



ILLINOIS CHESS ASSOCIATION

WHY NOT CHICAGO?

A proposal to set up a program of free chess instruction in Chicago's Title I schools to

- improve decision-making, strategic thinking and emotional development
- improve academic performance
- bring Chicago's youth chess program into the nation's top competitive tier

to

Mayor Rahm Emanuel

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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 and strengthened by it, so as to become habits ready on all occasions; for life is a kind of Chess...

The Morals of Chess by Benjamin Franklin

This is wonderful! This is marvelous! This is stupendous! It's the finest thing that ever happened to this school.... More than anything else, chess makes a difference... what it has done for these children is simply beyond anything that I can describe.

Connie Wingate, principal of P.S. 123 in New York

I've seen what chess has done for Bateman kids. By teaching them the importance of slowing down and thinking through choices, it's improved their decision-making and work habits. I'm convinced it will help them succeed.

Carl Dasko, Principal of Chicago's Bateman Elementary School

Playing chess helps students develop thinking and analyzing skills, concentration, greater self-control, and self confidence. When the Chess-in-the-Schools kids were tested on national standardized exams, they showed significant gains in reading, outperforming not only the average scores in their school districts but the national average as well... The program costs about \$100 a student per year. Today, Chess-in-the-Schools [serves]... elementary and junior high school students in 109 schools in New York City neighborhoods with incomes low enough to qualify for the federal school lunch program. It also operates after-school programs in more than 110 schools...

Bill Clinton on New York's chess program

[In addition to academic gains] the chess students had significantly fewer absences during the school year... With regard to behavior, principals reported that students who participate in chess see the consequences of their actions and are less likely to become involved in risky behaviors.

The Philadelphia Youth Chess Challenge Report 2009-2010

How do... experts account for New York's [dominance in chess]? Robust instruction isn't limited to tony private schools and their elite public counterparts... Chess-in-the-Schools [provides] instruction both in after-school settings and as part of the curriculum, serving 13,000 students at 50 Title I school... The group also trains teachers on how to start chess programs.

"Why NYC Kids Rule the Chess World" (Wall Street Journal, May 13, 2011)

I've traveled the country for 20 years promoting chess programs for kids. Chicago is one of those cities where I would love to see chess flourish.

Grandmaster Maurice Ashley (author of *Chess for Success*)

It would bring us all great pride if Chicago joined the top rank of the nation's chess cities.

Grandmaster Dmitry Gurevich (Illinois State Champion)

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WHY NOT CHICAGO?

A Proposal for a Program of Free Chess Instruction In Chicago's Title I Schools¹

Summary. The Illinois Chess Association (ICA) offers to set up and run a program to bring the educational and social benefits of chess to many more Chicago school children, and at the same time bring Chicago's chess program into the nation's top competitive tier. ICA's contribution would be without charge. Based on experience elsewhere, total program costs would be \$400,000, to be raised from the private sector. The program would begin with a fund-raising drive announced by ICA and representatives of the City and would be phased in to reach all areas of the city within three years. A detailed action plan based on the best features of successful programs in other cities appears below.

Why chess? Skyrocketing interest in youth chess over the past few decades can be explained by its unique ability to rivet our attention and simultaneously teach important life skills. Recent studies have confirmed what educators have known for nearly 40 years: that chess improves test scores, academic performance, concentration, decision-making, creativity, problem solving, and social skills.² Chess has proven to "add value" to student learning during the school day and extended learning hours. A 2009 study focusing on middle school students in some of the poorest and most dangerous areas of Philadelphia found that chess programs offered during the critical unsupervised hours after school not only improved participants' test scores in reading and math, but had significant positive effects on their school attendance and behavior.³ According to a summary of the academic gains produced by the city's chess program (ASAP),

[T]he ASAP students outperformed the matched comparison group in both reading and math on [statewide] tests. ASAP fifth-grade chess students did 25% better in math, while eighth grade chess students did 30% better than all public school students in those grades. In reading, 37% of ASAP chess-playing fifth-graders and 38% of ASAP eighth-graders did better in reading than all public school students in those grades.⁴

Why Teach Chess?

1. *Kids learn decision-making.*
2. *Kids develop concentration.*
3. *Test scores rise.*
4. *Attendance and behavior improve.*
5. *Kids gain emotional maturity.*

A 1999 New York study testing the effect of chess instruction on emotional intelligence -- including self-confidence, empathic respect for others, mood management, frustration tolerance,

and sustained efforts to achieve personal goals -- showed that, in every category, chess-playing students outperformed the non-chess-playing ones, with 91% of their responses being scored as emotionally intelligent, compared with 64% for non-chess players. The greatest differentiator involved respect for others, where chess students outscored the others by 42%.⁵

Chess in other cities. A number of major U.S. cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Miami, Portland (Oregon), Atlanta, Seattle, and Brownsville (Texas) have set up robust, centrally coordinated, year-round programs which provide free chess instruction to students in Title I schools. As illustrated in the Table below, programs are available in many of these cities in more than half of their Title I schools, with percentages ranging as high as 100%. By comparison, although accurate data are presently unavailable on Chicago schools, the data available suggests that fewer than 10% of Chicago schools have such programs.

Participation in youth chess programs in selected cities (2010-2011)⁶

City (population)	Kids Served	Title I Schools Served	% of Title I Schools Served	Chess Budget	Source of funding	Website (See Notes)
New York (8.4M)	23,000	300 ⁷	20	3,000,000	300,000 from city, 500,000 from state, rest private	8
Philadelphia (1.5M)	4,000	142	43	300,000	100,000 from city, rest private	9
Miami (400K)	4,000	123	41	600,000 ¹⁰	County, grants & indiv. schools	11
Portland (560K)	2,000	36	100	468,000	Private	12
Brownsville (400K)	1,200	44	81	400,000	School district	13
Seattle (617K)	1,000	21	> 40	See note ¹⁴	Indiv. schools	15
Atlanta (541K)	3,800	17	> 30	See note ¹⁶	Indiv. schools	17
Chicago (2.8M)	1,340? ¹⁸	54? ¹⁹	< 10?	Unkn	CPS, indiv. schools	20

Chess in Chicago. Chicago's low participation rates have two primary causes. The first is the absence of a robust effort to stimulate the development of new programs and promote competition. Chicago's sole city-wide commitment to chess is through the CPS Sports Department, which oversees a program of stipends for chess coaches and a single annual championship for students at the K-8 and high school levels. Though this support exists for the small number of chess programs already in place in CPS schools -- most of which were started locally by enterprising teachers and

parents – there is no system-wide effort to encourage and support the establishment of new chess clubs in the overwhelming majority of schools which at present don't have them.

Chicago's low numbers are also explained by the size of Chicago's chess stipends. Although they are important symbols of the city's support, Chicago's stipends are \$440 for an entire year, much lower than in other cities and inadequate as an inducement to start a club. In New York's top programs, part-time coaches start at approximately \$4000, and coaches who work full time can earn ten times that amount. In Miami, 80% of coaches receive \$3000 or more. Stipends are \$1000 in Portland and Brownsville. Even in Illinois, most high school coaches outside of Chicago receive \$1000 or more, and 65% of them receive \$2000 or more.²¹

We are sympathetic to the budgetary and contractual constraints on CPS and its Sports Department, but existing chess stipends are lower than those for Pom Pom and on a par with Double Dutch (jump rope).²²

The consequence is that there are only two small groups of chess programs in CPS schools. The first is run by a small number of extraordinarily dedicated teachers and coaches who devote vastly more time to their chess programs than they are paid for and thus serve essentially as volunteers. The second group of programs is run by private chess companies, generally at a cost which is prohibitive for the vast majority of low-income families.

Participation by CPS schools in major competitions is extraordinarily low. Only 47 out of the city's 524 elementary schools sent more than a single player to CPS' own 2011 K-8 championship. The numbers at the high school level are even worse. Only eight out of 151 CPS high schools participated in this year's CPS high school championship, down from 11 last year and 40 a few years ago, and only four schools could field a full eight-player team.

Attendance at state championships is even lower. Out of 146 teams competing in the 2011 K-8 championship tournament, none was from a CPS school.²³ By comparison, 30% of the teams attending the 2011 New York State Championship were from New York City Schools.²⁴ Only ten CPS schools sent teams to this year's All Grade state championship, despite that tournament being held in Chicago and having no entry fee for students in the city's free and reduced lunch program. At the high school level, six CPS schools attended this year's state championship out of 128 schools attending, a figure which has held constant in the past three years.

CPS is virtually absent from national championships. Only one CPS school attended the K-6 championship, sending two players. Not a single CPS school attended the national middle school championship, and only one school sent a team to the national high school championship.²⁵ By comparison, 11 teams from New York City public schools participated in the national events.

Action Plan: How the program would work. The program would have three phases.

Phase 1: Organize a structure and establish demonstration areas.

Organize a fund-raising campaign and conduct a citywide survey to generate data on existing programs and to identify areas and schools interested in new programs.

Establish a coordinating center to stimulate the growth of new programs and to support, recruit and train new coaches and club directors. The functions of the center are detailed below.

Establish planning, monitoring and evaluation systems in collaboration with CPS to ensure alignment with CPS priorities for the school day and extended day.

Promote independent, self-sustaining programs. ICA will not run clubs or teams on its own and will therefore not compete with existing service providers operating in CPS schools.

Support the existing CPS chess championships and the tournaments run by the Youth Chess Foundation of Chicago.²⁶

Organize ICA Fellows Program to provide trained high school chess players to support club directors by serving as coaches, mentors, tournament directors, and club assistants. Fellows will receive credit from their high schools for community service.

Establish CPS demonstration areas.²⁷ Utilize technology, including interactive “smart boards” and video-conferencing, as training tools for students and teachers. Organize workshops for area resource coordinators and organizations running programs in the extended school day.

Conduct area-wide and regional competition when teams are ready.

Phase 2: Expand the program

Encourage principals, area officers and CPS leadership to visit schools with successful demonstration projects and organize strategic expansion to additional areas.

Expand support for extended

First Year Action Plan

1. *Raise initial funds.*
2. *Establish program metrics.*
3. *Set up coordinating center.*
4. *Choose three demonstration areas.*
5. *Recruit and train coaches.*
6. *Organize local tournaments.*
7. *Launch citywide chess league.*
8. *Review first-year performance.*

learning programs.

Continue to build the program's competitive components including on-line chess matches.

Begin building partnerships with universities and cultural institutions (see next section).

Phase 3: Make the program city-wide

Support city-wide implementation, including alliances with universities for teacher preparation to embed chess in instruction.

What the coordinating center would do.

Services. A small staff²⁸ would serve as advocates and catalysts, providing a range of services to area directors, principals and others interested in starting new programs. They would support, recruit and train new coaches and club directors, who would be a mix of teachers, parents, chess professionals, and volunteers. Training would be available on how to play chess, on classroom management, and on how to manage a club. ICA has reviewed dozens of curricula including computer and video-assisted curricula,²⁹ and staff would make appropriate recommendations. The office would also help clubs find coaches and foster networking through online listings. A Resource Package (described below) would be made available explaining what is necessary to start a program.

Stipends. To increase incentives for participation by teachers and coaches, the office would work to supplement the existing chess stipends paid by CPS.

Partnerships. Using Philadelphia's successful program as a model, the office would set up partnerships with museums, universities and other cultural institutions to provide settings and opportunities for like-minded students from diverse backgrounds, neighborhoods and ethnic groups to participate in inter-club competitions, special events and formal tournaments.³⁰

Competition. The office would promote an expansion of local tournaments and special events. In addition, it will set up a new Chicago Scholastic Chess League in which schools compete against each other in live events or online.

Funding. Critical to the program's success is that it be free to students. Funds would be raised from corporate sponsorships, private foundations and individual donors. Although no new funds will be sought from CPS or the City of Chicago, the program would be strengthened by the continued availability of discretionary funds for special programs presently available to principals, areas directors and other administrators.

Types of chess programs. Most existing chess programs are run outside normal school hours, usually after school but sometimes before school or during the lunch break. The most common models are clubs run by a teacher or parent who is not a skilled player; clubs run by skilled players who may or may not have formal teaching experience; and "turnkey" clubs run by private service providers. There are pros and cons of each model, and many programs combine the models.

A growing number of schools nationally and in Chicago, however, offer chess as *part of the regular curriculum*. Some schools hire outside instructors, while in others teachers are taught chess and in turn offer it to their students, often one hour a week. One national service provider³¹ trains teachers in how to play and teach chess; that provider expects to serve approximately 20 Chicago public schools this fall.

What We Need from CPS

1. *Public endorsement to galvanize support.*
2. *Designation of liaison to facilitate planning.*
3. *Coordination with CPS Office of External Affairs and Partnerships.*
4. *Participation by Mayor or CEO in year-end student and coach recognition program.*

What ICA would ask of CPS and the City. As noted, funds to run the program would be raised from the private sector, and no new funds would be requested of CPS or the City. ICA requests only that CPS or the City join ICA as a partner in announcing the fund-raising campaign, and appoint a liaison to facilitate communication with principals, area directors and other offices within CPS. ICA would also seek to review our fundraising plan with the CPS Office of External Affairs and Partnerships. The program would also benefit from the early commitment of the Mayor or the CEO to participate in a year-end student and coach recognition program. Their personal involvement would reinforce the city's high-level commitment to chess. It would also create a "brass ring" effect, motivating coaches and students to get involved.

Building competitive excellence. Teams cannot reach the top competitive level without strong coaches, including titled players (Masters, International Masters and Grandmasters). A handful of titled players presently teach in Chicago schools, and those teams excel. New York City's competitive success is largely attributable to the much larger number of titled players coaching in New York schools. A major focus of the new program would be to bring stronger coaches into our schools. Notably, as reflected on our endorsements page, this proposal is already supported by virtually all of Illinois' titled players.

That CPS is capable of excellence is suggested by excellence elsewhere in the state. The current national high school champion hails from Skokie,³² the national K-1 champion is from Mt. Zion,³³ a team from Lincolnshire won the national championship for grades K-6,³⁴ and four players from Illinois have been invited to this year's World Youth Chess Championship in Brazil.³⁵ Excellent community-based programs also flourish in the suburbs and downstate.³⁶ With the exception of a single team, however,³⁷ CPS has little to say for itself in major competition.

ICA's resource package. ICA has prepared a comprehensive package of online resources for those starting or seeking to improve a club.³⁸ The resources include the research on the benefits of chess; links to short videos of kids, teachers, and experts talking about those benefits; an overview of chess in Chicago and the state; a section on competition including a description of major tournaments, a list of upcoming events and a detailed guide to how tournaments are run; and a discussion of sportsmanship and etiquette. We also profile the major community-wide programs in Illinois, providing website links and contact information.

The centerpiece of our Resources section is “Starting a Chess Program,”³⁹ which addresses every step in the process including initial planning, equipment, instruction and curricula (including computer-aided instruction), budgeting, volunteer recruitment, publicity, and club management. The Resources section also includes a guide to choosing a private service provider.

About ICA. ICA is the official United States Chess Federation affiliate in Illinois. A not-for-profit corporation, it organizes and oversees the state’s major youth and adult tournaments, including the Illinois K-8 Championship, the Illinois All-Grade Championship, the Illinois Open, and the Illinois Class Championships. ICA also helps bring national tournaments to Illinois. ICA has made a major commitment to youth chess through its Youth Committee, comprised of 30 leaders of youth chess programs throughout the state. The work is overseen by ICA’s Board of Directors. ICA’s website, www.il-chess.org, attracts more than 5,000 visits from Illinois chess players each month.

Oversight and potential partners. The program would be overseen by an ICA committee comprised of members of the ICA Board,⁴⁰ members of ICA’s Youth Committee (some of whom are currently CPS coaches),⁴¹ and additional representatives CPS might choose to designate. Assistance has been offered by the CPS Chess Coaches Association; the Illinois Chess Coaches Association; Illinois’ Warren Junior Scholars program (which serves the state’s top youth players); the Youth Chess Foundation of Chicago; and several program leaders in Illinois and other states.

Conclusion. Administrators, teachers and other experts often describe the value, pride and fulfillment offered by strong chess programs around the country. Many of their comments appear in short videos on our website.⁴² ICA is prepared to make the long-term commitment necessary to helping Chicago build a first-class chess program of its own. We invite the City and CPS to join us and bring this program to fruition for the benefit of the students of Chicago.



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Eileen Schmakel*
Trevor Scott*
Joe Splinter
Jennifer Stevens
Phil Yontez
Pattie Zinski*

*Member of the subcommittee on
chess in Chicago

Endorsements

This proposal has been endorsed by:

Top Illinois Players

Grandmaster Mesgen Amanov
Grandmaster Dmitry Gurevich
Grandmaster Nikola Mitkov
Grandmaster Yury Shulman
International Master Florin Felecan
International Master Mehmed Pasalic
International Master Angelo Young
National Master Pete Karagianis
National Master Eric Rosen
National Master Adarsh Jayakumar
FIDE Master Albert Chow
Tamara Golovey

Associations & Organizations

CPS Chess Coaches Association
Illinois Chess Coaches Association
Illinois Elementary Schools Association
Illinois Warren Junior Scholar Program
Youth Chess Foundation of Chicago
Bloomington-Normal Area Scholastic Chess

Chess Service Providers and Others

America's Foundation for Chess
CheckMates Chess Academy
Chess Education Partners
Chess for Life, LLC
Chess Fusion
Chess Now
Chess Without Borders
Dynamic Chess
Illinois Chess Teachers
Kings & Queens Chess Club
North Shore Chess Center
Sevan Muradian (International Arbiter and Organizer)
Steven Lipschultz (2009 Chess Educator of the Year)
Think Like a King
Touch Move Chess Academy
Yury Shulman International Chess School

Notes

¹ An earlier draft of this proposal was prepared at the request of senior CPS staff in 2010. Additional program details were requested and provided in a series of subsequent meetings and discussions. Those details are included here.

² The research is summarized on the ICA website at <http://bit.ly/dQ9IQ9>.

³ “An Evaluation of the Chess Challenge Program of ASAP/After School Activities Partnership” by Dr. Joseph DuCette, Temple University (2009) at pp. 1, 2, 8-9, 12-13. A 2010 report quotes a Philadelphia principal: “[S]tudents involved in chess experience ‘cognitive conditioning,’ which develops their ability to think and plan ahead. One of the benefits...is that chess students take their time with tests instead of rushing, resulting in better grades.” “The Philadelphia Youth Chess Challenge Report 2009-2010” (Study and report both available from ICA).

⁴ The Philadelphia Youth Chess Challenge Report 2009-2010 (available from ICA).

⁵ Stuart Margulies and Kathleen Speeth, “The Effect of Chess Instruction on Emotional Intelligence.” New York: Chess-in-the-Schools, 1999.

⁶ Numbers provided by program directors.

⁷ New York runs a hybrid chess program. Chess is taught during the school day by professional coaches in 50 schools, with coaches teaching in multiple classrooms. In addition, Chess-in-the-Schools has trained nearly 1000 teachers over the past 3 ½ years, approximately 250 of whom now run clubs in their schools. In many of these clubs, high school chess players serve as tutors and mentors.

⁸ www.chessintheschools.org

⁹ www.phillyasap.org/Chess.aspx

¹⁰ The bulk of this sum is provided by individual schools and a variety of public and private grants. In some schools, programs are also partly supported by parent contributions.

¹¹ While the program itself does not have a website, its director also serves as Commissioner of the Florida Scholastic Chess League, <http://www.fscchess.org/>.

¹² www.chessforsuccess.org

¹³ www.bisd.us/daas/chess/2010/index.html

¹⁴ Seattle and Atlanta schools teach chess one hour a week as part of their regular curriculum, utilizing the First Move Program created by America’s Foundation for Chess (AF4C), www.af4c.org. Schools pay fixed annual charges of \$650 per classroom in the first year, with fees declining rapidly in subsequent years. AF4C expects to run its program in approximately 20 CPS schools beginning in September.

¹⁵ See previous note.

¹⁶ See note 14.

¹⁷ See note 14.

¹⁸ ICA has proposed a survey of Chicago schools to collect accurate data. The estimate of the number of schools is based on participation in the 2011 CPS championships and the free tournaments hosted during the 2010-2011 academic year by the Youth Chess Foundation of Chicago (YCFC). 47 elementary schools sent two or more players to the CPS K-8 championship, and eight high schools sent teams to the high school championship. An additional 12 elementary schools sent two or more players to the YCFC tournaments. A conservative estimate is that 20% of these schools sent players but do not have established chess programs. The estimated number of players is based on an assumption of 25 players per club.

¹⁹ See previous note.

²⁰ www.cpschess.com

²¹ Sixty-four Illinois high school chess coaches attending the 2009 state championship answered a survey question asking the amount of their stipends. The results follow:

Number of coaches	Stipends
4	0
9	under \$1000
18	\$1000-\$2000
13	\$2000-\$3000
15	\$3000 - \$4500
5	over \$4500

Most of the coaches in the first two categories were from CPS schools.

²² The CPS contract with the Teachers' Union specifies that a single high school chess coach may be paid for 20 hours of coaching. Three Pom Pom coaches are authorized to be paid for a total of 52 hours. (Up to five coaches are authorized for major sports with total compensation for up to a total of 717 hours.) At the elementary school level, coaches for chess, Pom Pom and Double Dutch are all reimbursed at the same level (17-25 hours). See <http://bit.ly/k6tfAJ> at p. 195 et. seq..

²³ Eight CPS teams attended the 2010 event.

²⁴ <http://www.chesstour.com/cross.html>

²⁵ Whitney Young Magnet High School excelled, capturing 10th place in the country. The team's top player, Michael Auger, also won this year's national "Blitz" championship, in which players have five minutes to complete their moves.

²⁶ YCFC has been organizing and hosting free chess tournaments in the city for fifteen years. See www.thechessacademy.org/YCFC.html.

²⁷ Two area-wide projects are already underway. A summer program for 600 students focusing heavily on chess is being run by DePaul University's Center for Urban Education in Area 15. In the fall, Area 17 will begin a program in which 2nd and 3rd graders will receive chess instruction during the school day one hour a week.

²⁸ Most cities run their chess programs with a staff of two or three. New York's program has a much larger staff.

²⁹ <http://bit.ly/k7vfSI>

³⁰ "ASAP's Philadelphia Youth Chess Challenge Program Description" (2009-2010), p. 3 (available from ICA).

³¹ America's Foundation for Chess (www.af4c.org). See Note 14 above.

³² Eric Rosen. See <http://bit.ly/lSwl7S>.

³³ Aydin Turgut. See <http://bit.ly/kg463R>.

³⁴ Daniel Wright Junior High School. See <http://bit.ly/kg463R>.

³⁵ <http://bit.ly/mLMltU>

³⁶ <http://bit.ly/k7BdAp>

³⁷ See note 25.

³⁸ www.illinoisyouthchess.org

³⁹ <http://bit.ly/fLs6uL>

⁴⁰ Board members are profiled at <http://bit.ly/jHrH1D>.

⁴¹ Youth Committee members are profiled at <http://bit.ly/ffjOKd>.

⁴² Short video clips from programs around the country can be accessed from the ICA website: <http://bit.ly/dQ9IQ9>