

Thomas A. Edison Charter School

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February 21, 2017

Dear Chess Team Supporter,

We are writing to inform you that because of your outstanding support and encouragement, our students have finished in 1st place at the National Chess Championship in two of the past three years. We won National Titles in Dallas, Texas in 2014 and Indianapolis, Indiana in 2016. We are the only school in Delaware to win a National Chess title. As you are aware, our students come from some of the most impoverished areas in Delaware. With your support, Edison provides a safe and stable environment, and our students have gained acceptance into some of the best private, charter and traditional public high schools in Delaware.

There are over 400 students in our school who play chess during the school day in our First Move Program, in the lunchroom and in our after-school program. Your support is reaching a large number of children. In May, we will be taking 20–25 students by chartered coach bus on the road to another national title at the Super National (Grades K-12) Chess Championship in Nashville, Tennessee. Our students are very excited about competing in the Nationals this year, which will take place from May 11th-15th in Nashville. In order to provide each student on the team an opportunity to travel to Tennessee for 6 days we will need your help. The cost, including transportation by coach bus, hotel, meals, and tournament fees for twenty-five to thirty students, will be approximately \$20,000-\$25,000 (\$1000 per student). Students in the inner-city rarely have the opportunity to travel, but with your support they can be exposed to many wonderful and diverse experiences.

Recent Accomplishments

2017 Mid-Atlantic Grade Championship, 1st Place, January 2017, Baltimore, Maryland
2016 Perry Hall Scholastic Championship, 1st Place, October 2016, Baltimore, Maryland
2016 National Junior High Championship, 1st Place, April 2016, Indianapolis, Indiana
2015 National Junior High Championship, 4th Place, April 2015, Louisville, Kentucky
2014 National Elementary Chess Championship, 1st Place, May 2014, Dallas, Texas

We hope you will consider making a donation to our chess team. You can sponsor one or more students, or any amount you give will be appreciated. Please make all checks payable to *Thomas Edison Charter School, with chess team in memo section*, or you can donate through our “Go Fund Me” page at www.gofundme.com/EdisonChessTeam17. Your donation is tax-deductible and you will receive a thank you letter confirming your donation and indicating our tax-exempt number. Your commitment to children is paying huge dividends. “Every Child Deserves Someone To Be Crazy About Them”. They can’t do it without you. You have been instrumental in their success! God Bless You for your service to children!

Thanks for your support,

Handwritten signature of Salome Thomas-EL.

Salome Thomas-EL
Head of School



Delaware charter school wins 2nd national chess title in 3 years

Jordan McBride, The News Journal Published 4:24 p.m. ET June 3, 2016 | Updated 5:09 p.m. ET June 3, 2016



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(Photo: SAQUAN STIMPSON/SPECIAL TO THE NEWS JOURNAL)

Thomas Edison Charter School is located in one of Wilmington's toughest neighborhoods, but for the second time in three years, its chess team has defied its surroundings and has taken home a national title.

Edison's chess team competed at the Junior High National Chess Championship in Indianapolis, winning the title for the under-1,000 chess rating division. A chess rating is a score that estimates the strength of a player based on prior match results. Over 2,000 students from more than 30 states competed in the championship, which was held from April 14 to 18.

According to the school's website, Edison is the only school in Delaware to have won a national chess title.

In addition to snagging first place in their division, the team took home multiple individual titles.

Eric Farrell, an eighth-grader at Edison, placed first in his division after winning all seven games that he played during the championship.

Farrell, 13, said that he felt nervous going into the tournament, but that as he kept winning all of his games, he felt more at ease.

After winning the championship, he said he felt like he was "on top of the world. I had never even won a regional title before. I felt like this was finally my moment to show to people that I'm better than what everyone says I am."

Principal Salome Thomas-El oversees the team. When he became principal of Edison six years ago, one of the first things he did was start the program at the Wilmington school.

Thomas-El started his first chess program at Roberts Vaux Junior High School in Philadelphia, where he worked as a teacher and then assistant principal for 10 years. Vaux won a national title during his time there and two of those players – Nate Durant and Thomas Allen – are now coaches at Edison.

Thomas-El is also an award-winning author, and has written multiple nationally published opinion pieces focusing on the academic benefits of chess. He says that every day, he sees the impacts the game has made on his students.

"Chess forces students to learn how to be patient. It's not like a video game where everything happens quickly," Thomas-El said. "It forces them to reason and to see two, three, four moves ahead. That's a great life skill."

Allen, now 30, said that his favorite part about being a coach is that he gets to see the children grow.

"I like teaching the kids from a young age when they don't know much about chess," he said. "I like starting from the ground up, and watching them grow as players and students."

After all of the hard work the team had put in preparing for the championship, Allen said that he was extremely proud of what they had accomplished.

Wilmington Mayor Dennis P. Williams also praised Edison's chess team for their victory at nationals.

"The students on the Thomas Edison chess team are examples of how strong mentorship and a willingness to learn can lead and help a child excel," Mayor Williams said in an email, adding "they should serve as a model to other schools and academic organizations and programs."

One of Edison's top chess players, Maddy Yates, was selected by the United States Chess Federation as one of the top 50 12-year-old female players in the country. She won four and half of her seven games at the championship (the half being a tie) while competing in the under-1,250 rating division.

Yates, a seventh-grader, said she was excited to come home with the team national title.

"I was like, 'we're the bomb,'" she said. "I was proud to show off a little bit."

Edison's accomplished chess team is part of a larger chess initiative at the school, which includes a chess club and the First Move Program, a nationwide program aimed at exposing second- and third-graders to the game.

Despite the strength and success of the programs, the school's chess team relies heavily on fundraising to send its students to all of their tournaments.

"We have some students who are homeless and some who live below the poverty level, so asking the parents to pay \$1,500 or \$2,000 to send their kids to a championship is out of the question," Thomas-El said.

Thanks to donations from Wilmington residents and people across the country, they were able to reach their fundraising goal and send their entire chess team to Indianapolis this year for the national championships.

Another major fundraising challenge looms ahead. In May, Thomas-El was contacted by a Jamaican youth chess team interested in competing against the Edison team there. The Jamaican team had heard about Edison's most recent championship success through Twitter.

The principal sees the international competition as a great opportunity for his students, but said that first, they must first raise enough money to attend.

"There is an achievement gap in our nation, but there is also a major exposure gap," Thomas-El said. "This competition will be great exposure for our students. However, we cannot do it without the support of the community."

Contact Jordan McBride at (302) 324-2812, jmcbride@delawareonline.com or on Twitter [@jordanlmcbride](https://twitter.com/jordanlmcbride).

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