

# The Chess Champions of Nūhaka

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School Journal  
Level 2, August 2016  
Year 4



## Overview

Nūhaka School took out the title of “Most Successful School” in the Hawke’s Bay junior chess championship last year. The interest in chess at the school was sparked by a workshop given by Genesis Potini (subject of the New Zealand film *The Dark Horse*) several years ago. This is an inspiring article about a whole school embracing the idea that everyone can play chess. It carries the message that perseverance can result in success for all. We see that students enjoy the game, recognise the importance of encouraging their peers, and relish competition! They also gain skills in strategic thinking, problem solving, and decision making.

This article:

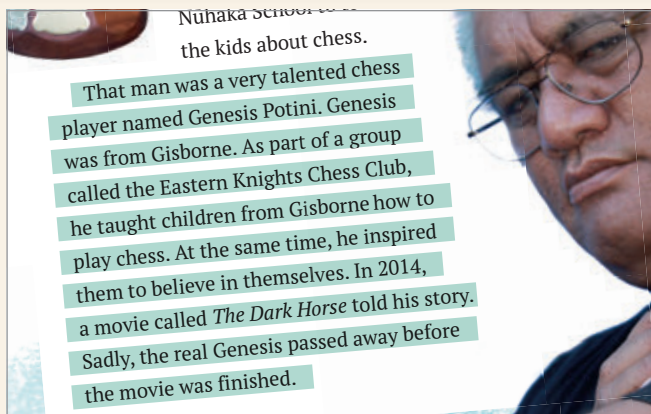
- includes photographs of Nūhaka School and some of the students
- has a text box with diagrams to show what chess notation is and how it is used
- supports the idea of practising to develop strategies and skills
- includes a profile of the man who inspired so many children to play chess.

A PDF of the text is available at [www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz)

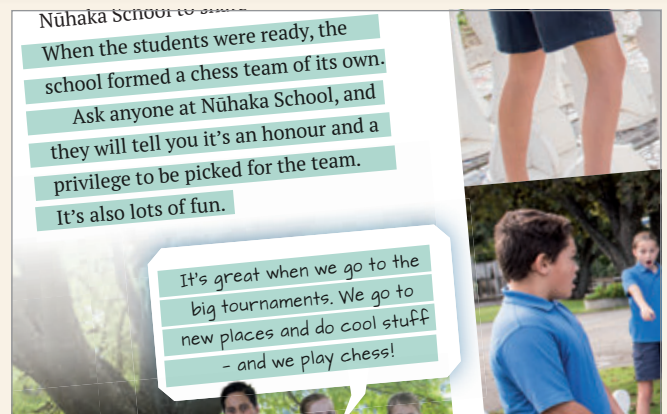
Texts related by theme

“Starting with Strings” SJ L2 August 2015 | “Just One Wheel” SJ L2 May 2015

## Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard



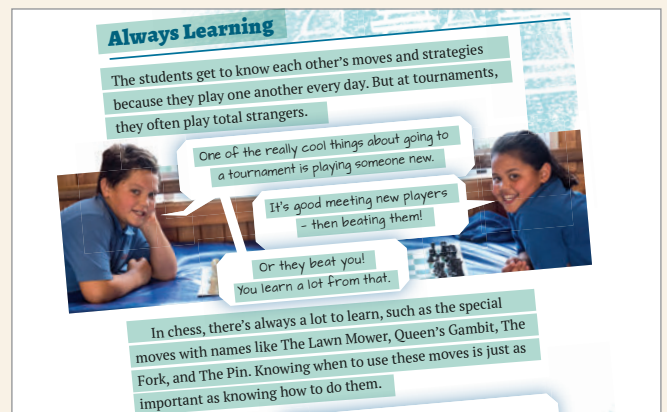
some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students’ prior knowledge



some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information



some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses



some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and/or written explanations



Reading standard: by the end of year 4

## Possible curriculum contexts

### ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

– Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.

### HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Personal Health and Physical Development)

Level 2 – Personal Identity: Identify personal qualities that contribute to a sense of self-worth.

### MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS (Geometry and Measurement)

Level 2 – Position and orientation

### Possible first reading purpose

- To find out about a school where the students are chess champions.

### Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To learn why the students at Nūhaka School enjoy chess
- To identify the things that are needed for being successful at chess.

### Possible writing purposes

- To describe a game you enjoy playing
- To write about a time when you tried really hard to learn something new
- To persuade teachers at your school to start a chess club (or an alternative, if there is already a chess club there).



The New Zealand Curriculum

## Text and language challenges

(Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.)

### VOCABULARY

### Possible supporting strategies

- Possibly unfamiliar words, including “inspired”, “dedicated”, “formed”, “passion”, “opponent”
- Topic-specific words: “tournament”, “checkmate”, “stalemate”, “notation”, “Knight”, “Bishop”, “Rook”, “Pawn”
- Proper nouns, including some te reo Māori place/iwi names: “Nūhaka”, “Ngāti Rākaipaaka”, “The Lawn Mower”, “Queen’s Gambit”, “The Fork”, “The Pin”, “Hawke’s Bay”, “The Dark Horse”, “Genesis Potini”, “Gisborne”, “Eastern Knights Chess Club”
- Phrases or expressions: “total strangers”, “an honour and a privilege”.

- Identify the words that may prove challenging for students.
- Explain that they will meet many names: names of places, people, clubs, chess moves, and chess pieces. Remind students that proper nouns have capital letters.
- Have students recall the strategies they use when they meet an unfamiliar word.
- Check the pronunciation of Māori names and support students to pronounce them correctly.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

### Possible supporting strategies

- Familiarity with playing board games
- Knowledge that chess has a variety of pieces, which move in different ways
- Some knowledge of competition, tournaments, and champions.

- Prompt students’ prior knowledge of playing board games. Provide opportunities for the students to talk in pairs as they make connections with what they know.
- Invite students who have knowledge of chess to share what they know with the rest of the class.
- If possible, have a chess set available so that students can become familiar with the different pieces.
- Invite students to share their own experience of competition, success, and failure.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

### Possible supporting strategies

- An article that informs readers about how students from Nūhaka School became passionate, successful chess players
- A text box with a grid and some explanation of chess notation
- A map to put Nūhaka into context
- Information divided into sections with relevant subheadings that give an indication of the content
- Short paragraphs (two sentences) interspersed with direct quotes from students to illustrate the information
- Longer paragraphs (up to seven sentences) with accompanying photographs to support the information.

- Prompt prior knowledge of reading information texts. Remind students that the visual text and the subheadings will give them clues for the content.
- During and after reading, check in with students to ensure that they are understanding the information about the students, *The Dark Horse*, and chess.
- Direct students to the quotes from students and discuss the effect of these. *How does it help us understand what is going on when we can hear what those students have to say?*



Sounds and Words

# Instructional focus – Reading

**English** Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

**Health and Physical Education (Personal Health and Physical Development)** Level 2 – Personal Identity: Identify personal qualities that contribute to a sense of self-worth.

**Mathematics and Statistics (Geometry and Measurement)** Level 2 – Position and orientation.

## First reading

- Set the purpose for reading.
- Invite the students to flick through the article, directing them to the photographs so they see that the Nūhaka students are about the same age as themselves.
- Prompt them to recall what they know about information texts – the subheadings, the photographs, the map, the text box. *What do we expect to find in an information text? What do you think we'll find out in this one?*
- Direct the students to the title, then ask them to share what they know about chess.
- Read aloud, or have the students silently read, the first paragraph, which poses the question: *Nūhaka? Where's that?*
- Direct students to the map and have them talk to a buddy. *Find where we are on the map of New Zealand. How far away from Nūhaka are we?*
- Have the students read through the rest of the text, either to the end or in chunks. Support them with vocabulary, proper nouns, and pronunciation as necessary.

## If the students struggle with this text

- Reassure the students that it won't matter if they don't know how to play chess, and that this article is not going to tell them how to play it, but that it's interesting to find out what other schools do. *We can make connections with what we do at our school.*
- Get students to bring to mind their own knowledge of board games (if necessary, clarify what is meant by "board games"). *Turn to the person next to you and have a chat about the board games you know how to play.*
- Share-read sections of the text with the students. Support their use of strategies to deal with unfamiliar words or phrases.
- Create a chart for the students and have them add the names of board games that they are familiar with.
- Create a similar chart to record words, phrases, and new learnings about chess.
- Display chess pieces (or pictures of chess pieces), or share an appropriate video clip, to make the ideas more concrete.

**Subsequent readings** How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

### The teacher

Prompt students to work with a partner to consider the success of the Nūhaka School students.

- *What inspired those students to get interested in chess?*
- *How did they get so good at it?*
- *What did they see as important to be a good chess player?*
- *How do they support each other?*
- *Why are they still interested? How does the interest in chess get passed on?*
- *Why are they so keen to win The Dark Horse trophy?*

Challenge students' thinking with questions that require them to evaluate and synthesise information.

- *Why was Genesis Potini so interested in teaching kids how to play chess?*
- *Why is it important for Nūhaka School to continue awarding The Dark Horse trophy?*

Provide opportunity for students to find out more about playing chess, for example, learning the moves for each piece. There may be someone in the school or wider community who could be an expert to consult.

### The students:

- recall and draw on what they found out about the attitude of the Nūhaka students
- use the guiding questions to discuss and locate specific phrases and sentences that tell them why the Nūhaka students enjoy chess and are successful
- use the statements made by some of the children to describe how you become good at chess
- make inferences about information that is close by in the text about why the children are interested in chess and why the trophy is so important
- find out more about chess and have a go at learning the moves and playing a game.

**Subsequent readings** How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

## The teacher

Ask questions to help your students identify some of the qualities the students at Nūhaka School show that have helped them to become good chess players. Focus on some of the statements made by the children. For example:

- *Why do you think the students say: “It’s good meeting new players – then beating them!” “Or they beat you. You learn from that.” “But you don’t just have to be a good chess player. It’s also important to support and encourage the other team members.”*
- *What can we learn about enjoying a game from what we have read in this article?*

Suggest activities that the students have experience of to add to their discussion, for example, kapa haka, sports teams, choir, dance groups.

- *What activities are you involved with? Have a chat with your buddy about the things you like to do at lunchtime. How do you get better at the things you do? How do you feel when you improve?*

Make connections with national role models who work hard to develop skills and enjoy success, for example, athletes, musicians, dancers, or artists.

## METACOGNITION

- How did thinking about your own experience of practising with the kapa haka group help you with understanding how the chess players feel? How will this strategy help you when you read other articles?

## The students:

- discuss the students’ statements in pairs and make inferences about the particular qualities that these statements reveal
- share opinions about what makes a good chess player
- make connections to games, sports, and activities with which they have experience
- reflect and share understandings about what is needed to be successful
- write to clarify thinking (quick writing): *How does it make me feel when I am successful?*

## GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You made some good inferences about why Nūhaka children enjoy playing chess that you shared with your buddy. The way you’ve used “stickies” on the text is an effective way to quickly find the parts that helped your discussion.*



Reading standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

**English** Level 2 – Language features: Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects; Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

**Text excerpts from**  
“The Chess Champions of Nūhaka”

**Examples of text characteristics**

**Teacher**  
(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 7

The children who Genesis taught are now grown up, and there’s a new set of students at Nūhaka School. They have the same passion for chess that Genesis inspired in their older brothers, sisters, and cousins.

Today, if you walk round the school during break, you’ll see children of all ages gathered round chessboards and the big outdoor chess set. Some will be playing while others will be watching, encouraging, and giving advice.

## COMPLEX SENTENCES

A complex sentence is formed when a subordinate clause is added to a simple sentence. The subordinate clause often adds detail, but it doesn’t make sense on its own. When the subordinate clause comes first, it is separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

Have students look at their first draft, and guide their revision.

- Read through what you have written. Have you said what you wanted to say? Have you chosen the words you wanted to use?
- Consider your reader – have they got the detail they need to make sense of what’s going on?

Tell the students to read their piece aloud to a partner and respond to each other.

- Your buddy is writing to describe ... Have they made it clear for you?

Invite students to consider adding detail by way of a subordinate clause and model this for them. *Although my mate is better at football than I am, he always encourages me.* Question them to consider the effect.

- Does the part before the comma make sense on its own?
- Do we find out more about the mate? Is this useful detail?

Direct students to reread their own writing and see if they could use a subordinate clause to add detail.

Page 4

The students get to know each other’s moves and strategies because they play one another every day. But at tournaments, they often play total strangers.

“One of the really cool things about going to a competition is playing someone new.”

“It’s good meeting new players – then beating them!”

“Or they beat you! You learn a lot from that.”

## USING EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

Writers use emotive language to help express how they or their characters are feeling.

Model adding emotive language to show feelings. *I must have fallen off a hundred times. My knee was bleeding a little bit. My dad held the seat for me, and I put one foot on a pedal. I felt like crying.*

Invite students to talk in pairs.

- Do we get a sense of what’s going on here?
- What tells us how the writer is feeling?
- How does that make us feel?

Remind students to check their writing to see if they have shown how the character is feeling.

Page 4

All that concentration must be working. Nūhaka School’s chess players have won or finished near the top in many tournaments. Their champion chess team is well known in Hawke’s Bay and throughout New Zealand too.

## SUPPORTING DETAILS

Writers often add details to clarify what they mean. In persuasive texts, the details need to support the opinion of the writer.

Explain how we have to give reasons to support our opinions if we want our readers to agree with us.

Give students a scenario where they have to form an opinion and justify it orally.

- Think about one of these questions: Is it a good idea to have homework? Should we have longer breaks? Have a chat about one with your partner and see if you agree.
- Think of two reasons that support your opinion.

Provide opportunities for students to talk in pairs or small groups.

- What reasons would you use to convince the principal that we need to start a chess club / buy more gym equipment / build a BMX track?

## METACOGNITION

- What helps you make your decisions about the words you use? Have you chosen the words you want to use carefully? Have you organised them into the right place?

## GIVE FEEDBACK

- I can see that you are having a go at using complex sentences. Read through this one. Does it sound right? What happens if we put that clause before the main idea?
- You have come up with a strong reason here. By suggesting an alternative, you have added strength to your argument.