ALABAMA SCHOLASTIC CHALLENGE

*Sponsored by Alabama Scholastic Competition Association*

*2025-2026 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. Home school collectives may enter ASCA tournaments and are subject to the same rules as private schools. No school may enter more than one team for each level of play (elementary 4th and 5th grades, elementary 4th through 6th grades, 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 state tournament 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 5th grade or lower for the Division A elementary school tournament, 6th grade or lower for the Division AA elementary school tournament, 8th grade or lower for the middle school tournament, 10th grade or lower for the junior varsity tournament, and 12th grade or lower for the high school tournament. Students who play up shall be permitted to play in multiple state events, provided they are not held on the same day and there are no conflicts due to question overlap. Players may compete for only one school and/or its feeder schools, as allowed in ASCA rules, for any given tournament cycle (District through State Tournament). 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 5 below.
4. **Individual Home School and Virtual School Students**: An individual home school or virtual school student who desires to participate with an existing public or private school team is subject to the rules below:
* **A home school student** must be enrolled at the beginning of the semester at the member school that serves the area in which the student’s parents reside. The service area for each school will be the same as used by AHSAA. ASCA recognizes a home school student as one who has reported as such with the local county/city board of education (superintendent) and as one who is earning academic credit in his public or private school in compliance with Alabama law through one of the approved home school options (2014 Ala Code 16-28-1). These students must earn 2 credits for HS and 1 for MS per school year through the public or private school in which they are enrolled.
* **A virtual school student** must be enrolled in a virtual program/school at the member public school that serves the area in which the student’s parents reside and must follow all ALSDE policies. The service area for each school will be the same as used by AHSAA. A virtual school student must be taking six units of work per year through the school’s virtual program.
* For an individual home school or virtual school student to be eligible to compete in ASCA’s regular tournaments for any given competition year, the team’s coach must identify that home school or virtual school student to ASCA by January 15 and submit a written statement from the team’s school principal certifying that the student meets the requirements to compete. This identification and certification should be emailed to ASCA’s tournament coordinator.
* Likewise, to compete in the Alabama Scholars Bowl television tournament, the team’s coach must identify the student as such and submit the principal’s statement to ASCA along with the coach’s submission of the roster for each tournament in which the student participates. This identification and certification should be emailed to the tournament director.
1. **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 will 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 feeds into. If it shares players for any level of play shared with the larger school, it may not compete independently at that level of play 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.
2. **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 accommodation 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.*
3. **High School Divisions:** Public nonselective high school teams will play in Class 7A, 6A, 5A, or 1A-4A based on their classification as determined by AHSAA. If a feeder school chooses to play independently of its larger high school, it will play in the same division as its high school.
4. **Middle School Divisions:** Public nonselective middle school teams will compete in Division A or Division AA based on the number of students enrolled in their 7th and 8th grade classes using the most current data available from the Alabama State Department of Education. The criteria for each division will be determined in late December based on the enrollment numbers for all schools registered by the third Friday in December of that year.

**Competitive Balance:** High school teams that have not competed in any ASCA tournaments in previous years will be placed in Class 7A for their first two years of competition, and middle school teams that have not competed in ASCA tournaments in previous years will be placed in Division A 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. 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 or second in the state tournament will be awarded one additional point for a total of three points.

After their initial evaluation, all 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.
1. **Competition Dates:**
* Elementary School Competition Date: Friday following MLK Holiday (District), Third Friday in February (State)
* 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 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 18. 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:** If more than 8 teams from any class or division advance to the state tournament, the state coordinator, using results provided by district hosts, will create state tournament pools. 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 18.

1. **Teams Advancing to Playoffs of State Tournament:** If a class or division has 8 or fewer teams advancing to the state tournament, the teams will play a round robin with the top 4 teams advancing to the playoff rounds. If a class or division has more than 8 teams advancing to the 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 12 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 18.
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 18. 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 Class 7A, 6A, 5A, and 1A-4A State tournaments, at the Junior Varsity State Tournament, and at the Middle School Division A

and AA State tournaments as follows:

* First Place - $400.00
* Second Place - $300.00
* Third Place - $200.00
* Fourth Place - $100
1. **Individual Awards:** The top six individual scorers in each High School Class, 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 each 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 Class 7A, 6A, 5A, and 1A-4A and Middle School Division A and Division AA 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. **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.
5. **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.