



## MEET LONDYN AND ITZEL 6TH GRADE STUDENTS AT CIS'S AFTER-SCHOOL CHESS CLUB IN THE BRONX

### What brought you to chess? Why did you decide to go to a chess club?

**Londyn:** I always saw my dad and my older sister playing so I eventually decided to learn. My family started teaching me, but it really continued when I got to chess club where I was able to learn a lot more.

**Itzel:** I decided to play chess because it seemed really interesting. When I got into it, I felt even more interested, I felt more like "this is what I want to do." I kept practicing and practicing, and now I am very grateful that I chose this.



Londyn

### Did you meet through chess?

**Londyn:** We knew each other since pre-K and we went to the same chess club.

**Itzel:** We bonded over chess that made our friendship stronger.

### Is there a link between subjects you learn at school and chess?

**Londyn:** There is. Chess helps me because in chess you have to make very good decisions and sometimes in school I have to make decisions. Like, what I want to write about, or what to do for that question. I think chess helps me because when I practice I have to think about making good decisions.

**Itzel:** I think there is a link. In chess you have to focus on a lot of things at the same time. In school I have to focus on one topic but there are also other things -- math, science --

and you have to focus on every single one of them at the same time. Chess is really helpful because it makes me feel focused and be better.

### Last school year was not the easiest one, but you stayed very active in chess.

#### How did you manage?

**Londyn:** When it comes to chess, [learning online] wasn't as great as being in person. There was a lot of distractions in my house because of school and stuff. But I was able to block all that out and focus on chess.

**Itzel:** It was very hard because I have multiple people in my house, because of family reason. I had to concentrate on school, and I also wanted to make sure I was doing chess too. When I came to [online] tournaments it did not feel the same. In real life you get to see people one-on-one, now you could not see [your opponent]. So, it felt very different. I feel like [playing chess] in-person is a lot better than playing on a computer.



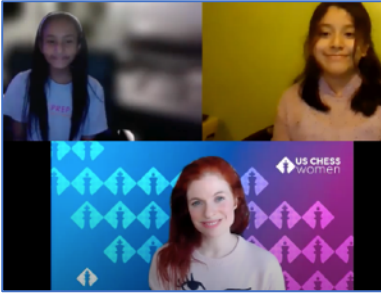
Itzel

### What prompted you to start writing about chess in your school newspaper?

**Londyn:** I wanted to inform my school about chess because this is something I am very passionate about. I did a lot of research on it and learned new things. This was something I benefitted from.

**Itzel:** I wanted to talk about it because I like chess and I like writing at the same time. I thought that if I combine these two things together it would be really good. And, actually, I loved it. I got to learn new stuff, I got to do more stuff. It felt really good. Since it was [during] Covid, it helped me do more stuff than before.

**Your interview with Jennifer Shahade, one of America's leading female chess players, was fascinating. What did you learn from her?**



**Londyn:** She taught me that even though some people might say “you can’t play because you are a girl,” I can still play if I want to.

**And you can win!**

**Londyn:** Yes!

**Itzel:** I felt more inspired. She talked about her lifestyle that was really different compared to mine. It gave me a real inspiration to try harder. I take her advice that I can play, as a girl. No one should bully you about it. [Speaking with Jen] gave me more confidence.

**You are in middle school now, but you still go to the chess club at your old elementary school as Assistant Teachers who help [CIS’s instructor] Mr. Stovall with the club. How do you like your new role?**

**Londyn:** It is going very well. I like playing against the girls [at the club] and teaching them new things. There is a chess club at the middle school but it hasn’t started yet, so coming here makes me able to practice.

**Itzel:** It’s been great so far. I get to see my coach and get to see other people, get to help other people. It feels like I am in the second phase. I used to like practicing and doing tournaments but now I can teach people and give them advice.

**Do you go to tournaments?**

**Londyn:** Yes! I went to tournaments the first year I started chess club. And I’ve been going since Covid. At first, I was a little afraid because it was a new environment, and I did not know anyone. But as I kept going and going it became like a schedule for me.

**Itzel:** I agree. At first, I kept losing a lot of times. I thought I would never get anywhere, and I should just quit. But I started practicing and learning the pieces. And I went to [online] tournaments every day and it also became like a schedule. You have to do this. It’s gonna make you better. I went through this, and I kept winning and winning. I was like “Wow! Look how much I can learn in just a few months!” I think real life tournaments are better than computer tournaments. Playing on computer, you are just focusing on the board, and the pieces. There is nothing else. But [playing] in-person you get to see the people face-to-face, and it gives you more confidence. You have more reaction to it, more intensity.

**Do you have any plans for college and life in general?**

**Londyn:** I think in college I am going to study something in science. After college, I hope to be a scientist, maybe a marine biologist. And at chess I want to be a grandmaster or higher than that. And, maybe, even a President of the United States.

**Itzel:** I want to focus on architecture. Buildings have always seemed fascinating. Also, I want to be an activist. There are a lot of things going on and I just disagree with them. I do not like them, and I want to change them. But I will always have chess somewhere [in my life]. I keep focusing on chess and hopefully be a grandmaster too.