



August, 2026

TO: Buffalo Area Public High School Principals
FROM: Scott Kroner, MasterMinds Commissioner
Shelby Lohrman, Interscholastic Chess League Executive Director
RE: Sign-up/registration for the 2026-2027 school year

The newest seasons of the MasterMinds and the Interscholastic Chess League (ICL) programs are right around the corner; **an exciting time which looks forward to a continued expansion of participating schools.** MasterMinds is a team-based, academic quiz bowl-style competition similar to the old College Bowl program. It provides a competitive structure to recognize the strengths of academically talented students. The Interscholastic Chess League allows students to test their analytical skills in the classic game of logic and strategy against the talents of the brightest students from other schools.

We are announcing a couple of behind-the-scenes changes to help deal with concerns we had last year. This year there is a new billing information form which we are requiring participants to submit along with their registration form. Our hope is that this will resolve billing problems we encountered last year (a continuation of issues that we have been dealing with since COVID). This financial form does not have to be submitted at the same time as the regular registration form or the prescheduling form but schools cannot be fully registered, nor be scheduled for games, until that form has been received.

Schools have two ways to register for these programs: as a service of the Erie 1 BOCES or through the non-profit CYPRAS (which directs both programs). On the billing information form there are boxes to indicate the vendor for billing. There are no other forms that must be submitted although non-component districts that opt to register with BOCES may need to submit a cross-contract form (which can be provided by their home BOCES).

If you are unsure of interest among your students, you can schedule a demonstration where we come to your school -- either during lunch or after school -- and set-up buzzers and chess boards so your students can see what the programs are like. If you are interested, please contact Scott Kroner as soon as possible to schedule a demonstration.

The fee for MasterMinds for the 2026-2027 season will be at **\$846/team** and the cost for the optional JV program is **\$390** (with varsity participation as a prerequisite). The cost for a team in the Interscholastic Chess League stands at **\$393**. Transportation remains the responsibility of each individual school although coordinated scheduling — having MasterMinds and Chess in the same league — does allow schools to save on transportation. **One bus; two teams!** That is not a requirement; teams from the same school may choose to participate in different leagues.

To register and participate in MasterMinds and/or Chess for the 2026-2027 season, the enclosed forms should be completed and returned, with a requested deadline of **Friday, September 25, 2026**. If you are considering working with another school to field a joint/shared team -- something that **is** permitted -- let us know. Previous non-participants in MasterMinds will still receive a new school orientation. Participating schools should forward the enclosed pre-scheduling form to the coach/advisor for submission.

As schools continue to restore or even expand programming to and beyond pre-COVID levels, now is a great time to become involved! For any questions about MasterMinds, contact Scott Kroner at 585-473-0864 or by e-mail at masterminds@nymasterminds.com. For Chess, contact Shelby Lohrman of the Rochester Chess Center at 585-442-2430 or league@nychess.org. You can also check out www.nymasterminds.com and www.nychess.org for additional information.

We hope to see your school offer your students the opportunity to participate in these popular programs, and we look forward to hearing back from you!