



2026 - 2027 ACADEMIC CHESS

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Dear Chess Coaches and Administrators,

The Department of Academic Competitions is pleased to offer elementary and high school students the opportunity to participate in after-school chess clubs and compete in various tournaments throughout the academic year. For the 2026 – 2027 season, Academic Chess will be divided into two categories:

- **High School (Grades 9–12)**
- **Elementary/Middle School (Grades K–8)**

Chess Season Overview

The chess season begins in October and will encompass the following activities:

- **Conditioning and Practice** – Preparatory sessions to enhance students' chess skills.
- **Online Tournaments** – Weekly rapid and monthly tournaments.
- **City-Wide In-Person Competitions** – Tournaments open to Academic Chess schools city-wide.
- **Conference Playoffs (K–8)** – Playoffs to determine the top-performing teams.
- **City-Wide Championship** – The final event to crown the city champions.
- **Sanctioned Tournaments** – Additional tournaments sanctioned by CPS.

Administrative Responsibilities

The administration of Academic Chess within Chicago Public Schools falls under the Office of Student Support and Engagement (OSSE) in the Department of Academic Competitions. Each school's Principal is responsible for all matters related to Academic Chess, ensuring effective implementation and student participation within their school.

Support Provided by Academic Chess

To assist schools in running their chess programs, Academic Chess will provide the following:

- **Coaching Pay** – See *Compensation Process* section below.
- **Busing** – Transportation to and from Academic Chess tournaments.
- **Meals** – Lunch for students at Academic Chess-organized tournaments.
- **National Tournament Opportunity** – High school students may compete in the US Chess High School National Championship, and female students may participate in the KCF All-Girls National Championship.
- **ChessKid Gold Memberships** – Access to premium resources for student training.
- **US Chess Memberships** – Provided for students who participate in an Academic Chess-organized or sanctioned tournament.
- **Chess Equipment** – New schools can receive 5 chess sets and 1 chess clock.

School Responsibilities

Schools are expected to:

- Hold regular weekly chess classes.
- Participate in at least two (2) Academic Chess in-person tournaments and the Championship/Playoff tournament.
- Cover any additional costs associated with their chess programs.
- Input chess class attendance into ASPEN.



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- Designate the school's point of contact for Academic Chess and ASPEN.
- Follow the Chess Rules and Regulations.

Coaching Hours Allocation

Each school participating in the Academic Chess Program is allotted **39 hours of compensable coaching time**, which may be divided between up to **two coaches**.

Breakdown of the 39 hours:

- **2 hours – Annual coaches meeting**
- **16 hours – Tournament preparation & instruction (October – March) [1 hr. per week]**
- **14 hours – CPS in-person tournament coaching [7 hours per tournament]**
 - *High Schools may substitute 1 non-CPS tournament*
- **7 hours** for tournament coaching at the CPS High School Championship or the K–8 Playoffs

Additional Hours

An **additional 7 hours** of tournament coaching is available for any school whose team participates in the **IHSA Sectionals** or advanced to the **Elementary K–8 Championship**.

Eligibility

To be eligible for coaching pay:

- Coaches must be a **CPS Teacher**, **ESP Employee**, or **Misc. Employee**.
- High school teams must participate in **two (2) CPS tournaments** prior to the CPS High School Championship, and must also compete in the CPS High School Championship
 - A maximum of **one (1) non-CPS tournament** may be substituted toward this requirement
- K–8 school teams must participate in **two (2) CPS tournaments** **K–8 school teams must participate in two (2) CPS tournaments prior to the CPS K–8 Playoffs and must also compete in the CPS K–8 Playoffs**

Pay Schedule & Rate

Coaches will receive payment **twice during the chess season**—once in **January or February** and again in **April or May**.

To receive payment, coaches are required to complete our **online timesheet** at two points during the season:

- **December** – reporting hours worked **October-December**
- **March** – reporting hours worked **January-March**

The hourly rate for chess coaching under the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) contract is **\$34.51**.



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To Confirm Your School's Participation:

Please have your school administrator complete this document by **Wednesday, September 30, 2026** and return it to Kristina Heiser at kheiser@cps.edu. Schools that do not have this form on file will not be allowed to participate in Academic Chess events.

Confirmation of Participation

Yes, _____
would like to participate in the 2026-27 CPS Academic Chess Program.

Our school agrees to:

- Hold regularly scheduled chess classes for students.
- Ensure that our chess coordinator, coach, or other school representative attends the annual online Coaches Meeting in September. (see www.cpschess.org for dates)
- Input chess classes & tournament attendance into ASPEN.
- Participate in a minimum of two (2) in-person CPS tournaments and the Playoffs/Championship. High schools may substitute one (1) outside tournament.
- Send a sufficient number of chaperones with students to supervise and manage their behavior at events.
- Acknowledge that tournaments and events may limit the number of students that can participate from each school.
- Follow the Chess Rules and Regulations and adhere to the deadlines set by Academic Chess.
- Provide funding for your chess program supplies and materials.
- Be responsible for expenses incurred by participating in non-CPS Academic Chess sponsored/sanctioned tournaments.

Name _____

Title _____

Signature _____

Date _____



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SCHOOL DATA SHEET

School Name _____

School Network # _____

This is our first year in Academic Chess _____

School Point of Contact will be _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____

ASPEN Contact will be _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____

Head Chess Coach will be _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____

CPS Role _____

Employee ID # _____

Assistant Chess Coach will be _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____

CPS Role _____

Employee ID # _____

Return completed MOUs to Kristina Heiser at kheiser@cps.edu.