

The Berkeley Chess School

Mission

The mission of the Berkeley Chess School, a 501(c)(3) organization, now in its 29th year, is to share the educational benefits of chess with Bay Area children, regardless of cultural background, socioeconomic status, or gender. BCS has taught hearing impaired students. A fifth of our students are on full or partial scholarship.

What We Do

Berkeley Chess School's offers

- Chess instruction and play to over 5,000 K-12 students each year in over 140 schools.
- Forty chess tournaments per year (including two All Girls Tournaments)
- Full and half-day weekly summer camps in June, July and August
- Weekly Friday-night chess classes in Berkeley and Walnut Creek
- An international chess exchange program
- Advanced teen classes
- Outreach programs for Title I schools

History

In 1981 Elizabeth Shaughnessy, former Irish Women's Chess Champion and mother of three, was asked to volunteer-teach chess at her children's school in Berkeley. Noting that chess appealed to children of diverse backgrounds and witnessing the academic benefits of chess, Shaughnessy founded the Berkeley Chess School. In 1986 Shaughnessy was elected to the Berkeley School Board and served until 1994. With intimate knowledge of the public school system in California, she witnessed that when properly taught, chess increases academic performance.

Highlights

- **1996 - 1999** Provided chess intervention to Anna Yates Elementary School and Emery Middle School in Emeryville.
 - Anna Yates went from being “a school in need of improvement” to “a school of merit” as defined by the State Department of Education.
 - Emery Middle School chess team earned top honors at the State Scholastic Chess Championships in 2000. One of the students became State Champion in his section. On the basis of this success he obtained a full scholarship to Head Royce Middle School and today is a philosophy major at St. Mary's College in Moraga.
- **2004 to 2010** brought chess intervention to J.O.Ford Elementary in Richmond. Test score results showed that students who had chess out-performed their peers by 38% in math and 25% in reading comprehension.
- **2008 - 2010** provided chess intervention in five of Oakland's Title I elementary schools. At the end of year one an independent research and firm, found that the students who took chess for 20 or more weeks (one hour per week) scored significantly higher CST Math score gains than non-program students from comparable schools in Oakland.

Berkeley Chess School has a history of community impact, including a 2007 Berkeley Community Fund award and certificate of recognition from Barbara Lee for “exceptional efforts to promote youth achievement and success”. *Diablo Magazine* named Berkeley Chess School "Best After-School Program in the East Bay". Elizabeth Shaughnessy has been recognized with an Avanti! MAGIC award for community service, a "Hometown Hero" award from the Berkeley Rotary Club and a Bank of America Local Hero award.

Our general operations are funded by our fee-based chess programs, offered at more than 140 schools in the greater Bay Area. Our outreach programs are funded by charitable organizations and individual donors.