



# HERITAGE

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*CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN ACADEMY*

A+ Program Handbook

# 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 Classical Christian School to establish guidelines and policies in order to administer the A+ Schools Program in a fair and consistent manner.

Heritage voluntarily chooses to participate in the A+ Schools Program as a commitment to provide all students with a rigorous education that prepares them for college, post/secondary career/technical training, and a high wage job. It is the responsibility of Heritage Classical Christian School 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 Classical Christian School 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 Classical Christian School.

The purpose of this manual is to provide students, parents, and staff with information about the guidelines and policies of the Heritage Classical Christian School's A+ School Program. It is Heritage'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 the A+ Schools 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 website at [www.heritageclassical.org](http://www.heritageclassical.org).

## Nondiscrimination Statement

Heritage Classical Christian School prohibits and will not tolerate discrimination against or harassment of any student, employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, genetic information, marital status, disability, handicapping conditions, or any other factor that is not a proper legal basis for an employment decision. This policy will prevail in all matters concerning the staff, the students, the public, the educational programs and services of the school, and individuals with whom the Board does business. Inquiries by students, parents, or employees regarding Heritage Classical Christian School's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to the school administrator.

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## 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.

## 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.

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](http://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 institutions. Students are encouraged to check with the admissions office of their school of choice for any criteria in addition to these general guidelines:

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

- Have a signed A+ Agreement on file.
- Attend an A+ designated high school for any three years immediately prior to graduation.\*
- Graduate with an unweighted, unrounded cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale (a GPA of 2.49 will not be rounded).
- Achieve math proficiency and meet the school's academic progress policy.
- Maintain at least a 95% cumulative attendance record in grades 9 – 12. An attendance rate of 94.9% will not be rounded.
- 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 \* 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.

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

- Enroll and attend on a full-time basis a participating Missouri community college or postsecondary 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 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. \*

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

## 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%. (An attendance rate of 94.9% will not be rounded.) 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.\* 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	REVIEW DOCUMENTATION <u>REQUIRED</u>
Hospitalization	Physician’s letter
Chronic Health problem	Physician’s letter
Court Appearance	Court letter
Funeral	Parent letter and copy of death certificate, obituary, or memorial pamphlet
Religious Holiday	Letter from clergy
Personal/Family Calamity	Parent and school counselor letter
Catastrophic illness/injury	Physician’s letter
College Visit	Letter from College Admissions Office

\*In 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 high 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. A+ attendance requirements are not to be confused with the general attendance requirements of Heritage Christian School 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 Classical Christian School. A violation will result in automatic removal of the student from the Heritage A+ Program.
- 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 discipline policy will serve as the definition of appropriate behavior. Specific information can be found in the school handbook.
- 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 high 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 (a GPA of 2.49 will not be rounded). 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 home grade 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. The class of 2017 and above must meet the following minimum requirements:

High school GPA	ACT Math Sub-Score
2.5	17
2.8	16
3.0	15

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 Heritage A+ Mentoring Coordinator, 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+ Mentoring 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 Classical Christian 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+ Mentoring Coordinator. Log sheets are to be turned in to the A+ Mentoring 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+ Mentoring 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](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) by the April 1st deadline. Both East Central College and St. Louis Community College offer several FAFSA nights to help students complete this application. Those dates are generally available on the college websites, and Heritage will make every effort to publicize those nights on its website as well.
- Heritage Classical Christian School 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 Classical Christian School 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 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 postsecondary 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.

## PARENT REMINDERS

- Upon enrollment, immediately contact the financial aid office of the school of choice for assistance.
- Once your son/daughter is A+ certified, do not pay tuition to the school that your student is attending. The Missouri A+ Program will reimburse the college/career-technical school for your son/daughter's tuition.
- It is highly recommended that you encourage your son/daughter to attend the A+ orientation meeting that is sponsored by the college.
- If you have questions or concerns, please contact the financial aid office at your son/daughter's college immediately. The Heritage A+ Coordinator will attempt to keep parents and students informed of any new information we receive from MDHE regarding the A+ Program Eligibility Requirements.

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

## 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

- Sign the A+ Schools Program Agreement
- Sign the A+ Schools Citizenship Guidelines and Eligibility
- Establish GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements

### SOPHOMORE YEAR

- See A+ Mentoring Coordinator for potential tutoring opportunities and associated forms (may begin 2nd semester of freshman year after completing one semester of eligibility)
- Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements

### JUNIOR YEAR

- Continue tutoring/mentoring hours if not completed
- Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements

### SENIOR YEAR – 1st Semester:

- Last opportunity to enroll – Applications due no later than the last Wednesday of September
- Complete tutoring/mentoring hours
- See the A+ Coordinator if you intend to graduate at semester and enter the postsecondary institution immediately upon graduation (or if you plan to attend summer session)
- Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements
- Submit FAFSA

### SENIOR YEAR – 2nd Semester:

- Maintain GPA, attendance, and citizenship requirements
- Register for Selective Service when applicable
- Meet with post-secondary admission advisor

