

Brooklyn Castle group: Katie Dellamaggiore, Robert McLellan, John Galvin, and Elizabeth Vicary
brooklyncastle.com

1. Katie

-Welcome. Thanks for joining us for this session. And thank you to Dr. Redman, Dr. Stallings and Alexey Root for having us. My name is Katie Dellamaggiore, director and producer of Brooklyn Castle and with me today I have Robert McLellan, our executive producer, John Galvin, Chess Coach and Assistant Principal at I.S. 318 and Elizabeth Vicary the I.S. 318 chess teacher.

-For the past 4 years I've been making a documentary along with my partner/husband/editor Nelson and brother/cinematographer Brian. The movie was called Chess Movie for a while – before we arrived at Brooklyn Castle as a title – and the idea for the movie came from an article I read in the New York Times.

The article was about Shawn Martinez – student chess player at Murrow High School in a neighborhood of Brooklyn called Midwood, minutes from where I grew up. Shawn was also one of the very talented young chess players featured in a new book out called “Kings of New York”, by sports writer Michael Weinreb.

So, I bought the book...read it...loved it...and asked Michael to meet for coffee to talk about my idea to make a documentary about Murrow's chess team. Michael told me a lot of interesting things that day about scholastic chess, a world I knew nothing about, and his experiences writing the book. But the most interesting thing he told me was that he had wished he had spent more time at I.S. 318, with Elizabeth Vicary, John Galvin and the kids in their national champion chess program. He told me that something very special was happening there, at this feeder school of sorts for Murrow High School, and that if I had the time I should maybe drop by there and check it out.

Luckily 318 was only minutes from the apartment I shared with my husband Nelson, in Williamsburg Brooklyn, and so one day before work I was able to visit 318 to meet John, Elizabeth and the team and my immediate reaction was that yes indeed something very special was happening in Ms. Vicary's classroom and that I better move quickly and figure out how to make to a film about them – cause I couldn't believe someone else hadn't done it already. The story just seemed so ripe and full of so many interesting people and ideas – ideas about chess, public education, opportunities for academic success and the American Dream.

-So today I'm going to share the Brooklyn Castle trailer and 2 scenes from the film, we're going to talk with John and Elizabeth about what they've created at 318, and then after we're going to talk a little about our outreach campaign, and how Brooklyn Castle might benefit your efforts to further scholastic chess in your own communities.

2. Trailer / Scene

First day of school / Alexis at home and Patrick working with Elizabeth

3. Intro John and Liz

Elizabeth and John have built the best junior high chess program in the United States. I've seen it first hand. They are two of the most dedicated educators I've ever met. And of course they can both be very, very humble about it, but I thought it might be interesting to share with all some of their insights and experiences as chess educators. I'm have some questions for Elizabeth and John – some of my favorite questions that I've asked them many, many times in the process of making this film and I think their answers might interest you all.

4. LIZ AND JOHN Q&A:

First Questions for Elizabeth and John

-How did the chess program at 318 get started – can you trace it's evolution.

Questions for Elizabeth

-How has your methodology in the classroom grown or evolved over the past 10 years?

-Any particular strategies in getting junior high kids excited about chess? What challenges do you face teaching junior high school students?

-How do you maintain enthusiasm for your job and the subject matter year after year?

-What have been some your proudest moments as 318 chess teacher?

-How is teaching chess different than teaching math, english or social studies?

-Describe any experiences working with students that have learning disabilities or emotional/behavioral issues

-Everyone here agrees that chess is a valuable education tool – what specific value do you see it having on your students – regardless of their chess level.

Questions for John

-How does the school support the chess program? Describe the team's "culture of success" and how that infuses the entire school.

-What methods of team building do you employ as a coach?

-Can you talk about how traveling is such an important part of the kids' experience on the chess team

-How do you keep the program funded year after year? How have the last few years been particularly hard?

-What value do afterschool programs have in general for students at 318?

-What message do you want the kids to take away from being part of the chess program?

-Do you keep in touch with kids who have come through the program – where are they now? Do you think they feel a connection the chess program?

Final Question for Elizabeth and John

-People will often ask you – what is the program successful – how do we do what do? What do you tell them?

5. Katie

On the first day that I visited with 318 had a Polaroid camera with me – cause in the world of TV production that I was from – we always took Polaroid photos of potential cast members or subjects to attach to a description of their story. I asked if the kids would write something about why they loved chess and they happily obliged. One of the 6th grade students that day was Rochelle Ballantyne – who later as an 8th grader and HS freshman became a main subject in our film. So when I asked Rochelle why she loved chess she said:

"I like chess because it's a thinking game that not only helps me in school but lets me see things in a new way, I also love chess cause I love the feeling of winning, even can't always win"

Rochelle went on to win Girls Nationals in 2010 and took home a full scholarship to UT Dallas valued at I think 68 thousand dollars and hers is just one story of how chess can have an overwhelmingly positive impact on kids lives, beyond the chess board. And so after witnessing these stories of success in the film, we've crafted an

outreach campaign focused on building and expanding on support for chess and other quality afterschool programs in Title I middle schools and junior high schools.

The cornerstone of our campaign is a 10-city screening tour that will target principals and administrators of Title I junior high schools throughout the country to inform them about how to create and maintain chess as well as other quality afterschool programs in their own schools. And I know that you all hear agree that chess is a valuable education tool, but you're also well aware of is that afterschool and expanded learning opportunities – like chess – are the first programs to be cut when budgets are tight. Through these community screenings we want to help schools find the resources, tools, partners, and funding they need to create and sustain chess programs.

I'd like to find out who's in the audience – can you share your name and what you do – and just find out if you think a film like this can be useful in helping to build the case for scholastic chess.

- Biggest challenges you face in creating and maintaining school based chess programs
- How can this campaign translate into real life chess programs getting started in underserved schools?
- Would you show a film like this in class with a discussion guide?