**A+ Handbook**

***Goals of the A+ School Program***

The A+ Schools Program is designed to achieve the three basic goals set forth in the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. The three goals are the following:

* All students will graduate from high school
* All students will complete a selection of high school studies that are challenging and have identified learner expectations
* All students will proceed from high school graduation to a four-year college, community college, post-secondary vocational /technical school, or high wage job with work place skill development opportunities.

All projects and efforts of the A+ Schools concept in the Adair County R-l School District are designed to achieve the three basic objectives listed above.

***Benefits of an A+ School for Students***

The A+ Schools Program began with the graduating class of 2003 at Adair Co. R-l. A+ graduates are eligible for the following benefits if state funds remain available:

* Paid tuition and fees while attending any **Missouri** public community college or public **Missouri** vocational /technical school.
* These costs will be reimbursable only after the student has made a good faith effort to first secure all available federal postsecondary student financial assistance fund (FAFSA) that do not require repayment.

Students will receive this incentive for two years. A student must be considered a **full-time** student by the institution. Students must complete the two years of full-time enrollment at public community college or a public vocational/technical school within four years after graduation from Adair Co. R-I High School. **NOTE: Even if students do not directly after high school begin pursuing some post secondary schooling, they are eligible for this benefit for up to four years following graduation. They must complete their studies within this four-year window.**

***Student Eligibility***

To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Program, a student must be certified as an A+ student by Adair Co. R-I High School. As the official representative of the A+ Schools Program with the Department of Education of the State of Missouri, the A+ School Coordinator has the responsibility to certify if a graduate of Novinger High School has met the criteria for certification. To be certified as an A+ School Student, an individual must do the following:

* Sign an A+ Student Participation Agreement prior to October of their senior year (Copy included in the appendix of this booklet.)
* Attend Novinger High School or other A+ designated high school for the three consecutive years prior to graduation.
* Maintain at least a 2.5 or higher grade point average on a 4.0 scale.
* Beginning with 2015 graduates, have obtained a score of proficient or advanced on the End of Course exam for Algebra I.
* Maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs.
* Make a good-faith effort to first secure all available federal postsecondary student financial assistance funds (FAFSA) that do not require repayment.

***Enrollment Requirements***

* This section of the A+ Student Handbook will discuss the requirement of a student attending Novinger High School for three years prior to graduation.
* The student must be enrolled at Novinger High School during the student's entire sophomore, junior, and senior years.
* If a student withdraws or transfers from Novinger High School after the beginning of their sophomore year, the student will not be considered eligible of the A+ Schools Program unless he/she transfers to another A+ designated school.

***Grade Point Requirement***

To be eligible for the A+ Schools financial assistance, the student must graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale. The following statements are intended to help clarify the A+ Schools policies concerning grade point average.The cumulative grade point average is for the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years. The student's official transcript will serve as evidence of grade point average for admission into a public community college or public vocational/technical school.

# *A+ Attendance*

A+ students are to maintain a high attendance rate. They are required to graduate with a cumulative high school attendance rate of at least 95%. At this time that means missing no more than 35 days of school attendance in a total of four years. On average this is 9 days a year or 4 and ½ days a semester. If absences occur over that number, a student may submit a request of an A+ attendance waiver.

***A+ Attendance Appeals Process***

* Those students submitting a request for an A+ attendance waiver shall provide the A+ Coordinator with official documentation of the following:
	1. Doctor’s/Dentist’s visits – doctor’s excuse
	2. Hospitalization letter from the doctor
	3. Court dates- letter from the Court
	4. Funeral - letter from the principal
	5. Personal calamity: flood, fire, etc.- letter from principal
	6. Leadership, personal development opportunities with prior permission from the secondary principal.
* A student will not receive a waiver if any absence is due to any of the following:
	1. Truancy
	2. Skipping classes
	3. Personal/family vacation
	4. Transportation problems (unless late school bus)
	5. Suspended from class or school for any reason

***Waiver (Appeals) Process***

Students and parents or guardians may appeal the A+ attendance requirement using the following process:

1. Students and parents/guardians must notify the A+ Coordinator (using the appeals form included in this handbook) of the their request for an attendance waiver at the beginning of the student’s final semester of senior year and no later than the beginning of fourth quarter of their senior year.
2. The Coordinator shall then convene the A+ Appeal Committee for consideration of the appeal.
3. The committee shall hear the appeal and return its decision to the student and parents/guardians.
4. The student and parent/guardian may follow a course of appeal to the superintendent in writing within 10 school days of receiving the decision of the Appeals Committee.
5. The superintendent will notify the student/parents/guardian of his decision within 5 school days.
6. Upon receiving the notification of the superintendent’s decision, the student may request in writing within 10 school days of receiving the decision of the superintendent, a final appeal to the school board to be conducted at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

***Appeals Committee***

The Appeals Committee will be composed of a counselor, secondary principal and high school teacher(s).

***Tutoring/Mentoring Requirements***

The law states A+ students must perform 50 hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring for students sometime during the last three years of high school. The following guidelines should be followed in the completion of this requirement. Should questions concerning tutoring or mentoring arise, please contact the A+ Coordinator.

* Most tutoring and mentoring activities will be designed to involve the A+ applicant with lower grade students in the Adair Co. R-I School. If applicant is attending the Kirksville Vocational Technical School and involved in the childcare program, he/she may count half his hours there toward this requirement.
* Tutoring and mentoring activities will provide, as an ultimate goal, encouragement to lower grade students to get turned on to school, stay in school, and to strive for good grades.
* Tutoring and mentoring activities will be school-based, academic in nature, and under the auspices of school. (Not private or public sector programs in which the school has not input into the activity.)
* Tutoring and mentoring must be supervised and verified by a teacher, principal, counselor, or A+ Coordinator.
* Tutoring and mentoring activities must occur before, during, or after the school day and on the school premises. Summer school is an approved opportunity.
* The A+ applicant is responsible for maintaining a weekly journal indicating all tutoring/mentoring activities. Exact time should be indicated. Only activities that have been verified with a journal and signature by the tutoring/mentoring supervisor will count toward the 50-hour requirement. At the end of each week, or at the end of the sheet, the mentoring student submits a log to the A+ Coordinator.

***Being An A+ Citizen***

Participation in the A+ Schools Program is an honor and a unique privilege for students. Citizenship is an important part of the A+ Schools Program. A requirement of the program states, “maintain a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs including alcohol.” In an effort to set the parameters of good citizenship, the A+ Schools Advisory Committee defines “good citizenship” by the following criteria:

**A good citizen:**

* Maximizes his/her educational opportunity.
* Recognizes and accepts responsibility in and beyond the school environment.
* Sets a positive example for all to follow at school and in the community.

The student is responsible for maintaining all the requirements under the A+ Program on a year-round basis, from the first day of school his/her freshmen year until his/her graduation from high school. Student admission, direct observation and testimony from school administrators and certified staff will be considered as proof of violation of this policy.

Information for the purpose of certification of good citizenship will be obtained from the official discipline record maintained in the high school office. The principal assigns consequences for infractions of the discipline code outlined in the Adair County R-l Student Handbook and is responsible for certifying the accuracy of the student's in-school discipline record.

### *Probation*

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+ Incentive is a privilege and should be treated as such. Students who are designated A+ 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 one semester for the following infractions:

1. More than one in-school suspension.

2. Any out-of-school suspension.

3. Use of tobacco at school activities or on school property.

If no further misdeeds occur, the student will be returned to full A+ status following his/her probation. Any student who receives two semesters of probation during his/her high school career will have his/her disciplinary record reviewed by the A+ Appeals Committee for continued probation or possible dismissal from the program. Furthermore, any senior who has been placed on probation for his/her final semester of school will be considered in good standing in the A+ Program at the end of the final semester if no further misdeeds occur prior to graduation.

## *Removal from the Program*

* A student may be removed from the A+ Program when the following occurs:
* Within the semester while on probation, the student commits another offense that would result in another probationary action.
* After two semesters of probation, a review by the A+ Appeals Committee shows earlier disciplinary consequences did not positively affect the student’s behavior.
* Within the school year, the student receives 2 or more cumulative out-of-school suspensions.
* The student is convicted of a felony that is verifiable and is either a matter of public record or is communicated to school officials in compliance with the Safe Schools Act.
* The student is convicted of two or more misdemeanors (other than for moving traffic violations not involving alcohol or illegal drugs) that are

verifiable and a matter of public record.

***A+ Citizenship Probation/Dismissal Appeals Process***

1. Students and parents or guardians may appeal an A+ disciplinary decision using the following process:
2. Students and parents/guardians must notify the A+ Coordinator of their intent to appeal a decision that is made dealing with discipline or probation within 10 schooldays of the reported decision.
3. The A+ Coordinator shall then convene the A+ Appeal Committee for consideration of the appeal within 10 school days of the written intentto appeal
4. The committee shall hear the appeal and return its decision to the student and parents/guardians within 5 school days.
5. The student and parent/guardian may follow a course of appeal to the superintendent in writing within 10 school days of receiving the decision of the Appeals Committee.
6. The superintendent will notify the student within 5 school days of his decision.
7. Upon receiving the notification of the superintendent, the student may request in writing within 10 school days of receiving the decision of the superintendent, a final appeal to the school board to be conducted at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

**(Appeals form is found at the end of this document.)**

# *Appeals Committee*

The Appeals Committee will be composed of a secondary counselor, secondary principal, three teachers, one of which to be chosen by the student, and two A+ Advisory Committee members who will be appointed by the A+ Coordinator and will serve for a one year period.

***Good Faith Effort to Secure Funding***

This section of the manual explains the requirement of parents to first make a good faith effort to secure all available federal postsecondary student financial assistance funds that do not require repayment (Pell Grant or SEOG- Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant).

* Parents must complete and send in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA information must be sent to the public, community college or public vocational /technical school that the student is planning to attend.
* The FAFSA application form is available online, in the guidance counselor's office of Novinger High School, or from the financial aid office of the institution of higher learning.
* Parents are encouraged to apply as early as possible, but not before January 1 of the year the student plans to attend school. Some schools award scholarships etc., on a first come-first serve basis.

***Requirements for Maintaining Eligibility After High School Graduation***

Missouri public community colleges and vocational or technical schools shall verify for each student intending to participate in the A+ Schools Program student financial incentives at their institution that during the first semester of the student's participation:

* Verification of the student's eligibility has been received from Adair Co. R-I High School.
* The eligible student is enrolled as a full-time student.
* A good faith effort has been made to secure federal post-secondary student financial assistance funds (federal grants); and
* The amount of A+ Schools Program student financial incentive funds necessary to cover the remaining cost of tuition and fees to attend, after applying any secure federal post-secondary student financial funds or scholarships; and

**During the second and subsequent semesters of the student's participation:**

* The eligible student continues to be enrolled as a full-time student;
* Good faith efforts continue to be made to secure federal postsecondary student financial assistance funds;
* The student has earned and maintained at least a grade point average (GPA) of (2.5)points or higher on a four (4.0) point scale.
* The amount of A+ Schools Program student financial incentive funds necessary to cover the remaining cost of tuition and fees to attend, after applying any
* secured federal postsecondary student financial funds or scholarships.

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| **APPEALS FORM** |
| CHECK ONE: |
| Attendance Appeal |  | Good Citizenship Appeal |  |
| STUDENT NAME: |  |
| PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME: |  |
| PARENT/GUARDIAN ADDRESS: |  |
| PHONE NUMBER: |  |
|  |  |
| This request is to appeal the attendance or citizenship certification of my son/daughter for the following: |
| DATES: |  |
| SCHOOL YEAR: |  |
| In the space below, please indicate the basis of your appeal concerning attendance or good citizenship certification for the A+ Schools Program. If additional space is needed, please attach another sheet of paper to this form. |
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