

I am the Chess Club Advisor for Tapteal Elementary School in West Richland, Washington. My name is Becky Ufford and I also teach part time in a 4th grade classroom. I took on chess coach last year, so I've been advising for a little over 1 year. Last year I had 67 kids signed up for Chess Club. Since we had a new school built in our area, our population has gone down and now I currently have over 50 kids participating. This is A LOT of kids to manage! This year in particular I have a large number of 1st and 2nd graders (which I love!) Management is a huge issue for me. I MUST have parent help this year due to the large number of primary kids. I call or email parents that I know could help me before we meet. I "shoot for" at least 2 parents to help. I distributed a letter to all chess club parents that I could not hold chess club unless I had parent volunteers. Not only was it too difficult for me to manage, but it also becomes a safety issue with that many students. So far, I have had plenty of volunteers.

Parent responsibilities include:

- Checking in kids at the door (Many of my primary kids would take much too long to find their name on a list of 50 kids. I even tried breaking the kids names into grade levels, but it still took way too long!)
- Kid management (Asking kids to sit down and wait for the mini lesson to start)
- After the lesson, they hand out boards and pieces.
- When all boards are distributed, they check to make sure they've set up the pieces correctly and boards are set up to "white is right". They also check the queens to make sure they are on the correct space. I sometimes use students to help me with this one too!
- Parents that know how to play chess, help kids answer questions and solve problems.
- Help kids with chess clock resetting and how to use them properly. (Don't hover your hand over the clock. Hit the chess clock button with the same hand you move with, etc.)
- Encourage kids to do "touch move".
- Help kids find partners that don't have partners yet or find a pair they can rotate in with.
- Put away all chess pieces, boards, and clocks.
- Distribute any notes, messages, worksheets at the end of chess club.
- Make sure all kids are safely being picked up by a parent or guardian.
- Anything else I need them for! One week I had a parent distribute my chess club shirts.

The first couple of sessions are tough because about half of the kids don't know how to play chess AT ALL. I ask the kids who know how to play and would be willing to

teach someone to stand on one side of the room and the ones who don't know how to play to move onto the other side of the room. Then, I have them find someone they would like to teach. This usually works out well, unless I get a bossy kid who tries to teach a quiet kid and isn't really showing them how to play. I monitor this carefully the first couple of sessions. I match kids up like this for about the first 2-3 meetings, then it seems as though all the kids know how to move the pieces pretty confidently.

I usually have a short 5-10 minute mini-lesson every Chess Club time. I focus on naming the pieces, piece movement, and touch-move the first few sessions. After that I am able to show opening moves, castling, etc. I look at the needs and levels of the students as the year progresses.

One thing I stress EVERY time we have Chess Club is manners. I have them shake hands and wish each other good luck and say "good game" after every game. We talk about the importance of not gloating if you take a powerful piece and being respectful of each others feelings.

Once kids are paired up and playing, I am able to rotate around and watch games. I instruct kids at their personal level. Most kids will pair up with someone at their level. If a kid is ready to learn castling and it is a need at that time in their game, I will show them. If a kid is a more advanced player, I may show them other techniques.

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The rules are simple in my Chess Club. You follow the school rules (be safe, be kind, be respectful, obey reasonable requests) and you play chess. You are not allowed to just "hang out". You are there to play or help. If you are disrespectful or not playing, you leave and call home. I really have not had any trouble with discipline this year. I did send a student home last year that just wanted to "hang out". I treat Chess Club just as I would my regular classroom.

Our PTA has donated money so I could purchase 10 chess clocks. I finally got these at the end of the year last year so we were able to practice with them before the Blitz Extravaganza Tournament and will have them before the Bughouse Tournament. The kids enjoy learning how to use them and are becoming more familiar with their operation.

They also donated \$75.00 for the purchase of chess books. Many parents have been asking me for books so they can help their child and so they can make sure they are learning correctly. I placed several books in our library for student checkout so Chess Club kids could check these out to take home. I also purchased a couple of books for me to use as an instructor. I am using Chess Workbook for Children which has some

reproducible worksheets that I can copy for kids to practice at home. I also have been using 202 Checkmates for Children which I can also reproduce. I personally bought Chess for Dummies last year to read. I just learned how to play chess last year and felt I needed to make sure I knew the basics to help kids. I still have a lot to learn, but I really enjoy working with the kids.

As far as tournaments go, I put the information out there and let the parents and kids decide if they're ready or want to try it. I require that the parents be there the entire tournament. I have found the they can be emotional and some kids really need their parents around for support.

I hope this helps some of you new chess coaches. If you have any questions feel free to email me at Becky.Ufford@RSD.edu. Good Luck!