

# **Mississippi Schools Chess League**

## **MSCL :**

### A Proposal to Build **Sustainable** Infrastructure for Chess in Mississippi Schools Through Partnership

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#### **SUMMARY:**

- Free for a school to JOIN the League
  - MSCA will provide vast functional support to League Teams
  - School-Level Chess Coaches should contact MSCA:  
<http://msscholasticchess.org/resources/mscl/>
  - Chess Coaches are able to earn monetary compensation (\$75–\$200 per event) from MSCA by officiating Chess Tournaments
  - Schools are heavily encouraged to compensate Chess Coaches for their position as coach & provide transportation for teams to tournaments
  - Chess is should be offered to EVERY child, not just “gifted” or private school students
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## **I . Introduction & Purpose**

Chess has long been understood to be one of the most efficient tools to develop both intellectual prowess and positive character traits in children. But in the state of Mississippi, scholastic (K12) chess training programs are sparse, inconsistently maintained and worse yet, usually only introduced to students identified as “gifted”.

Competitive scholastic chess opportunities in Mississippi suffer a similar fate. District or School-Level Chess Tournaments are sporadic in location and frequency. Only two statewide organizations host tournaments regularly. They are both 501c3 non-profit organizations.

First, the MCA (Mississippi Chess Association) is the most prestigious organization that presently only hosts 3 scholastic tournaments a year – the individual, team & girls only state championships. These championships determine the representatives Mississippi will send to national invitational tournaments to officially represent our great state.

Second, the MSCA (Mississippi Scholastic Chess Association) is a more informal organization that primarily depends on requests from schools to host more casual and developmental chess tournaments or training.

The MCA championship chess events lack robust participation comparable to other neighboring states due to the paucity of active scholastic chess programs statewide. Similarly, MSCA lacks consistent requests from schools to host K12 chess events because the personnel managing chess programs in Mississippi schools are typically uncompensated volunteers who inevitably move on to other endeavors due to inconsistent support for their chess programs’ growth.

The purpose of this proposal is to deliberately coordinate existing organizations (*public & private schools, the MCA, the MSCA, & the USChess.org, among others*) to create a self-sustaining infrastructure of K12 chess program inception, growth and vigorous maintenance through the function of a **Mississippi Schools Chess League (MSCL)**. This league would provide potent intellectual & personal growth opportunities for *EVERY* Mississippi K12 student through the study of and / or competition in the game of chess.

## **II. Procedure / Methodology**

**Stage 1 – INCEPTION (Designate Coaches):** An MSCA Representative meets with Superintendent(s) and/or Principals across the state to recommend that it be mandated for a Chess Coach be designated and possibly compensated. A coach should be designated at each school under their administrative supervision. These chess coaches should be permitted to hold after-school meeting times for students interested in joining the Chess Club or Chess Team at their schools.

MSCA also recommends that the school commit to provide transportation to a limited number of chess tournaments (both local & out of town) each school year.

Compensation for a coach & limited school-sponsored transportation are steps that will ensure that Chess will achieve the same normalcy and continuity as historically staple activities like football, band, basketball, choir or cheerleading to name just a few.

Title 1 Elementary, Middle and High Schools in similar feeder patterns are encouraged to apply for the “US Chess Education Program” <https://new.uschess.org/news/us-chess-opens-2022-2023-title-i-school-outreach-program-affiliates-serving-risk-youth>

This program provides:

- 16 free USChess Memberships – required to track the progress of chess players in their game performances.
- 8 additional chess boards & pieces (accumulating a mass of boards & pieces is a crucial step in being able to host tournaments at your school)

**Stage 2 – TRAINING:** MSCA will schedule, coordinate & perform training sessions (both virtual and in-person) for the school-level Chess Coaches designated in Stage 1.

This training will include (but not be limited to):

- Providing instructional resources for increasing student knowledge chess
- Providing material resources (boards, pieces & clocks)
- **Training & Certification of Tournament Directors (TDs)** through USChess.org

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*www.msscholasticchess.org*

- TDs can officiate chess tournaments for MSCA
- TDs can be compensated monetarily by MSCA
- Both adults and students can become TDs
- Providing seminars for students and coaches to receive advanced chess instruction

**Stage 3 – COMPETITION:** Certified & Trained TDs all over the state will host & officiate K12 Chess Tournaments at schools regularly and year-round. **Each tournament can accommodate all grade levels regardless of the host school.** (*For example: if a high school hosts, there will still be divisions available for middle and elementary school students.*) This will not only increase familiarity with feeder school patterns but also build community outreach, as many of these events will be open to other schools and school districts.

- **Playing Area:** each host school will be responsible for securing...
  - Space needed for chess game play (typically a library or cafeteria)
  - Custodial services will be provided by the school as well
  - Space needed for waiting parents and players in between rounds, called: “Skittles Rooms”
  - “Skittles Rooms” can be additional classrooms, conference rooms, gymnasiums or even hallways
  - Events are typically held on a Saturday, but weekday evenings are also possible
  - Saturday tournaments usually last for 6-7 hours
  - Weeknight tournaments usually last for 2-3 hours
- **Moneys:**
  - MSCA will collect tournament player registration fees via the website: <http://msscholasticchess.org/registration/>
  - MSCA will be responsible for paying TDs & purchasing tournament awards.
- **Equipment:** MCA, MSCA & Schools will coordinate on a case-by-case basis
  - Some schools may have enough equipment to host a tournament
  - Other schools may need to borrow equipment from MCA or MSCA
  - Some tournaments may ask participants to bring their own

Through competition, chess players will have the option to casually participate in “Unrated” play or track their progress more formally through their “Chess Rating”. These options will prevent “trophy hunting” and “sandbagging” of skilled players

amongst lower skilled players of similar age. Likewise, “Chess Ratings” allow lower skilled players of advanced age to still experience success when playing within their skill group. These options further provide students with training in self-analysis and growth-mindset.

**Stage 4 – DATA COLLECTION & IMPACT ANALYSIS:** Following the Inception, Training and Competition Stages, the time will come to begin gathering data to establish efficacy. Surveys about school behavior intervention and academic growth rates can be obtained as well as school culture surveys. Chess has been measured to be a motivator for children to have an increased “desire to attend school” from the Alabama Chess in Schools Initiative.

**Stage 5 – ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY:** Deliberate action must be taken to ensure that the success experienced by students in the initial stages of the MSCL will be exponentially available to future Mississippi youth. These deliberate actions will be critical at the school & district level

1. Supervision - It MUST be expected that every school district in Mississippi be hosting regular chess club meetings and chess tournaments. It should be expected that each principal maintain a chess program at their school by continually naming an official Chess Coach each school year
2. Transportation- School districts must commit to providing occasional transportation to chess tournaments for these programs. MSCA’s recommendation is for at least 2-3 local events and 1 out-of-town event per year at a minimum.
3. MSCA & MCA Support - beyond Supervision and Transportation, MSCA and MCA will be available to support school-based chess programs in whatever area they are needed (further training for chess coaches, mentors, students, TDs)

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### **III. Costs & Funding**

**A school can join the MSCL at absolutely no cost.** They need only form a chess team and register it with MSCA to receive support. This can be done with a volunteer chess coach. That volunteer can tap into the aforementioned resources to sustain and advance the program. But if the goal is sustainability, at some point, there must be monetary investment by the school.

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Below are some recommended monetary investments suggested (but not required) by MSCA. Also represented are costs that MSCA will incur to assist in the growth of the MSCL.

**INCEPTION Stage COSTS:**

- **Schools are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to compensate Chess Coaches with a stipend comparable to other club sponsors at the same school.** Uncompensated (volunteer) Chess Coaches will not create sustainability.
- **Schools are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to commit to provide transportation** for Chess Teams to at least 2-3 local tournaments and possibly one out-of-town tournament per year.
- Application for a feeder-pattern of schools to have a “USChess Affiliate”
- The US Chess Trust will provide 10 FREE Tournament Grade Chess Boards & Pieces to any Title 1 School who completes an online application: <http://www.uschesstrust.org/chess-for-youth-online-form/>

**TRAINING Stage COSTS:**

MSCA will pursue corporate donations to fund in-person training seminars for Chess Coaches and TDs. **Initially, online “ZOOM” training sessions can be provided at no cost to Title 1 public schools.**

**COMPETITION Stage COSTS:**

- Costs to schools:
  - tournament host schools provide space & custodian services
  - visiting schools provide occasional transportation to tournaments
- **Costs incurred by MSCA:**
  - Chess materials: boards, pieces & clocks
  - **Tournament Director (TD) Compensation:**
    - Minimum 20 players each event\*, otherwise compensation will be adjusted to less than outlined here depending on revenue.
  - **NOVICE TD:** Less than 10 Events Directed as Chief TD = **\$75 / event\***
  - **BEGINNER TD:** 10-20 Events Directed as Chief TD = **\$100 / event\***
  - **EXPERIENCED TD:** 21-30 Events Directed as Chief TD = **\$150 / event\***
  - **ESTABLISHED TD:** More than 30 Events Directed as Chief TD = **\$200 / event\***

**DATA COLLECTION & IMPACT ANALYSIS Stage COSTS:**

- Title 1 Elementary, Middle and High Schools in similar feeder patterns are encouraged to apply for the “US Chess Education Program” <https://new.uschess.org/news/us-chess-opens-2022-2023-title-i-school-out-reach-program-affiliates-serving-risk-youth>
- This program provides:
  - 16 free USChess Memberships – required to track the progress of chess players in their over-the-board game performances.
  - 8 additional chess boards & pieces (accumulating a mass of boards & pieces is a crucial step in being able to host tournaments at your school)

**ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY Stage COSTS:**

- Compensated Chess Coaches are much more likely to maintain chess programs and invest in student progress both in chess and their academic life.
- Schools should make a purposeful attempt to recruit a chess coach from their teaching staff & pay the chess coaches a stipend from their school budget.
- MSCA will collect revenue from chess tournament player registration fees.
- MSCA is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization and thus, will re-direct revenue to the MSCL by compensating TDs, purchasing trophies and other awards and providing materials like chess clocks, boards and pieces to schools in need.

*\*An “event” is a Chess Tournament with Regular / Quick Time Controls that lasts all day (Usually on a Saturday). A lower adjusted compensation rate will apply to “events” that are partial day / evening / blitz time control events.*

## **IV. Conclusion & Impetus**

Of particular note, the MSCL strongly seeks to recruit the participation of K12 Students who traditionally may have never been exposed to the game otherwise.

The status quo in Mississippi, at present, is for students to only have accessibility to chess if they attend a private school, are identified as “Gifted” or lucky enough to attend the random handful of public schools with volunteer coaches.

This is tragic. Chess might very well BE the gift of countless students. Chess may be the reason hundreds or thousands of struggling scholars decided to invest in their own personal potential. But we’ll never know if they don’t have the chance to discover the game.

What about the students who may never win chess championships or lead their team in wins, but who’s lives could be forever changed by exposure to the game and its inherent supportive community?

We owe every single K12 Student in our “Hospitality State”, the opportunity and access to chess and its infinite benefits.

## **How does my school team / club join the MSCL?**

Submit the name & email of the School- Level Chess Coach to:

<http://msscholasticchess.org/resources/mscl/>

or directly contact:

[beththrasher@msscholasticchess.org](mailto:beththrasher@msscholasticchess.org) and MSCA

will take it from there!