



## Chess For Children - Benefits of Chess in the Classroom

By [Mona Gaughan](#)

Schools all across the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia have been teaching chess in the classroom. We're not talking about chess for children as an extracurricular activity but as an academic subject. Since the early 20th century Russians have dominated the world of chess. Why? Maybe it's because chess has been taught in Russian schools for about 50 years!

There had long been anecdotal evidence that chess promotes intellectual development in children. Then in 1991 and again in 1996 Stuart Margulies, a well-known educational psychologist, conducted studies on the effect that chess has on children's reading ability. Both studies showed that children, who participated in a school's chess program, improved their scores on standardized tests. The improvement was even greater for children whose initial scores were low or average.

In Texas in the 1990s a study showed that elementary students who participated in the school's chess for kids club showed more than twice the improvement in reading and mathematics between the third and fifth grades on standardized testing than did students who did not participate.

Why is chess so beneficial to young children? Chess has been proven to improve or increase:

- Math problem solving skills
- Reading comprehension
- Self-confidence
- Patience
- Logic
- Critical thinking
- Pattern recognition
- Ability to concentrate
- Analytical skills

The list goes on and on.

All across the country schools and teachers are getting the message and are bringing chess into the classroom. Chess clubs in schools have been in existence forever but now chess is being taught as an academic subject. New York City schools have been particularly effective in introducing chess to the classroom. This effort has been spearheaded by an educational, non-profit organization called, "Chess-in-the-Schools" whose mission is to improve academic performance and increase self-esteem among inner city public school students. Since 1986 this organization has been instrumental in teaching chess to over 400,000 students in New York City alone. In a recent survey of teachers involved in the program 86% reported that chess has had a "direct and positive" influence on their students.

On March 20, 2008 The International Herald Tribune reported that this year Idaho would become the first state to offer a statewide chess curriculum to all second and third-graders. Idaho has 40,000 second and third-grade students and the program is estimated to cost at least \$200,000. How's that for putting your money where your mouth is?

Many states have enacted legislation approving the introduction of chess into school programs. In particular the state of New Jersey passed a bill which allowed individual boards of education to offer chess instruction beginning in the second grade. The bill stated that:

1. Chess increases strategic thinking skills and stimulates creative activity.
2. Students in countries where chess is offered in schools show an increased ability to recognize complex patterns and consequently excel in math and science.

If our politicians recognize the importance of chess for children, it must be pretty obvious.

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