

## Chess

The October 2001 issue of *Child Magazine* featured an article entitled *The Brainy Benefits of Chess* by Beth Weinhouse.

The article takes the position that “Schools and parents across the country are betting that this classic game of strategy makes kids smarter and improves their test scores. Experts agree it’s a winning position.”

Weinhouse states that a growing body of research is showing that chess improves kid’s thinking and problem-solving skills as well as their math and reading test scores. Some states—New Jersey, for one—have written chess into their official school curricula. She also says that schools that encourage chess are reacting to studies like that of New York City-based educational psychologist Stuart Margulies, Ph. D., who in 1996 found that elementary school students in Los Angeles and New York who played chess scored approximately 10 percentage points higher on reading tests than their peers who didn’t play. Other similar studies have found that students playing chess also scored over 6 points higher in math tests than the non-players. Not only are academic tests affected, but several psychological ones too: Chess players tend to score higher in both critical and creative thinking processes.

Experts attribute chess players’ higher scores to the rigorous workout chess gives the brain. Studies have found that chess improves a child’s visual memory, attention span, and spatial-reasoning ability. And because it requires players to make a series of decisions, each move helps kids learn to plan ahead, evaluate alternatives, and use logic to make sound choices.