

FIRST REGULAR SESSION  
[CORRECTED]  
HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
**HOUSE BILL NO. 76**  
**102ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

0233H.04C

DANA RADEMAN MILLER, Chief Clerk

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**AN ACT**

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

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*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Section A. Section 160.545, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 160.545, to read as follows: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. (1) This subsection shall be known and may be cited as the "A+ Certificate**  
121 **Program".**

122 **(2) As used in this subsection, the following terms mean:**

123 **(a) "Approved institution", an institution of postsecondary education that is**  
124 **subject to the coordinating board for higher education under section 173.005, offers**  
125 **eligible programs of study or training programs, and is at least one of the following:**

126 **a. A public community college or vocational or technical school as provided**  
127 **under subsection 8 of this section;**

128           **b. A two-year private vocational or technical school authorized to obtain**  
129 **reimbursements under subsection 8 of this section as provided under subsection 10 of**  
130 **this section;**

131           **c. An approved virtual institution, as defined in section 173.1102; or**

132           **d. An eligible training provider;**

133           **(b) "Department", the department of higher education and workforce**  
134 **development;**

135           **(c) "Eligible program of study", a program of instruction for which the required**  
136 **length for completion of such program does not exceed the equivalent of sixty credit**  
137 **hours or the equivalent under a different measure of student progress and that results in**  
138 **the award of a non-graduate level certificate or other industry-recognized credential**  
139 **below the graduate level that has been designated by the coordinating board for higher**  
140 **education as preparing students to enter an area of occupational shortage as determined**  
141 **and updated annually by such board under subdivision (5) of subsection 2 of section**  
142 **173.2553;**

143           **(d) "Eligible training provider", a training organization listed in the state of**  
144 **Missouri eligible training provider system maintained by the office of workforce**  
145 **development in the department of higher education and workforce development that is**  
146 **not a four-year institution of higher education;**

147           **(e) "Training program", a program of study that leads to a certificate or degree**  
148 **and is offered by an approved institution but that does not meet the length-of-program**  
149 **requirements for an eligible program under 34 CFR 668.8, as amended. The term**  
150 **includes, but is not limited to, certified nurse assistant (CNA) programs, certified**  
151 **medication technician (CMT) programs, level 1 medication aide (L1MA) programs,**  
152 **insulin administration programs, or commercial driver's license (CDL) programs.**

153           **(3) (a) In addition to the reimbursements provided under subsections 8 and 12**  
154 **of this section, for the 2024-25 academic year and all subsequent academic years, the**  
155 **department shall, by rule, establish a procedure for the reimbursement of the costs of**  
156 **tuition, books, and fees from the A+ certificate program fund to the approved institution**  
157 **at which a student who is eligible for such reimbursement under subsections 8 and 12 of**  
158 **this section is enrolled in an eligible program of study or a training program.**

159           **(b) No tuition reimbursements in excess of the tuition rate charged by a public**  
160 **community college for coursework offered by a two-year private vocation or technical**  
161 **school, approved virtual institution as defined under 173.1102, or eligible training**  
162 **provider within the service area of such college shall be reimbursed under this**  
163 **subsection.**

164 (c) The reimbursements provided under this subsection to a two-year private  
165 vocational or technical school, approved virtual institution as defined under 173.1102, or  
166 eligible training provider shall not violate the provisions of Article IX, Section 8, or  
167 Article I, Section 7, of the Constitution of Missouri or the First Amendment to the  
168 Constitution of the United States.

169 (4) (a) There is hereby created in the state treasury the "A+ Certificate Program  
170 Fund", which shall consist of any moneys appropriated annually by the general  
171 assembly, gifts, bequests, grants, public or private donations, or transfers. The state  
172 treasurer shall be custodian of the fund. In accordance with sections 30.170 and 30.180,  
173 the state treasurer may approve disbursements. The fund shall be a dedicated fund and,  
174 upon appropriation, moneys in this fund shall be used solely for reimbursements as  
175 provided in this subsection.

176 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 33.080 to the contrary, any moneys  
177 remaining in the fund at the end of the biennium shall not revert to the credit of the  
178 general revenue fund.

179 (c) The state treasurer shall invest moneys in the fund in the same manner as  
180 other funds are invested. Any interest and moneys earned on such investments shall be  
181 credited to the fund.

182 (5) No rule promulgated by the department under this section shall prohibit  
183 students enrolled in an eligible program of study or a training program from qualifying  
184 for tuition reimbursement under this section solely because the eligible program of  
185 study or training program does not meet the length-of-program requirements for an  
186 eligible program under 34 CFR 668.8, as amended, or because the eligible training  
187 provider at which a student enrolls does not participate in federal student aid programs.

188 (6) Eligibility for tuition, books, and fees reimbursement to an approved  
189 institution as provided under subdivision (3) of this subsection shall expire upon the  
190 earliest of:

191 (a) Receipt of the reimbursement for the required length for completion of such  
192 program as determined by the department;

193 (b) A student's successful completion of an eligible program of study or training  
194 program; or

195 (c) A student's completion of one hundred fifty percent of the time usually  
196 required to complete an eligible program of study or training program.

197 (7) The department may promulgate all necessary rules and regulations for the  
198 implementation and administration of this subsection. Any rule or portion of a rule, as  
199 that term is defined in section 536.010, that is created under the authority delegated in  
200 this section shall become effective only if it complies with and is subject to all of the

201 provisions of chapter 536 and, if applicable, section 536.028. This section and chapter  
202 536 are nonseverable and if any of the powers vested with the general assembly  
203 pursuant to chapter 536 to review, to delay the effective date, or to disapprove and annul  
204 a rule are subsequently held unconstitutional, then the grant of rulemaking authority  
205 and any rule proposed or adopted after August 28, 2023, shall be invalid and void.

206       12. (1) For the 2024-25 academic year and all subsequent academic years, the  
207 procedure established by the department for the reimbursement of the costs of books  
208 and fees under subsection 8 or 11 of this section shall contain a process that allows  
209 students eligible for reimbursement of the cost of books and fees under subsection 8 or  
210 11 of this section to submit evidence of the cost of each book or fee, such as a receipt or a  
211 bill, and evidence that such book or fee was required for a course of instruction or  
212 training program for which reimbursement is sought under subsection 8 or 11 of this  
213 section. Upon confirmation of such evidence, the student shall be reimbursed for such  
214 books or fees, subject to the limitations in subdivision (2) of this subsection.

215       (2) No reimbursements provided under this subsection shall exceed five hundred  
216 dollars per student per semester for reimbursements sought under subsection 8 of this  
217 section or five hundred dollars per student per training program for reimbursements  
218 sought under subsection 11 of this section.

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