

Kent Youth Bridge Report – September 2017 (“First Stab”)

I am hoping that the 2017 / 2018 school year sees a growing impetus around the strategy of building a critical mass in school bridge clubs in Kent. The schools will be following EBED’s JAS and competing in the Interschool’s Tournament in May 2018. I hope to see the number of bridge clubs grow towards a target of 20 and the emergence of a few more regional “hubs” (such as the Ruffians Bridge Club at Tunbridge Wells Bridge Club) hosting junior bridge lessons.

To this end I have held a number of very useful meetings with bridge teachers, coordinators and school heads looking to initiate new clubs. I have also put together a “draft” Q&A sheet to assist the initial enrolment conversations with school heads; circulated a Bridge Assembly presentation (to recruit learners); and encouraged sharing of information between new emerging youth hubs and some of the more successful, “role model” regions (West Berkshire coordinated by Joan Bennett and East Sussex with Andy Ryder).

In addition to the existing successful Kent clubs at Radnor House; New Beacon Preparatory School; Tonbridge Grammar School for Girls; and Weald Community Primary School, I am hoping that new clubs will start up at Mersham Primary School (under Shirley Goldwin); Seabrook Church of England Primary School (under Brian Crack) and Sevenoaks School (who will shortly be getting a new bridge playing teacher). I know there are others starting and as soon as I have confirmed details of them, I will report on them. Furthermore, I am hoping for the emergence of at least two new extra-mural clubs (like Ruffians), providing hubs for at least three near-by schools. I hope to base these at Weald of Kent Grammar School for Girls and at Sevenoaks School. I would appreciate suggestions for “champions” who could assist in establishing clubs and hubs in other centres in our county (such as Orpington, Maidstone, Canterbury etc.). I am also hoping to update an existing schools’ database (previously used in the Interschool’s Tournament) and to compile a county bridge youth map, in order to better track development.

The JAS, EBED support and recently updated teaching material now provides an excellent “backbone” for youth bridge clubs and makes it fairly simple to get a new club started

(although the importance of enrolment cannot be under-estimated) and for participating juniors to track their progress and be rewarded. With good progress tracking; and a strong, growing network of new youth bridge teachers and coordinators setting up clubs, this should become even easier. The provision of youth bridge teachers may become a challenge, but I am working with Chris Lohan to figure out the available distribution of resources.

During the summer holidays, we saw some of the Bronze-level children starting to play gentle duplicate sessions (at St Julian's BC). I hope to encourage a better turn-out from Kent at the excellent JTO, recently held at Loughborough, and at the "Real Easy" Eastbourne Congress.

I believe marketing is a crucial element in "spreading the word". To this end, I will make sure we get as much local coverage of youth bridge events and school club achievements as possible, and I appreciate the KCBA website keeping an updated section for junior bridge and bridge in schools (thank you).

Yours in Bridge

Anton

Request – I would like to be connected with anyone who has contact with coordinators or bridge teachers in Kent who are keen to start up either an extra-mural or break-time bridge club (particularly in areas of the county where we do not yet have a youth presence).