ALABAMA SCHOLASTIC CHALLENGE

*Sponsored by Alabama Scholastic Competition Association*

*2023-2024 Procedures*

1. **School Eligibility:** Elementary schools, middle school, and high schools in Alabama are invited to participate in the *Alabama Scholastic Challenge*. The elementary, middle, junior varsity, and high school tournaments are open to both public and private schools. No school may enter more than one team for each level of play (elementary, middle, junior varsity, or high school). An ASCA member must sponsor the team.
2. **AISA Members:** AISA schools must join ASCA to compete in the AISA and ASCA tournaments. They may then choose to compete either in the AISA district and state tournaments or in the ASCA district tournament to qualify for the ASCA state tournament. Schools that have not notified ASCA of their choice by November 30 will automatically be entered in the AISA tournament series. The first-place teams from the AISA state tournaments will receive automatic bids to the ASCA state tournaments.
3. **Player Eligibility:** Players must be enrolled at the represented school or play for a direct feeder school and must be in the 6th grade or lower for elementary school, 8th grade or lower for middle school, 10th grade or lower for junior varsity, and 12th grade or lower for high school. Students who play up shall be permitted to play in multiple state events, provided they are not held on the same day and that there are no conflicts due to question overlap. Teams that play ineligible players will, at a minimum, forfeit any rounds in which the ineligible students competed. This rule is subject to the limits of Rule 4 below.
4. **Feeder Schools:** In the case of a school that has eligibility to field a team at multiple levels of play but which feeds into a larger school that plays at a level overlapping that of the feeder school, the feeder school shall be required to choose to either compete as a stand-alone school OR to compete as part of the larger school it feeds into. Should it choose to compete independently, it may field a team for each event but may NOT contribute players to the school it own team for any level of play shared with the larger school, although it may continue to compete independently at levels open to that school alone. Feeder schools may change their decisions from year to year without penalty.
5. **Special Needs Players:** ASCA encourages participation by all students. It is the responsibility of coaches to notify tournament directors *in advance* of players who have special needs. Provided that said notification is made, the tournament director will have the leeway to make accommodations as he or she deems appropriate to meet the needs of the player in question. The tournament director will be the arbiter of the necessity and scope of such changes, *which may not be protested.*
6. **High School Divisions:** Public nonselective high school teams will play in Division I, Division II, or Division III based on their classification as determined by AHSAA. Public schools in AHSAA Class 7A will compete in Division I, public schools in AHSAA class 5A and 6A will compete in Division II, and public schools in AHSAA classes 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A will compete in Division III. If a feeder school chooses to play independently of its larger high school, it will play in the same division as its high school.
7. **Middle School Divisions:** Public nonselective middle school teams will play in Division I or Division II. Public middle school teams that feed into Class 6A and 7A high schools will compete in Division I. Public middle school teams that feed into Class 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, or 5A and all 5th and 6th grade teams will compete in Division II.
8. **Competitive Balance:** Private, magnet, and charter high school and middle school teams will play in Division I or Division II. Initially, teams will be placed in Division I and be evaluated on the two previous years’ performance in ASCA tournaments to determine their competitive advantage. The following point system will be used to evaluate each team:

* Teams that qualify for the state tournament will be awarded one point.
* Teams that qualify for the state tournament playoffs will be awarded one additional point for a total of two points.
* Teams that finish first, second, third, or fourth in the state tournament will be awarded one additional point for a total of three points.

After their initial evaluation, teams will be evaluated each year based on their performance in ASCA tournaments for the previous two years. After totaling the points for the two-year period, teams will remain in their current division or move up or down one division based on the following point system:

* Teams receiving 0 to 1 point – Move down on division.
* Teams receiving 2 to 3 points – Stay in the same division.
* Teams receiving 4 or more points – Move up one division.

Teams that have not competed in any ASCA tournaments in previous years will be placed in Division I for their first two years of competition. At the end of the second year of competition, they will be evaluated based on their performance to determine their placement for the following year.

1. **Competition Dates:**

* Elementary School Competition Date: Last Friday in January (Open)
* Middle School Competition Dates: Saturday following MLK Holiday (District), Fourth Saturday in February (State)
* Junior Varsity Competition Dates: First Friday in February (District), First Friday in March (State)
* High School Competition Dates: Second Friday in February (District), Second Friday in April (State). If the second Friday in April falls on Friday, the tournament coordinator will determine and announce the date at the beginning of the season.

1. **District Tournament Assignments:** The state coordinator, with the assistance from the Board, will assign teams to district tournament sites based on geographic proximity and group teams into pools for round robin play.
2. **Pool Winners**: District and state pool winners will be determined **based on win-loss record** using the following tie-breaking criteria:

* Head-to-head competition.
* Average number of points per round played.
* Point differential in all matches (Total points a team scores minus the total points scored against that team).
* Coin toss.

1. **Advancement from Districts:** The tournament coordinator, after consultation with Board members, will announce in advance the total number of teams advancing to the State tournaments. The number of teams advancing from each district will be determined by the state tournament coordinator based on the size of the field at each site. All pool winners will automatically advance to the state tournament, and wildcard teams may be chosen to complete the state tournament field.
2. **Wildcards:** The state tournament coordinator will determine the number, if any, of wildcard teams necessary to fill out a state tournament field. Wildcard teams will be chosen from the state as a whole **based on average points scored per game** and need not come from a specific field. Ties for any wildcard berth will be broken using the criteria set forth below in Procedure 17. Additional wildcard teams may also be chosen to replace any qualifying teams that choose not to continue to the next competition level.
3. **Seeding for State:** The state coordinator, using results provided by district hosts, will create state tournament pools for high school and middle schools. Teams will be placed in pools in alternating fashion **based on their points per game (PPG) average from district play** in the following manner:

Pool A Pool B Pool C Pool D

` Team 1 Team 2 Team 3 Team 4

Team 8 Team 7 Team 6 Team 5

Team 9 Team 10 Team 11 Team 12

Team 16 Team 15 Team 14 Team 13

Ties for any place in the tournament field will be broken using tie-breaking criteria set forth in Procedure 17.

1. **Teams Advancing to Playoffs of State Tournament:** Playoff teams shall be equal to no more than one-half the number of participants with a minimum of 6 teams and a maximum of 8 teams advancing. Pool winners will advance automatically (See Procedure 11 for determining pool winners). Pool runner-up teams may advance if their inclusion allows for wildcard teams to be selected from the remaining teams. Wildcard teams will be chosen **based on average points scored per game.** Ties for playoff slots will be broken using the tie-breaking criteria set forth in Procedure 17.
2. **Seeding for Playoffs.** After all playoff slots have been determined, teams will be seeded **based on average points scored per game.** Ties for seeding will be broken using the tie-breaking criteria set forth in Procedure 17. If six teams advance to the playoff rounds, the first round of the playoffs will be a bye round for the top two seeds.
3. **Tie-breaking Procedures for Selecting Wildcard Teams, Seeding of Teams for State, Selecting Playoff Teams, and Seeding Teams for Playoffs:** If two teams are tied for the same place, tie-breaking factors will be applied in the following order:

* Head-to-head competition at the tournament in which the tie occurred.
* Win-loss record.
* Strength of preliminary schedule as defined by the team whose opponents have the highest PPG average, disregarding any matches in which said opponents competed against the team(s) involved in the tie.
* Coin toss.

1. **Tie-breaking for Three or More Teams:** If three or more teams are tied for the same place, tie-breaking factors will be applied in order until at least one team is ranked lower than the other teams in the tie. As long as teams remain tied, the tie-breaking factors will be reapplied from the beginning until all teams have been ranked.
2. **Forfeiture of Rounds:** If a team forfeits a round, it will be given a loss with zero points and its opponent for that round will be awarded a win and earn a score for that round by playing empty chairs.
3. **State Tournament Finals:** When two teams have advanced to the finals of the state tournament, the champion of the tournament will be determined by playing a “best of three,” including preliminary matches between the two teams, with the first team to win two games being declared the winner. All normal ASCA rules will apply during these games, including the rules for sudden death tiebreakers.
4. **Team Awards:** The State champions and three runners-up receive trophies. Depending on the availability of funds, ASCA will award cash prizes to the first, second, third, and fourth place teams at the High School Division I, II, and III State tournaments and at the Middle School Division I and II State tournaments as follows:

* First Place - $400.00
* Second Place - $300.00
* Third Place - $200.00
* Fourth Place - $100

The first-place team at the Junior Varsity State tournament will be awarded $200.00.

1. **Individual Awards:** The top six individual scorers in each High School Division, the top six individual scorers in the Junior Varsity Division, the top six individual scorers in each Middle School Division, and the top six individual scorers in the Elementary Division will be named to their respective All-Tournament Teams. The selections will be made based on individual points per game in the preliminary rounds of the State Tournaments. To be eligible, the player must have heard at least fifty percent of the questions asked. Each member of the All-Tournament Teams will receive a medal.
2. **Certification of Tournament Results:** The ASCA president or a designee will be on call for all tournaments. While the results of the tournament will be unofficially announced on site, results will remain unofficial until certified by the ASCA Board and posted on the ASCA website.
3. **Additional Awards for National Tournaments:** ASCA may, at the Board’s discretion, provide financial assistance to the High School Division I, Division II, and Division III and Middle School Division I and Division II state champions to attend the national championship tournament of their choice. The award will be made to the school upon presentation of proof of payment for the tournament.
4. **Classification Championships:** In addition to awarding trophies to the overall state champion and the runners-up, trophies will also be awarded at the State Tournament to the champion of each classification (1A through 7A non-selective public schools and an additional class for all private and/or selective schools) represented by at least one State qualifier. A classification championship can be earned in any of the following ways:

* Being the only team in one’s class to qualify for the State Tournament
* Defeating all the other teams in one’s classification head-to-head in the preliminary rounds.
* Being the only team in one’s class to advance to the State Semifinal round.
* Being the only team in one’s class to advance to the State Final rounds.
* Winning the State Tournament Finals.
* Defeating the only remaining team in one’s class in the Consolation Round.

1. **Classification Championship Rankings:** If no team earns a classification championship outright by any of the situations described in Procedure 25, then the teams in that class will be ranked for participation in the Class Championship Finals. The ranking will be made using the following factors successively. Once a team has been ranked, the next highest-ranked team will be chosen by re-applying the factors from the beginning. Ties will be broken by moving to the next factor in the list until one team can be ranked higher than all the other teams in the tie.

* Teams that qualified for the State playoffs.
* Preliminary win-loss record.
* Head-to-head preliminary matches, if any.
* Average points per game.
* Point differential.
* Coin toss.

1. **Classification Championship Finals:** If necessary, once the top two teams from a class have been selected, the classification champion will be determined by playing a “best of three” between those two teams, including preliminary matches, with the first team to win two games being declared the winner. A team that qualified for the State Playoff will receive a one-game advantage in the best of three; if both teams advanced to the state Playoff, the Classification Finals will consist of no more than one game. All normal ASCA rules will apply during these games, including the rules for sudden death tiebreakers.
2. **Classification Championship Eligibility:** All schools in Alabama, including public, private, and selective public schools, are eligible for a classification championship. However, AISA member schools that compete in the AISA tournament series, even if they qualify for the ASCA State Tournament based on AISA State Tournament performance, are considered to have competed in their own classification with the AISA State Tournament serving as its championship and are not eligible for an ASCA classification championship. For non-selective public schools, classification will be made based on current attendance-based Alabama High School Athletic Association classifications. Schools that are eligible but do not have a current classification will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for classification. All private and/or selective public schools regardless of AHSAA classification, will compete in the Private/Selective Class.
3. **Sportsmanship.** ASCA expects players and coaches to represent the state and their schools with honor and respect. Players or coaches who violate their standard through fraud, cheating, impropriety, or poor sportsmanship will be ejected from the tournament and may be sanctioned or banned from future ASCA events. Any such incident will be promptly reported to the ASCA board.
4. **Cheating:** Under ASCA rules, cheating is defined as a situation that meets any of the following criteria:

* Having an unfair knowledge of the question content, either by seeing questions in advance, playing on questions at a previous event, or receiving answer lines ahead of a match.
* Players and/or coaches being aware of this issue or having a reasonable expectation of being aware of the issue based on situation or experience.
* Players and/or coaches failing to immediately self-report this situation upon recognition of those circumstances.

1. **Participation in Independent Academic Tournaments**: ASCA encourages its member schools to host independent academic tournaments, sometimes referred to as “invitational” tournaments, and to participate in such tournaments hosted by others. ASCA assumes no responsibility for these events, even events that choose to use ASCA’s rules and/or procedures. However, participants in and hosts of such events are still expected to adhere to a high standard of conduct and sportsmanship in accordance with ASCA’s rules. While tournament hosts shall be primarily responsible for adjudication at their events, the ASCA Executive Board reserves the right to enact penalties affecting a school’s Alabama Scholastic Challenge participation if it becomes aware of misconduct committed by that school at any academic tournaments.
2. **Question Security:** If a bye-room is provided, questions will be provided by the tournament director one round at a time. If an official moderator for the bye-room is not provided, then the coach will receive the questions from the tournament director upon request. Questions will be returned to the tournament director at the end of the bye round. In addition, the tournament director and moderators will keep all questions secure at all times.
3. **Code of Conduct:** All ASCA coaches will be required to read and sign a Code of Conduct before their teams may compete in an ASCA tournament. The signed Code of Conduct must be submitted to the Tournament Coordinator before the district tournament.