Chess Training and Motivation

Ideas for coaches
Problem: chess dropout rates

- Not “cool” enough

Encourage more girls to play!

T-shirts, letter jacket patches, buttons

Speed chess, bughouse
Competition

- Pressure
- Disappointment
- Stagnation and subsequent loss of interest
Meno’s Paradox

“How will you inquire into a thing when you are wholly ignorant of what it is? Even if you happen to bump right into it, how will you know it is the thing you didn't know?” (80d)

• Socrates’ theory of learning through recollection
Socratic method for chess teaching

• Leading questions to arrive at answer
• Question the answer, even if correct
• Verbal reasoning
• Constant dialogue
Pattern Recognition

- Chase & Simon study, 1973 and de Groot, 1966

- Constant repetition

- Benefits of blitz, bughouse (with place-mate, but no capturing kings!) and progressive chess

- Effective classroom exercises / homework
Verbal thinking

• Thinking in words versus calculation of variations
• Constant articulation of thoughts
• Encourage debate
• Students can invent and present their own opening
• Group game versus coach
  - Points awarded for good reasoning
What stage of the game to teach first?

- Capablanca: start with the endgame
  - Initial endgame lessons should be limited to the most basic and essential knowledge, such as the “square of the pawn” or how to checkmate with a king and queen. Then on to openings.

- Do not teach openings in isolation
  - Focus on pawn structures and related middlegame/endgame strategies
Opening

- Teach a wide variety of openings (new patterns/structures)
- A new opening each week
- Focus on pawn structures and related piece play
- Theme tournaments/matches
- Student presentations of favorite opening
Middlegame

• Advantages of disaggregate learning

• Choose one key concept (material, space, weak points, etc) and focus on it before moving on

• Set up instructive, unbalanced position and assign “lawyers” to represent each side

• Teaching and praxis, time for both in every lesson
Motivation

• Solitary deliberate practice not always fun
• Studying with others is more enjoyable
• Chess facility
• Chess parties (with food!)
• Internet
Tournaments

• Unrated tournaments are fine

• Encourage students to register in their respective section

• Lots of trophies or medals. Certificates for all others if possible. Prizes!
  • Best game prize
  • Rating/section prizes
  • Best comeback prize
  • Best endgame prize
  • Free lessons to winners
Chess Heroes

• Just like sports

• Anecdotes: chess lore, history and trivia

• Play like ________! Guess the move.
Student teachers

- Older/more advanced students often enjoy the role of teacher
- Develops leadership skills
- Students can teach their parents lessons learned in chess club
Be creative!

- Chess is an art
  extrinsic vs intrinsic motivation

  Chess compositions
  Retrograde problems

  Helpmates

  Excelsior and other Sam Loyd creations

  Children should try to invent their own chess jokes and puzzles!
Chess Humor

- Humor makes every lesson more fun for kids
- Koltanowski jokes
- Personify the pieces
- Chess lore: entertaining anecdotes and quotes