

**KIWANIANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE
EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN
CHESS IN SCHOOLS**

A how to booklet...

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Chess in Your School

The Mission:

- ^ To develop critical and logical thinking, reasoning, decision making, and problem solving abilities;
- ^ To instill a sense of self-confidence and self-worth;
- ^ To teach the values of hard work, dedication, and commitment;
- ^ To bring out latent abilities that have not been reached by traditional educational means.

What is a chess program? It ...

- ^ **Brings kids together to play chess:** A chess club meets regularly (generally once a week) under the supervision of a responsible adult to learn and play chess.
- ^ **Provides Basic Instruction:** (See "Tips on Chess Instruction -- for non-players and for chess players without teaching expertise," page 4.)
- ^ **Maintains interest -- makes it fun.** Lets kids play: Playing chess is the essence of a chess program.

Why should we have a chess program? It ...

Builds strong intellects: Chess has long been recognized throughout the world as a builder of strong intellects, but only recently has the United States begun to recognize chess's ability to improve the cognitive abilities, rational thinking and reasoning of even the least promising children. Chess brings out latent abilities that have not been reached by traditional educational means. It promotes logical thinking, instills a sense of self-confidence and self-worth, improves communication and pattern recognition skills. It teaches the values of hard work, concentration, objectivity, and commitment.

Raises academic performance: In Marina, CA, an experiment with chess indicated that after only 20 days of instruction, students' academic performance improved dramatically. George L. Stephenson, chairman of the Marina JHS math department, reported that 55 % of students showed significant improvement in academic performance after this brief smattering of chess instruction.

Similarly, a 5-year study of 7th and 8th graders by Robert Ferguson of the Bradford, PA School District showed that test scores improved 17.3% for students regularly engaged in chess classes, compared with only 4.56% for children participating in other forms of "enrichment activities" including Future Problem Solving, Dungeons and Dragons, Problem Solving with Computers, independent study, and creative writing. A Watson-Glaser Thinking Appraisal evaluation showed overwhelmingly that chess improved critical thinking skills more than the other methods of enrichment.

Improves Relationships and Socialization: Carolyn Tolley, a teacher from W. D William Elementary, Buncombe County, North Carolina, and Jerome Fishman, Guidance Counselor, C.J.H.S 23 1, Queens, NY agree. Fishman said: "I like the aspect of socialization. You get into friendly, competitive activity where no one gets hurt. Instead of two bodies slamming into each other like in football, you've got the meeting of two minds. It's strategic, and you use logic to plan an attack scheme. Aside from being good for the cognitive development of these youngsters, chess develops their social skills, too. It makes them feel they belong. Whenever we get a child transferred from another school who may have mal adaptive behavior, our principal (Dr. Wilton Anderson) suggests chess as a way of helping him find his niche. It also helps kids learn how to be better friends. They analyze the game and talk it over afterwards. I even had a couple of kids who never had much in common start going to each others houses to play chess and swap Chess Life magazines. We've got kids literally lining up in front of the school at 6:45 am to get a little chess in before classes start."

Benefits all Students: Historically in the US, education was an important key to upward mobility and a great equalizer for minorities and the economically disadvantaged. But systemic problems in public education have plagued the inner-cities for years. For many inner-city youngsters, school seems irrelevant and boring. Failure in intellectual activities, especially in elementary school, can lead to low self-esteem and a loss of vision or hope for the future. There is no shortage of programs addressing these problems. Yet, by all reports, too many youngsters are not reaching the levels of academic achievement they will need to become productive citizens and meet the demands of the next century.

In 1986, Mobil Oil Executive Faneuil Adams, Jr., began teaching the ancient game of chess to children in the lowest income areas of New York City. Experienced chess instructors, equipment and chess books were sent into public schools in Harlem, Bedford Stuyvesant and the South Bronx. To the surprise and delight of teachers and parents, students learned quickly, played with gusto and soon became very skillful. Since many of the youngsters previously failed at intellectual activities, this new success was a source of wonderment and satisfaction. Teachers reported improvement in the students' behavior, attitude and scholastic performance; test scores went up, particularly in reading and math; attendance and punctuality improved; children began looking forward to school, and students developed confidence in their ability to succeed at schoolwork.

By now it should be clear that the game of chess is not a game just for intellectuals.

Costs little with a high benefit/cost ratio. Chess is inexpensive. A couple of chess sets and you are ready to go. Money from chess sets can come from a \$5 student fee, a sponsoring Kiwanis Club, The School, The PTA, PTO, or even a local booster club.

Additional costs might include: joining the US Chess Federation as a scholastic club, and purchasing chess references such as Pawn and Queen and In between, Bobby Fisher Teaches Chess, and other books; a few trophies for in school tournaments; and fees for participation in tournaments. (see appendix E)

What are the steps to start a program?

Weigh potential results and make a personal commitment. Sound programs require continual personal attention.

Obtain Project Approval. Brief your local Kiwanis board of directors and seek their approval for the project. Get membership backing by using this brochure to inform them of the project objectives and requirements.

Gain essential support -- sell school officials. A chess in schools program needs support from the school principal. Even though the principal says that he knows chess helps kids, don't assume he is familiar with all of the recent studies which show how chess helps improve academic skills. Benefits must be great enough to overcome difficulties such as persuading someone already busy to take on additional work. Emphasize that you want to work with the schools, that you will be in charge each week, and that the program will adhere to school rules.

Agree on a time table. Once school officials are on board, prepare a time table with deadlines for recruiting volunteers, bringing in students, sending out permission slips, ordering chess sets, and planning the first and subsequent meetings.

Set time, place, length of chess meetings and the date for the first meeting. The place is determined by availability. Scholastic programs have used cafeterias, media centers, gym floors, hallways and class rooms. Some prefer to hold meetings where other kids walking by can see what's going on and become interested. Programs run from 20 minutes to 2 hours. Most popular are 45 minutes for kindergarten through third grade and an hour for 4th grade and up.

Recruit volunteers from parents and others interested in education. A single responsible person can start a program, and this person need not know chess. Some of our strongest programs are led by non-chess players. What is needed is a person who wants to help kids grow. This leader may be a faculty member or a volunteer.

Volunteers strengthen programs. How do you get volunteers? Ask. Ask for volunteers with the permission sheet. (Appendix G. Forms.) Then ask again. Ask and give them a specific job such as group leader at meetings, or on a telephone committee, or driving and chaperone kids to tournaments. Don't assume that volunteers know that chess educates. Let them know that they are doing something important. **THE MORE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, THE STRONGER THE PROGRAM!**

Bring in the Players. Use announcements; have teachers recruit for you. Plan announcements in the school. At PTA or PTO, have teachers recruit. Once potential players have been identified, provide them with written permission slips as well as parent volunteer sheets and educational materials (see Appendix H, Forms).

Lay the foundation -- the first meeting.

Invite the principal to attend. A typical agenda might include:

Introductions

What you as students can expect:

To play chess,

To have fun,

To participate in tournaments,

To be praised on improvement rather than winning.

What we expect from you students:

To obey the school rules (review important rules).

To be here on time. The first match will be prearranged. Being late is unfair to you and opponent. Lateness or tardiness will cost you the game and will drop you three places in the standings (see standings board, below).

To be polite and shake hands before and after each game. (See Appendix D: Rules of Etiquette)

To reset the board after each game.

To Play "touch move" : If you touch a piece you must move it. If you put the piece down and let it go it stays on that square. If you touch an opponent's piece, you must take it. Touch move demands that the player looks ahead to the future.

If there is any disagreement, US Chess Federation's Official Rules of Chess should be established as the final arbiter.

We are a team; we are here to learn, improve, and have fun.

Make certain that beginners know that the basic objective is to capture the King, then teach the moves of the pieces. When the introductory phase has concluded, let the kids play.

Tips on chess instruction for non-chess players and for chess players without teaching expertise.

To many, "I can't teach chess," becomes a major stumbling block. It need not be. Consider:

That many of the best programs were started by non-chess players.

That on its most basic level chess is an easy game.

That more people play chess than any other game.

That educational benefits begin to accrue the moment the least experienced player sets his goal (to get the king) and strives mentally to achieve that goal.

That our mission is not to produce Grand masters -- but to help kids grow.

Help is at your finger tips:

Tips from a Coach. A veteran tells how to teach chess. (Appendix A -- a single page.)

Teaching Basic Chess - the Board and Moves of Pieces describes a quick, easy, and effective way for kids to learn the moves of the pieces (Appendix B).

Pawn and Queen and In Between, with marvelous illustrations, has been designed "for teachers who do not know chess." It can lead you through early lessons. It has a Teacher's Manual and a Work Book for students. The Manual and Work Books can be ordered from US Chess Federation (see Appendix E.)

Bobby Fisher Teaches Chess. Kids read it! And those that read it show remarkable improvement. Available from US Chess Federation (See Appendix E.)

Questions can be answered by Joe Noertker. E-mail JAN.@worldnet.att.net. Also look at the list of Frequently Ask Questions (Appendix F).

Additional options to teach chess include recruiting or hiring an experienced chess player to coach and making use of peer teaching. Whatever you choose, you must set the direction of the program and keep it on track, For example excellent chess players are often too far ahead of their students and lack patience.

How do we maintain interest -- make it fun?

Keep instruction short -- generally 10 minutes or less. Experts agree that the best way to learn chess is by playing. See Appendix B, Teaching Basic Chess.

Keep kids busy. Idle kids not only fail to learn, but they will disrupt others and will ruin your program. This is worth repeating: idle kids not only fail to learn, but they will disrupt others and ruin your program. While players of similar strength are paired for the first game on the meeting day, the priority for the rest of the meeting is to keep them playing. Don't let players stand around; tell them to play. If there is a mismatch, tell the stronger to help the weaker, or handicap the stronger player. Reward peer teaching.

Kids love tournaments -- hold them. Emphasize participation, self improvement and having fun over winning, but hold in-school tournaments as soon as possible (see Appendix C, Tournaments). As soon as they know the basic rules, let them participate in regional, state, and national tournaments, or in tournaments with other schools. These children feel a part of a greater community -- be it a club, a school team, or as a representative of one's city in regional, state, or national tournaments. Further, children who participate in tournaments learn more than in weeks or months of ordinary chess. When they return to school from a tournament, their interest in chess is greater than ever. Winning goes unmentioned in the Mission Statement; tournament participants have more fun and show more improvement -- win or lose.

Jo Burn, Principal, PS 189, Brooklyn, NY: "In chess tournaments the child gets the opportunity of seeing more variety and diversity. There are kids who have more money than they have, but chess is a common denominator. They are all equal on the chessboard. I believe it is connected academically and to the intellectual development of children. I see them able to

attend to something for more than an hour and a half. I am stunned. Some of them could not attend to things for more than 20 minutes."

Maintain a simple standings board. A small bulletin board, or even a strip of wood, and velcro can be used for a base; players' names can be printed on tongue depressors, and used to create a simple ladder or standings board. A player can play three above or three below his standing. If a player beats someone higher in the standings (up to three spaces higher), he is promoted to that spot on the standings board, and the loser drops one slot. If a player is late or absent, he drops three places.

Offer awards and incentives. Reward games played (participation) and won. Kids who play improve. The following is one awards program used by several schools: Master Point cards are given to players as rewards. The lowest value reward is a single black Master Point card. Five black cards may be turned in for one red card; five red cards for a blue card; five blue cards for a gold plated Knight lapel pin. Establish guidelines for obtaining reward cards. Typically:

One black card for playing a game; two for winning.

Five black cards for writing down moves (notating).

Cards also might be awarded for winning a tournament, participating in outside tournaments, peer teaching, helping clean up, good behavior, etc.

Target potential drop out situations:

The top player -- bored. Find a strong adult player and recruit him to play with your top players. At tournaments, play your top player against stronger kids. Encourage students to read progressively more difficult books on chess. Play against a computer. And play E-mail and interface games on the computer.

The weak player -- discouraged. Chess is a simple game. Return to the basics: ask your players "How do you win the game?" Have patience and praise an answer that shows thought. Build self-confidence with timed two Rook checkmate or checkmate with Rook and King. Help students demonstrate other ways to checkmate. See Bobby Fisher Teaches Chess, pages 20-31. Praise improvement that seems almost automatic after student reads Bobby Fisher Teaches Chess. Ask leading questions on Openings, for example: "How can you checkmate if your pieces are on this side of the board and his king is on the other?" "How can you attack the king with force?" Have student show you the best first ten moves. Dare the student to play 100 games without getting better. Ask more experienced players to help. Handicap better players with time and pieces (i.e. reduce his available time or take one or more of his pieces). A winning player can stand criticism; a losing player needs praise and support. Work to find ways to praise weak players. This may be where we are able to make an impact in education. In tournaments, the chess team's success will often depend on the success of the weakest players. Also, if your poorer players improve, the others will get better.

In 1998, Wimbledon announcer Dick Enberg said that when Pete Sampras was young, he played against better players. He played to get better, not to win. De-emphasize the importance of winning and losing. Winning and losing is not important. The objective should be to improve.

Happiness is accomplishment and progress.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX B: TEACHING BASIC CHESS -- THE BOARD AND MOVES OF PIECES.

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APPENDIX A
TIPS FROM A COACH

by Joe Noertker, 1998 North Carolina Coach of the Year

This works for me. I do not presume that this is the only way to teach chess.

- I. I do not teach chess; I teach children chess.
- II. My mission is not developing national masters nor winning championships. Chess strengthens young minds in so many ways. Using chess, I want to help a child grow.
- III. Basic chess: Chess can be a simple game. I want the student
 - To become obsessed with the goal -- Capturing the King.
 - To think and thereby exercise the mind rather than memorize.
 - To plan by doing.
- IV. "Hands-on" serves me best. My kids learn by playing, making mistakes, and setting up the board and playing again.
- V. Fun. Kids having fun, play. If they play they learn. I focus on having fun.
- VI. I strive to have my kids so obsessed with CAPTURING THE KING, that they:
 - Plan without knowing the definition of planning;
 - Develop pieces purposefully, without studying openings; and
 - Absorb instruction because it fits their goal -- to capture the King.

How do I, as the instructor, win? Simplify! Chess can be an easy game. Simply capture the opponent's King. With board set up in the beginning of the game, ask: "With your pieces on one side and your opponent's king on the other, how are you going to capture the king? Don't tell them to "plan," but see that they plan. Ask: "How are you going to capture the King?" Then, shut up. Have patience. Put their minds to work -- planning.

PATIENCE.-- that's tough (watch parents reach over to show their little Johnny a better move.) Get the wheels turning. Watch the eyes. If the student is studying the board, don't interrupt.

PRAISE: Tell the child how good he is -- find a way! Praise efforts to think even on a bad move. Nothing is more important than to teach the child to think. Only thinking leads to better chess and a more rewarding life.

Players who understand and apply basics -- get the King -- have more fun and play better chess. At tournaments we often compete against smarter kids who have memorized a ton; of moves, but we do O.K. After one tournament in which even our second team creamed everyone, an opposing coach, shaking his head in negative reaction to our players lack of memorizing approved moves, said, "I'll tell you one thing, your players really go after the king."

Chess can be fun. Don't memorize! Make kids use their heads. Say: "That's a good move, show me another. "Another." "Another." Or... "How will that help you get the king?" Ask questions. Have patience. Let the child's mind work. Watch the eyes. **If the eyes sparkle an "Ah Ha!" I have my reward.**

Mr. Noertker has taught 2200 kids in the last decade. His teams won two state championships and placed second numerous times.

APPENDIX B

TEACHING BASIC CHESS -- THE BOARD AND THE PIECES

The Goal: The King -- get the King. It is said that a beginner could leap ahead of half of the chess players if only he/she could become obsessed with capturing the enemy King. Every move, every play, every thought should be directed toward the enemy King.

The Board and the Pieces:

Props: Paper and pencil for each child. A chess board for instructor and each group of four to six children. Each board needs one Rook, one Bishop, one Queen, one Knight and eight Pawns

Describe Board -- squares and highways. Then have the students draw it.

Files: Move queen vertically along the files (indicated in small letters).

Ranks: Move queen horizontally along board (indicated in small numbers).

Diagonals: Move bishop along the diagonals.

Ask, "How do you win?" (Answer: Capture the opposing King.)

Ask: "What must you, do to capture the opposing king?" (A: "Move your army across the board.")

Show the Rook

Write rook on your paper.

Who can make a plus sign (+)? -- Praise and/or reward (e.g. give the player a Master Point card)

Make a plus sign on your paper.

Now, a Rook moves like a plus sign.

Who can show me how a rook moves on the board? -- Praise and/or Reward

Let each child demonstrate on the board.

Make five plus marks on your paper. -- Praise and/or Reward

Show the Bishop.

Write Bishop on your paper.

Who can make an X? -- Praise and/or Reward -

Now, a Bishop moves like an X.

Who can show me how a Bishop moves? -- Praise and/or Reward

Let each child demonstrate.

Make 5 X's on your paper after Bishop.

Show the Queen.

Write Queen on your paper.

Make a plus sign and then put an X on top of it.

A queen moves like the Rook (demonstrate) and the Bishop (demonstrate).

Who can show me how the Queen moves? -- Praise and/or Reward --

Let each child demonstrate.

Make five stars on your paper after the Queen.

Show the Knight.

Write Knight on your paper.

The Knight moves to the next square not touching of opposite color.

Demonstrate. Place a pawn on each square to which the Knight can move.

Play simple games: Divide the pawns: two students with four pawns each, or four students with two pawns each. Who can be first to put the pawns on squares to which the knight can move?

Show that a knight in the center can attack eight separate enemy pieces. Put a Knight, King and Queen on the perimeter. Ask, "Where can you put the Knight where he can check the King and win the Queen on the next move?" This is called a fork.

APPENDIX C TOURNAMENTS.

Swiss format: In the first round, players are matched according to skill level. In succeeding rounds, winners play winners and losers play losers. Everyone plays every round. A win receives one point; a loss 0 points, and a draw receives ½ point. See U.S.C.F. rules of chess for details.

Blitz (5-minute games)- two games with same players, switching colors.

10 second tournament. Players are given 10 seconds for each move. At the end of ten seconds, the director rings a bell and the players must move. If a player has not moved by a second bell two seconds, later he loses the game. This allows clubs without clocks to participate in fast chess.

Simultaneous: A top player plays all or some of the other kids. He moves quickly from player to player. The student waits until the simo-player is at his board, then he must move.

Round Robin: Each player plays one game with everyone else in the group. Usually there are 4 in a group.

School vs. school: Either everyone or a selected group plays. Keep winning in perspective. Both participation and improvement are more important than winning.

State and Nationals: A Swiss type tournament. The top four players count toward total team score; all can be recognized as any number can be on a team. This tournament can declare both team and individual winners.

Team tournaments: Generally four players from one team compete against other teams with four players. At the beginning of the tournament, each individual is assigned a board number 1-4 on his team. He/she must play the person with the same board assignment on the opposing team. The player may not change board assignment throughout the tournament. Winning teams are paired against winning teams in subsequent rounds (similar to the Swiss type pairing.) With 30 minutes per side, a tournament starting at 5:30 can be over by 8-8:30. Extremely well received.

General: Since games end at different times, kids must leave the tournament area between rounds. There should be another area where they can play chess, and be kept busy between rounds!

Note: Various types of chess tournaments are described in detail in the U.S. Chess Federation Rules of Chess, available from USCF, 3054 NYS Route 9w, New Windsor, NY, 12553

APPENDIX D
U.S. Chess Center

RULES OF ETIQUETTE

1. Every game must begin and end with the players shaking hands.
2. Between the two handshakes, no talking is permitted. "Check" need not be said. Players are responsible for noticing where all of the pieces on the board are located, and what threats are pending.
3. Never do anything to distract any other player in the tournament, especially your opponent.
4. Always use the "touch move" rule. If you touch a piece, you must move it. If you touch an opponent's piece, you must take it. The only time this does not apply is if a move is impossible or illegal.
5. If an illegal move is made, the tournament director should be summoned. In a tournament using a "Sudden Death" time control, the other player receives an extra two minutes when one player makes an illegal move.
6. Never gloat over a victory, or become despondent or hostile following a defeat. It is always best to analyze the game with your opponent, after the game ends, and in a different room from where you played. Leave the playing room quietly when you finish so as not to distract the other people who are still playing.
7. Never comment on a game that is in progress, whether the game is yours or one that you are just Watching-
8. The tournament director has the authority to punish breaches of etiquette, and may add or subtract time as a sanction. In extreme cases, players may be forfeited for violating the rules and spectators may be banned from the site.

APPENDIX E
USEFUL AIDS TO TEACHING CHESS: ORGANIZATIONS, BOOKS & PAMPHLETS,
SOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

Here is a list of useful aids. Unless otherwise noted, they can be ordered from: US Chess Federation; NYS Rte 9W, New Windsor, NY 12553. Telephone: 1-800-388-5464.

ORGANIZATIONS:

U.S. Chess Federation, (3054 NYS Route 9W, New Windsor, N.Y. 12553): Scholastic Membership at a cost of \$40 annually; includes *Chess Life*, the adult monthly magazine and *School Mates* for scholastics. Upon becoming a member USCF will send a packet of information on Scholastic Chess. These magazines publish a list of tournaments by state. USCF's scholastic coordinator is Beatrice Marinello (scholastic-uscf@juno.com).

Individuals must be a member to participate in rated tournaments. The U.S. Chess Federation publishes a rating list of about 70,000 Tournament Players including scholastics "The Nation's Top 50 Players" are listed in the following categories: boys 8 and under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18; and girls under 16, and under 13.

USCF has a 52 page catalog of chess sets, chess clocks, chess books, chess computers, and chess software, tournament and club supplies, etc. Most items carry a discount for scholastic organizations

Rochester Chess Center, (221 Norris Dr., Rochester, NY 14610; 1-800-ON CHESS; Web site: www.vivanet.com/-rec). The Rochester Chess Center is Western NY's largest Scholastic Club. They have chess equipment at very competitive prices. We buy many items from them including several hundred Knight Pins a year (used in our Master Point program described on page 6 under Offer awards and incentives.). They have quantity discounts for schools.

VIDEOS:

New teaching videos appear regularly, but most fail to hold the class's attention. The movie *In Search of Bobby Fisher* available in video stores is a fine movie with a good message for kids. Good for parents, kids, and coaches. Highly recommended.

Video: Mrs. Tolley, a 5th grade teacher at W. D. Williams, Mrs. Oosdyke Counselor at Owen Middle School and Dwayne Wilson underscore the benefits of chess . In 14 minutes they will make you a believer. Available on rent for postage from Asheville Kiwanis Club, in care of Joe Noertker, 1617 Hendersonville Road, Asheville, 28803.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS: 100,000 books on chess, we are told, are in the Cleveland Library. Most are not useful for our purposes. Below find some books, that we recommend. Unless other wise stated these books are available for the United States Chess Federation.

For Coaches and leaders.

Best Lessons of a Chess Coach, Sunil Weeramantry, more difficult.

Comprehensive Chess Course Volumes I & II, by Pelts and Albert. Useful lesson ideas.

USCF Official Rules of Chess. Includes descriptions of and rules for running tournaments.

Chess-In-The Schools, a Simple Instructional Guide for Teachers

Bobby Fisher Teaches Chess

How to Reassess Your Chess, Jeremy Silman, Thinkers- Press, 1991.

Chess in the Classroom - a complete guide, Rosalyn B. Katz, Executive Training Concepts, Inc., 1992.

The Ideas Behind Chess Openings, Ruben Fine

How to Play Good Opening Moves, Edmar Mednis

Appendix E

Recommended Books (cont.)

For Beginning Students.

Bobby Fisher Teaches Chess, The kids work the problems. A must for every child.

Ten Tips to Winning Chess, A USCF pamphlet.

ABCs of Chess, Bruce Pandofini

One step above Average.

How Not to Play Chess, Eugene A. Znosko-Borovshy. Order from Amazon Books; old notation, but easy to read. Emphasizes planning and understanding over memorization.

1001 Brilliant Ways to Checkmate, Fred Reinfeld

Students Really in to it.

My System, Aron Nimzowitsch. A classic on positional chess.

How to Reassess Your Chess, Jeremy Silman.

The Ideas Behind Chess Openings, Ruben Fine. A classic on chess openings.

Games of the Masters for study.

My Sixty Memorable Games, Bobby Fisher

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

Joe Noertker will answer your questions on building chess programs via E-mail at JAN.@worldnet.att.net.

New York's CHESS-IN-THE-SCHOOLS web site is worth a visit: <http://www.symbolic.com/chess/>

Contact your local chess club.

APPENDIX F FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HAVE A QUESTION? TRY US

In 11 years we've run into many obstacles; some looked insurmountable. I remember a call from Mrs. Tolley of W.D. Williams Elementary. The school bus schedule had changed. The only time available for chess was 20 minutes in the morning, and who can learn chess in 20 minutes? Five years later, 123 kids are playing chess and W. D. Williams placed second in the state for the second consecutive year. They have the strongest program in Western North Carolina -- in spite of being limited to 20 minutes. Call us - we have already been through the problem. Joe Noertker, will answer your questions. E-mail JAN.@worldnet.att.net. Mailing address: 1617 Hendersonville Road, Apt # 4-A, Asheville, NC 28803. Tel (828) 277-0654

Q. We've no one who is a good enough chess player to teach?

A. This obstacle looms big. A number of years ago, Ira B. Jones Elementary started chess with Ms. Henderson, a non-player, in charge. All question were referred to their best player -- a rank beginner. It worked. The chess club grew from 27 to 36, and finally to 65. And gradually they learned the rules. If you don't know the answer to a question, ask your best player to answer. Don't let certainty about a specific rule get in the way of playing. Refer to Appendices A, Tips from a Chess Coach, and B, Teaching Basic Chess. You'll be better equipped than Ms. Henderson.

Q. When should kids go to tournaments?

A. As soon as they know the moves. Kids often learn more at tournaments than they do all year long. They learn by playing better players. The child, parent helpers and coaches all have a learning opportunity. At our first state scholastic tournament we were I so bad that I called ahead to make certain that we would not embarrass the tournament. The Asheville team finished last, absolutely last! "How can we get chess going in Asheville?" I asked. "Take them to tournaments," they all replied. I had the team before the Asheville City School Board took sponsorship of the chess program. Participation IS more important than winning.

Q. Isn't intense competition at a young age bad? Should kids really go to tournaments?

A. Losing in a competition can be a negative experience. How children are prepared for a formal competition is, therefore, crucial. There are valuable lessons here. In chess and in life self improvement -- not winning -- is the key. Never ask a child if he won, but rather how did he play. You learn more by playing better players. Set the kids up for self improvement and fun -- win or lose.

Q. Question: Do you teach younger kids differently?

A. Differences exist in attention span and mental maturity. Some require more patience, but on the most basic level, chess is chess -- an easy game. Establish the goal -- TO CAPTURE THE KING -- then promote common sense. Teach the moves of the six different pieces plus the board as quickly possible (see Appendix A: Teaching Basic Chess). Hands on (rather than lecture). Search out and praise the slightest success or improvement. The game must be fun -- Happiness is accomplishment and progress.

Q. How can you insure that the kids have fun?

A. Keep them playing. Emphasize improvement over winning.

Q. The kids beat me. Won't that destroy their respect?

A. You're teaching kids not chess. The kid who beats you will tell the world that he/she beat an adult and think he's God's gift to chess. And it's almost a certainty that "God's gift to Chess" will return eager to learn more.

APPENDIX G FORMS

PARENTS AND BOOSTERS

BEN FRANKLIN, in *The Art of Virtue*, said, "The game of chess is not merely an idle amusement. Several very valuable qualities of the mind, useful in the course of human life are to be acquired or strengthened by it so to become habits ready on all occasions." (see Ben Franklin, *Chess & Strengthening* attached.

Count on me to take an active part in my child's chess experience. I can help in the following areas (please check):

- Being a member of Parents Committee.
- Helping us get publicity.
- Telephoning.
- Typing.
- Car pooling kids on Fridays to various events.
- Helping at tournaments.
- Teaching Chess.

NAME	TELEPHONE	ADDRESS
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DID YOU KNOW:

That chess is 3500 years old?

That more people have played chess than any other game?

That there are more books on Chess than all other sports and hobbies put together? The Cleveland Library has 100,000 books on chess.

That the *In search of Bobby Fisher* is now in video stores?

That at a move a minute, after just four moves in a game of chess, it would take 600,000 years to make every possible move? No wonder no one can master it.

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Asheville Citizen Times 02/17/94 section C

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Why chess? "Chess is the Gymnasium of the Mind."

Helping Kids Grow one Move at a Time

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