

May 21, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

My son, Sully Malhoit, has been playing chess with Woodberry Chess for some years now. The program has provided something for our family that we didn't even know we needed. I had originally taught our son some basic chess at home, but he quickly was becoming better than I would be, so I jumped at the chance to put him into a chess club when I received the flier at his elementary school. I anticipated he would learn some more advanced chess and maybe even come home and teach me a thing or two.

Over time I realized that this chess club was so much more than just a chess club. Under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry these children were being taught, not just how to play chess, but how to think in ways that children don't often get to think anymore. They were given time, space, and patience. They were learning to think critically and solve problems that required both a longer-term plan and the ability to adjust the plan quickly.

I have frequently heard the anecdote that American children don't have an attention span longer than five to seven minutes. The Woodberrys have apparently not heard this anecdote. I have watched my son sit and strategize, work through a game in his head, have it not work out, then try to figure out how to make it work the next time. These are things that can't be fixed with the click of a mouse or hitting the reset button. There are very few spaces left in this world for a child to sit quietly and use his mind. The Woodberrys have provided one of these spaces and I can't thank them enough for it.

And while doing all of this they still provide a fun environment for the kids to engage in. Chess club is the part of the school week that is missed during Winter or Spring Break. Chess club is what is missed during Summer Break. Partially for the chess, but partially for the Woodberrys. I count our family as lucky that we found the chess club on the first floor of Jones Leadership Academy. It has truly been a gift.

Sincerely,

Alanna Paully

Mother of Sully Malhoit



From: Nida Ammar

To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 01:30:16 PM EDT

Subject: Re: Chess Evaluation 2025

For our evaluation, I don't think you should look any further than this article: <https://toledoparent.com/features/teaching-chess-makes-kings-and-queens-of-toledo-youth/>

As I display this artwork of my daughter at my house, proudly; I reflect on the 3 years she spent at Chess club. She may not be the best chess player out there, but she learned to play in addition to other skills as well. She learned more about herself and how to carry herself, she is encouraged to pursue her hobbies and how to state her opinions. She really has become a lot more focused on area of her personality that are viewed by others. She has never complained that she didn't want to go; on the contrary, she always felt sad if a holiday falls on chess club days.

Chess is a discipline, an art that she now cherishes. She was taught the moves, the strategies and the etiquette of the game. Over the past 3 years, I believe Joud has moved from acting randomly to thinking before she acts. While others play checkers, Joud now plays chess!

It is an unforgettable experience; especially that she was welcomed in as is, with all respect to her culture and practice; it is rare to find a safe space for that!

Nida Ammar

Mother of Joud

Sent from my iPhone

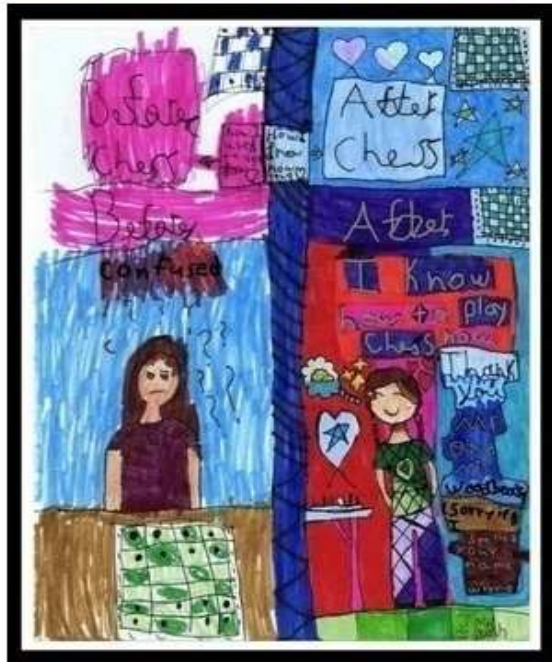


Joud

A

Teaching Chess Makes Kings and Queens of Toledo Youth

By Dennis Bova - June 2, 2024



The young girl's drawing was simple, yet revealing and powerful. It was in two parts: one, titled "Before Chess," with her looking over a chess board, feeling confused and lacking confidence; the other, titled "After Chess," with her smiling and surrounded by hearts and stars and words of thanks to the man whose help transformed her through learning the game.

"It was a sweet drawing that she gave to us," said the man drawn in the picture, Warren Woodberry.

Woodberry, a retiree who with his wife, Yolanda, teaches Toledo Public Schools youths that time-honored game of strategy to build up their self-esteem, give them a place where they can put troubles aside while deep in concentration and have fun.

She is one of many over the past dozen years or so who the Woodberrys have taught after school during the academic year. Working from their base at [Jones Leadership Academy](#), the Woodberrys greet and meet students from four other TPS buildings: [Ella P. Stewart Academy for Girls](#), [Escuela SMART Academy](#), [Grove Patterson Academy](#) and [Winterfield Venture Academy](#). They also host homeschooled youths.

Warren said TPS transports Ella P. Stewart and Escuela students to the academy, while parents bring their children from the other two schools to Jones for the sessions, which run from 3-5 p.m. The Woodberrys are at the academy on other days to welcome other students who want to join the chess program.

Many of the youths have learned the game well – several have won state and national competitions.

B

The chess powerhouse of sorts began by accident. Warren said he and Yolanda were at the Frederick Douglass Community Center working with youths in art and talking about inventions. “I had a chess board beside my desk,” Warren recalled, “and kids thought it was for checkers. I showed them the game.”

“Toledo’s not a chess town, like New York,” said Warren, who worked in the clothing business in New York City, where he met Yolanda. With the Woodberrys’ guidance, youths learned the game.

Warren said TPS leadership asked the Woodberrys to expand the chess program, which led to the move to the academy.

There have been challenges. “We’ve had some cases where kids didn’t want to be there,” Warren said, “but converted them and many went on to win championships.

“We offer more than chess,” he continued. “We do counseling. We spend two hours interacting with them. The kids are free to ask questions, and we feed them. Sometimes we have 15 to 20 kids, make sure they’re sociable. We don’t allow bullying or bad language.”

Eventually, he said, “some get hooked on the game and become competitive.”

Warren said in the early years, all the youths were boys. Then girls started showing interest, some going on to win championships, he said. The last couple of years it’s been pretty even between the genders.

While the school year is over, the Woodberrys continue to teach chess to youths in first through seventh grade through a summer camp at [Woodward High School](#) from June 3 to July 3 called Brains and Body, conducted by the Toledo Police Department.

Warren reflected on teaching chess to youths. “Some students pick up the game very quickly and some learn at a slower pace,” he said, “but eventually we have had positive surprises with the slower paced players on the learning process who takes more time but gives more thought than some of those that quickly learns the game of chess.”

“Chess has a great effect, it relaxes you,” he continued. “People who play chess can put away all their issues and concentrate on the game. There’s a calmness.”

As for not only next school year but the foreseeable future, Warren, 86, said, “I’m in good shape. I’m going to do this as long as I can.”



BEFORE CHESS & AFTER CHESS
BY JOUD IDRAIKH AGE 10 (5/14/24)

May 13, 2025

**Recommendation for the
Woodberry Chess Club at Jones Leadership Academy**

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with immense pleasure and without reservation that I recommend the Woodberry Chess Club, founded and expertly run by Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry at Jones Leadership Academy. Having personally witnessed the remarkable impact this club has had, particularly on my two sons, I can confidently state that the Woodberry Chess Club stands far above others, and the dedication of Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry is truly irreplaceable. We came from another chess club so we can speak to the difference.

The Woodberry's provide a service that extends well beyond simply teaching the rules of chess. They genuinely care for their students, fostering an environment of intellectual growth and personal development. Their commitment to enriching the lives of the chess players is evident in their efforts to expose the students to cultural events outside of the club itself, broadening their horizons in meaningful ways.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry are, quite simply, in a class by themselves. They are constantly teaching, imparting not only a high level of chess strategy and tactics but also valuable life lessons through the game.

A

They work diligently with each player, tailoring their instruction to individual needs and strengths. The results speak for themselves; they have demonstrably improved the game of every student they work with, all while maintaining a high level of enthusiasm and engagement in chess. The Woodberry Club has earned trophies in each tournament where we participated, individual and team trophies.

My own children eagerly anticipate each week's meeting, a testament to the engaging and supportive atmosphere the Woodberry's have cultivated. The positive impact they have had on my sons, and I know on countless other students, is truly immeasurable.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly recommend the Woodberry Chess Club and commend Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry for their exceptional dedication, skill, and genuine care for their students. They are an invaluable asset to Jones Leadership Academy and the wider community.

**Sincerely,
Shumon Majumder
Parent of Miko & Amaan
Grove Patterson**



B

Re: chess evaluation 2025
Edward McDaniel
To: me · Fri, May 16 at 10:40 PM

May 16, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my support for the Woodberry Park Chess Club facilitated by Warren and Yolanda Woodberry. Chess has been proven to enhance academic performance, cultivate critical thinking, and emphasize the importance of thoughtful decision-making. Under the Woodberry's tutelage, my two sons have not only learned the game of chess, but they have also acquired discipline, accountability, and a sense of belonging.

The Woodberry's epitomize the word commitment and work beyond the chessboard to provide our students with opportunities and experiences that otherwise would not be afforded to them. This chess program is a true gem and we should be looking for ways to strengthen it. Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry are pillars in the community, and I support programs that empower and enrich the youth of Toledo.

Sincerely,

Ed McDaniel Jr.
(Father of Edward
& Eli)



Cookie Williams

To: me • Tue, May 13 at 6:01 PM

Mr. & Mrs Woodberry,

You two are great chess teachers and more. I really enjoy learning to play chess in the after school club at Jones Leadership Academy. I also like how it teaches me to think about moves. Playing chess is like moving through life, you have to think. I can't wait to join again next year. Keep being awesome teachers you both are greatly appreciated.

JaNaya Haynes

(student)

Ella P. Stewart

Academy For Girls



From: Cookie Williams

To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Sunday, May 18, 2025 at 09:11:24 PM EDT

Subject: Re: Fw: Chess Evaluation 2025

The Woodberry Chess program, is a wonderful program. We appreciate the time Mr& Mrs Woodberry take out their schedule to spend time with JaNaya and Jayana, to teach them the game. It is very important to have such people as you in the community reaching our children. I love how you always teacher them about the art work in your class and it's meaning.

Chess has taught JaNaya more critical thinking skills, problem solving skills and patience. Jayana enjoys chess and looks forward to joining the chess club next school year. Chess has also taught Jayana patience and problem solving skills.

**Cookie Williams
Parent of JaNaya & Jayana**



From: Treana McClendon
To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at 07:12:01 AM EDT
Subject: Re: Chess Evaluation 2025

Hello, I would first like to extend my gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry on the exceptional influence and patience with my child Trenton. I have heard about the Chess program. I personally just thought it was two people just teaching chess. As I enrolled my child I seen something different with role models that look just like him.

Since Trenton has started playing chess he has an increase of things and also self confidence. Before entering chess Trenton had very minimal self control with anger. In just a few short months my child has learned to think first. At home Trenton is more calmer and gentle to his friends in the neighborhood. At School Trenton now understands to think first to answer questions. Trenton has always been an A student now he is an A+ student. Not only did Trenton gain an interest in Chess he has gained self respect and control. We thank the Chess Club

Treana McClendon
Mother of Trenton 3rd grade
Harvard Elementary



From: valerie mcclendon

To: Y. W. <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Monday, May 19, 2025 at 05:37:13 PM EDT

Subject: Trenton

Since Trenton has been in the chess program he's improved with his social skills. He also seems to think before he speaks I attribute that to his participation in the chess club as well.

Keep up the Good work chess club!!

**Valerie McClendon
Grandma to Trenton 3rd grade
Harvard**



**TRENTON WITH HIS MOM
& SISTER, HOLDING
TEAM TROPHY HE
HELPED TO WIN.**

From: theSynonymous4
To: "yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com"
<yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, May 19, 2025 at 01:08:33 PM EDT
Subject: Evaluation Review/ ThankU

I want to say Thank you to both of you (Woodberrys) for taking time patience and energy to teach my son the techniques and strategies of Chess. My son has learned how to be a little more strategic in making decisions in life and to have more self control and to stay calm under pressure.

Thank U for all that you do, Love and support for our children in school and communities.

**Respectively,
Sassinee D Brown
Mother of Shamir Brown**



From: JLA PTO

To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Sunday, May 18, 2025 at 07:04:55 PM EDT

Subject: THE WOODBERRY CHESS CLUB

Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry, for doing what you do well. Thank you for always showing up for our kids. Thank you for creating and sustaining the Woodberry Chess Club. We can not thank you enough! You have made a space where our children learn lifelong lessons, not just how to play a game. You consistently offer creative ways to expose our children to the arts and culture. You have given event tickets to siblings, and table etiquette is learned during the meals you provide.

Our daughter, London, looks forward to Tuesday afternoons during the school year. She comes home telling us how much fun she had and how good the food was. London is teaching her younger sister Paris chess. Paris wants to join your chess club next year. Thank you for always being upfront and honest.

We look forward to our daughters attending the Woodberry Chess Club this next school year.

**Sincerely,
Karlveltis and Joanna White
Parents of London S**



**On Monday, May 12, 2025 at 10:36:07 PM EDT,
Sherry Patterson wrote:**

Good evening,

The Horton-Patterson family sends our sincere thanks to Mr.& Mrs. Woodberry . Thank you for your patience, leadership, and mentorship to the students who attend Ella P school and participate in your after school chess program. Chess club is the highlight of my granddaughter London Horton's week. Learning chess has improved her interest with school work, especially mathematics.

She has developed a healthy competitiveness. She speaks glowingly about the Woodberry, sharing there knowledge with her. To my joy, London won a 3rd place trophy in a tournament. I'm proud of her accomplishment, since London was introduced to chess in September 2024, and attends once a week on Tuesdays.

The Woodberry's are a testament to the values the Horton - Patterson family holds dearly. London looks forward to participating in the Woodberry's chess program in the coming school year.

Best Regards

**Mrs. Sherry Horton-Patterson
Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad**



Edward McDaniel

To: me • Thu, May 15 at 4:06 PM

At first I didn't really appreciate chess but the Woodberry's helped me see it as more than just game but as a way to connect with other people. Chess has taught me to not give up and to problem solve correctly. I have also learned that my actions have consequences.

The Woodberry's have improved the lives of countless students in the city of Toledo. The Woodberry's chess program is a vital and should be experienced by all students.

**Edward
(Student)**



name Dutchess

Dear Mr and Mrs wood berry, I loved chess this year. I knew how to play when I came but I got so much better. Thank you for feeding us everytime we come even though you don't have to. Even when we get attitudes you treat us with respect. Also thank you for letting us come for free. This is my second year and I plan to come back next year. Thank you for this year.

THANK
YOU

Ella P. Stewart



Dutchess

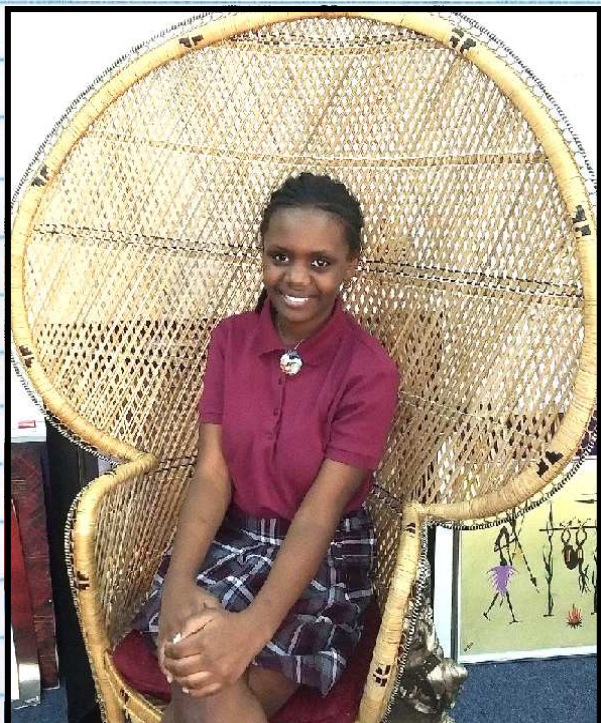
The after School Chess
Program. Is more Than a Chess Program
It's a Special Place. It teach our
Children Value and Responsibilities.
It take our Children places That
They my not see, without The
wood berry's. They Teachs The kids
a New way of life.

Ella P. Stewart

Thank you So
much.

The Calladge's

(Grandparents)



Heaven

May 2025

Elijah, May 15 2025.

During The chess club I've learned to change my attitude around others. This has helped me in life because now I don't get in trouble. In the tournaments I've done amazing and had fun all because of this chess club. I really appreciate this chess club for all they do for this community. They're giving chances for kids even when they don't have a lot.



Eli & Edward his Dad

From: alisha durham

To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 at 09:38:45 PM EDT

Subject: Re: Chess Evaluation 2025

Hi Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry,

I would like to personally thank you both for pouring into not only my son but every child that walks through the doors of your chess club. Walking into your space at JLAB is like walking into a vibrant oasis of culture. The warmth of the decor in your space, the welcoming smiles that you give each and every student and parent and the knowledge of the game of life taught through chess is PRICELESS!!!

I appreciate the love and care you have shown my son. The patience you have, while teaching him the game you both love is forever appreciated. The lessons he gets every Thursday afternoon is bigger than learning how to checkmate in a game. Mr. and Mrs. Woodberry I am grateful that you both are a part of my sons village. Although I am saddened that we wont see you this summer, I look forward to Thursday afternoons knowing he is gonna receive lifelong knowledge from you two while learning the game of Chess!

**Thank you both,
Alisha Durham
Mother of Kenson Ross
Grove Patterson**



Kenson

**On Thu, May 22, 2025, 5:07 AM
Lynn Foster Russell**

The chess club has offered numerous benefits for my 3 great grandchildren. A sense of self-worth, creativity, and their belief in their abilities to achieve not just chess but life skills.

What I really like is the positive structure in maintaining rules in the chess / art room. Team work as well as helping by showing them how to win and loose with a winners attitude. My children love to go.

Thank you for offering Chess to my babies.

**Ladore Foster
Great Grandma of
Ava, Alivea n Alijah**



From: Christopher Sekpeh

To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2025 at 06:19:08 PM

Subject: Re: Chess Evaluation 2025

Hello Mrs. Woodberry,

Thank you and Mr. Woodberry for providing the Woodberry Park Chess club for the kids. My evaluation of the club is simple: we love it. It has provided Maxwell with a life long skill he can continue to grow over the coming years. It is awesome to see him take to a non-screen activity and one he looked forward to. Thank you for providing a nourishing environment for the kids.

Maxwell chose skipping soccer or being late for practice rather than miss Chess club. It just shows how passionate he was about the Woodberry Park Chess Club and the wonderful space your team provided the kids. It is a wonderful program you have established and I wish you many more years and the growth of your Woodberry Park Chess Club army. Maxwell cherishes his time in the club for it was time well spent..

He will be attending Toledo Early College High School as a 7th grader. He plans to join the chess club there to continue what he started with you.

Again thank you for such a wonderful program. Hopefully we can stop by next fall.

**Christopher Sekpeh
Father of Maxwell
Grove Patterson**



From: Jaquel Miles

To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, May 23, 2025 at 01:43:27 PM EDT

Subject: Re: chess evaluation K'myah n Kaleah

My daughters have attended this program for the last two school years and it was a gem I did not know I needed as a mother. My older daughter is more confident with her speech and trusting in herself.

My youngest daughter has excelled so well with the guidance they receive. She is more patient and absolutely loves chess. Personally I would like to say thank you to them for taking the time to work with these ladies.

Jaquel Miles

Mother of K'myah n Kaleah

Ella P. Stewart



From: Family Montri
To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2025 at 09:40:23 PM EDT
Subject: Re: Fw: chess evaluation

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share feedback on how chess—and specifically your outstanding program—has positively impacted Charles’s development.

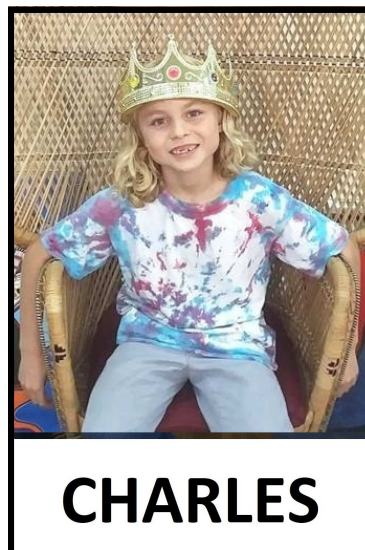
Your chess program has been instrumental in Charles’s growth, not just as a player, but as a person. Through your structured and engaging lessons, Charles has found a community of peers who share his interests. These friendships, rooted in mutual respect and intellectual curiosity, have helped him build meaningful social connections.

One of the most unexpected and rewarding benefits has been watching Charles engage in a mentoring role. He has discovered an interest in teaching others—a quality that your program has nurtured by encouraging him to help some of the younger players. The pride he takes in helping others learn, and the patience he shows in doing so, are clear signs of his personal growth.

Additionally, we’ve seen improvement in Charles’s self-control and emotional regulation. The strategic and contemplative nature of chess, combined with your even-handed and consistent guidance, has helped him learn to stay calmer and reflect more thoughtfully before reacting. These are invaluable life skills that extend far beyond the chessboard.

We are incredibly grateful for the positive influence your program has had on Charles. We look forward to seeing how he—and all the children fortunate enough to learn from you—continue to grow under your thoughtful and inspiring mentorship.

**Sincerely,
Derrick Montri
Father of Charles
Escuela Smart**



From: Rodney Braziel

To: "yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com"

<yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Sat, May 24, 2025 at 11:21:30 AM EDT

Subject: Chess

As a parent it was great to see my daughter Amya Braziel's joy and excitement about chess. The program provided a solid atmosphere to learn and shine.

Attending the tournament at Jones improved her confidence and helped her with a healthy competitive spirit. I have nothing but love for the coaches and program.

Rodney A. Braziel Sr.
Father of Amya



From: Sierra Webb

To: y w <yol_teacher2002@yahoo.com>

Sent: Sunday, May 25, 2025 at 10:07:00 PM EDT

Subject: Re: chess evaluation

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm happy to share how much my son, Jaxon, enjoyed the elementary school chess program. He found it both challenging and fun, with great mentors who encouraged him every step of the way.

The program gave him a chance to think critically, improve his focus, and connect with friends in a positive environment. Beyond just learning chess, I've noticed Jaxon's behavior and attitude at school have improved.

This program really helps kids build important skills and confidence while promoting good behavior.

I highly recommend continuing and supporting this valuable program—it's making a real difference for kids like Jaxon.

**Best,
Sierra Webb, Mom**



TPS 19th Annual Chess Tournament April 20th 2024
Comments from Parents and Coaches

04/20/24

Very Well Run Tournament and
the kids give us hope!

Great experience. Extremely well run!
Best Display of sportsmanship in any
tournament we have attended.
Excellent collaboration amongst
coordinators, volunteers, etc.
Knowledgeable and effectively Run!!

We had lots of fun and the event was
very well organized .. !!

RAVI VISWANATHAN

We had a wonderful time!
Thank you for your organization,
hard work, and kindness.

TPS 19th Annual Chess Tournament April 20th 2024
Comments from Parents and Coaches

Great Energy from all. Kids had fun!

excellent job to everyone! Smart group of kids!

Great fun for everyone! The kids are doing such a great job!

Great learning experience. Hope for more in the future.

Great time and family fun. Pizza and hotdogs were a hit!

Had an awesome time! Great learning Experience!

TPS 19th Annual Chess Tournament April 20th 2024
Comments from Parents and Coaches

Had a great team, will come again
Thank you for all yall hard work

Wonderful setup! Thank you
Great for The Kids

Fun Time Had by all. Great
for our 1st tournament!!

the staff was so nice

Great! 1st tournament

I Love playing it was so fun

All around fun for the kids! So fun
and great thank you!!

This was a great experience for the kids.
Also an excellent way to build confidence

TPS 19th Annual Chess Tournament April 20th 2024
Comments from Parents and Coaches

The event was fantastic. It was our
first tournament and this made our kids
want to participate more
Sherman May-2

today was amazing
Harrison Lecyl

I had a great time today. 😊
Loreal Watkins

This was a wonderful tournament
Charles Strong

This was amazing!!
Coach B manor

TPS 19th Annual Chess Tournament April 20th 2024
Comments from Parents and Coaches

Great job!

The kids worked so hard. Go Harvard Hustlers!

Great experience & exposure
for students!

VERY FUN. GO OAKDALE

Wonderful job today guys! You rock!!

Congratulations every one

Such a wonderful program for the kids - Evelyn Proud

Kids minds at their best!
Keep it up....

★ These children are the BEST. ★



Black Violin Then & Now



**The Valentine Theatre
410 Adams Street
(near N Superior St)**

**MAY 8th 2025
7:30 pm Thurs
Meet in Lobby 7pm**

