



Chess!

(I tried to insert an audiofile of a song from the musical, but it did not work. Please use your imagination)

This article is from

http://www.schoolchess.org/information/why_teach_chess.html

1) History

Chess is a classic game of strategy, invented more than 1500 years ago in India. Legend has it that the ruler of India asked his wise men to devise a way to teach the children of the royal family to become better thinkers and better generals on the battlefield. Chess was the result. In the centuries since its invention, chess has spread to every country in the world. While countless other games have died out, chess lives on. In the United States, it has received endorsements by many educators, ranging from Benjamin Franklin to former U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrell Bell.

2) Academic Benefits

We have brought chess to the schools because we believe it directly contributes to academic performance. Chess makes kids smarter. It does so by teaching the following skills:

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Spark Class Update

I will be helping administer OCCTs for the remainder of the month, so SPARK class will be sporadic at best. Then it will be the end of the year and the whirlwind of activities that we have at Mayo to celebrate a year of working, learning and playing together.

Mayo Chess Tournament

We will have the Mayo Chess Tournament on Saturday, April 23rd from 9a.m. to noon. Students in grades 1-5 will play for three rounds.

If you would like for your child to participate, please find the registration form on the last page of the newsletter.

I could use help running the tournament! Please let me know if you can lend a hand. Volunteer and get your chess on!

On May 10th, the top players from Mayo will be invited to participate in the Tulsa Public Schools Chess Tournament.

If your child is invited to the Tulsa Tournament, please plan to accompany your child. I will be helping run the festivities, and need parents to help with the Mayo team. I could also use parent volunteers whose kids are NOT on the team to help as well!

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Focusing - Children are taught the benefits of observing carefully and concentrating. If they don't watch what is happening, they can't respond to it, no matter how smart they are.

Visualizing - Children are prompted to imagine a sequence of actions before it happens. We actually strengthen the ability to visualize by training them to shift the pieces in their mind, first one, then several moves ahead.

Thinking Ahead - Children are taught to think first, then act. We teach them to ask themselves "If I do this, what might happen then, and how can I respond?" Over time, chess helps develop patience and thoughtfulness.

Weighing Options - Children are taught that they don't have to do the first thing that pops into their mind. They learn to identify alternatives and consider the pros and cons of various actions.

Analyzing Concretely - Children learn to evaluate the results of specific actions and sequences. Does this sequence help me or hurt me? Decisions are better when guided by logic, rather than impulse.

Thinking Abstractly - Children are taught to step back periodically from details and consider the bigger picture. They also learn to take patterns used in one context and apply them to different, but related situations.

Planning - Children are taught to develop longer range goals and take steps toward bringing them about. They are also taught of the need to reevaluate their plans as new developments change the situation.

Juggling Multiple Considerations Simultaneously - Children are encouraged not to become overly absorbed in any one consideration, but to try to weigh various factors all at once.

None of these skills are specific to chess, but they are all part of the game. The beauty of chess as a teaching tool is that it stimulates children's minds and helps them to build these skills while enjoying themselves. As a result, children become more critical thinkers, better problem solvers, and more independent decision makers.

3) Educational Research

These conclusions have been backed up by educational research. Studies have been done in various locations around the United States and Canada,

showing that chess results in increased scores on standardized tests for both reading and math. A study on a large scale chess program in New York City, which involved more than 100 schools and 3,000 children, showed higher classroom grades in both English and Math for children involved in chess. Studies in Houston, Texas and Bradford, Pennsylvania showed chess leads to higher scores on the Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal and the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking.

4) Social Benefits

In the schools, chess often serves as a bridge, bringing together children of different ages, races and genders in an activity they can all enjoy. Chess helps build individual friendships and also school spirit when children compete together as teams against other schools. Chess also teaches children about sportsmanship - how to win graciously and not give up when encountering defeat. For children with adjustment issues, there are many examples where chess has led to increased motivation, improved behavior, better self-image, and even improved attendance. Chess provides a positive social outlet, a wholesome recreational activity that can be easily learned and enjoyed at any age.



**Calendar of Caring
April Focus: Testing
From:**

<http://giftedchallenges.blogspot.com/2014/02/tips-for-taming-test-anxiety-because.html>

Tips for taming test anxiety (because even gifted kids get anxious)



Even gifted kids get anxious. Contrary to popular belief, giftedness does not necessarily endow children with the confidence to sail through exams without a worry. Many gifted children, adolescents and college students suffer from disabling test anxiety that affects performance, [achievement](#) and self-esteem. Test anxiety pops up at the most inopportune times, and can be completely unexpected, an occasional nuisance, or a chronic obstacle. Its origins may be simple or complex, and whether you are a sufferer or the parent of one, you can learn how to overcome this burden.

Identify behaviors that interfere

Determine whether the reason for test anxiety is as simple as lack of sleep, poor nutrition, or inadequate preparation. Many gifted children are so accustomed to exerting little effort in school that they may be shocked when they finally encounter an exam that is challenging or one where they are caught unprepared. Often they have never learned basic study skills, and may be reluctant to ask for help. Concepts such as setting aside structured time free from distraction, knowing the material completely (yes, actually reading the whole textbook), and confronting procrastination are new to them.

Identify physiological triggers

As gifted individuals are frequently oversensitive, their nervous system may be primed to recognize and overreact to minor sensations that others might easily ignore. A slightly increased heart rate, a tense stomach, or sweaty palms, all normal physiological signs of readiness for a new and somewhat stressful situation, might be misinterpreted by an overly reactive person as symptoms of panic and fear, resulting in an even greater escalation of symptoms. Instead, these signs need to be seen as evidence of readiness for a challenge, similar to the surge of adrenaline that occurs before a race.

Identify negative emotions and attitudes

Sometimes, test anxiety stems from worrying about performance, fear of failure, perfectionism, concerns about maintaining a particular status or GPA, or low self-esteem. Some gifted children can be driven to

achieve, and may worry that their test performance may not reflect their passion and mastery of a topic. Others may fear disappointing parents or teachers if they receive a less than perfect grade. Some doubt themselves and question whether they can keep up with the other students, and assume that test scores will confirm or invalidate their abilities, and even define their sense of self-worth. Sometimes these fears can be addressed through "cognitive-behavioral" techniques that challenge faulty assumptions and distorted beliefs, such as developing positive self-statements that challenge negative thoughts, and learning relaxation and mindfulness techniques to stay focused and calm. Other times, [counseling may be necessary](#) to understand and overcome these difficulties.

So what can you do to improve your confidence and keep calm during tests?

Work on the basics (develop good study skills!)

- Study thoroughly – know your material completely (no skimming or Spark notes)
- Use good study skills – outlining, note cards, highlighting, writing summaries, etc.
- Ask for help when you need it – get help with difficult material and with developing study skills
- Set aside a structured time and place for homework that is quiet and free from distractions. Turn off the phone and message alerts on the computer.

Prepare for the test

- Get enough sleep and eat a good breakfast.
- Avoid conversations with other students about their worries about the test, since this can increase your anxiety.
- Ask your teacher for a change in seating if your seat is in a very distracting location.
- Practice stress management techniques. These can include *meditation, deep breathing, mindfulness, yoga, and relaxation techniques*. While sometimes these techniques can be learned through books, CDs or classes, meeting with a psychologist, yoga teacher or meditation teacher may be beneficial.
- Practice a technique called *imaginal rehearsal*. Picture yourself at your desk in school feeling relaxed and confident, as you calmly take the test, free from anxiety.
- *Challenge negative beliefs and develop positive self-talk*. Identify some of the negative thoughts that create self-doubt, such as assuming you will fail, or that you will become anxious during the test. Develop statements that can challenge these assumptions. These can include short statements to boost confidence, such as, "I know I can handle this," to challenges related to specific worries, such as "I don't have to get an A to win my family's approval." Some books listed below offer suggestions for this technique, but a psychologist may be helpful if you need more support with this.

Strategies for test-taking

- Do something relaxing or distracting right before the test.
- Start working on the test immediately. Plan what you want to do first or just start writing, but don't hesitate.
- Skip questions that seem too difficult – you can return to them later. Plan to use the entire class period for the test. Outline your response for essay questions.
- Don't aim for perfection.
- Use *deep breathing techniques* to calm yourself.

- Use *mindfulness techniques* to “let go” of anxiety. Notice distracting thoughts, but don't “follow them.” Let them drift away and refocus on the test.
- Take short breaks during the test to close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax.
- Use a squeeze ball to release tension, or tense and relax your muscles.
- Remind yourself that some tension is normal; use it as an ally like adrenaline in a race. A pounding heart means you are excited and *eager* to take on the test, not that you are afraid of it.
- Repeat a *calming “mantra”* to yourself. Identify a calming phrase or word that you can use to calm yourself and feel grounded.
- Remind yourself that negative self-talk is unproductive and remember your *positive self-statements*.

These steps listed above are suggestions that you or your child could try. Taking an inventory of problem behaviors that can be changed is an essential first step. Some books that offer guidance are listed below. Negative attitudes and low self-esteem are often the most difficult symptoms of test anxiety to address, though, since they are not easily remedied by simple behavioral tools. Gifted children and adolescents who are burdened with self-doubt, perfectionism and low self-esteem frequently benefit from the support and guidance of a therapist who can help them understand and overcome these perceptions, and stop the cycle of anxiety before it escalates and becomes a chronic problem.

If you have found other tools that have worked, please let us know in the comments section. Thanks!

Suggested readings:

Biegel, G. (2009). *The stress reduction workbook for teens: Mindfulness skills to help you deal with stress*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Bourne, E. (2010). *The anxiety and phobia workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Burns, D. (2008). *Feeling good: The new mood therapy*. New York: Harper.

Schab, L. (2009). *The anxiety workbook for teens: Activities to help you deal with anxiety and worry*. Oakland, CA: Harbinger Publications.

Mayo Chess Tournament

April 23rd Mayo Cafetorium 9a.m.to Noon

- Participants will play in a three-round, Swiss style tournament.
- Pieces are not counted for points; points are based on win (1 point), lose (0 points) or draw (0.5 points).
- The players with the highest cumulative score will be invited to the Tulsa Public Schools Chess Tournament on May 10 at Wilson Teaching and Learning Academy.
- Players must be accompanied by an adult throughout the duration of the tournament. Adults will wait in the library during games and students will return to the library between games. Respectful use of personal electronics is allowed in the library.
- Good sportsmanship is expected from all attendees.
- Registration is due by 9:00 a.m. on April 18th.
- Email registrations may be sent to Mrs. DePalma by the registration deadline.
- Late registrations will not be accepted.
- Please direct questions to Mrs. DePalma via email: depalcy@tulsaschools.org

Please sign and return the bottom portion of this form by 9:00 a.m. on April 18th. Late registrations will not be accepted.

My child, _____ will participate in the chess tournament.

I understand that my child needs to be accompanied by an adult throughout the tournament, and that good sportsmanship is expected of all attendees.

Parent Signature and Date