



## BOOK REVIEWS

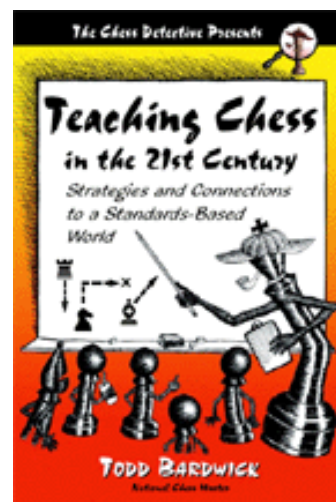


## Teaching the Teacher

Bruce Pandolfini

*Teaching Chess in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Strategies and Connections to a Standards-Based World* by Todd Bardwick, English Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 2004 Chess Detective Press, 192pp., \$19.95

Anyone acquainted with the literature of chess knows that there are hundreds of books that have been written to instruct players on all aspects of the game. At the present time, for example, there are approximately 225 (!) items in the USCF Sales online catalog. However, all but two are for chessplayers to use to improve. One, *Chess in the Classroom* by Ros Katz, came out a number of years ago, and, until recently, was really the only thing a chess instructor had available to assist with chess teaching. We now have a new entry into this niche, *Teaching Chess in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Strategies and Connections to a Standards-Based World* by Todd Bardwick.



The author, a Denver based chess master and teacher, also known as “the Chess Detective,” nicely packages some of today’s recently developed pedagogy in ten convenient chapters, including sections on basics, openings, scorekeeping, mating and non-mating tactics, pawn play, and the endgame. Readers may also find the various appendices and their informative lists to be of practical utility.

This is an excellent book for helping teachers who know little about chess introduce and teach the game in primary and elementary classrooms. Although *Teaching Chess in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is written especially for educators unfamiliar with advanced chess principles, its suggestions and tips can benefit veteran and skilled chess people, as well as administrators, parents and even students who want to understand more about why chess has become an esteemed adjunct to curricula around the world.

The “Teacher Tips for Chess Play Time” gathers together hands-on guidelines for coaching and coping with problems concerning touch move, disputes over position, talking during play, moving too quickly, announcing

or not announcing check, capturing kings, sportsmanship, promotion, forfeiting, resigning, using the word “killed” for “captured,” 3-move repetition, counting material off the board, quick piece captures, and Scholar’s Mate.

“Appendix A” features information on chess and mathematical standards. In one chart Mr. Bardwick compares chess skills with a sample 2<sup>nd</sup> grade math curriculum guide. Covered are number relationships, geometry and measurement, probability and statistics, patterns, functions, and algebra. There are also sub-sections entitled “National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards” and “Chess Correlated to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards,” followed by discussions and analyses of the standards as they relate to algebra, geometry, measurement, data analysis and probability, problem-solving, reasoning and proof, communication, connections, and representation.

In Appendix B, “Fun Chess Games for the Class,” the author provides useful ways to teach chess in the context of spin-off games. Educators may find *Line Chess*, *Postal Chess*, *Simon Says Chess*, and *Who Wants to be a Chess Millionaire* entertaining side shows to bring out certain aspects of the main game. And in the last appendix, “Additional Exemplars,” the Chess Detective highlights specific tasks, including *Ant on a Knight*, *Ant on a Bishop*, *Save the Queen*, *Start of the Game Probabilities*, and *New Threats*. Finally, the author/teacher/detective has seen the wisdom of closing with a helpful glossary and a convenient index, both of which have their place in any well-designed instructional book.

It’s evident that Mr. Bardwick appreciates the merit of presenting his material in a clearly delineated format. Teachers can thereby utilize concepts with greater facility and reliability, and students can pace themselves better by knowing what to expect. The means by which he instills this reliable feeling is by breaking down the presentation under several recurring headings.

First he begins with “task,” wherein he lays out what is to be done for the teacher. There follows “context;” “task purpose;” “student task;” “time required;” “interdisciplinary links;” “teaching tips;” “concepts to be assessed and skills to be developed;” “suggested materials;” and “solution.” These themes are repeated throughout the manual, so teachers relying on the book can provide structured lessons that accordingly become more usable and memorable. The author furthermore spells out what students of different abilities can expect under what he calls “rubrics and benchmarks.” The four categories are “novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert.” Finally, each section concludes with a problem task relating to whatever was outlined earlier.

While the book is not a technical disquisition on the science of teaching chess, with incontrovertible hardcore evidence to back up its claims, it does indeed gather together all kinds of worthwhile thoughts and offers them in a palatable layout from which virtually anyone could tap and profit.

Furthermore, the author is obviously someone who has seen the handwriting on the wall: for quite some time he's realized the virtues of chess as a kick in the pants to stimulating learning.

Bardwick is clearly a personable spokesperson for chess and its partnership with general education. He is not the first person to perceive the value of chess to the development of a sound mind, but he is certainly an established and deserving card-carrying member of that wonderful group. His *Teaching Chess in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* admirably captures many of the fundamentals for teaching chess in schools and related environments. It also encourages more of us to get moving in the same direction. I give it high marks, and for those charged with inspiring the young to play chess, I think it a natural addition to their library.

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[Order](#) *Teaching Chess in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*  
by Todd Bardwick

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