

DISCUSSION GROUP

EVERY LAST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

HINTS & TIPS - EXCHANGING IDEAS - SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Discussion Group Meetings allow participants to share their knowledge and expertise on a particular topic regarding *Chess in Education*. Educators can learn from each other and gain new insights through different perspectives and experiences.



MEETING NOTES

31th May 2023

DISCUSSION GROUP MEETING

31st May 17:00 pm

London time



Mikkel Nørgaard (Denmark)



THE BRAIN ON THE CURRICULUM

In what ways do you see the game of chess could be beneficial to mental health?



Every last
Wednesday
of the month

Oliver Conran (UK)

STUDENTS' INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

How can we best recognise and respond to students' individual needs in the classroom?

Chess in Education
www.chessplus.net



REGISTER AND
JOIN THE
DISCUSSION

Discussion summary

Mikkel Nørgaard (Denmark)
Chief Learning Officer
Danish Scholastic Chess

I've been one of the 12 full-time employees with the Danish Scholastic Chess for 13 years. I manage a number of projects the organization has with the Danish government, municipalities, foundations etc. Among those are "The Day of Scholastic Chess" which takes place every year in February. This year, 47,000 students took part and 313 schools were involved. I will be speaking about another project of ours: "The brain on the curriculum" which involves 49 schools and +1,000 special needs pupils aged 6 – 17.

Oliver Conran (UK)
Principal
Scholastic Chess Hong Kong

Oliver Conran studied for a BA in Business Studies from Thames Valley University and is the principal of Scholastic Chess, a provider of school programs based in Hong Kong and organiser of monthly scholastic tournaments. Oliver is an adult improver in chess himself, a chess enthusiast and has a strong belief in the power of educational chess.

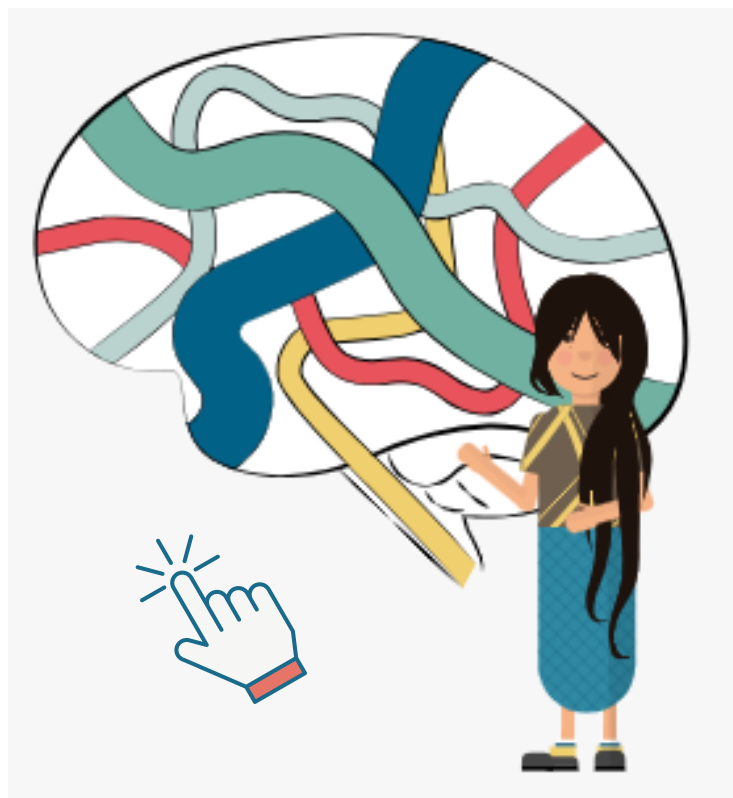
The Brain on the Curriculum

Danish Scholastic Chess, founded in 1960, aims to use chess as a tool to improve education and well-being for young people. Although independent from the government, they receive support from various sources to work with around 600 schools and 2000 teachers in Denmark.

MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTION IN DENMARK

Mental health has become a significant concern, especially among young people, and the organization believes they can make a positive impact. They define mental health based on the World Health Organization's definition as *'a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'* and use chess to promote mental well-being.

Through their intervention in special needs schools, they reach over 100,000 students and train 200 teachers to use specially designed teaching material. The halfway evaluation conducted in 2022 showed promising results, including improved language skills, positive interactions, and a better classroom atmosphere, leading to reduced school absences.



THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The impact of electronic devices on mental health acknowledges that many people, including school children, consider themselves addicted to screens. The recommendations from brain scientists and psychologists advocate for extended periods of focused attention on a single problem in an analog (non-digital) setting as a solution. They also endorse scholastic chess as an antidote to screen addiction.



The Brain on the Curriculum

Danish psychologist Sven Bankman stresses the importance of "*thoughtfulness*" as a valuable skill that is being eroded in the digital age. According to Bankman, the ability to reflect and think systematically is crucial, and this can be nurtured through chess. Using chess to promote reflection is believed to be effective in addressing mental health issues.

This sense of community has a positive impact on mental health, and they actively promote this perspective to decision-makers in Denmark.

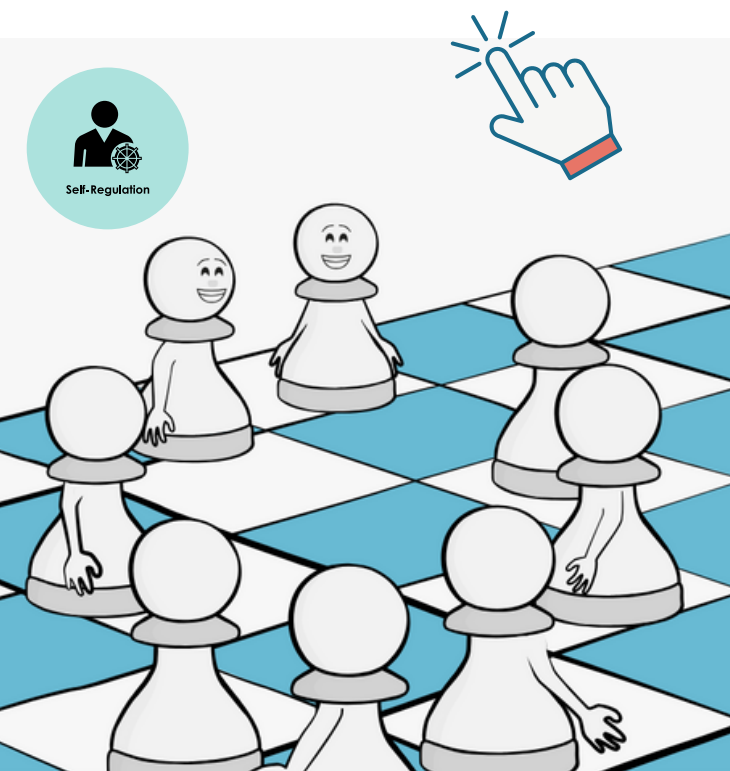
Respectful behavior, such as shaking hands, speaking softly, and allowing opponents time to think, are qualities they teach and consider crucial for special needs children and beneficial for everyone.

THE BENEFITS OF SELF-REGULATION

Teaching self-regulation from the beginning of chess instruction provides a concrete and valuable tool for children, particularly for special needs children, within and outside of school.

The underlying goal is to improve self-regulation abilities during chess exercises, and general activities are incorporated alongside board exercises in different contexts. The activities can involve conversations, puzzles, or role-playing.

Students regulate each other during the game, where they naturally discuss appropriate moves and rule adherence. This fosters a sense of social control and the development of self-regulation skills.



THE CULTURAL ASPECTS

The organisation also emphasizes the importance of maintaining the cultural aspects associated with chess to value and preserve the broader chess community and the idea that learning chess connects people worldwide.

The Brain on the Curriculum

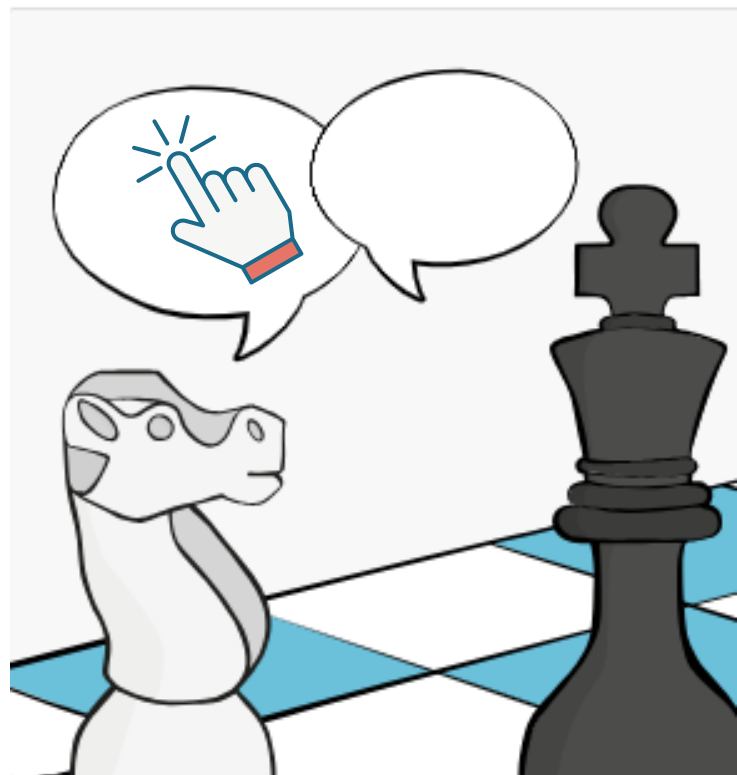
LEARNING HOW TO CONTROL ONE'S EXPRESSION

Part of self-regulation also involves learning how to control one's expression and complaints without getting excessively angry or losing control of emotions. This can be challenging for young children but it is an important aspect of learning and development.

Chess provides a unique opportunity for intense focus and the application of rules, which may not be as prevalent in other school subjects. It's important to recognize and build upon these skills to further enhance their development.

PREVENTATIVE OR THERAPEUTIC?

While they have psychologists on board, they haven't specifically focused on using chess as a treatment method. However, they have conducted interventions with children at risk of delinquency, which have shown promising results in preventing mental health issues from emerging. Overall, their organization's primary focus is on prevention rather than treatment, as that is where they have the most experience.



THE PROCESS OF MEASURING THE IMPACT OF THEIR INTERVENTION

An external research team conducted a halfway evaluation about six months ago, and currently, a final evaluation is underway. The evaluation includes surveys for both the children and teachers involved, as well as extensive interviews with them. This process is expected to be completed within a month, after which it will take around three to four months to analyze the data and prepare the final report. By autumn, they anticipate having a better understanding of what they have learned from the evaluation.

Students' individual needs

Questions to deal with today

How can we best respond to individual needs in the classroom?

What are the best practices for addressing diverse skill levels?



TYPES OF NEEDS WE MAY ENCOUNTER:

- Diverse skill levels
- Behavioural
- Age-specific
- Interest / Attention / Focus

Engaging students and maintaining their attention requires identifying and addressing these different aspects. The goal is to elevate interest and keep students engaged by understanding their individual needs. It can help tailor teaching methods to meet their needs.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Gifted children often require more control over their learning environment, and not meeting their needs can lead to disruptive behavior. After teaching Maxim for a while, it was observed that he wanted to be the source of information rather than just receiving it. He wanted to be actively involved in creating checkmate patterns instead of just being shown to him. This understanding helped to improve the learning experience for Maxim. By allowing Maxim to use the concepts we had taught him to create his own checkmate patterns, we were able to cater to his specific needs.

Students' individual needs

GROUP DISCUSSIONS TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS BETTER

Encouraging students to speak up in the classroom helps develop their communication skills, which schools and parents value and benefits students' development. Group discussions are suggested to share their understanding, with others and to feel valued and listened to.

It also gives the teacher the opportunity to actually get to know their students a little bit better and identify their proficiency levels.

CELEBRATE STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

In terms of incentives, the classroom employs a mix of medals given at the end of the term. Awards are to try to incorporate not just the competitive chess approach but also emphasising different skills that kids may have developed or the effort they made to play more chess. We encourage kids to learn outside of the classroom because we only have them for an hour per week.

They are awarded for different aspects, including improvement, social interaction, and the use of online resources. It encourages students to do any chess-related activity outside of class. Social interaction and helping others are also considered when awarding. Did they play chess with a parent or a friend? Did they discover a new app that they thought was really good? Did they use some new technology?

We also give medals to the most improved and best beginner students. Beginners receive special attention, as teachers strive to provide a positive and enriching learning experience for all students.

Educational Chess vs Competitive Chess

Educational Chess

- Aimed at improving competencies across a broad range of subjects
- Chess as a tool for teaching life skills as well as academics skills

Competitive Chess

- Not inclusive of all
- Focus on winning
- Focus on extrinsic motivational factors:
 - trophies
 - rating points

Discussion summary

THE LEARNING STYLES THEORY IS DISCREDITED

Elizabeth Spiegel

There's a great pair of books called [*How Teaching Happens: Seminal works in Teaching and Teacher Effectiveness and what they mean in practice*](#) that reviews the last 50 years of pedagogical research and tells you what has been discredited, - the learning styles theory is one of them

Oliver Conran

I'm really happy to see Karel Van Delft with us today, his book, [*Chess for Educators and Developing Chess Talents*](#). A lot of material within there has been an inspiration for me in the classroom and I would direct people to read those books. Really good resources for teachers.

Uttam Dhungel

When will this type of discussion happen again? 😊 so much instructive...

FUN & EDUCATIONAL FOR EVERYONE



Interactive Games

This section is about learning how to play chess from the beginning. We start with minigames. These are simple games played on a chessboard. By...

Next Discussion Group Meeting

Wednesday, 28th June 2023



[Register!](#)



MISSION

Our Mission with the monthly Discussion Group Meeting is to connect educators who use chess as an education tool from all over the world to learn from each other and discuss different perspectives and experiences.



DO YOU WANT TO SHARE
YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND
EXPERTISE?

CONTACT US!

training@chessplus.net