

NATIONALLY: A record **ten** Mississippi ACT-SO students have earned medals at the National Competitions between 2007 and 2014.

2007 Amber Bland (Jeff Davis County, MS) won a Gold medal in Drawing
Jerredith Jiles (Jackson, MS) won a Bronze medal in Mathematics
Rachel Lockhart (Jackson, MS) won a Bronze medal in Medicine and Health

2008 Tiffany Williams (Jackson, MS) won a Gold medal in Vocal/Contemporary

2009 Eshan Safaya (Jackson, MS) won a Silver medal in Medicine and Health
Danielle Buckingham (Louisville, MS) won a Bronze medal in Poetry

2013 Krystal Jackson (Jackson, MS) won a Gold medal in Vocal Classical
John Eze Uzodinma (Madison, MS) won a Gold medal in Instrumental Classical
Jasmine Miller (Jackson, MS) won a Bronze medal in Sculpture

2014 Krystal Jackson (Jackson, MS) won a Silver medal in Vocal Classical

THE LOCAL ACT-SO PROGRAM:

The MS State Conference ACT-SO currently has 100+ students compete in the ACT-SO program overseen by volunteer Chairperson Lolita Bolden who have assumed the immense task of coordinating individual mentors, monthly enrichment programs and special activities. ACT-SO's Liaison, Sherry Knight, ensures facility support in addition to overseeing the activities required to host the local competition. Each year, a core group of participants' parents (past and present) additionally volunteer their talents on various steering committees in order to reach defined goals.

The recruiting process begins at the start of the school year in August, when African-American students in grades 9 through 12 attend an orientation. Attendees are given a presentation about the 8-month long program and how it aids in the discovery and/or refinement of talents they may or may not have known they had. Guidance is offered through personal mentorship to clarify the pursuit of a specific career and make more informed life choices. In total, students gain a better perspective on the type of education, professional training and work required to succeed in life.

Students who decide to compete in ACT-SO can choose up to 3 categories from a total list of 26 encompassed within five broad areas. The five areas are Visual and Performing Arts, the Humanities, Science and Business. The **27 individual categories are: *architecture, biology, chemistry, computer science, dance, dramatics, drawing, earth and space science, engineering, entrepreneurship, filmmaking, music, mathematics, medicine and health, oratory, painting, photography, physics, playwriting, poetry sculpture, short story, and culinary arts.***

To compete in a category, students must adhere to pre-determined ACT-SO specifications. For instance, those who choose to work on a project in the Science category must select a topic, stage an experiment, and write a paper (utilizing the scientific method) in addition to creating a board to support their conclusions. If this sounds intense ... IT IS! That's why each student works with an individual mentor. Working with a mentor helps students acquire the know-how to illustrate their knowledge and expertise thru a project presentation or performance in front of judges and an audience and compete against their peers.

Once a month for 8-months, participants are required to attend group enrichment sessions (that generally last around 3 hours) in addition to meeting with an individual mentor on a bi-weekly basis. Monthly enrichment sessions locations are forthcoming. The first hour is highly interactive, designed to engage the entire group. To prepare for subsequent sessions, students are encouraged to watch the news, read newspapers and stay current on local, regional, national and global issues. The group then disperses to areas according to the four broad areas (Sciences, Humanities, Business and the Arts). There they participate in workshops and receive competition requirements for their specific category.

JUDGING:

The most unpleasant task belongs to the numerous volunteer judges (generally college professors, instructors, and professionals) who are charged with evaluating entries. Each student is allowed 3 to 5 minutes to present, followed by an optional question and answer period (depending on the category). Judging panels consist of 3 to 4 professionals who either work or instruct in one of the 25 subject areas. Students earn a score from 1 to 100 based on their ability to translate their experience in the form of a project or performance. A score of 95-100 gets a gold medal, 90-94 a silver medal, 85-89 a bronze medal and 80-84 an honorable mention.

Competitors put all their energy into each project because the ACT-SO program gold medal winners automatically advance to the national competition (with all expenses except food paid) which moves from city to city each year and is hosted somewhere inside the continental United States. In 2015, the national competition will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Students who earn gold medals in the local competition are eligible to compete against an estimated 700 other gold medal winners representing the "best of the best" in almost every state in the union.

Student applications for the 2015 program year are now available!!!

1. Complete the application
2. Sign, get your parent's/guardian's signature, and date the application (*a \$10 Registration fee must accompany the application*)
3. Mail application to: Mississippi State Conference NAACP, 1072 W. Lynch Street, Suite 10, Jackson, Mississippi 39203 or scan/email the application to: msnaacpactso@gmail.com or fax (601) 353-1565.
4. Clear your calendar for the following dates:

March 7, 2015 (Local competition, mandatory to attend), Jackson State University F. D. Hall Music Center, 1400 John R. Lynch Street, Jackson, MS

TBA (Local awards ceremony)

July 9-12, 2015 (National ACT-SO Competition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Please share this information with other African American high school students and encourage them to contact the MS State Conference office at (601) 353-8452 or a local branch in your area to obtain more information about the program.