



Calgary · **New**

Bridge can help teens develop math, critical thinking, and face-to-face social skills



Unique five-school tournament caps year of bridge lessons for 60 kids

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60 students from five schools competed in a bridge tournament held in Calgary today, to wrap up a year of bridge lessons. (CBC)

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It's a card game we tend to associate with our parents or grandparents. But bridge may be seeing a comeback among a younger demographic.

About 60 students from St. Jude, Father Whelihan, St. Philip, Nellie McClung and Captain John Palliser schools competed in a unique year-end bridge tournament to wrap up a year of bridge lessons.

"It just a chance for kids to maybe, not look at a device, and look at each other and be social," said Robert Brabec, principal at St. Jude School. "But the coolest part about bridge is there's that math part to it, that strategy, and the kids just really enjoy each other's company when they come together."

Brabec said playing bridge is about working with a partner, and helps kids develop both math, communication and problem-solving skills.



Myron Achtman coordinated the bridge program and helped create the tournament. (CBC)

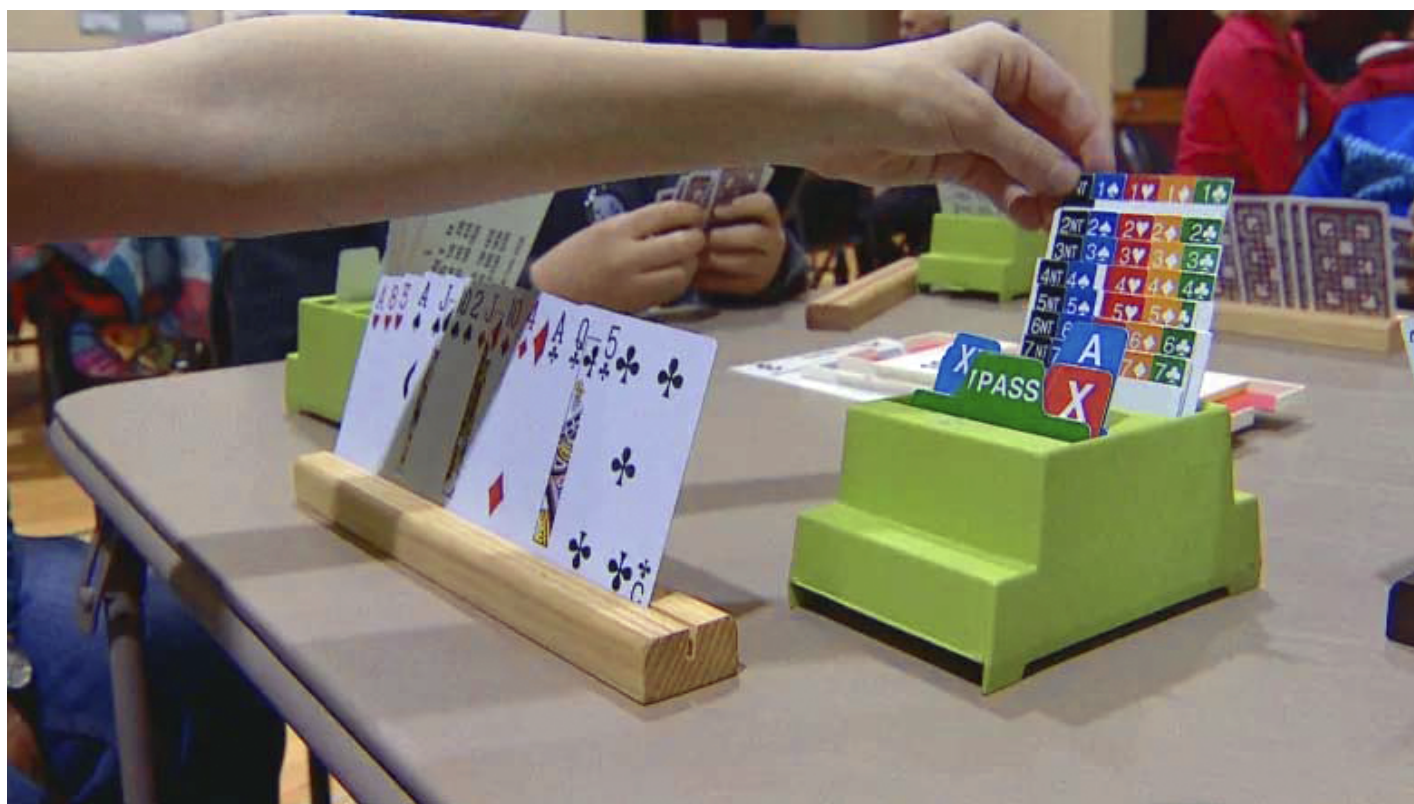
Myron Achtman is from the Calgary unit of the American Contract Bridge League. He helped set up a pilot program at St. Jude school last year. It went so well, they rolled it out to five schools this year.

Bridge is actually a mind sport," Achtman said. "it's really enjoyable to be able to analyze what you've got and determine what you're going to do with the cards that are dealt to you."

"The kids are learning a lot of things," he said. "They're learning what I like to refer to as creative thinking. So the ability to make decisions and create ideas in their mind about how to approach using those cards."

One of the best things might just be a chance to get face to face with other humans.

"The most important skill in my opinion is the idea of the social interaction," Achtman said. "Instead of being between you and your little phone that you're staring at, and interacting with on social media, you're now dealing face to face with people at the table, with your partner, and the two other opponents that are at the table. It's a real life face to face interaction. I think that's what a lot of kids are missing today."



The tournament was a way to wrap up a year of bridge lessons for students, and brought together kids from five different schools in Calgary. (CBC)

Grade 9 student Terra Brower agrees, saying she is now teaching her own family members to put down their phones and gather at the table. She's been playing for two years.

"It helps me focus a lot," she said. "It's very relaxing, it's calm. I've actually started teaching my family how to play bridge. Instead of maybe going on my phone or something I'll go downstairs with them and play a hand of bridge."

The students had the help of about 40 volunteer mentors and instructors from the Calgary Duplicate Bridge Association.

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