

# Chess tournament



Staff photo by Rob Felt

Kendrick Middle School held its first-ever chess tournament Jan. 23 and is the first official middle school-sponsored team in the district, organized and funded in part by the A Plus Foundation. The team made its competitive debut at the state regional tournament Jan. 26-27. From left, Brandon Fleming and Keenan Notae challenge each other for a chance to represent the school in the state competitions.





Photos by Daniel Lenz  
Brandon Dean, left, contemplates his next move against Brandon Mikell during a chess competition at Kendrick Middle School. The Chess Club will be the first middle school group to enter the Georgia Regional tournament, which will be held Saturday in Tucker. Below, about 30 students are involved in the Chess Club, which was funded by an A Plus Foundation Grant.



## All the right moves

Chess Club members  
at Kendrick Middle  
School prepare to  
enter the Georgia  
Regional tournament

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## Jumping into competitive chess

### Middle schools take up game

By ROCHELLE CARTER  
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The game of kings is being played for the first time by middle school students in Clayton County.

Kendrick Middle School has organized the county public schools' first official middle school-sponsored chess team.

Chess teams are common on the high school level. But Kendrick Assistant Principal William Greene, who helped start the team after working with chess teams at other Clayton County schools, said younger students also can benefit from playing the game.

"There is not another game that teaches the same attributes as chess," Greene said. "I think the kids need to learn these skills now."

The Kendrick team, made up of 30 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders, was organized in December, Greene said. Some of the students came to Kendrick already knowing the basics, while others have just learned. Last weekend the group participated in its first tournament, the North Georgia Regional Chess Tournament, in Tucker. Two Kendrick teams competed; they came in 16th and 17th out of 20 teams.

Recent studies have indicated that children benefit academically from playing chess.

Students in chess programs in New York City and Los Angeles schools were found to have made greater gains in reading on a national standardized achievement test than children in a control group, according to two studies conducted by educational psychologist Stuart Margulies. The chess players also exceeded the averages scored



Photos by JOHNNY CRAWFORD / Staff

**Claudia Barrios** watches as **William Chapman** makes a move against **Phillip Phan** during Kendrick Middle School's first chess tournament.

on the test by students in those school districts and in the nation. Some of the students in the chess-playing group started with relatively low or average initial scores.

Margulies explained in his study report that the reading gains for students who played chess were significant because reading and chess use similar cognitive processes. Both chess and reading involve decoding, thinking, comprehending and analyzing — all considered higher-order thinking skills.

Kendrick held its own elimination tournament last week. Teammates played against each other to determine their ranking.

Keenan Notae, 11, and Timothy Ampy, 12, sat across from each other, staring down at the black-and-white-checked surface in front of them. Their more nervous, their



Kendrick student **Megan Hambrick** studies her opponent's options.

young faces reflecting a determination not often seen in sixth-grade boys.

Both boys have been playing chess since elementary school. Keenan said his test scores began to improve

shortly after his uncle taught him how to play when he was in second grade. "It's like a challenge to me, and I love challenges," Keenan said.

As the match became more heated, Keenan chewed on the back of his hand. Timothy pulled on his lip. Then Keenan saw his opening.

"What kind of raggedy move is that?" Keenan asked, taking one of Timothy's knights.

The game was over a few minutes later. Keenan won. The two shook hands, indicating there were no hard feelings.

Timothy said the game of chess is much like life: "If you aren't careful, you can make the wrong move and lose."

► **ON THE WEB:** Do you want to learn how to play chess? Visit [www.learn2.com/05/0581/0581.asp](http://www.learn2.com/05/0581/0581.asp) for the rules that govern the game of