



2024 – 2025
Unit Intent Booklet





MISSION

Our mission is to achieve equity, political rights, and social inclusion by advancing policies and practices that expand human and civil rights, eliminate discrimination, and accelerate the well-being, education, and economic security of Black people and all persons of color.

VISION

We envision an inclusive community rooted in liberation where all persons can exercise their civil and human rights without discrimination.

THEORY OF CHANGE

We are committed to a world without racism where Black people enjoy equitable opportunities in thriving communities. Our work is rooted in racial equity, civic engagement, and supportive policies and institutions for all marginalized people.





ABOUT ACT-SO

The NAACP's Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics is a yearlong achievement program designed to recruit, stimulate, and encourage high academic and cultural achievement among African-American high school students.

ACT-SO includes 33 competitions in STEM, humanities, business, and performing, visual and culinary arts. Almost 300,000 young people have participated from the program since its inception.

OUR FOUNDER

ACT-SO was founded in 1978 by author and journalist Vernon Jarrett. The program is intended to provide recognition to young people who could demonstrate academic, scientific, and artistic achievement, allowing young people to gain recognition equal to that often achieved by entertainers and athletes.



MISSION

To prepare, recognize and reward youth of African descent who exemplify scholastic and artistic excellence.

GOALS

- To mobilize the adult community for the promotion of academic and artistic excellence;
- To recognize creative talent and academic achievement; and
- To provide and assist students with the necessary skills to establish goals and acquire the confidence and training to make a successful contribution to society.



ELIGIBILITY

Students of African descent who are U.S. citizens enrolled in grades 9-12 and are amateurs in the categories are eligible to participate. Students and families looking to participate and need contact information for programs in their area, visit: naacp.org/actso

BENEFITS

The ACT-SO program is an enrichment program. Over the course of each year students work with local volunteer instructors and mentors to develop projects and participate in enrichment opportunities, including workshops, tutorials and field trips specific to their competitions.

The local ACT-SO competitions and ceremonies showcase the results of the students' hard work. Competition winners receive medals and prizes provided by the local and regional sponsors and contributors. The local Gold Medalists advance to the national competition and have the opportunity to receive scholarships and other rewards provided by national sponsors.



TIMELINE

1976

Vernon Jarrett presented his concept for ACT-SO an “Olympics of the Mind” to the DuSable Museum of African American History, in Chicago. The original idea was to install in the Chicago area. It was decided that the program would be better served with a national audience.

1977

At the 68th annual NAACP Convention the NAACP Board of Directors adopted a resolution to accept ACT-SO as an official sponsored NAACP youth achievement program with the following goals:

- To encourage and recognize academic achievement of African American students.
- To promote excellence and highlight academic achievement as well as, support the accomplishments of these students.
- To encourage communities to become involved in working as partners in the quest for scholastic achievement by serving as mentors, fundraisers, sponsors, and organizers.

1978

The first National ACT-SO competition was held in Portland, Oregon with seven cities participating: Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Kansas City, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and St. Louis.

1980

Barbara Coggins, a colleague of Vernon Jarrett, was hired as the first National ACTSO Director and designed a structural framework for the execution of ACT-SO programs across the country. Subsequent Directors include Rhonda K. Suttle, Jeneen Robinson, Anana Kambon and Larry Brown, Jr.

1991

The NAACP Board of, Directors/ACT-SO Board, committee was created.

2004

Mr. Vernon Jarrett lost his battle with cancer at the age of 82.

NOW

ACT-SO expanded its offerings to foster collaborative work among students from various disciplines. The program sustains approximately 200 programs nationally. 300,000 people have participate in the program at the local and national levels combined.

2024+

ACT-SO continues to promote academic excellence, and leadership development to position ACT-SO competitors as the brightest and best scholars and creatives in the world.



NOTABLE ALUMNI

- Alicia Keys
- Anthony Anderson
- Anthony Burrell
- Angela Rye
- Bresha Webb
- Claudia Logan
- Cornelius Smith, Jr.
- Edwina Findley-Dickerson
- Jada Pinkett-Smith
- John Singleton
- Joel Steingold
- Jordan E. Cooper
- Kalen Allen
- Kanye West
- Lauryn Hill
- Leslie Odom, Jr.
- Michelle Williams
- MAJOR
- Myles Frost
- Nicco Annan
- Roy Hargrove
- Ryan Toby



SAVE THE DATE



48TH NATIONAL ACT-SO COMPETITION

and

NAACP ACT-SO AWARDS

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

JULY 9-13, 2025



CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

Business

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Refers to owning, organizing, and managing your own business by providing a necessary product or service.

Culinary Arts

CULINARY

The creative practice of cooking. One who engages in the culinary arts, or a culinarian, is either called a cook or a chef depending on their level of expertise.

Humanities

MUSIC COMPOSITION

The science or art of arranging music by ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination or in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity.



CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

Humanities (continued)

ORIGINAL ESSAY

A brief examination of a subject in prose usually expressing a personal view or interpretation of a subject or topic.

PLAYWRITING

A literary composition developed for the stage.

POETRY—WRITTEN

A composition, marked by language chosen for its sound, beauty and evocative power.

SHORT STORY

A brief examination of a subject in prose usually expressing a personal view or interpretation of a subject or topic.





CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

Performing Arts

DANCE: BALLET

To perform a series of rhythmic and highly technical patterned bodily movements usually performed to music using grace and precision.

DANCE: CONTEMPORARY

To perform a series of rhythmic and technical patterned bodily movements usually performed to music.

DANCE: MODERN

To perform a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually performed to music that focuses on the dancer's interpretations using their emotions and moods to develop choreography.





CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

Performing Arts (continued)

DANCE: TRADITIONAL

To perform a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually performed to music to reflect the life of the people of a certain region or country.

DRAMATIC ARTS: ACTING

The art of staging or acting plays.

MUSIC: INSTRUMENTAL—CLASSICAL

The art of performing with a device used to produce music with tones of the late 18th and 19th centuries characterized by an emphasis on balance, clarity, and moderation.

MUSIC: INSTRUMENTAL—CONTEMPORARY

The art of performing with a device used to produce music with the tones of the present.



CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

Performing Arts (continued)

MUSIC: VOCAL—CLASSICAL

The art of performing with the human voice rhythmic tones or sounds of the late 18th and 19th centuries characterized by an emphasis on balance, clarity, and moderation.

MUSIC: VOCAL—CONTEMPORARY

The art of performing with the human voice rhythmic tones or sounds to produce music with the tones of the present.

ORATORY

The art of effective written, and oral presentation to persuade or inform. (This is not a dramatic presentation.)



CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

Performing Arts (continued)

POETRY—PERFORMANCE

An original poem or prose, written by the contestant, performed as a monologue or exchange involving extemporization.

STEM

ARCHITECTURE

Plans for and models of structures and outdoor spaces.

BIOLOGY/MICROBIOLOGY

The science of life or of the origin, structure, reproduction, growth and development of living organisms collectively.





CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

STEM (continued)

CHEMISTRY/BIOCHEMISTRY

The science that deals with the composition, structure and properties of chemical processes and phenomena of substances and the transformation that they undergo.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

The science that deals with the theoretical aspects of computers including storage and the transformation of data using computers.

EARTH AND SPACE SCIENCES

The body of sciences that include geology, mineralogy, physiographic, oceanography, meteorology, climatology, astronomy, speleology, seismology, geography, etc.



CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

STEM (continued)

ENGINEERING

Technology. Projects that directly apply scientific principles to manufacturing and practical uses.

MATHEMATICS

The science of numbers and their operations, interrelations, combinations, generalizations, and abstractions of spaced configurations and their structure. Development of formal logical systems or various numerical and algebraic computations and the application of these principles.

MEDICINE AND HEALTH

The study of diseases and health of humans and animals.





CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

STEM (continued)

PHYSICS

Theories, principles and laws governing energy and the effect of energy on matter.

Visual Arts

ARCHITECTURE

Plans for and models of structures and outdoor spaces.

FILMMAKING

The art and process of making motion pictures.

PAINTING

Art created by applying pigment on a two-dimensional surface with a brush, knife, or hand and/or the manipulation of digital processes with a computer



Visual Arts (continued)

PHOTOGRAPHY

The process, art and technique of capturing images with an analog or digital camera

SCULPTURE

The art of making three-dimensional forms or designs.

CATEGORIES & COMPETITIONS

