

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 1778

102ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE PERKINS.

3468H.011

DANA RADEMAN MILLER, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal section 160.545, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to eligibility for the A+ scholarship program.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 160.545, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 160.545, to read as follows:

160.545. 1. There is hereby established within the department of elementary and secondary education the "A+ Schools Program" to be administered by the commissioner of education. The program shall consist of grant awards made to public secondary schools that demonstrate a commitment to ensure that:

(1) All students be graduated from school;

(2) All students complete a selection of high school studies that is challenging and for which there are identified learning expectations; and

(3) All students:

(a) Earn credits toward any type of college degree while in high school; or

(b) Proceed from high school graduation to a college or postsecondary vocational or technical school or high-wage job with work place skill development opportunities.

2. The state board of education shall promulgate rules and regulations for the approval of grants made under the program to schools that:

(1) Establish measurable districtwide performance standards for the goals of the program outlined in subsection 1 of this section; and

(2) Specify the knowledge, skills and competencies, in measurable terms, that students must demonstrate to successfully complete any individual course offered by the

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

18 school, and any course of studies which will qualify a student for graduation from the school;
19 and

20 (3) Do not offer a general track of courses that, upon completion, can lead to a high
21 school diploma; and

22 (4) Require rigorous coursework with standards of competency in basic academic
23 subjects for students pursuing vocational and technical education as prescribed by rule and
24 regulation of the state board of education; and

25 (5) Have a partnership plan developed in cooperation and with the advice of local
26 business persons, labor leaders, parents, and representatives of college and postsecondary
27 vocational and technical school representatives, with the plan then approved by the local
28 board of education. The plan shall specify a mechanism to receive information on an annual
29 basis from those who developed the plan in addition to senior citizens, community leaders,
30 and teachers to update the plan in order to best meet the goals of the program as provided in
31 subsection 1 of this section. Further, the plan shall detail the procedures used in the school to
32 identify students that may drop out of school and the intervention services to be used to meet
33 the needs of such students. The plan shall outline counseling and mentoring services
34 provided to students who will enter the work force upon graduation from high school, address
35 apprenticeship and intern programs, and shall contain procedures for the recruitment of
36 volunteers from the community of the school to serve in schools receiving program grants.

37 3. Any nonpublic school in this state may apply to the state board of education for
38 certification that it meets the requirements of this section subject to the same criteria as public
39 high schools. Every nonpublic school that applies and has met the requirements of this
40 section shall have its students eligible for reimbursement of postsecondary education under
41 subsection 8 of this section on an equal basis to students who graduate from public schools
42 that meet the requirements of this section. Any nonpublic school that applies shall not be
43 eligible for any grants under this section. Students of certified nonpublic schools shall be
44 eligible for reimbursement of postsecondary education under subsection 8 of this section so
45 long as they meet the other requirements of such subsection. For purposes of subdivision (5)
46 of subsection 2 of this section, the nonpublic school shall be included in the partnership plan
47 developed by the public school district in which the nonpublic school is located. For
48 purposes of subdivision (1) of subsection 2 of this section, the nonpublic school shall
49 establish measurable performance standards for the goals of the program for every school and
50 grade level over which the nonpublic school maintains control.

51 4. A school district may participate in the program irrespective of its accreditation
52 classification by the state board of education, provided it meets all other requirements.

53 5. By rule and regulation, the state board of education may determine a local school
54 district variable fund match requirement in order for a school or schools in the district to

55 receive a grant under the program. However, no school in any district shall receive a grant
56 under the program unless the district designates a salaried employee to serve as the program
57 coordinator, with the district assuming a minimum of one-half the cost of the salary and other
58 benefits provided to the coordinator. Further, no school in any district shall receive a grant
59 under the program unless the district makes available facilities and services for adult literacy
60 training as specified by rule of the state board of education.

61 6. For any school that meets the requirements for the approval of the grants
62 authorized by this section and specified in subsection 2 of this section for three successive
63 school years, by August first following the third such school year, the commissioner of
64 education shall present a plan to the superintendent of the school district in which such school
65 is located for the waiver of rules and regulations to promote flexibility in the operations of the
66 school and to enhance and encourage efficiency in the delivery of instructional services in the
67 school. The provisions of other law to the contrary notwithstanding, the plan presented to the
68 superintendent shall provide a summary waiver, with no conditions, for the pupil testing
69 requirements pursuant to section 160.257 in the school. Further, the provisions of other law
70 to the contrary notwithstanding, the plan shall detail a means for the waiver of requirements
71 otherwise imposed on the school related to the authority of the state board of education to
72 classify school districts pursuant to subdivision (9) of section 161.092 and such other rules
73 and regulations as determined by the commissioner of education, except such waivers shall be
74 confined to the school and not other schools in the school district unless such other schools
75 meet the requirements of this subsection. However, any waiver provided to any school as
76 outlined in this subsection shall be void on June thirtieth of any school year in which the
77 school fails to meet the requirements for the approval of the grants authorized by this section
78 as specified in subsection 2 of this section.

79 7. For any school year, grants authorized by subsections 1, 2, and 5 of this section
80 shall be funded with the amount appropriated for this program, less those funds necessary to
81 reimburse eligible students pursuant to subsection 8 of this section.

82 8. The department of higher education and workforce development shall, by rule,
83 establish a procedure for the reimbursement of the cost of tuition, books and fees to any
84 public community college or vocational or technical school or within the limits established in
85 subsection 10 of this section for any two-year private vocational or technical school for any
86 student:

87 (1) Who has attended a high school in the state for at least two years that meets the
88 requirements of subsection 2 of this section and who has graduated from such a school;
89 except that, students who are active duty military dependents, and students who are
90 dependents of retired military who relocate to Missouri within one year of the date of the
91 parent's retirement from active duty who meet all other requirements of this subsection and

92 are attending a school that meets the requirements of subsection 2 of this section shall be
93 exempt from the two-year attendance requirement of this subdivision; and

94 (2) Who has made a good faith effort to first secure all available federal sources of
95 funding that could be applied to the reimbursement described in this subsection; and

96 (3) Who has earned a minimal grade average while in high school or through the
97 semester immediately before taking the course for which reimbursement is sought as
98 determined by rule of the department of higher education and workforce development, and
99 other requirements for the reimbursement authorized by this subsection as determined by rule
100 and regulation of the department; and

101 (4) Who is a citizen or permanent resident of the United States.

102 9. The commissioner of education shall develop a procedure for evaluating the
103 effectiveness of the program described in this section. Such evaluation shall be conducted
104 annually with the results of the evaluation provided to the governor, speaker of the house, and
105 president pro tempore of the senate.

106 10. For a two-year private vocational or technical school to obtain reimbursements
107 under subsection 8 of this section, the following requirements shall be satisfied:

108 (1) Such two-year private vocational or technical school shall be a member of the
109 North Central Association and be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission as of July
110 1, 2008, and maintain such accreditation;

111 (2) Such two-year private vocational or technical school shall be designated as a 501
112 (c)(3) nonprofit organization under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended;

113 (3) No two-year private vocational or technical school shall receive tuition
114 reimbursements in excess of the tuition rate charged by a public community college for
115 course work offered by the private vocational or technical school within the service area of
116 such college; and

117 (4) The reimbursements provided to any two-year private vocational or technical
118 school shall not violate the provisions of Article IX, Section 8, or Article I, Section 7, of the
119 Missouri Constitution or the first amendment of the United States Constitution.

120 **11. For the 2025-26 school year and all subsequent school years, no eligible**
121 **student shall be disqualified from receiving a grant under this section solely because the**
122 **eligible student has pled guilty to or been convicted of the offense of:**

123 **(1) Possession of a controlled substance under section 579.015; or**

124 **(2) Unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia under section 579.074.**

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