

The New York City Schools Chess Program Report

The New York City Schools Chess Program Report is impressive, here is what Chrisine Palm writes in 1990. In its four-year existence, NYCHESS has proven that:

- a. Chess instills in young players a sense of self-confidence and self-worth;
- b. Chess dramatically improves a child's ability to think rationally;
- c. Chess increases cognitive skills;
- d. Chess improves children's communication skills and aptitude in recognizing patterns,
- e. Chess results in higher grades, especially in English and Math studies,
- f. Chess builds a sense of team spirit while emphasizing the ability of the individual,
- g. Chess teaches the value of hard work, concentration and commitment;
- h. Chess makes a child realize that he or she is responsible for his or her own actions and must accept their consequences;
- i. Chess teaches children to try their best to win, while accepting defeat with grace,
- j. Chess provides an intellectual, comparative forum through which children can assert hostility i.e. "let off steam" in an acceptable way;
- k. Chess can become a child's most eagerly awaited school activity, dramatically improving attendance;
- l. Chess allows girls to compete with boys on a non-threatening, socially acceptable plane;
- m. Chess helps children make friends more easily because it provides an easy, safe forum for gathering and discussion;
- n. Chess allows students and teachers to view each other in a more sympathetic way;
- o. Chess, through competition, gives kids a palpable sign of their accomplishments, and finally;
- p. Chess provides children with a concrete, inexpensive and compelling way to rise above the deprivation and self-doubt which are so much a part of their lives.

Most people naively believe that any child who becomes proficient at chess must be an extremely rare prodigy (probably with grand masters as parents). On the contrary, particular chess coaches consistently produce strong players, year after year, even though specific children move on. While the child's individual talent is important, the training a child receives appears to be equally important. In fact Coaches like myself often say that given a few months of training, any motivated and bright 10 year old can become a proficient player. Skills acquired by playing chess are not just for the select few extremely gifted children, they are trainable skills for all. Chess educators have argued that chess is beneficial, not just for the intellectually gifted, but also for the learning disabled and hyperactive children.