



## BCS Oakland Chess Program: Testimonials

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### **Steven Daubenspeck, Principal, Futures Elementary:**

I am very honored to be working with you and your contribution to Futures. I do believe in your philosophy and how it impacts student thinking and relationships. I look forward to working with you more. As I send these articles [about the chess program] to friends and families across the country, I am delighted by people's amazement with the Chess Program.

Thank your team for their professionalism, eagerness and belief in the students at Futures.

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### **Carol Johnson, Principal, Santa Fe Elementary:**

It is always satisfying to see the light in children's eyes shine brighter when they are fully engaged and happy with learning. Mr. Poehlmann teaches with passion and makes challenging concepts easy to understand.

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### **Patrick Hamilton, third-grade teacher, Maxwell Park International Academy:**

I just wanted to thank your organization for the wonderful gift you have given our school this year. Without a doubt our chess classes with Mr. Poehlmann and the chess tournament last week were among the highlights of the year for my students. My students have no outside art or music classes, and they only get P.E. once every two weeks. Having a chess master come to our classroom was an opportunity they really latched onto. Through our BCS sessions, they have all learned to love the game, and during our weekly choice time, the chess boards are always the first chosen.

It wasn't easy. Many of my students were very impulsive and impatient at the beginning of the year. I was uncertain as to how they would react to a game with so many rules, so much strategy and intricacy. Now, a few short months later, my students are all accomplished chess players, and the skills that they have taken away from their chess lessons will help them become better test-takers, better students and better people. The patience, thoughtfulness and high-level thinking that is required of them in chess has started to emerge more in the classroom and on the playground as well. The tournament you put on allowed my students to feel the thrill of high-level competition, and to feel pride in their accomplishment of learning something difficult.

I'm writing mostly just to say thanks, but I'm also hoping we can continue the program at Maxwell Park next year. I know Mr. Ervin and Mr. Davis feel very strongly about the impact that the program had in their classrooms as well. If there is anything I can do to make it possible for your teachers to return next fall, please let me know!

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### **A "Chess-Timonial" by Futures 4th Grade Teacher Rebecca Jelen:**

My class has thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from the Berkeley Chess School's program this school year. I have seen them grow in ways I knew were possible, but had not yet seen before the program. During chess they are extremely focused and attentive, and take the game and the lessons very seriously. I have seen students who normally choose to sit in the back during my lessons make sure they are smack dab in the center front when Mr. S. is here. They have learned to work together, partnering with anyone they are matched against, lose with grace, and win without boasting. They teach each other and allow their peers to teach them. They have even taught me a lot when I have been playing against them. My husband has been trying to teach me for years (his strategy- keep beating me and then I will learn) and by playing my students I have finally learned how all the pieces move and what some of the strategies are. Students are going home and teaching family members how to play, or playing relatives who already know how. They are asking for chess sets as birthday gifts and Christmas presents. They seem proud and excited about their knowledge and new ability at this challenging game.

I believe that chess has affected my students outside of chess class as well. Overall they are more focused, cooperative and are an amazing community compared to where we were when we began this year.

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### **Elizabeth Hutchinson, OUSD substitute teacher:**

Today I worked in a third-grade classroom at Esperanza, where Stephen, or, as the children call him, Mr. Chess, came from 9-10 am. I remembered him from a day last spring when I subbed at the same school. I cannot say how much your program gives these children. They are fully invested in what your program teaches. And then they get to play! That they learn intricacies that will serve them well forever stands side by side with the camaraderie generated as they win, lose, watch their pawns morph into knights and bishops. Today they were done with their math with ten minutes to go before the bell to go hom, and they begged, "Can we please play chess?" How could I say no?

All the best to you - I only wish you could serve more schools - all of them would benefit.