



Talking Quizbowl

Presented By:



Welcome

Welcome to the second ever newsletter of the Partnership for Academic Competition Excellence, or PACE! We hope that you will find this issue informative whether you are an experienced coach or a person who has never heard of Quizbowl before. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Quizbowl is continuing to be played, with tournaments moving online.

Quizbowl is an academic competition that is played at thousands of high schools in over forty states. In Quizbowl, teams of middle school, high school, or college students are read questions and use a buzzer to ring in when they are ready to give an answer.

The questions that are used in such competitions are on a wide variety of topics, including a lot of history, literature, and science. Quizbowl competitions use tossups, which are answered by the first student to buzz in, and bonuses, which are answered by teams once they confer and reach consensus on their answer.

Quizbowl has experienced remarkable growth over the last few decades. 96 teams compete each year in PACE's National Scholastic Championship, and over 300 teams compete in the High School National Championship Tournament run by NAQT. Quizbowl appeals to a variety of students who share an interest in learning and knowledge. Much of the growth of Quizbowl has been due to students recruiting each other and going on to run tournaments and write questions when their high school playing days are over.

This newsletter has articles explaining why teams play Quizbowl, listing resources available from PACE, and describing how Quizbowl has moved online this year. All of the pictures in this issue were taken before the pandemic hit.

The first issue, which can be found at <http://www.pace-nsc.org/newsletter/newsletter-2020-01.pdf>, includes testimonials and articles on starting a team, attending a tournament, and using internet resources to improve as a team and a player.

We hope you find our newsletters informative, and we encourage you to contact us if you want our support in expanding Quizbowl.

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The PACE website is <http://www.pace-nsc.org/>. If you wish to contact us, you can reach Vice President of Outreach David Reinstein at outreach@pace-nsc.org.

PACE runs the National Scholastic Championship, which will take place online this year on June 5-6. See our website for information on qualifying for the tournament.

Why Your School Should Play Quizbowl

With so many activities available to students in any middle or high school setting, why should your school be playing Quizbowl? It's a fair question, and one that makes sense to ask given that for many administrators, the concept of Quizbowl, if it exists, is murky. It is unusual for administrators to attend a Quizbowl match, but in my experience, once they do, they immediately become Quizbowl converts. Why? Because Quizbowl is an activity where students demonstrate their incredible ability to learn, think, and succeed, and it celebrates what every school stands for: the student who learns for the sake of learning.

Competitive Quizbowl can be overwhelming to watch. Sitting in the audience watching two teams of students competing to answer questions on virtually any academic topic as quickly as possible is a great way to be humbled, especially when the students consistently know the answers before you even understand what is being asked. For an administrator who is looking for evidence that your school is academically strong, this is a wonderful example. Quizbowl players study extensively, practice regularly, and work to learn as much as possible in order to outperform other schools in competition. Imagine--students who study competitively! Either that's a dream come true or a fairly scary nightmare.

Quizbowl teaches teamwork, study skills, and responsibility. Players know that their teammates are counting on them to be prepared. They understand that the work that their peers have done will go to waste if they don't do their part to help the team. As that team mentality grows, so does the accompanying pride that comes with being a part of that team. Quizbowl gives students who excel in academics an opportunity to represent their school, their city, and their state in competition, and that evokes just as much school spirit and pride as any athletic competition.

Speaking of school pride, Quizbowl gives a community yet another reason to be proud of their students, and one which is arguably more important than athletic success. When the time comes to consider funding schools through tax votes, wouldn't it be nice to be able to go to the public and say "Look! Our school's academic competition team regularly finishes in the top four in our state, even when competing against private and selective schools!" When a community believes it is getting a clear return on its investment, it will continue to invest.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Quizbowl programs create opportunities for a wide range of students. Yes, many of the participants are among the top students in a school, but Quizbowl also appeals to students who can't seem to engage in school but have a great deal of knowledge. These students may be bored or unchallenged in their classes, but when they compete in Quizbowl, they find an opportunity to showcase their personal interests—and they may even discover new ones! Even students who have learning or behavioral differences that limit their participation in other activities can find a supportive opportunity in Quizbowl; many such students who struggle with interpersonal skills or with the multiple stimuli of a classroom are able to thrive in the rule-focused, clearly delineated format of a Quizbowl match.

Quizbowl creates opportunities for students to succeed. It creates school spirit, develops teamwork and interpersonal skills, and teaches responsibility and focus. Players need only be engaged and interested to compete. At an average cost of \$60 per tournament entry, the cost is extremely reasonable, making it an option open to students regardless of their individual financial status. It just makes sense for schools to be active supporters of Quizbowl--it's a win-win for the players, the school, and the community!

This article is by Joshua Rutsky of the Alabama Scholastic Competition Association.

Quizbowl Resources from PACE

PACE offers several resources online that are useful to both new and experienced members of the Quizbowl Community.



The Quizbowl Resource Center at <https://hsquizbowl.org/db/> has listing of upcoming tournaments, a forum to discuss Quizbowl, results from tournaments, and many free practice questions in the Quizbowl Packet Archive. One of the sets of questions is the Middle School introductory Set, which has the first round posted online and has other rounds available by emailing outreach@pace-nsc.org.

PACE has also published an Online Tournament Guide at <http://www.pace-nsc.org/online-tournament-guide/>. The guide has sections for Tournament Directors, Coaches, Moderators, and Students.

PACE also has a mentoring program for females and people with nonbinary genders that pairs up mentors and mentees to help people gain more comfort in Quizbowl. People can sign up to be mentors or mentees by clicking this [link](#).



PACE also offers outreach grants to people and organizations who want to increase participation in Quizbowl either nationally or locally. You can apply for a grant by sending an email to outreach@pace-nsc.org.

PACE's website has several articles useful for coaches and students at <http://www.pace-nsc.org/quizbowl-101/>.

PACE also runs the National Scholastic Championship each year. This year's championship will be online on June 5 and 6, 2021.



Playing Quizbowl During COVID

COVID-19 has posed unprecedented challenges to high school education and extracurriculars, and Quizbowl is no exception. However, high school teams across the country have found ways to remain engaged through online Quizbowl practices and tournaments.

Online practices can be managed through various platforms, including video conferencing tools provided by school districts. Coaches may hold practices on platforms like Zoom and WebEx: students may join a video conference meeting hosted by a coach and use the chat feature on the video platform to “buzz” in and answer questions. Free online buzzer platforms, like gamenightbuzzer.com and buzzin.live, can supplement video conference practices by simulating a physical buzzer system for players.

Teams that do not have access to video conferencing tools can also consider using Discord, a free online chat platform that has a capability for voice and video chat. Coaches can create online servers for their teams and host practice using the voice chat feature. More information about setting up a Discord practice server can be found at <http://www.pace-nsc.org/online-tournament-guide/>.

There are only a few technological requirements for online Quizbowl, although not all students may have access to a fast and stable internet connection or a good headset at home, and this may cause challenges. The mobile versions of online platforms such as Zoom or Discord may be a better option for students who do not have a reliable internet connection; Zoom or Discord sessions that are hosted by a coach on the desktop versions of the platforms are still accessible to mobile users.

For coaches, it is crucial to have a well-functioning microphone so that students can clearly hear questions that are being read aloud. USB headsets are recommended for the best microphone quality.

Online tournaments have also become widespread for the 2020-21 school year. Schedules of upcoming online tournaments can be found on the hsquizbowl.org online tournament database at <https://hsquizbowl.org/db/tournaments/>. These tournaments are frequently run on popular platforms like Discord and Zoom, and the accessibility of online tournaments can lower barriers for many Quizbowl teams: online tournaments do not require travel to other schools, they are often less expensive than in-person tournaments, and many of them do not have geographic restrictions—this grants teams opportunities to compete against teams they would otherwise only face at national tournaments.

For any questions about running effective online practices or participating in online tournaments, coaches and teams are welcome to contact David Reinstein at outreach@pace-nsc.org.

This article is by University of Minnesota student Tora Husar.