



Belarus project teaching chess to children with autistic spectrum disorder

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WIM, FIDE Trainer, Trainer of the FIDE Chess Academy in Belarus, leader of the year-long project teaching chess to children with autistic spectrum disorder (Belarus)

The selection criteria for children were as follows:

1. Understanding of speech.
2. If child is non-verbal: availability of alternative communication.
3. Absence of unsafe behavior, such as running away, picacism, aggression and self-aggression.
4. Ability to ask.
5. Age from 6 to 12 years old.

Chess classes – Main ideas

1. Use simplified chess curriculum.
2. Change your tone of speech: make sentences shorter, pause more often.
3. Use different memorization techniques: visual, auditory, body movements, physical exercises.
4. Work with individual child is more important than whole class lectures.
5. Make classes dynamic, engaging, non-boring.

Classroom Equipment

1. Demonstration board and pieces were made at my request in a **special color scheme**:
 - the squares on the board are white and dark gray;
 - the pieces are white and black with contrasting edging so as not to merge with the squares;



Classroom Equipment (cont.)

2. Each child can sit at their own table and have their own board and pieces.



3. Black and white floorboard with pieces in the seating area is also available to use.



4. A timer for each child on the table so that he can see how much time is left until the end of the lesson.

This was a distraction for the kids, currently only on the teacher's desk – smiley indicating the break.



Classroom Equipment (cont.)

5. Fit-ball chairs for every child:

- Difficult to conduct classes.
- Using it as a reward.
- Used during the breaks as a relaxation.



Classroom Equipment (cont.)

6. Soft pillow chairs for resting children.

7. Headphones for children (if they need it).

8. Trainer equipment: printer, card laminator for support cards.

9. Stationery: paper, pencils, etc.

10. The walls in the classroom were white, with pictures of children playing chess on one of the walls. The blinds on the window are white and black.



The “Wings of Happiness” Project

Start Date: 2019 November 16.

Initial meeting

- Children got to know me
- Acclimated to the classroom (could touch anything!)
- Got small gifts

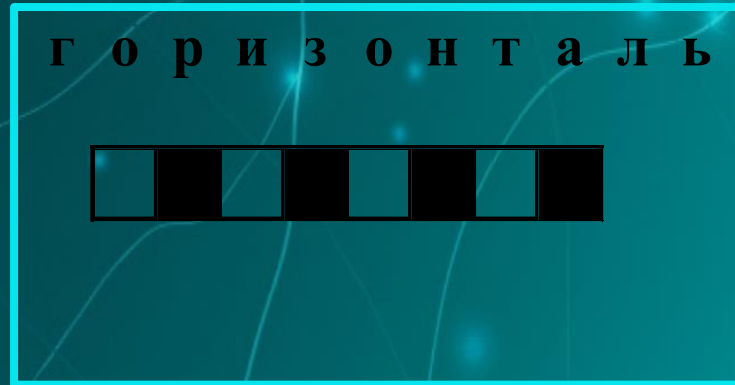
Chess classes

- Emphasize: chess is a game
- Introduce chess board: squares and colors
- Horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines
- Use physical exercises to understand and memorize
- Use support card for coloring exercises on paper
- Do individual work on children's own board

My task is to teach chess to children, not to correct their behavior!

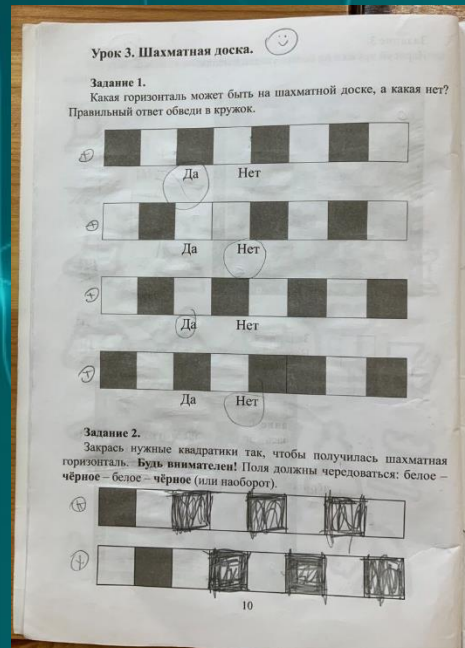
Horizontal line – Card & Exercise

Support card



Doing the exercise on paper:

- Color the squares in the horizontal line: B-W-B-W-B-W-B-W



РАЗУКРАСЬ ГОРИЗОНТАЛЬ

ЧЕРЕДУЙ ПОЛЯ:

ЧЁРНОЕ-БЕЛОЕ-ЧЁРНОЕ-БЕЛОЕ- ЧЁРНОЕ-БЕЛОЕ-ЧЁРНОЕ-БЕЛОЕ



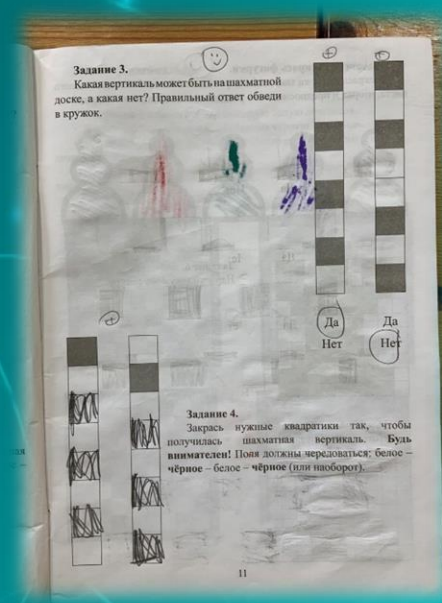
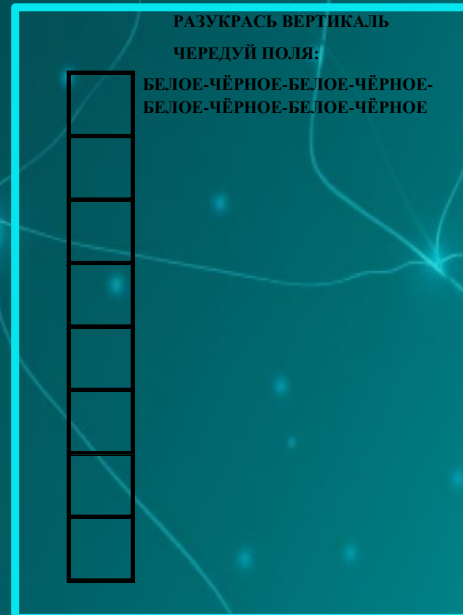
Vertical line – Card & Exercise

Support card



Doing the exercise on paper:

- Color the squares in the horizontal line: W-B-W-B-W-B-W-B



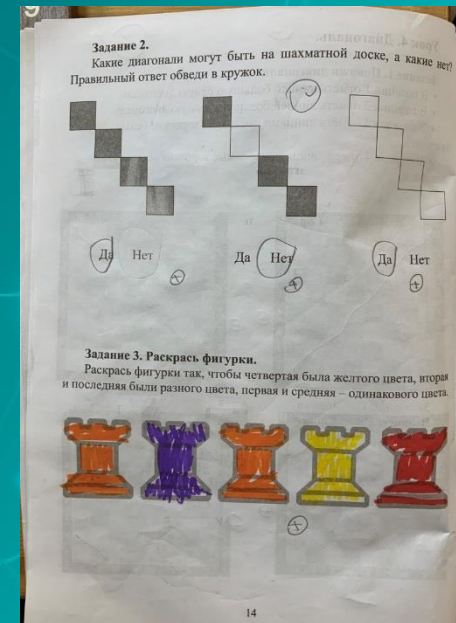
Diagonal – Card & Exercise

Support card



Doing the exercise on paper:

- Color the squares of the diagonal.



Our lessons



Position setup based
on printed material

Individual work



Summary

- Currently: 15 students in 4 groups
 - All kids know the pieces and most of them know how they move.
 - All kids know the chess notation and can set up a position on the demo board from a printed one.
 - 6 children are guided by what is check, checkmate, stalemate, en-passant, castling. They can play a game deliberately: they want to checkmate in order to win it.
 - 7 children can play the game, but do not understand the purpose of the game. They simply move and rearrange the pieces mechanically.

In such a short time, it is already a great success with all kids!
Speed and depth of understanding will vary child to child.

Conclusions

Successful start of the program

Will have to start from the beginning after Covid-19

What's next? Work & Think!

How to convey information to children

How to simplify components

Ideas that can be reinforced with physical exercise

How to teach non-verbal children

Thank you for your attention!