibility.

The purpose of an attendance appeal is to help the students meet the state requirements for A+ when extreme and unusual situations occur, such as:

- ❖ Catastrophic Illness
- ❖ Hospitalization for surgery or emergency treatment
- ❖ Catastrophic family crisis
- ❖ Chronic issues that require regular medical treatment and for which the students has a 504 accommodation plan on file or for which the student could be eligible for a 504 accommodation plan.

It is the responsibility of the student to closely monitor their attendance percentage and citizenship standards. The A+ Coordinator will notify students during the spring semester if they are at risk of not meeting the requirements for attendance or citizenship. The student will need to complete an Appeals Report form and submit all supporting documentation to the A+ Coordinator by April 15th.

A Review Committee, comprised of the Administration, Counselors, and A+ Coordinator meets and reviews each student appeal within one week after April 15th. The student/parent is notified in writing of the committee's decision within fifteen (15) days of the review.

Frequently Asked Questions

*** What does signing the A+ Agreement mean?**

By signing and submitting the A+ agreement, students and their parents are simply indicating an interest in the students' participation in the A+ Program and that they understand the requirements that qualify the students for that program.

*** Does participating in the A+ program restrict a student's choices?**

Participating in the A+ Program DOES NOT in any way restrict a student's educational choices. The A+ Schools Program is designed to provide greater opportunities for students. Signing up will not restrict the options available to a student while in high school or upon graduating from high school.

*** What if an A+ participant decides to attend a four-year college or university?**

There are no repercussions for participating in the A+ Program and completing the student eligibility requirements. Many students will develop plans to attend a four-year college or university following high school. The A+ Schools Scholarship incentive MAY NOT be applied to costs associated with a four-year college or university. Students eligible for A+ tuition benefits may choose to attend a community college for two years, earn an Associates Degree, or simply earn basic credit hours; then transfer those credits to a four-year college/university. If for whatever reason an A+ eligible student should withdraw from the four-year institution with at least a 2.5 GPA he/she could enroll at a Missouri public community college or vocational-technical school and be eligible for A+ tuition benefits. A+ tuition benefits are available to students for up to four years after the date of their graduation from high school, provided state funds are appropriated by the legislature.

*** Does participating in the A+ Program guarantee that students will receive the tuition benefits?**

There are at least three factors that will impact the availability of tuition benefits to a particular student. First, the high school from which the student graduates must meet and maintain all the requirements for A+ Schools designation. Second, State funding must be available. Third, the student must meet all the criteria outlined in the A+ Schools Program and the participation agreement, which the student signed.

*** Does a student qualify for A+ tuition benefits if his/her average daily attendance is 94.8 or his/her grade point average is 2.47 on a 4.0 scale upon graduation?**

No, the A+ Schools Program does not permit rounding up of GPA percentage. The average daily attendance rate must be figured over a four-year period and must be a solid 95%.

***If a student enrolls in an A+ designated high school after the beginning of the 10th grade year, is he/she eligible to participate in the A+ program?**

The A+ Schools Program requires that a student must attend a designated A+ high school for three years immediately prior to graduation. If a student transfers to or from another school they may still be eligible for A+ benefits as long as both schools are A+ designated high schools.

***What if I do not score advanced or proficient on the Algebra I EOC?**

You have the opportunity to regain eligibility by retaking the Algebra I EOC during the fall semester in which you are enrolled in Algebra II or by completing your first semester at a participating institution with a minimum of 12 hours and earning a 2.5 GPA. You must also have met all other program requirements prior to graduating.