

Schools bridge program the real deal

East Gippsland bridge aficionados have taken the challenging card game to the next generation.

First started at Bairnsdale West Primary School more than four years ago, the program, a national leader, is now in six local schools weekly, teaching hundreds of students the game of bridge, challenging them mathematically and developing their teamwork...and brains.

Local bridge club members volunteer their time to instruct small groups of willing students in weekly sessions for Bairnsdale West, Swan Reach, Tambo Upper, Eagle Point, St Mary's and Lucknow primary schools, Gippsland Grammar and Nagle College.

Bairnsdale West signed up to the program following an approach by the brainchild of the concept and Bairnsdale Bridge Club member, Frank Power.

For West principal Doug Vickers the program has had long-lasting student and community benefits.

"When Frank first approached us about four-and-a-half years ago and talked about it, there was immediately an interest," Mr Vickers said.

"It was seen as a great program to support children competent in mathematics and had teamwork qualities attached. Frank also had research to support the fact it would be great for their brain development."

Mr Vickers said the success of the program was unquestionably Mr Power's ongoing commitment, passion and care for the students.

"He has developed kids individually, shared his passion and taken a great interest in the students," he said.

"Frank pioneered the program and it is now known throughout Australia as the Bairnsdale bridge program."

Bairnsdale Bridge Club member, Lou Pemberton, has been involved in the program in schools since last year and said it was fantastic.



LUCKNOW: Darcy Clifford, Chloe Long, Oliver Woodsmith and Austin Toms. K470-2358

"It's good for the students' maths and they need to respect each other and work as a team. They need to think and work out strategies," Mrs Pemberton said.

Tosie Tholen's son, Kyowa, is getting a lot out of the game.

"He just loves it. He comes home and tells me all about it and is trying to teach me to play."

St Mary's Primary School student Bree O'Neill said the bridge program allowed her to get to know other people and that it was a good card game.

"It helps with my maths, too," Bree said.

Bairnsdale Bridge Club member and one of three instructors visiting Gippsland Grammar on a Tuesday, Patricia Brown, plays bridge in Bairnsdale every Saturday.

"I just think it's good for the brain," Mrs Brown said.

"There's a couple here at the school who we've asked to play at the bridge club on a Saturday; they're up to playing at the club."

Grade six Grammar student, Lachy Rose, said he enjoyed the challenge of bridge.

"I find all card games fun. I play card games with my sister all the time," he said.

Students at Lucknow Primary School usually fill three tables, and instructor John Brazier said the students were doing well.

"We've been doing it here for four years, but this group has only been

doing it this year," Mr Brazier said.

Students at Eagle Point Primary School have enjoyed the bridge program in 2014, collectively saying it's a "new thing to learn and it makes you think".

"Working with a partner makes it more enjoyable, you can share the fun," student, Eishia Miller, said.

Carey Lang, of Paynesville Bridge Club, said the characteristics of the game fit in with the grade 5/6 curricular in primary schools, eight students spending an hour a week honing their skills.

"Bridge is a game of strategy, maths and learning to problem solve," Ms Carey said.

"It teaches them the independence of thought, etiquette, partnership skills, respect and etiquette. It's a different way of thinking."

Four players play bridge

in two competing partnerships, with partners sitting opposite each other around a table.

Millions of people play bridge worldwide in clubs, tournaments, online and with friends at home, making it one of the world's most popular card games.

The game consists of several deals, each progressing through four phases: dealing the cards, the auction (bidding), playing the cards, and scoring the results.

Frank Power was passionate about bridge and the benefits it was having for the district's school children. He instigated this feature with the Advertiser, in cooperation with the schools involved in his program, and was hopeful other regions across Australia followed Bairnsdale's lead. Mr Power died last Friday, July 25.



BAIRNSDALE WEST: Taking instruction from Mary Turnbull are Emily Steele and Deklan King. K468-2438



ST MARY'S: Luke Forehan, Kath Cassidy and Mal Mundi. K474-553



ST MARY'S: Lilly Zelenko and James Stastra. K474-551



ST MARY'S: Helen Sampson (Bairnsdale Bridge Club) instructs Bree O'Neill, Ebony Walsh, Erin Forster and Lara Bolger. K474-541



BAIRNSDALE WEST: Connor Taylor and Corey Fraser settle in for a game. K468-2436



GIPPSLAND GRAMMAR: Bridge instructors and staff with participating students in the weekly Tuesday lesson. K466-2344

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Bridge in Schools



EAGLE POINT: Students Jordyn Correll, Jasmine Spencer, Eishiea Miller and Dylan Morrell with instructors Philly and Carey Lang and Ron Wilson, of Paynesville Bridge Club. Absent: William Shell, Lilly Stephenson, Chelsea Wellman and Liana Wilson. K489-2380



ST MARY'S: Bree O'Neill, Ebony Walsh, Erin Forster and Lara Bolger (sitting), Joel Wright, Brian Sampson (tutor), Luke Forehan, Mal Mundi, Kath Cassidy (Bairnsdale Bridge Club), Lilly Zelenko, James Stastra, Helen Sampson (Bairnsdale Bridge Club) and Dominic Hodder (standing). K474-539



GIPPSLAND GRAMMAR: Students Emily Jackson, Sophie Guinness, Hannah Wilkie-Pitt and Chen Li with instructor Jean Graves. K466-2339



SWAN REACH: Above - Grade six students from Tambo Upper Primary School head to Swan Reach Primary and join eight of their grade six students each Tuesday morning. Jasmine DeBono, Jan Davey (Bairnsdale Bridge Club), Reece Carstairs, Lou Pemberton (Bairnsdale Bridge Club), Mya Rogers, Richard Milner (Bairnsdale Bridge Club), Cooper Patterson, Tosie Tholen (mum and helper), and (sitting) Jack Cole, Jack Wheatfill-Edes, Hannah Borland and Kyowa Tholen. Right - Kyowa Tholen, Jack Cole, instructor Lou Pemberton, Jack Wheatfill-Edes and Hannah Borland. Right below - Mya Rogers, Jasmine DeBono, instructor Richard Milner, Reece Carstairs and Cooper Patterson. K464-457/466/459



GIPPSLAND GRAMMAR: Staff member Kyle Mandry with students Lachy Rose, Milli Campbell and James Lancaster. K466-2342



GIPPSLAND GRAMMAR: Madeline Jong, Piper Stubbs, Jamie Chin and Sam Shelton with instructor Patricia Brown. K466-2340

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Bridge in Schools



BAIRNSDALE WEST: School teacher Darrell Harris with bridge students (from left back) Stephen Smith, Corey Fraser, Connor Taylor, Declan King and Zakk Rutherford, and (front) Lara Crotty, Emily Steele, bridge teacher Mary Turnbull and Tahli Holford. K468-2433



LUCKNOW: Jemma McLaughlin and Georgie Wharfe challenge instructors Ilse Porritt and Fritz Riedacher. K470-2363



LUCKNOW: Gemma Watt, Lochie Ballard, instructor Christa Riedacher and Melanie Steed. K470-2361



NAGLE COLLEGE: Nagle College bridge players meet for lessons at 1.30pm every Wednesday lunchtime. Year seven students Rachael Butler and Joel Freiberg welcomed some coaching from Bairnsdale Bridge Club mentor Elaine Newcomen, who told the students the Bairnsdale club has been going for 37 years. K560-135



NAGLE COLLEGE: Under the enthusiastic eye of Nagle College teacher Sue Williams regular player Matthew Butler and new player Paige Smith learn how to count cards and bid. K560-139



NAGLE COLLEGE: Kyle Gibbs is a picture of concentration. K560-148



NAGLE COLLEGE: Chloe Laity, Sue Williams and Gabby Lightowler. The college formed a bridge club late last year. "This year we have attracted a number of year seven students and the club is open to every student at the college, supported by members of Bairnsdale Bridge Club," Ms Williams said. K560-146

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