

CHESS IN THE SCHOOLS: a new strategic vision



Our unique mission is to foster the intellectual and social development of low-income youth through chess education. Over the decades, we have crafted a program model based on the following key principles to best address the needs of our students and communities:

High-impact skill-building

Our instructional approach and curriculum teaches chess with the explicit goal of developing cognitive, social, and emotional skills in students.

Commitment to equity and access

All our programs, delivered exclusively through Title I schools, are free of cost to participants, up to 90% of whom are students of color.

Focus on community-building in and out of school

Partner schools highlight the positive effect our programs have on school climate and cohesion, peer relationships, and family engagement.

Having emerged from the pandemic even stronger, Chess in the Schools recently completed a strategic plan designed to harness this moment for change and cement our status as a best-in-class education organization with the potential to serve as a national model for chess-focused youth development that ensures equity, opportunity and connection for under-resourced students.

Through a collaborative planning process, CIS developed a core set of strategic goals that will help us better serve more children in need, expand program evaluation to better document and deepen impact and increase resources to better sustain and grow our work inside and outside schools.

Over the next three to five years, Chess in the Schools seeks to:

Goal #1: Align Programs to Impact. We have identified and will implement a series of achievable enhancements that will strengthen our comprehensive program offerings to further students' chess, cognitive, and social-emotional skills – and increase opportunities for enhanced parent and school partner engagement to reinforce and grow student learning and success. Each year we serve 10,000+ K-12 students in 40+ NYC schools. With these program enhancements, including new virtual opportunities, we will reach even more students throughout the city, across the country and around the world.

Goal #2: Scale up Evaluation. We will refine approaches to measuring our In-school and College Bound programs and begin to collect baseline and participation data on other core programs (i.e., the After-school program and Tournaments). We will invest in our evaluation infrastructure via added systems and staffing and use this new data to enhance outcomes and better communicate our impact to a broader audience of constituents, including funders.

Goal #3: Optimize Fundraising and Communications. We will scale up brand-building communications efforts and focus fund-development strategies to grow individual and institutional giving. CIS will also invest in its fundraising staff capacity, systems and technology.

Implementing this strategic plan is projected to lead to \$1.6 million in new expenses and \$1.2 million in new revenue over the next five years. We plan to temporarily increase our annual endowment withdrawal of \$550,000 to fund annual expenses until breakeven is projected to be reached in 2025. The \$1.6 million investment includes costs related to permanent and one-time staffing, systems, and compensation. Considering these costs, CIS would reach and maintain \$2.6 million in annual operating expenses by 2023, a 15% increase from its 2020 expense base of \$2.2 million.

CIS is currently in a position of strong organizational stability with successful and proven programs. With your support and investments, we will build on that success over the course of the next three-to-five years.