

chess news

An interesting comparison of the top organized mind-sports in the U.S.!

By USCF President John McCrory
I had a chat with Al Levy, President of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL). It was interesting to compare our organizations. Al was very impressed with our scholastic and youth work, and I invited his staff to visit the Nashville National Elementary Championship tournament in May (the ACBL is located in Memphis, so it was convenient).

They have a hall of fame on a smaller scale than ours (no separate museum). They were turned down by the USOC about the same time we were, although their international Olympic scene is analogous to ours (many Bridge federations belong to their NOCs; their World President is pushing drug testing, while their players object). They have a membership of 160,000 with a staff of 90 employees. They have lots of politics, he said; I told him we had some too!

We are exchanging copies of our monthly publications. Interestingly, he said that many of their strong women players do not like mixed-gender competition because they do better in women-only events. Their Internet-play situation is very similar to ours, with various competing groups not necessarily associated with ACBL. Their adult membership is dropping and aging, but they have limited youth replacements so the overall membership is also not growing, while ours is.

Problem-Solving Skill Enhancement Through Chess

Recently, Shiv Gaglani, a freshman at West Shore High School in Florida, competed at the 40th annual Junior Science, Engineering, and Humanities Symposium at the University of Florida in Gainesville, held February 2-4. He was one of only 28 ninth and tenth graders in the state to be selected for the JSEHS and one of eight top presenters. He won second place in his division.

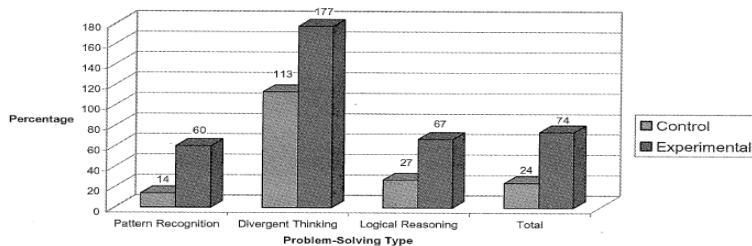
Also, he placed first at the 2003 Brevard Intra-coastal Regional Science Fair in the Behavioral category. Shiv is now invited to compete at the state level and at the 40th Space Congress where he will again present his findings.

Here is a copy of his abstract:

The aim of this study is to find whether implementation of systematic chess training will enhance the problem-solving skills in elementary school students and, in the long term propose chess

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Average Percentage Increase
Experimental vs. Control Group



as an integral part of the curriculum in elementary schools if proved so.

The hypothesis states that when elementary students are introduced to effective chess training, they will show a significant increase in pattern recognition, divergent thinking, and logical reasoning.

Twenty-five elementary students from third grade to fifth grade with no previous knowledge of chess were recruited for the Harbor City Elementary Chess Club. In order to control some inevitable limitations such as age, maturity, and school curriculum, ten students made up the control group that did not undergo the variable, chess training. [Fifteen students made up the experimental group that underwent the chess training.]

A pre-test was administered to [both] group[s] before any chess training. The pre-test was based on the book Fundamentals of Mathematics, testing for pattern recognition, divergent thinking, and logical reasoning. Students [among the experimental group] learned chess skills through direct instruction, puzzles, and computer simulation. After 16 weeks of training, both the experimental and control group took a post-test.

The data shows:

■ Chess significantly increased pattern recognition, divergent thinking, and logical reasoning skills. The experimental group showed about a 74% increase while the control group only experienced about a 24% increase.

■ Chess dramatically reduced the time taken for test completion, engendering quick and efficient problem solving. The experimental group took about 19% less time taking the post-test than the pre-test [times for taking the pre-test and post-test for the control group were not available].

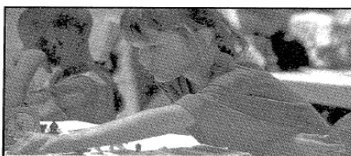
This data supports the hypothesis that chess significantly increases problem-solving skills. These results are in line with previous chess research that proved chess increases critical thinking, cognitive skills, intuition, memory retention, verbal reason-

ing, and consequences of actions.

Shiv is convinced that the teaching of chess to students, especially at a younger age, could significantly improve student performance on tests such as the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) by increasing skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. He is planning to prove his theory in future research projects.

If his theory is proved correct, his future goal is to establish chess as an integral part of elementary school curriculum in Florida, and later in all of the United States.* He would like to begin by starting a chess club in all the schools in Brevard County. If you are interested in starting a chess club in your school, Shiv can be contacted at arpesh@aol.com or (321) 726-0761.

* The State of New Jersey has already passed a bill to implement chess as an integral part of school curriculum.



change a child's life

Include a bequest for the U.S. Chess Trust in your will. To do this, add this clause to your will: "I give to the U.S. Chess Trust, a charitable trust organized under the Laws of Massachusetts, c/o the U.S. Chess Federation, 3054 US Route 9W, New Windsor, NY 12553, the sum of \$_____ to be used for chess educational and charitable purposes." If you already have a will, a short separate document (known as a "codicil") can add the bequest above. Your attorney can do this easily and should be consulted. Any such gift is deductible by your estate for U.S. estate and gift tax purposes. You may get further information on this matter by calling: 845-562-8350, ext. 138, Barb Vandermark.