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Budget Cuts Could Check-Mate School Chess Programs



Reporting Suzanne Le Mignot

CHICAGO (CBS) — [Chicago](#) Public Schools made waves earlier this month when officials said they would be cutting sophomore sports because of budget woes. Now, kids who compete in the CPS chess program wonder if they're next.

CBS 2's Suzanne Le Mignot reports.

The cafeteria inside King High School on the south side held Chicago's best Chicago Public Schools students, sitting across from each other, qualified

They make up just under 150 students out of 643 who made it to the city championship.

First-grader Izellah Ortiz says she finds the game challenging.

"When you get the king and check you get to win," she said.

When asked what happened when she competed Saturday, she replied, "Well we got a draw," Ortiz said, with a smile, adding in her opinion she and her opponent are both winners.

Children as young as six and as old 13 went head to head for a chance to win a trophy in their grade category.

Second-grader Franklin Jin just won the game he was playing.

"It felt great," Jin said.

The non-profit organization Renaissance Knights Chess Foundation helps CPS run their chess programs. Development Director Dorian Jones expressed what the tournament means to the children.

"They love it. They're really into chess. They're into the competitiveness, they're into the thinking, they know the game," he said.

Kevin Willis says chess has been an important part of his sons' lives.

"I was once out there on the streets before," he said. "I have three boys I'm raising myself. I want to open up different avenues. I want them to see different things that I never saw."

Stephen Wilkins is the manager of the Elementary School Sports Program for CPS.

When asked if the recent CPS budget cuts would have an impact on whether the chess programs will continue for elementary students, Wilkins said, "I don't know the answer to that question."

"There's a lot of moving parts to all of this, nobody wants to see this go away, but we just don't know what the future holds for any of the programs in Chicago Public Schools," Wilkins said.

Parent Jenny Jin said, "It will be really sad to see that this is not going to be lasting for future years."

Jin's son, Franklin said, "Schools need more money so they can make more clubs in their schools so some students might go to worldwide championships."

A total of 25 awards were given out to students at the tournament who won in their grade category.

To [learn](#) more about the non-profit organization Renaissance Knights Chess Foundation that helps integrate the game into schools, click [here](#).

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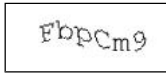
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