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Chess: It's a Wonder Game

Players learn the same sportsmanship, strategy, and social skills with chess that they might pick up on a baseball diamond. But chess also teaches important academic lessons every parent should tune in to.

Jeremy Chiappetta, a teacher in New York City's Chess-in-the-Schools program, explains: "Even kids who don't view themselves as smart find a sense of pride in playing chess. It's a hugely positive academic tool for all kids."

While chess improves school skills (students learn critical thinking and long-term planning), belief in themselves may be the game's most valuable lesson. "Chess teach-

es you how to think in the future—to remain patient yet attentive," says Max Lerner, 12, who participated in the New York City program. "But more important, it also makes you feel good about yourself and the progress you make."

How to get your child involved?

■ Start a chess club in school.

Find a few like-minded parents, then take your plan to the principal.

■ Contact a local club (consult the phone book) or visit www.uschess.org for a directory.

■ Learn to play together at home. Check out educational books from your local library to get you started.—*Jacqueline Leigh Ross*

THIS DAD'S LIFE By Bob Sloan



UNITED WE STAND

I'm in the supermarket, getting food to prepare dinner because I'm a 21st-century dad, undaunted by shopping lists and complicated recipes. Another dad comes down my aisle. His daughter is in the throes of a meltdown, wailing about not getting the right cereal or a favorite dessert. She's being loud, unreasonable—in short, a kid. Passing mothers shake their heads disapprovingly at this poor, hapless dad. He looks up in exasperation. His eyes meet mine, waiting for me to reproach him, too. I don't. I know better. This isn't a dad thing; it's a parent thing. I want to tell those moms: "Hey, we're trying here. Kids have meltdowns for all kinds of reasons, but not because we dads don't know what we're doing." This episode reminds me that it's more important than ever to support other dads, especially when we set forth into territory where our own fathers seldom ventured. So moms, please cut us some slack. And to all the dads, as Thomas Jefferson said of the explorer Meriwether Lewis: Seek "courage undaunted, possessing a firmness and perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibilities could divert..."

FAST FACT

Public elementary schools with Internet access:

61% in 1996 94% in 1999

—National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education