

FIDE Chess in Education Commission

Annual Report 2026

2026 — FIDE Year of Chess in Education

“Every Lesson Counts”

Reporting period: 1 January – September 2026

Submitted by Rita Atkins

Secretary, FIDE Chess in Education Commission

18 September 2026

Introduction

2026 was designated by FIDE and the International School Chess Federation as the Year of Chess in Education. That designation shaped the Commission's work throughout the year, raising both the visibility of educational chess and the expectations placed on the Commission's programming. This Annual Report reviews the Commission's activity from January to September 2026 against the commitments set out in the 2026 FIDE EDU Annual Plan.

2026 Annual Plan: Commitments and Achievements

The table below sets the Annual Plan's principal commitments against the Commission's achievements to date.

2026 Plan Commitment	Achievement to Date
Continue and expand PoT/PoL teacher and lecturer training, online and in person, across languages and regions	37 courses delivered Jan–Aug 2026 (565 participants, 478 titles qualified), broadly in line with the record levels set in 2025 and well above 2023–2024 volumes
Grow the FIDE School Award programme beyond the 87 schools recognised as of Q1 2026	4th award cycle concluded 30 June 2026: 20 further schools recognised (11 gold, 6 silver, 3 bronze) across 11 countries
Deliver four major CiE conferences (Bhubaneswar, San José, Spain, Samarkand)	Bhubaneswar (Jan), San José (Mar) and Menorca, Spain (Apr) delivered as planned; a further conference in Katowice was added; the Samarkand EDU Summit is scheduled for 24 September 2026
Distribute the newly published Chess Curriculum and CiE Commission Coursebook; develop a Chess History book and a Minigames Strategy book	All three planned titles — the Chess Curriculum, the Minigames Strategies book and the Chess History book — have been published. Printed copies of each will be given to every member of the FIDE Congress
Complete and present the findings of the 2026 Global Survey	Data collection and analysis are complete; preliminary findings are positive; the full report will be presented at the Samarkand EDU Summit and a copy given to every FIDE Congress member
Run the FIDE EDU Classroom Contest	Contest delivered in full: 130 submissions and over 300 photos received from 30 countries

Taken together, the Commission has delivered against the great majority of its 2026 commitments, matching or exceeding the pace set in 2025 — itself a record year for teacher training. The publishing programme is now complete: the Chess Curriculum: A Teacher's Guide, the Minigames Strategies book and the Chess History book have all been published as planned. Copies of each title, together with the report of the 2026 Global Survey, will be presented to every member of the FIDE Congress, so that the full record of the Commission's Year of Chess in Education reaches the federation's governing body directly.

Teacher & Lecturer Training — EDU Course Statistics

— by Alla Khachatryan, Senior Course Administrator, FIDE Education Commission

Since 2023 the Commission has conducted courses designed to prepare both lecturers and teachers in chess education. Courses have been delivered in a range of formats, both online and in person, ensuring accessibility to a diverse group of participants and resulting in the awarding of significant titles.

Preparation of Teachers — Courses for School Instructor (SI) title

Total number of courses: 36 Total participants: 547 Total titles qualified: 462

PoT courses have been delivered in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic, Greek, German, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Sinhala.

Preparation of Lecturers — Courses for Lead School Instructor (LSI) and Senior Lead Instructor (SLI) titles

LSI title courses — Total number of courses: 1 Total participants: 18 Total titles qualified: 16

No Senior Lead Instructor course was held during the reporting period. The SLI title remains the highest chess educational title awarded by FIDE EDU and is currently held by only 30 individuals worldwide.

Summary of 2026 Courses to Date

Course type	Courses	Participants	Titles qualified
Preparation of Teachers (PoT) — SI title	36	547	462
Preparation of Lecturers (PoL) — LSI title	1	18	16
Preparation of Lecturers — SLI title	0	0	0
Total (1 January – 18 August 2026)	37	565	478

With 37 courses completed in the first eight months of the year, activity is running broadly in line with the record levels of 2025 and well above the volumes recorded in 2023 and 2024. Demand for certified chess educators continues to grow, and the Year of Chess in Education has generated additional interest from federations and schools that had not previously engaged with EDU training.

Four-Year Overview, 2023–2026

Year	Courses	Titles qualified
2023	22	452
2024	36	484
2025	58	871
2026 (to date)	37	478

Cumulative Totals, 2023–2026

Measure	Total 2023–2026
Preparation of Lecturers (PoL) courses	13
Preparation of Teachers (PoT) courses	140
Total participants	2,758

Measure	Total 2023–2026
Total titles qualified	2,285
of which School Instructor (SI)	2,131
of which Lead School Instructor (LSI)	124
of which Senior Lead Instructor (SLI)	30

In total, more than 150 PoT, PoL, and SLI courses have been conducted in just over three years, with thousands of educators trained worldwide.

Countries Hosting In-Person Courses

In-person courses have been hosted in the following countries and territories since 2023: Bahamas, Bermuda, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Canary Islands, China, Colombia, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Jamaica, Jerusalem, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Vietnam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

New Cooperations and Benefits for Participants

A number of new partnerships were secured to add value for course participants:

- ChessKid — premium membership for all course participants and their students for six months.
- Notationary — six months of free membership for successful PoT course graduates.
- Chesslang — six months of free membership, including unlimited student accounts, suitable for running a school chess programme.
- Opening Master Premium Chess Databases — lifetime access for those who pass the FIDE EDU exam, offering access to over 9.6 million official chess games. Chesspertise Platform, the new version of Opening Master Premium Chess Databases gives access to an environment integrating database search, analysis, training, and coaching tools.

FIDE School Awards

— by SLI/IA Abel Talamantez, FIDE Education Commission

The FIDE School Award (FSA) programme concluded its 4th award cycle on 30 June 2026. The programme has been highly successful in engaging schools that prioritise chess as an educational tool and in building a network of schools around the world committed to using chess to enhance learning across academic subjects and to develop 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Through this work, the programme raises awareness of the transformative power of educational chess, showing how it can positively impact lives while enriching school culture and community.

In this cycle, 20 schools qualified for awards: 11 schools earned gold status, 6 schools earned silver, and 3 earned bronze. Eleven different countries were represented in the 4th awards cycle.

The FSA programme is a vital part of the Chess in Education Commission's goal of expanding the number of schools that emphasise chess as an educational tool. In conjunction with the Preparation of Teachers (PoT) and Preparation of Lecturers (PoL) courses, the FSA programme provides prestigious, valuable recognition for schools for their efforts to expand chess programming around the world using educational methods and tools that prepare students for success academically and socially, with an emphasis on building community and culture.



Colegio Obradoiro International School in Spain, one of the Gold award recipients, showcases how chess can become part of a school's culture and rally a local community.

FIDE EDU Classroom Contest

— by SLI/IA Abel Talamantez, FIDE Education Commission

The FIDE EDU Classroom Contest was launched over the summer as an initiative aimed at learning more about chess programmes in schools around the world. Programmes were asked to submit no more than three photographs capturing the joy of learning, the connection between students and community, and the way different cultures bring their own flavour to a vibrant, shared endeavour. The Commission was looking for differences — that was what originally sounded exciting. What ended up happening was far more enriching.

The contest drew 130 submissions and over 300 photos from 30 different countries. When programmes are asked for three photos, the results are bound to reflect their culture, atmosphere, and community — and the Commission did see the differences. But more importantly, it saw the threads that connect chess-in-education programmes everywhere: photos of rural schoolchildren in Ethiopia playing in a classroom, first-graders using art projects to learn piece movements while unlocking creativity, children playing chess together outdoors in Algeria and Brazil, and a child using a support system to solve a puzzle in a 21st-century classroom. In every photo there was a tangible sense of community, culture, friendship, and learning.

What is special about this initiative is that most of the participating programmes use chess as an extension tool for learning in general, with the growth of the child as the fundamental goal. The contest showed the Commission that chess in schools is thriving, and that there is a continuing need to create opportunities to develop grassroots programmes in schools — because the positive impact on the child is great, and the potential to transform communities through chess cannot be ignored.



The winning photo, from Kazakhstan.



Runner-up, from Ethiopia.

The contest helped the Commission engage with schools around the world through their photo submissions and brought those schools closer to FIDE EDU by raising awareness of the Commission's work and resources. Many of these schools were subsequently spotlighted through the weekly story-telling posts.

FIDE Weekly Story-Telling Posts

— by SLI/IA Abel Talamantez, FIDE Education Commission

Since the beginning of January, weekly story-telling posts have been released on Mondays, spotlighting schools around the world where chess is more than just a game. These posts have engaged a global audience and reminded them that chess can be a powerful tool of social and community change. By sharing these stories, the series also serves as an example to other schools, giving them ideas for how they can make an impact in their own settings. Shared across FIDE's social media platforms and news sites, and reshared by individuals, schools, and organisations, the posts help keep chess in education continuously in the news cycle.

One representative post featured Phyllis Ruth Miller Elementary in Miami, Florida, USA, and generated 318 likes — one of the more strongly engaged posts on the Facebook platform, particularly for a post not involving professional players.

Through the FIDE School Awards, the EDU Classroom Contest, and the weekly story-telling posts, the Commission has shared with the world the difference chess can make in the lives of children, their schools, and their communities. In this Year of Chess in Education, it is important to recognise that chess should be for all children, as the benefits of chess and the lessons it teaches can be applied to many other areas of their lives and remain useful throughout their lives. Every lesson counts.

Communications and Social Media

—by SLI Alla Khachatryan, Senior Course Administrator, FIDE Education Commission

The Commission's presence on social media has been further enhanced, using Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube to share articles, updates, and information on chess in education. Sustainable growth in follower numbers is evident: the Facebook account now has over 10,000 followers, up from 5,200 in December 2024.

Teacher training remained a central focus of communications activity, and courses were actively promoted across all channels alongside the weekly story-telling series and the Classroom Contest.

Commission channels:

- Instagram: [instagram.com/fidechessineducation](https://www.instagram.com/fidechessineducation)
- Facebook: [facebook.com/FIDE.Chess.in.Education.Commission](https://www.facebook.com/FIDE.Chess.in.Education.Commission)
- YouTube: [youtube.com/@FIDEChessinEducationComm-Lf6zw](https://www.youtube.com/@FIDEChessinEducationComm-Lf6zw)
- X: x.com/FIDEschoolChess

Conference Reports

— by Rita Atkins, Secretary, FIDE Education Commission

Global FIDE Conference in Bhubaneswar Marks Launch of 2026 Year of Chess in Education

From 14–16 January 2026, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Bhubaneswar, India, hosted the FIDE Global Conference on Chess in Society and Education, organized by FIDE in partnership with KIIT and the All India Chess Federation. Serving as the official launch event for the 2026 FIDE Year of Chess in Education, the landmark conference gathered over 5,000 participants, researchers, policymakers, and international delegates to examine chess as a structured instrument for learning, inclusion, and cognitive development. The second day of the programme, centred around the theme “Every Lesson Counts: The Present and Future of Chess in Education,” featured extensive contributions from the leadership and members of the FIDE Education Commission: Chairman Jerry Nash outlined FIDE's strategic roadmap for the Year of Chess in Education; Secretary Rita Atkins presented frameworks on curriculum integration; Senior Lead Instructor WIM Anzel Laubscher shared insights on lecturer and teacher training methodologies; Commission member Dijana Dengler highlighted practical classroom integration techniques and non-verbal learning strategies for early childhood and inclusive education; and Commission member GM Abhijit Kunte addressed the expansion of educational chess initiatives across regional networks. The conference successfully set the vision for 2026, reinforcing FIDE's commitment to expanding teacher training, supporting research, and integrating chess into national curricula worldwide.

Chess and Education Summit: Costa Rica Plans to Bring Chess into the Classroom

On 20–21 March 2026, the Chess and Education Summit took place at the Costa Rica Tennis Club in San José as part of the FIDE Year of Chess in Education. Organised jointly by FIDE, the Confederation of Chess for the Americas (CCA), the Costa Rican Chess Federation (FCA), and the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica (MEP), the policy-focused event brought together educators, national authorities, and educational councillors from all 27 regions of Costa Rica to launch a national pilot programme in 10 public schools. Representing FIDE EDU, Secretary Rita Atkins delivered the address “More Than Just a Game: FIDE's Model for Building Skills Through Chess in the Classroom,” presenting FIDE's framework contrasting competitive chess with educational chess and highlighting how game-based education uses flexible, progressive rules to create a safe place to fail, fostering grit, creativity, and immediate feedback.

2026 Katowice: Chess in Education Conference

On 13 April 2026, held alongside the European Individual Chess Championship in Arena Katowice, the Chess in Education Conference – ChessboArt brought together international experts, educators, coaches, and institutional decision-makers to explore how chess strengthens cognitive, analytical, and social development. Organised in collaboration with ChessGrow and supported by the City of Katowice and the Silesian Chess Federation during the centenary year of the Polish Chess Federation, the event featured practical strategies, research insights, and school implementation models. Representing FIDE EDU,

Secretary Rita Atkins delivered a presentation on the transformative role of chess in modern curricula, emphasising how integrating chess into school frameworks expands its impact far beyond competitive play and fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and inclusive learning environments for young minds.



Panel discussion on innovative chess education in the AI era, Arena Katowice.

IV International Congress: Chess, Artificial Intelligence and Innovation in Education

From 24–26 April 2026, the IV International Congress on Chess, Artificial Intelligence and Innovation in Education took place in Maó, Menorca. Organized by Olimpia Chess Academia and ChessForEdu, the event brought together international experts, researchers, and educators to explore how emerging technologies are reshaping chess pedagogy. Presenting alongside fellow experts — including Dilda Nauryzbayeva, Dr Jonathon Quest, and Mădălina Lejean — FIDE EDU Secretary Rita Atkins delivered a keynote address on the challenges and opportunities educators face in the digital and AI era. In her address, she emphasised that while AI tools offer significant potential for personalized learning and cognitive development, they must serve to support — rather than replace — human instruction, stressing that the core value of the chess classroom remains human interaction and social connection.

Educational Visit Reports

Educational Visit: Catalonia, Spain (17–23 April 2026)

— by Rita Atkins, Secretary, FIDE Education Commission

From 17–23 April 2026, a delegation from FIDE led by EDU Secretary Rita Atkins, alongside members of the FIDE Media team, visited schools in Catalonia to observe the region's pioneering approach to educational chess and record its impact through extensive photography, video footage, and interviews. The delegation was joined by key regional representatives, including Marta Amigó Vilalta (Department of Education of Catalonia) and officials from the Catalan Chess Federation.

At Escola Jaume Balmes, around 280 students aged 5 to 12 use chess as a cross-curricular teaching tool embedded into daily subjects like mathematics, science, Spanish, and Catalan. Teachers utilize interactive chessboard activities where squares represent subject-based questions, and mathematical concepts like piece movements (such as the knight's move) are used for problem-solving. Beyond academics, the school demonstrates how chess acts as a non-verbal bridge for social inclusion, helping non-native-speaking students overcome language barriers and build connections with peers.

In Terrassa, Escola Ramon y Cajal has integrated chess for over 400 students aged 3 to 12, led by primary school teacher and chess expert Toni Arboles. The school employs a co-teaching model where subject

teachers collaborate directly with chess specialists during lessons. For younger learners (ages 3–5), physical activity and spatial awareness are integrated through giant floor chessboards in the gym, teaching spatial relations, colours, and piece positions through movement and play.



Toni Arboles teaching at Escola Ramon y Cajal, Terrassa.

During the visit, Rita Atkins delivered seminars and workshops for local teachers to share practical approaches to using chess in education. The visit highlighted the importance of institutional backing, supported by Sònia Fernández Cuenca (Director General of Innovation, Digitalization, and Curriculum at the Department of Education of Catalonia), Ramon Chalmeta Ugas (President of the Catalan Chess Federation), and programme coordinators Eva Zamarreño and Marta Amigó Vilalta. The visit provided a clear example of how strong collaboration between educational authorities and chess federations can sustain long-term chess integration.

Master School Visit: Overseas Family School, Singapore (20–24 May 2025)

— by SLI/IA Abel Talamantez, FIDE Education Commission

As part of the Year of Chess in Education, the Commission introduced a programme of “master school” visits: delegations of Senior Lead Instructors travel to schools with an established record of integrating chess into the curriculum, in order to observe their practice at first hand. The aim is not ceremonial but practical — to identify what makes these programmes work and to carry those methods back into participants' own schools and national programmes.

The first visit of the programme took the delegation to Overseas Family School (OFS) in Singapore, held 20–24 May 2025. OFS is an international school of some 3,000 students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 representing more than seventy countries. OFS holds a Gold FIDE School Award from the 2024 cycle and has a long-standing reputation within the educational chess community for using chess as a learning tool rather than solely as a competitive activity, which made it an ideal setting in which to observe how chess can be embedded in a school's academic culture. The delegation comprised Commission members IA/SLI Abel Talamantez (USA) and GM Abhijit Kunte (India), together with SLI Jedidiah Huang (Singapore), IA/SLI Ton Tung (Vietnam), SLI Tuan Nor Hariz (Malaysia), NA/LSI Dishal Ruwanga (Sri Lanka), and FI/FA/LSI Muhammad Firdaus Ismael (Malaysia). The visit ran over three days.

The delegation was welcomed by Head of School Vanessa McConville and the school's chess instruction team, including EDU Commission member Dijana Dengler and Philipp Ziegler, and toured facilities that showed how thoroughly chess has been woven into the life of the school. The second day was given over to observing lessons in Grades 1 to 5: calm music, a consistent fifty-minute rhythm of instruction and practical play, and a form of “chess yoga” kept pupils settled and focused. Two activities illustrated the school's approach particularly well — a team relay in which pupils reconstruct a position from memory, balancing a single piece between two fingers, and a purpose-built magnetic board that is turned after each

move so that players must recall their opponent's position, training visualisation and positional recall in an enjoyable form. On the final day, the delegation assisted with the school's family tournament, in which a pupil and parent enter as a team; GM Abhijit Kunte gave a simultaneous exhibition open to all comers alongside the tournament.



The FIDE EDU delegation with Overseas Family School leadership, Singapore.

Master School Visit: Budapest, Hungary (8–12 September 2026)

— by Rita Atkins, Secretary, FIDE Education Commission

In September 2026, the FIDE Chess in Education Commission held a three-day working visit in Budapest, bringing together an international team of Senior Lead Instructors to observe and exchange ideas on chess as an educational tool. The visit's first day took the group to the Benedek Elek Comprehensive Special Education Methodology Institute in Zugló, where they watched chess-based lessons tailored to children with learning difficulties and special needs — including a third-grade class blending chess with environmental education through music and storytelling, a seventh-grade class linking chess to mathematics and logical reasoning, and a physical education session weaving chess concepts into traditional Hungarian dance. The recurring theme of the visit was that the game itself should adapt to the child, not the other way around, with chess functioning as a flexible teaching language across cognitive, visual, and physical learning styles.

Central to the schools' approach is the Chess Palace Program, developed by former World Champion Judit Polgár's foundation. Designed for children aged four to ten, it wraps core chess concepts in a playful, imaginative fairytale world, using storytelling and movement rather than formal instruction to introduce skill-building through the game. The programme has grown into one of the most widely adopted early-childhood chess methodologies internationally, reaching more than 50,000 children a year across about 1,000 institutions and training upwards of 4,000 instructors.



Chess Palace program in action

As part of the Budapest visit, the FIDE team — five FIDE Senior Lead Instructors from Morocco, Gambia, and France, joined by Rita Atkins, Secretary of FIDE EDU, as the local host — toured three Budapest schools that have embraced the Chess Palace Program, seeing firsthand how it is put into practice in the classroom. The exchange gave the visiting instructors a close look at how the programme's storytelling-based methodology plays out with real students and teachers, offering ideas they can carry back to their own national programmes. A fuller account of the visit was published by SLI Marianna Stefanidi on chess.gr.

Following Singapore and Budapest, the master school visit programme has now given the Commission a direct comparison between an international-school model and a national, cross-curricular one — both offering practical methods that participating instructors can carry back into their own countries.

2026 Global Survey

Following the 2021 Global Survey, FIDE and FIDE EDU set two major goals: to double the number of students playing chess from 25 to 50 million, and to double the number of teachers offering chess instruction from 25 to 50 thousand. The survey invitation was issued in October 2025, with data collection and analysis to follow and findings to be presented at the EDU Summit in Samarkand on 24 September 2026.

Data collection closed in mid-2026 and the analysis is now complete. The full report is being prepared for the Commission by Dr George Chitiyo, Professor of Educational Research and Evaluation at Tennessee Technological University, with the support of Rita Atkins and Dr Khanat Kassenov. The 2026 exercise used a substantially expanded instrument and, unlike the largely European survey of 2021, drew responses from every continent and from close to one hundred countries. The mix of respondents has also shifted: schools are far better represented than before and national federations correspondingly less dominant, which gives a fuller view of what is happening at classroom level.

Preliminary indications are encouraging. The findings point to growth in both the reach and visibility of chess in education since 2021, and the response of schools, parents, and communities to chess programmes is overwhelmingly positive. The report is careful to note, however, that the two surveys are not directly comparable, and that participation figures rest largely on informed estimates rather than official records; trends should therefore be read as indicative. The findings also identify, consistently across continents, the constraints on further growth — the shortage of trained instructors, the absence of a written curriculum in many programmes, insecure funding, and limited capacity to evaluate results. The support respondents most want from FIDE is training, teaching materials, and funding, which maps directly onto the Commission's existing priorities and will help sharpen them for the next cycle. Printed copies of the full report will be given to every member of the FIDE Congress alongside the Commission's three newly published books.

Looking Ahead

The EDU Summit in Samarkand on 24 September 2026 will present the full findings of the Global Survey and mark the Chess Olympiad's dedicated Chess in Education programme, including the presentation of FIDE School Awards and the Educator of the Year award.

The numbers speak for themselves: training programmes are growing, demand for certified chess educators is increasing, and FIDE EDU is at the forefront of this transformation as it continues to mark the 2026 FIDE Year of Chess in Education. For the remainder of the year the Commission will maintain its emphasis on teacher training, the FIDE School Awards, creation of CiE content for teachers and other educator resources, national CiE initiatives, and CiE conferences.

Report submitted by

Rita Atkins

Secretary, FIDE Chess in Education Commission

18 September 2026