

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Thinking Beyond
64 Squares,
One Move
at a Time



Chess in the Schools fosters the intellectual and social development of low-income youth through chess education.

Chess Instruction in Public Schools:

Unlocking Brighter Paths: Offering Free, High-Quality Chess Education for Lasting Success



5,076

students

in 41 schools learned chess with a CIS instructor during classroom sessions and in after-school clubs.

3,958

students

in 17 schools participated in the Digital Chess Program.

8,427

players

competed in 25 day-long citywide tournaments.

1,200

players

competed in 24 online chess tournaments

249

teachers

across NYC participated in comprehensive training on innovative digital learning curricula and tools.

58

schools
enrolled in in-person and digital learning programs, including 4 that offered chess instruction twice a week.

The Impact of CIS's Programs Through Educators' Eyes



“The most significant impact of the program on my students is that they were more excited to come to school and play chess. They had great teachers and they learned something new so it was exciting for them.”

Teachers Say...

“Students were able to make connections between chess and other subjects. Students recognized multiplication table patterns and connected them to the way certain chess pieces moved.”

“Students used chess vocabulary week to week and were able to articulate in complete sentences how to play the game and how different pieces moved.”

“Having a “chess culture” at school means creating an environment where students are encouraged to think critically, practice patience, and engage with one another in meaningful ways. It’s more than just playing a game—it’s about building a mindset.”

Teacher Survey Results

We surveyed 132 teachers from the academic school year from partner schools to evaluate the impact of CIS's chess program on their students. Below are the percentages of teachers who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements.

- Boys and girls were equally interested in chess: **97%**
- Learning and practicing chess enhanced my students' cooperation skills: **96%**
- Learning and practicing chess enhanced my students' analytic and logical reasoning skills: **94%**
- Most students could play a legal game of chess by the end of the semester: **93%**
- Learning and practicing chess helped my students concentrate better: **93%**
- Learning and practicing chess improved my students' behavior: **90%**
- Most students applied the lessons of chess beyond the chessboard: **90%**
- Learning and practicing chess enhanced my students' understanding of math concepts: **89%**
- Most students actively participated in the chess class: **99%**
- Chess had a meaningful positive influence on my students: **99%**

College Bound / College Success: Inspiring Our Community Through Collaboration and Shared Pathways to Success

Program in Numbers

100 high-school students

75 college students

Up to 500 hours

of individualized scholastic and academic programming, chess learning, and social-emotional support

Program Impact

100% of seniors graduated high school on time.

100% of seniors were accepted to colleges and matriculated to college in the fall.

100% of college freshmen stayed in school and continued their studies.

95% of College Success participants graduate within 4 years.

Venturing Beyond New York City

Exploring College Opportunities

CIS's College Bound students traveled to University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, Franklin and Marshall University, Haverford College, Pace University, and New York University.



Competing in Tournaments

Chess in the Schools brought over 100 students and alumni to local and regional chess-rated tournaments.

- US Amateur East Team Chess Tournament, Parsippany NJ (February 2025)
- US Amateur East Individual Chess Tournament, Parsippany NJ (May 2025)
- Magnus League Chess Tournament, Year Round (September 2024-May 2025)
- Marshall Chess Club Tournaments, Year Round (September 2024-May 2025)

High School Seniors Will Attend

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| • Baruch College | • University of Rochester |
| • Binghamton University | • John Hopkins University |
| • Boston University | • Laguardia Community College |
| • City College of New York | • Lehman College |
| • Duke University | • Hunter College |
| • Harvard University | • State University of New York at New Paltz |
| • New York University | • Stony Brook University |
| • Rhode Island School of Design | • Williams College |
| • University of Albany | |

College Bound / The Leaders of Today and Tomorrow



“Working for CIS has helped me build connections with people that I never thought would have such a meaningful impact on my growth.”

— Nohelia

Since 2003, Chess in the Schools has entrusted its College Bound students with a role that is as demanding as it is meaningful: leading our Saturday tournaments. These days begin long before the first move is played. In the early morning hours, our students arrive ready to transform empty spaces into playing halls, setting up more than 300 boards and preparing to welcome hundreds of young players. What they create is more than a tournament. It is a space built on leadership, care, and community.

Our Saturday tournaments are a cornerstone of New York City's scholastic chess scene providing all K-12 students with free access to chess competition. Students from all over the tri-state area to come and join in on the fun. At the heart of those events are our College Bound high school

students. At a glance, they may seem like teenagers working a weekend job. In reality, they are mentors in action, developing meaningful life skills while inspiring the next generation of chess players. Their days often begin as early as 4:00 to 6:00 in the morning, a commitment that reflects both discipline and genuine pride in what they do.

These tournaments are also a place where students grow. They work alongside friends in a supportive environment where they are encouraged to take initiative, solve problems, and learn from their mistakes. It is a setting where challenges become lessons and confidence grows with every experience. A common example of experience involves communicating not just with players, but also with parents and coaches resolving conflicts on and off the board. Above all, our students lead

with heart. At every tournament, they are a steady presence for younger players, helping them find their boards, guiding them to their team rooms, or simply offering reassurance when it is needed most. These students are not just staff, they are role models who help many children feel safe, supported, and seen.

Each year, every student takes part in a thoughtful tournament director training process, regardless of grade level. This ensures they begin the season with a clear sense of purpose and a shared commitment to the standards they proudly uphold. Through dedication, teamwork, and care for their community, our CIS's College Bound students do more than support our tournaments. They shape them, and in doing so, they leave a lasting impact on every player who walks through the door.



Boris Gelfand, Partho Nath, Jethro Liu, Gavin Liu, Chance Deas (left to right).

Photo by Lennart Ootes

College Bound FIDE World Rapid & Blitz Championships 2024

Chess in the Schools College Bound and College Success students played a simultaneous exhibition with Grandmaster Boris Gelfand at the FIDE World Rapid & Blitz Championship. It was an honor for our students to experience this opportunity and play against someone who has had such an incredible chess career. Beyond the games themselves, the

simul gave students the chance to connect with and learn from a player they look up to, while experiencing the chess world on a much larger stage beyond New York City.

College Bound students and alumni were also invited to volunteer at the FIDE tournament at the tournament, allowing them to experience the event up close over three exciting days filled with some of the biggest names

in chess. Having the opportunity to see many of the best players in the world competing in their own city was a unique and inspiring experience for everyone representing Chess in the Schools. Events like this help students feel connected to the larger global chess community, while showing them the many possibilities and opportunities that chess can create both on and off the board.

“Thanks to College Bound, I was given the amazing opportunity to play against Boris Gelfand, a legend I highly admire. We had a great game and I appreciate being able to meet, talk to, and play against such a renowned player.”

— Chance, CIS Alumnus

The Lerner Award for Excellence in Chess Education

“It is my hope that this award will highlight the invaluable work that chess educators are doing in underserved communities across the U.S.”

— Andy Lerner,
CIS Board Member



Jenny Ingber, Michael Herbst, Salema Jackson, Adam Geisler Richard Abshire, Brian Ribnick, Yuri Lapshun, Mitchell Fitzko, Andy Lerner (left to right)



Chess in the Schools proudly presented the third annual Lerner Award for Excellence in Chess Education, established in 2022 by Andrew Lerner, a distinguished member of the CIS Board of Directors. This prestigious nationwide award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding efforts of educators in public schools and non-commercial children's chess clubs across the country.

A panel of judges from the chess community carefully selected two winners and six finalists, evaluating the depth and impact of applicants' chess programs, innovative teaching methods, and measurable outcomes for students and the communities they serve.

The Award Ceremony took place at the Temple Emanu-El in New York, NY, a renowned institution known for hosting players from around the globe. This year's honorees include David Heiser, co-founder and CEO of the Renaissance Knights, Chicago, IL, who received the Lerner Award in the Coordinator Category, and Brian Ribnick, coach of the Nicollet Middle School Chess Team, Burnsville, MD, who was recognized in the Educator Category. Finalists from Chicago and New York were also acknowledged for their exceptional contributions. Additionally, Mitchell Fitzko and IM Yuri Lapshun were honored with the Chess in the Schools Legacy Award for their 25 years of service. Throughout 25 years these instructors have built the next generation of players and teachers. Many of their students have gone on to have exceptional ratings and become educators themselves in the field of chess. Most importantly they are a representation of what dedication to teaching looks like.

Nominations are announced annually in the fall.

Board of Directors

Mark Maher, Board Chair

Jenny Ingber, President & CEO

Cody Smith, Treasurer

Dann Ryan, Secretary & Compliance Officer

Kwad Acheampong

Lawrence Benenson

Elana Brickner

Praju Doshi

Paris Heymann

Oche Idoko

Andrew Lerner

Gary Li

Chun Lin

Dr. Joel Marcus

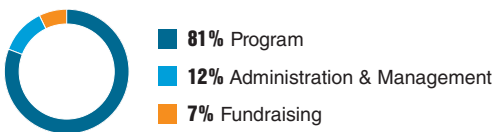
Mike Walsh Peissis

Dhruv Sharma

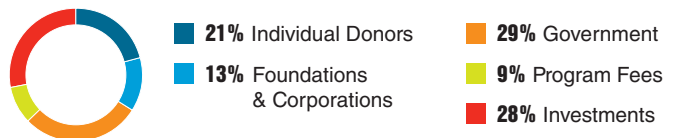
Ben Statz



2024-2025 Expenses



2024-2025 Revenue Sources



Chess in the Schools is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

All Chess in the Schools programs are always free of charge to all students. We can only do this with the support of CIS's donor community.

Thank You to Our Supporters!



To find out how you can help, contact development@chessintheschools.org

520 Eighth Avenue, 22 Floor
New York, NY 10018

212 643-0225

www.chessintheschools.org