

Your Questions Answered



What is Chess in the Schools?

Chess in the Schools is a non-profit organization that teaches critical thinking, encourages scholastic achievement, and levels the playing field for 10,000 public school students living in the poorest neighborhoods citywide. Our free in-school and out-of-school programs, which begin with chess instruction in third grade, grow over time, following students through college. Since 1986, we've engaged more than 500,000 youth – 90% students of color.



CIS programs include:

- year-round in-school classes and after-school chess clubs at 40+ public schools
- college-bound and career-building programs
- the largest free tournament system of its kind in the US
- summer learning programs
- a Teacher Training Institute
- a new College Success Initiative

What is the need for the program?

Many New York City public schools, especially in low-income communities, do not have adequate resources and staff to create an academic environment that encourages children's scholastic growth, social emotional maturity, and comprehensive intellectual development. Citywide only 57% of high-school students are college-ready. In the poorest communities the percent drops to 36%. Less than half of all elementary and middle school students score at or above reading and math grade levels. The numbers are even lower for the economically disadvantaged children (41% reading and 39% math). These are the students we serve in 40+ Title I public schools located in all five boroughs of NYC.

We address the needs of these students with our full menu of programming. Using chess as a “hook,” CIS builds a community of like-minded peers united by their passion for the game and common goal of life-long learning and skill perfection. CIS helps students develop invaluable academic, social, and cognitive skills such as high-level strategic thinking, long-term planning, concentration, mental discipline and appreciation of the consequences of actions.

Why chess?

Chess is recognized worldwide for advancing **intellectual** skills. Studies confirm that it improves cognitive abilities, rational thinking, logic, and pattern recognition. Chess instills motivation and self-confidence. It rewards hard work, focus, and creative problem-solving. Chess is a **social** game. Chess players join a network of chess teammates, peers, mentors, and coaches. With its emphasis on fair play and sportsmanship, chess strengthens positive behaviors. Introduced at any age, chess is fun! Chess is the best **equalizer**. It is accessible to all regardless of gender, age, race, religion, culture, or physical ability. Unlike many activities, instruction is easy to provide in person and remotely. Chess sets are inexpensive and readily available. The game does not require a special venue. It can be played indoors, outdoors, online, anytime.

Are children learning a full legal game of chess?

Yes, we begin teaching the full legal game to students in the third grade. Our in-school curriculum includes 32 lessons for elementary students and 16 lessons for middle school students, and we provide schools with free chess sets for students' use.

What is the impact of your program?

Schools love CIS. In a recent survey, more than 96% of teachers reported that CIS's chess program was effective and that they would want it to return. Below are the percentages of teachers who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the following statements:

- Most students can play a legal game of chess: **95%**
- Most students actively participated in the chess class: **96%**
- Chess had a meaningful positive influence on my students: **96%**
- Most students applied the lessons of chess beyond the chessboard: **89%**
- Learning and practicing chess enhanced my students' cooperation skills: **92%**
- Learning and practicing chess enhanced my students' understanding of math concepts: **89%**
- Learning and practicing chess enhanced my students' analytic and logical reasoning skills: **92%**
- Learning and practicing chess helped my students concentrate better: **90%**
- Learning and practicing chess improved my students' behavior: **86%**

We are currently engaged in a planning process to strengthen program evaluation in all programs.

What happens to students after the program?

We believe that CIS helps students become life-long learners. The impact on a particular child intensifies with time. Our engagement starts with a weekly chess session, then the child can join the after-school chess club and play in tournaments. After graduating from middle school, many students choose to stay with us by joining the College Bound Program. 100% of the seniors in the program graduate on time, and 95% are accepted into colleges of their choice within 6 months of graduation, many are first in their families to attain higher education. The newly established College Success Initiative helps students adjust to college life, graduate on time and launch professional careers after graduation. Some of CIS alums stay with us even longer as they become regular supporters, volunteers and Board Members.

How large is CIS?

With an annual budget of \$2.6M and staff of 19, each year we educate and engage over 10,000 students in 40+ public schools. Our major funding sources include individuals (29%), investments (23%), foundations and corporations (19%), and City government (18%).

What is the impact of my gift?

A gift to CIS has a great and immediate impact, ensuring that we can provide our best-in-class programs, in-school and after-school, including 25 annual chess tournaments that attract thousands of players. We cover all the costs for every student. In addition, we maintain a very low operating cost, spending less than 20% of our budget on administration and fundraising, so that over 80% of each dollar we receive goes directly to fund programs. We also offer many ways for donors of \$5,000 or more to target their gifts to fund programs that meet their philanthropic goals. Please see our Named Giving Opportunities.

What kind of donor experience do I get from supporting CIS?

We regularly send e-newsletters and provide updates on the progress of our young learners, and we invite our supporters to attend special donor events twice a year. We also invite donors to see our programs in action by visiting schools, our chess tournaments, summer camps, and our high school program at CIS's headquarters in Midtown. Corporate employees serve as educators and mentors for our College Bound students through a variety of programs, such as job shadowing and internships. Chess players are invited to challenge students to a game at our events, classes, tournaments, and College Bound Program chess nights.

How can I get involved?

In addition to donating, we are looking for people to host fundraisers and fundraisers, and to heighten our profile on social media. We invite guest chess coaches to teach small group classes of our high-school students. We welcome young professionals to speak on career panels to inspire high-school students and alumni.