

# They overthrow kings and queens after school



JOHN A. RAMOS JR.

Micah, 10, and brother Tov Fisher-Kirshner, 9, right, play for their father, Alan Kirshner.

## Pupils take their chess seriously

By Leslie Haggin  
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — While their classmates dash out of school at the end of the day, happy to be free from school, Weibel Elementary School chess team members sat in front of their chessboards, silently thinking about their next move.

"Could they be quiet?" one boy asked Alan Kirshner, the team coach.

A visitor cannot help feeling that the pupils are different. It's not because they're quiet or that they would rather study chess pieces than watch television. Rather, they're patient. They seem older somehow.

"They see angles. They see little things like pins and forks (chess moves),"

Kirshner said, proudly looking at the 38 pupils hunched over boards or triumphantly seizing an opponent's piece.

"We are living in a visual media age. We deal with our emotions. Chess creates critical thinking in three dimensions. It allows them to analyze more rapidly," he added.

But visitors should not be fooled by the stillness in the room. The team is aggressive — and successful.

In the four years since the team started, Kirshner's proteges have brought home dozens of trophies. Most recently, the team won the kindergarten through third-grade division as well as the fourth- through sixth-grade division at the state championships.

While each pupil wants to bring home the trophy, they are also eager to learn by

teaching each other. Invariably, pupils say they want their teammates to be proud of them.

"It's harder to play in tournaments. I went to a tournament recently and I made a mistake, so I tied instead of won," said Jimmy Bedgood, 11. "That's a mistake I'll never make again. I should have won."

Nevertheless, Bedgood and his friends have come a long way since they first learned how to play.

"It was difficult to learn. I didn't know how to move the pieces. Everybody started to beat me. I got frustrated," remembered Marjan Sharifi, 10.

Sharifi has no reason not to believe in this added bonus.

"I have a lot of patience in school," she admitted, crediting the game.

# ALL THE RIGHT MOVES



JOHN A. RAMOS Jr. — Staff

Micah Fisher-Kirshner, a member of the Weibel Elementary School Chess team, contemplates his next move Tuesday during a practice session. The team has won dozens of trophies including recent victories at the state level. See story on page **B-1**.