In this document, I will discuss my plans to compose a proposal seeking funding for the Murray Language Academy Chess Club. I intend to compose a “sample” proposal that can later be localized to fit the different proposal requirements of various corporations. To make the final proposal sufficiently compelling, I will garner information about the following topics:

- the benefits of chess playing to the social and cognitive development of elementary school children.
- the background and qualifications of the proposed chess coach.
- the costs involved in running an elementary school chess team.
- the proper procedures involved in raising funds for a Chicago Public School

The Problem

Murray Language Academy is a public magnet school located on Chicago’s south side. Students are chosen to attend Murray through a random computerized lottery process, and represent roughly the same ethnic demographic breakdown as the city at large. Socio-economically, families tend to be decently educated and from the middle and working classes. Unfortunately, like many of Chicago’s public schools, Murray receives no extra-curricular funding. Those after-school activities that do exist are headed by volunteers; any expenses are paid through in-house fundraising (bake sales and the like), or by the parents themselves. This poses a number of problems for the chess club:

- It is led by volunteers who know how to play chess, but provide little or no instruction to the students.
It has no interaction with the Chicago area chess scene, thus there is no opportunity for the children to participate in tournament play.

There are few parents who can afford the $100-plus per-year per-child cost to run a proper chess team.

There is a tremendous glut of fundraising activities at Murray that makes raising funds in-house difficult.

Attendance at Murray’s current chess club is consistently high, with approximately fifteen students meeting twice a week after school. Those students who have dropped out of the program frequently cite boredom with not learning anything new or frustration with fellow students who don’t understand the rules of the game among their reasons for discontinuing. The consistent attendance indicates a strong interest in a chess team among students and their parents (several of whom have willingly made special arrangements with after-school caregivers so their kids can attend the chess club). I therefore believe an expansion of the program into a proper chess team would be an improvement welcomed by parents and students alike. Before that happens, though, I will need to answer the following questions:

- How can Murray improve its current after-school chess program to include proper instruction and tournament play?
- Who in the area is qualified to coach a chess team at Murray?
- How much will it cost? and,
- How can we raise the funds to pay for it without relying on an already over-taxed in-house fundraising system?

Background

Chess is a popular after-school activity that has many benefits for those students who participate. Social benefits include the opportunity to participate on a team and meet many others who share their interests at gatherings and tournaments. Chess players also learn

Strategy: Success at chess requires no luck, only know-how, skill, and strategy. In the first ten moves of any given game, the possible positions that could arise are legion; computers have calculated the number to 36 digits.

Patience and self-control: Chess strategy requires players to consider their moves carefully, and to anticipate those of their opponents. This requires patience and an ability to control frustration.
**Sportsmanship:** If a chess player loses a match, she must analyze her moves and learn from her own mistakes; there is no blaming the loss on another team member. Chess thus requires children to learn how to take responsibility for their own actions.

**Self-esteem:** For the same reason, no one else can take the credit when a child succeeds. Young chess players earn the right to be proud of themselves when they win games.

**Cognition:** The complex and infinitely possible moves of the game promote logical thinking and memory. Its ability to assist the development of logic, memory, awareness, analysis, and pattern recognition has made chess a required part of the curriculum in 30 countries.

Chess at Murray would be tremendously valuable for students whose school barely has the funding to cover the basic curriculum, and must place 30-plus students in each classroom due to budget constraints. Students will receive similar benefits to those they receive in the classroom, but in a more relaxed environment. Chess is a fun activity for the students—who have few recess breaks, and no art or music classes to speak of—to look forward to.

**Research Plans**

Before I begin this proposal, I must further research the data available concerning the benefits of chess. There is a lot of anecdotal “evidence” available in chess books and periodicals, but I prefer to find a few serious studies in order to garner the most objective and convincing data possible.

I must also gather information regarding the qualifications of the proposed coach, Wayne Smith. He is eager to coach the team at Murray, but I must be able to present the details of his experience and past successes. It is vital that the Murray Parent Teacher Organization feel comfortable with the choice of coach, who would be supervising their children at school and at tournaments. In addition, any sponsoring organizations must feel that their contributions will truly benefit the children; an excellent choice of coach will go a long way toward that end.

I must also research the costs of running a chess team and carefully prepare a budget. The budget must be detailed, accurate, and reasonable. My hope is to raise enough to have a reserve from which to draw funds to send children of reduced circumstances to tournaments; I must have an accurate accounting of how much I expect tournament travel to cost.

I must learn more about the PTO and its procedures for raising and distributing funds. The PTO is one possible audience for my proposal, as the organization frequently holds fund raisers to pay for books for the library and various extra-
curricular activities. I must also learn the policies of the Chicago Public Schools and Murray itself. Any organization that decides to contribute to the chess team will need Murray’s non-profit and tax-exempt information in order to receive tax deductions. I must also be able to provide them with simple logistical information, such as where to send the money.

Finally, I must learn more about each potential audience for this proposal. For instance, I need to learn company philosophies because when it comes to charitable giving, companies follow trends; some preliminary research will help me determine which companies are likely to fund an elementary school chess program. I must also do some research the company’s preferred procedure for submitting proposals; each company is likely to have a different procedure.

**Tentative Research Schedule**

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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| 1    | • Gather research regarding chess and cognitive development  
      • Interview chess coach Wayne Smith to obtain credentials  
      • Visit Donor’s Forum web site for proposal template and potential donors  
      • Put together budget for meeting with principal |
| 2    | • Visit and interview Murray’s new principal to pitch chess team  
      • Learn procedures for raising funds at Murray |
| 3    | • Draft proposal  
      • Edit and refine proposal and graphics  
      • Cushion time for unexpected cancellations or schedule conflicts |
| 4    | • Interview Murray PTO fund-raising chair for information regarding procedures  
      • Attend monthly Murray PTO meeting and submit proposal  
      • Revise proposal and submit to Professor Skolnik |

**Credentials**

I have variety of pertinent work experience, a solid educational background, a body of published work, and a son in the Murray Chess Club. Consequently, I am well qualified and highly motivated to conduct this research, and conduct it well.

My work experience includes searching real estate titles, a job that required advanced and creative research skills; bookkeeping, which involved the appropriation and disbursement of funds; and business writing, which involved producing memos, letters, flyers, and brochures. Additionally, I am a certified
English and Psychology teacher with experience teaching at the high school and adult levels.


My educational accomplishments include earning a bachelor’s degree in Psychology and a teaching certificate from Wheaton College (1988 and 1991, respectively). Currently, I am earning an MA in Writing from DePaul University (course of study will be completed in June 2004). Both courses of study have required me to conduct research on a wide variety of topics, including the experimental method, developmental psychology, abnormal psychology, educational psychology, rhetorical philosophy, and technical writing.

Finally, I am the mother of an eight-year-old third grader in the Murray Chess Club. My son, through his association with Wayne Smith at the Chicago Park District, has garnered a strong set of chess skills and is wonderfully proud of his accomplishments in the game. Along the way, he has shown tremendous improvement in his reading skills (particularly his ability to read music) and his math skills. As a parent, I am eager for Murray students to have the opportunity to participate in such a beneficial activity and to have proper and challenging instruction. I am therefore determined to successfully raise the necessary funds to make that opportunity possible.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to construct this proposal. My hope is that it has demonstrated the need for a grant proposal for Murray Language Academy’s Chess Club. I am grateful that my education and skills can be used to benefit Murray’s chess-playing students, possibly affording them the opportunity to learn vital skills, meet new students, and improve their educational prospects. As for me, I hope to add a solid piece of work to my portfolio and to hone a new set of skills that could benefit others in the future.