

BridgeAtSchools, Inc.
"Giving Youth a Hand for the Future"



Program Overview
2002-2003

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Introduction

Few games – including physical sports, intellectual games, and other cards games – can match the lifetime of fascination and rewards which the game of bridge provides. BridgeAtSchools is proud to introduce a program for schools which benefits youth so profoundly in terms of academic improvement, personal development, connecting to community, life-long learning, and pure enjoyment.

The game you will be teaching has its roots in 16th century England: whist. In those days, whist was popular among the aristocracy; however, since literacy is not a requirement to play the game, its appeal quickly spread to the working classes. By the mid-18th century, knowing how to play the game and playing it well became status symbols for all social classes. During the 19th century, the game evolved to *duplicate whist*; all participants played the same hands as everyone else over the course of an event. Modern scoring was introduced by Harold Vanderbilt in the 1920's, and the game became hugely popular in the United States by the 1950's.

Certainly history has shown how bridge can integrate people of different backgrounds. More recently, studies have shown that bridge improves the immune response system in older people and keeps them mentally alert. Bridge also develops math and critical thinking skills, improves concentration and memory, promotes the articulation and exchange of ideas, strengthens communication skills, and fosters trust. Through cooperating schools, BridgeAtSchools will collect data to quantify these improvements.

Although bridge is a complex game, anyone can pick up the basics. Endless combinations of card permutations guarantee lifelong learning opportunities as players are constantly confronted with situations they haven't encountered before but must resolve in the span of a few minutes or seconds. Even bridge pros marvel about the ongoing lessons the game teaches them; that's part of its intrigue.

Unlike other programs available to youth, bridge is available to and suitable for everyone. There are no physical advantages or handicaps. Each individual learns and improves at his or her own pace in the midst of the larger playing field, so no one is held back or hurried. Competitions are structured such that participants are integrated with all other players. Their scores are compared to the larger field as well as to those with similar experience and skill, thus improving the opportunities for earning rewards, building self-esteem, and meeting more people.

We encourage you to interest parents in learning the game, too, as this is an activity perfectly suited for family participation and which enhances parent-child relationships.

This handbook outlines the major components to preparing, organizing, and running a bridge program at your school. The at-school instruction and practice will enable your students to compete more effectively and enjoyably at the sanctioned inter-school tournaments that will be announced during the school year.

In bridge, every card counts, not just aces and kings. Let's help kids learn this early in life!

Program Personnel BridgeAtSchools Support

Each school is assigned a BridgeAtSchools, Inc. **project coordinator**. This individual works closely with the school bridge sponsor to ensure that all the components needed to run the program are in place. Once you sign up with BridgeAtSchools, the project coordinator will be the school's primary contact regarding program execution:

- ♣ Oversees orders of bridge-related equipment and supplies
- ♣ Locates a volunteer bridge mentor for the sponsoring teacher and class
- ♣ Schedules a sanctioned tournament director for inter-school competition if you decide to hold one at your school
- ♣ Schedules inter-school competitions at ACBL-sanctioned tournament sites
- ♣ Coordinates research data collection activities for test and control samples of student population (in cooperating schools)



In addition to a project coordinator, each school is assigned a primary **volunteer bridge mentor** who is a subject matter expert in bridge and interested in helping children. While this individual is available primarily on a remote on-call basis, the sponsoring teacher may find it desirable for the mentor to make guest appearances at the school so that the children can make a personal connection to the bridge community prior to tournament play. The role of the mentor is clearly not to teach the lessons or to suggest variations in the lesson plans, as most are not trained in education or conscious of national educational standards, but to assist the staffed teacher during the bridge lessons by helping children follow the exercises and directions outlined in the curriculum:

- ♣ Responds to questions from the sponsoring teacher arising from the bridge curriculum and how to use equipment and supplies
- ♣ Locates other bridge volunteers depending on the size and needs of each school to provide additional one-on-one tutoring and support to students, organize guest lectures, field trips, etc.
- ♣ Provides other services of a volunteer nature to help run the program, such as assisting in set-up of at-school competitions, organizing snacks, helping kids practice the game, etc.

Find A Sponsoring Teacher It Can Be Anyone!

BridgeAtSchools has developed a bridge curriculum with measurable objectives that meet the national standards for Math, Critical Thinking, and Social Skills. It can be taught by non-bridge players. We designed our program this way to increase the educational value for the students. We wish to deliver recognizable, valid benefits that make a positive contribution to their overall education and development. We also believe that professional teachers – rather than subject matter experts in bridge – will be more attuned to the measurable outcomes of the program and much more experienced in ensuring consistent delivery of the learning outcomes engineered into it. “An educational program that’s a game” is not just our mantra, it speaks to how we developed the program.

Since the sponsoring teacher will not necessarily know bridge, BridgeAtSchools provides overview information and recommends resources via our website to orient those unfamiliar with the game of duplicate bridge. It is not necessary for sponsoring teachers to access other bridge resources as these tend to presume the reader already has a basic understanding of duplicate bridge and go well beyond the scope of our curriculum.



BridgeAtSchools is also in collaboration with the Bridge and Other Games Foundation, which is developing a “Teach the Teachers Bridge” workshop in which participants can earn continuing education credits. The University of North Dakota is considering a 30-hour workshop worth 2 semester hours of graduate credit based on a prototypical workshop held in the summer of 2002. We anticipate offering continuing education opportunities along these lines in the near future.

Who makes a good bridge teacher? Math and science teachers are obvious choices, but the search shouldn’t be limited to teachers in those disciplines. Math and logic are important components to the game but so are strong communication skills. We have seen teachers of English, drama, music, librarians, and physical education become excellent bridge teachers. What matters most is that they like problem-solving, thinking on their feet, collaboration, and exchanging ideas. The bridge-playing public fits no particular mold, either, as politicians, judges, realtors, analysts, professional athletes, actors, teachers, counselors, and writers are some of the many professions represented.

We don’t anticipate you will have difficulty interesting a teacher at your school to run the BridgeAtSchools program; however, call your BridgeAtSchools project coordinator if you need additional information.

Teacher Orientation Earn Your BridgeAtSchools Accreditation!

(still in development)

Sponsoring teachers new to the BridgeAtSchools program, even if they already know how to play bridge, may desire to attend an orientation seminar at which they will receive a comprehensive overview of the school program, tournament competitions, and the curriculum. These orientations take place at remote locations, either a local bridge club or hotel. Other teachers are welcome to attend but need to register in advance in order to receive BridgeAtSchools accreditation.



The BridgeAtSchools program differs from other school bridge programs in a couple of respects.

1. Unlike all other bridge teaching materials on the market or in use, our curriculum is aligned to national educational standards and learning outcomes. The lay bridge player who teaches voluntarily and the bridge expert who gives paid lessons will not necessarily relate that readily to the look and feel of our teaching materials; even they would need a thorough review of this new way of teaching bridge.
2. Secondly, we include inter-school tournament competitions as an integral part of the BridgeAtSchools program. We encourage your school to gear up and send as many 2-person and 4-person teams to these tournaments as possible, because that's what gets children excited about the game, interested in learning more, and getting better, which can only improve their overall education. We know of no other school bridge program that organizes inter-school competitions; most just give lessons at school, play a few hands, and leave it at that, which is like suiting up and running basketball scrimmages but never playing a real game.

Bridge materials and supplies

- ♣ Table markers (print from website)
- ♣ Bidding boxes
- ♣ Card holders (many children cannot easily hold 13 cards)
- ♣ Playing cards
- ♣ Score sheets
- ♣ Teacher's manual, student textbooks (print from website)
- ♣ Starter kits for program participants

Getting Organized

Your BridgeAtSchools project coordinator will help you get all the pieces in place so that you can begin your program. Here are a few items for the sponsoring teacher to consider in advance:

- ♣ **Card Tables.** Bridge is played on card tables. The 4 players at each table must be at right angles to one another. The dimensions of a regular card table are ideal for small bodies. Most schools have small tables suitable for the game, but if yours doesn't, we can help connect you to a sanctioned bridge club that might loan some. Another alternative is to push four desks together, as long as the desktops are level. We recommend against the use of a long rectangular table such as what is seen in school cafeterias as it tends to be too large a playing surface for most children and doesn't allow them to sit at right angles to one another.
- ♣ **Meeting time and location.** The BridgeAtSchools program needs to run a minimum of 18 weeks – ideally the full school year – with each session lasting 60-90 minutes, in order for the participants to accrue the expected educational and developmental benefits. The meeting location needs to be large enough to accommodate at least 5 full tables of players. A table configuration that maximizes teacher mobility is recommended, as the teacher will need to visit each table and move about when speaking to the group to avoid facing the same students' backs.
- ♣ **Number of participants.** BridgeAtSchools teaches *duplicate bridge*, a form of bridge in which everyone in the room plays the exact same hands. This is the only form of bridge amenable to tournament play. A partnership scores points according to how their result on a given hand compares to other partnerships who played the exact same cards. The absolute score is meaningless. For example, a score of -100 – even though it's a negative score – would be an excellent result if all the other pairs scored -110, just as +600 would be a poor result if everyone else scored +620. This form of bridge develops critical thinking and social skills far more effectively than *rubber bridge*, which requires only 4 players, and in which only the score matters (i.e., whoever is dealt good cards tends to win). Obviously more than 4 players are needed for duplicate bridge. To account for attrition and absences, we recommend an initial enrollment of 20 participants; if enrollment falls below 12, the duplicate scoring nature of the game is compromised.
- ♣ **Clearance to get into your school.** From time to time, your BridgeAtSchools project coordinator or volunteer mentor may need to visit your school. Please advise whether there are procedures to follow and forms to complete in advance.
- ♣ **Have a back-up teacher.** Consider having a second teacher available to do a lesson or review recent material in the event of your absence.



Get the Word Out to the Parents

Because bridge helps kids so profoundly in their education and personal development, you will want to make parents aware of the program so they will encourage their children to enroll in it.

BridgeAtSchools has an informational flyer in the parent area of our website which the school can disseminate to parents prior to the beginning of their bridge program. If desired, the school may also wish to invite the project coordinator to an open house to give parents the opportunity to meet a representative of BridgeAtSchools and to get first-hand information about the bridge program and our organization.



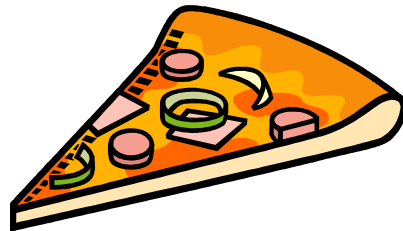
Enroll Students

20 students are recommended for starting a program. If fewer than 12 enroll, they will be at a disadvantage when it comes to tournament competition as they will not have trained under adequate duplicate scoring conditions. There is no upper limit on enrollment, so long as your meeting room can accommodate all the tables needed (additional equipment and supplies might need to be ordered).

It is crucial to the success of the program to keep your enrollment up. Students can always enter the program late; you might be amazed how quickly they can learn from one another.

Enrollment may be kept open to all students, 3rd graders and up. Participants need not be sought out or segregated on any basis as one of the unique features of bridge is that each individual learns and advances at his or her own pace in the midst of the larger group. No one is hurried or held back. Your BridgeAtSchools project coordinator can give you ideas about marketing the program to the student population. Here are examples of marketing tactics:

- ♣ **Flyers and Posters** – announcing program features, benefits, meeting times, location and placed in classrooms, bulletin boards, administration office, etc.
- ♣ **Open House Demonstration** – pizza party with live demonstrations involving people who already know the game, informational brochures, tournament schedules, etc.



Inter-School Competitions At Sanctioned Tournament Sites

BridgeAtSchools has formed alliances with bridge communities across the United States that are affiliated with the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), the main sanctioning body for duplicate bridge tournaments in North America. The ACBL has over 165,000 loyal members, operates three North American Bridge Championships each year, and runs hundreds of smaller tournaments year-round in convenient locations across the continent.

Your project coordinator will work with neighboring bridge communities to organize and announce two or three inter-school competitions in your area during the school year. You will only need to know the dates, times, and locations, and to urge children and parents to participate and support. The first of these competitions can occur only after the children have had several lessons, probably no sooner than January, and the second competition will be scheduled in the late spring.

Some of the events will require 2-person teams, and others will need 4-person teams. A school can enter as many teams as it wishes in any event. The more teams entered, the greater the odds that the school will be well represented in the overall standings. These competitions carry a lot of prestige, as they will be open to all middle and elementary school children, even if they're from a different state or part of the country.

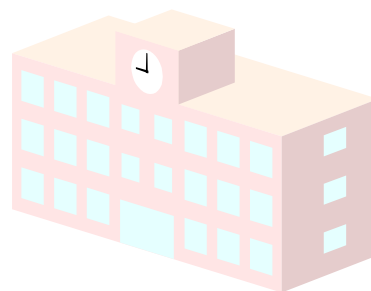


Besides these special competitions, local sanctioned bridge leagues hold regular games and tournaments that are open to the public. Some games are open only to people new to the game. Children who desire practice outside the classroom may consult these clubs for schedules.

Inter-school Competitions At School Locations

In addition to the sanctioned ACBL tournaments, tournaments can also take place at any participating school able to host such an event. A certified tournament director will be hired to run the tournament, and bridge volunteers will support other routine tournament activities. Each participant will be asked to bring relevant bridge supplies from their home school (e.g., bidding boxes, card holders, table cards, etc.) since no school would have enough supplies for everyone.

The at-school competition gives children something of a home-field advantage and the opportunity to display their new abilities and school pride in front of peers and family. Prizes are budgeted into the program.



Research

BridgeAtSchools was founded in the belief that the game of bridge has educational benefits and can contribute to children's personal development in a profound way. We are the only organization actively researching and quantifying the impact that bridge has on children's test scores in math, critical thinking, and social skills. Having reviewed the national education standards for math, critical thinking, and social skills, we believe that bridge can help children improve in over 20 of them! We are asking schools to provide data with which our research department can measure its impact in a quantifiable, rigorous way.

We can utilize whatever standardized tests your school typically uses to measure math, critical thinking and social skills. Most schools use tests that have wide acceptance and use at a national level, and some states have standardized tests unique to that state. Either is fine. If your school measures only some of the areas we're interested in, we can still utilize the data. We have no interest in or need for individual student names; however, some basic demographic profiling is needed, such as gender, race, grade level, and so on.

The data collection activities will be initiated by the project coordinator and occur in two phases, one in the fall after initial enrollment into the bridge program has stabilized, and again in the spring, no sooner than after 18 weeks of exposure to the program. For each standardized test subject matter used for the study, there are 4 sets of data needed for the analysis:

Test group: The regular participants in the bridge program who stay with the program for at least 18 weeks constitute the test group. This might be a dozen students or fifty students, but all the regulars for whom the school would have test scores prior to exposure to bridge need to be included in the study.

Control group: Students who don't enroll in the bridge program and don't know how to play the game otherwise are candidates for the control group. The control group needs to be randomly selected from the same population to whom the bridge program was offered. For example, if it was only offered to 5th and 6th graders, the control group must come from those same grade levels. For statistical reliability, the control group should have at least 30 children represented.

Pre-scores: The most recent scores from standardized tests administered prior to the launch of the bridge program are needed. The tests might have been administered the prior spring or earlier; it doesn't matter, but it needs to be documented.

Post-scores: The same standardized tests used to generate the pre-scores must be used to report post-scores. For the control group, the timing of this test is not critical, but for the bridge students, the data may not be reliable if the test is administered before they have had at least 18 weeks of bridge lessons.