

A GAME FOR ALL AGES



Barry Tse, a student at Lowell Alternative High School in San Francisco, counts his tricks.

Photos by Richard Bellerose.

Proud of our students

By Lauren Friedman

Want to be jazzed about youth bridge? How about two high school students scoring a section top in their first sectional tournament? Or a student graduating and going on to play on his university's team and winning the collegiate championship? The Center for Bridge Education (CBE) in San Francisco has had both of these happen and much more.

In 2006, a group of concerned bridge players in San Francisco formed a charitable nonprofit organization to promote teaching with a primary focus on youth. Richard Bellerose, the first president, contacted various schools, and by the 2007–08 academic year, had convinced two high schools to give it a try.

At Mission High School, Assistant Principal Jennifer Fong saw the opportunity immediately. "Bridge is a fantastic game to teach to young people because it appeals to different personalities," Fong said. "Some

students are quiet and keep to themselves, and they like the introspective nature of declarer play. Other students are gregarious, and they like playing with a partner or in a team game. All students like the healthy competition."

CBE has found that for a club to be successful,

someone on the faculty must promote it. The faculty member does not need to know how to play, but must convey a sense of enthusiasm about the game to the students. Also critical are volunteers who are excited about teaching young people to play. Volunteers have never been difficult to find.

Now, five years later, CBE has taught more than 250 kids to play and has sent youngsters to all of the Youth NABCs. The most difficult issue the organization faces is getting schools to sign on because few students have heard of bridge.

CBE has seen success. William Zhu and Chris Chen, Lowell Alternative High School seniors, took a section top at the Marin (CA) Section-

al earlier this year.

Another student, Edmund Wu, who didn't know what bridge was before CBE started a club at Galileo High School, is now a student at the University of California at Berkeley. He took a second in Flight X and a fifth in A. Edmund will play on the UC team in the collegiate championships this summer in Toronto. He hopes to match the performance of Kendrick Chow, also a Galileo graduate, who played on the University of Pennsylvania team that won last year's collegiate championship at the New Orleans NABC.

CBE finances trips to sectional tournaments for high school students, pays entry fees (if they are not waived) and provides transportation and a meal. CBE also finances trips to the Youth NABC for those who qualify, including table fees, transportation, lodging and meals. CBE sent two students to Atlanta, four to Washington DC, two to New Orleans, and plans to send two to Toronto, all thanks to the generous support of area players.

What do the volunteers who teach get out of it? Bragging rights! □



Lauren Lai wonders, "What do I bid with this hand?" as Justin Lee (left) sorts his cards. Both are learning bridge at Galileo High School in San Francisco.