

# School-bridge in Norway

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# Myth 1 – Youngsters are not interested in learning bridge

- Truth: Most youngsters today don't know what bridge is and therefore has no prerequisite to say if they want to learn bridge or not.
- Once they try (mini) bridge, most of them love it.



## Myth 2 – Bridge is only for the smart kids

- Kids struggling with maths or other school subject will benefit immensely from learning bridge
- Excellent model for exploring mathematics, also learning basic terms to catch up
- And of course: Smart kids will love the endless challenge of bridge.
- Truth: Bridge is for everyone!



## Myth 3 – Kids prefer video games

- Truth: Yes, they like videogames. Kids today have all different kinds of gadgets. That's not very special to them.
- If you spend time with them playing a game that *you* love, *that is special*, and they will absolutely love it.



# Reasons to play bridge – the package

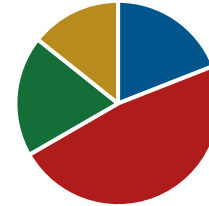
- Socialiser (joy) – Mind Gamer (curiosity)
- Competitor (excitement) – self-improver (mastering)

Reason to play – Marianne Harding  
(international player)



■ Competition  
■ Social (social connection, observe people)  
■ External incitaments (travel)  
■ Self-improvement

Reason to play bridge  
– random 12 year old



■ Competition  
■ Social (social connection, interactions, observations)  
■ External incitaments (food, camps etc)  
■ Self-improvement

- If 75 % of a 12-year-old's reason to play are reasons outside the game itself, we have to do more than just teach bridge technique

# Strategies NBF

1. Presence in school – all levels:
  1. Spread knowledge about bridge in the population
  2. Gain credibility
2. Build environments around existing junior members
3. Educate juniors in organizational work (bridge teachers, TDs, board members)
4. Host junior events throughout the year





# A local inspiration

## Båro Bridge Club



# How can we offer this to every kid?

- Create a national project
- Change our way of teaching bridge to suit kids
- Establish after-school bridge for kids, where they meet other kids, not just their grandparents
- Access schools to introduce bridge to kids
- Get funding to offer this for free



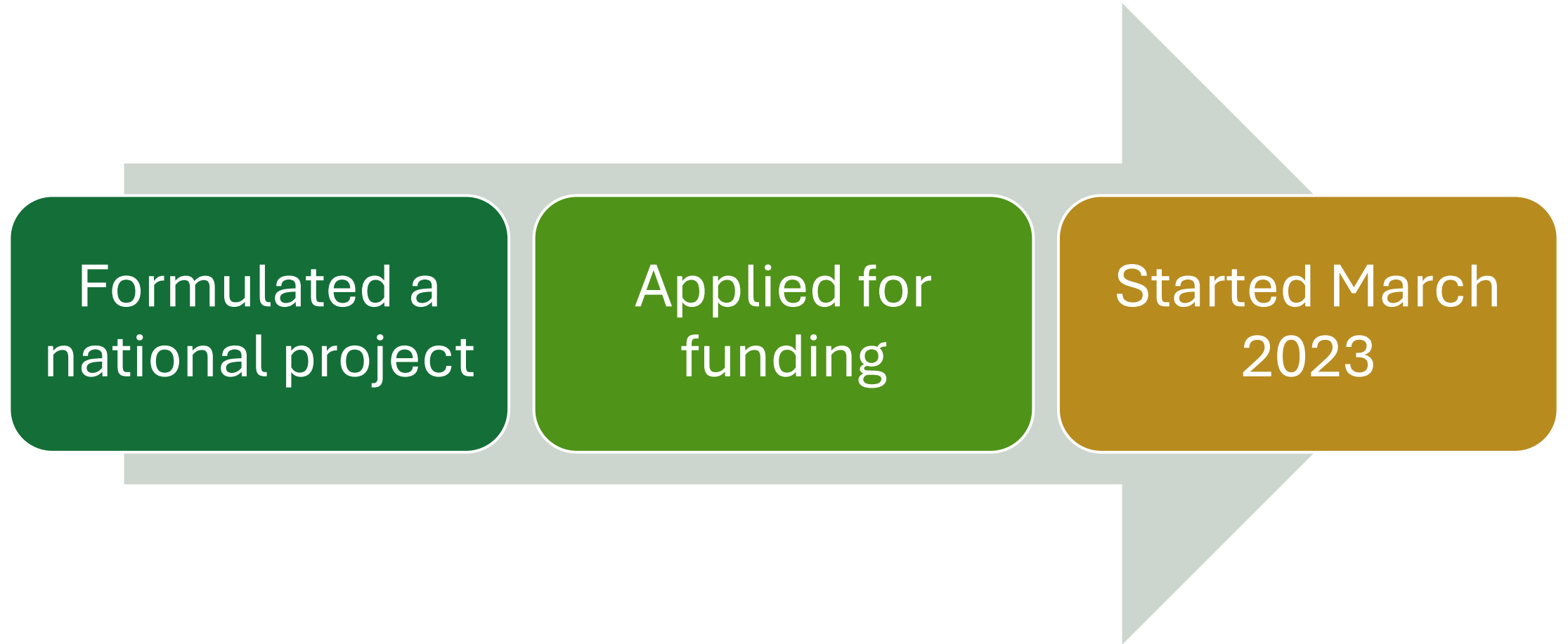


# Change perspective: What can bridge offer?

- A warm and competitive environment that includes those who don't have the best physical abilities
- An arena for kids to blossom
- Two screen-free hours where the kids interact with others, supervised by adults
- Skills that will help them do better at school
- A reasonably priced leisure activity
- Travel
- A network that will help them socially when studying, getting their first job, getting through hard stages in life



# The process for Norwegian School Bridge



# Short time goal: Bridge intro to 10 000 kids

- Introduce 10 000 6<sup>th</sup> graders to bridge within 3 years
- Establish after-school bridge at 15 schools in 2023, and another 10 schools in 2024.
- We believe this is doable in many countries. We'll show you what we have identified as the key success factors.







## Schools, kids and volunteers

- 3461 kids has been introduced
- At least as many families have gotten a deck of cards with rules for mini-bridge and funfacts
  - Research interviews shows they often show it to their parents
- 512 kids has started to play bridge
- 101 volunteers have received coaching and shown police certificate
- 34 schools, 10 regions, 23 after-school programs (20 active in April)
- 14 different bridge teachers has done the introduction
- Just started in middle schools too

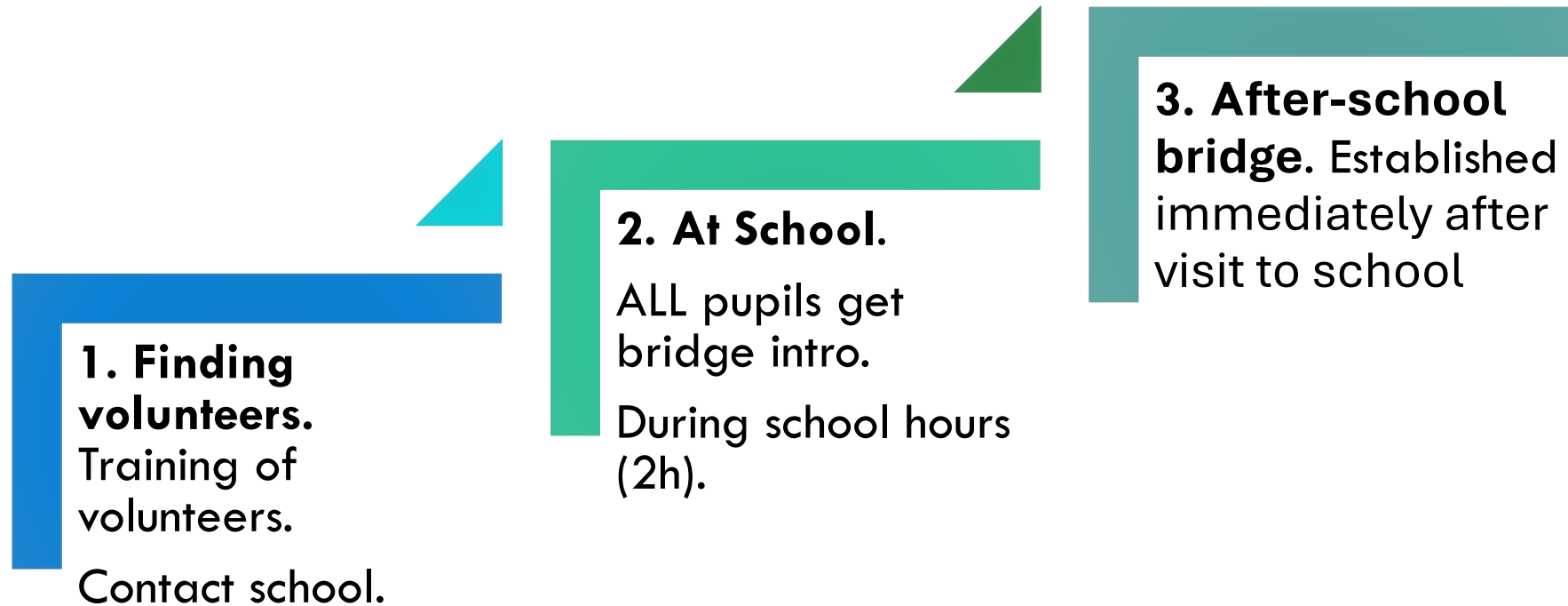


# Bridge in schools: Overall goal

- Establish Norwegian School bridge as a partner organization with the Norwegian school system.
- Bridge remains an activity for future generations to enjoy.
- The kids are offered an activity where everyone is included, that gives them a network and skills to help them later in life.



# Three steps







## School visit: The goal is motivation

- We only ask for 2 hours
- Absolutely necessary to catch their interest
- GOAL: Love of the game! The kids should feel they're mastering the basis of trick-taking games.
- Be motivated to join the bridge group to learn more.

# Effects of changing perspective

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- From: «What can new members offer us» to «what can we as a bridge club offer society»
- Message better received: Bridge seems more attractive to new members
- Society accepts bridge in a new way
- Working with club culture comes easier
- Also a lot easier to get funding





# Long time perspective – involve parents

- Parents are a golden resource!
- Work actively to include parents of kids who joined the bridge group
- Establish a method of communication that works for you
- Bridge is an activity that may be exercised across generations
- Maybe you see the parents before the kids in your local club?



# Teaching kids vs adults

- Adults have more experience, more basic knowledge.
- Adults chose to learn bridge because they like to play cards. Kids might be motivated by other factors (their friend attended, want to impress a grandparent, love food, curious, bored)
- Adults are normally more motivated than kids and thus learn faster.
- Kids have no previous experience in trick taking games. We start TOTALLY from scratch.
- Adults have more self control and can regulate their feelings to a higher degree.
- Even “easy things” such as sorting their cards, the name of the suits and the honours, ranking of the cards: All new to kids
- Kids need room for exploration and play

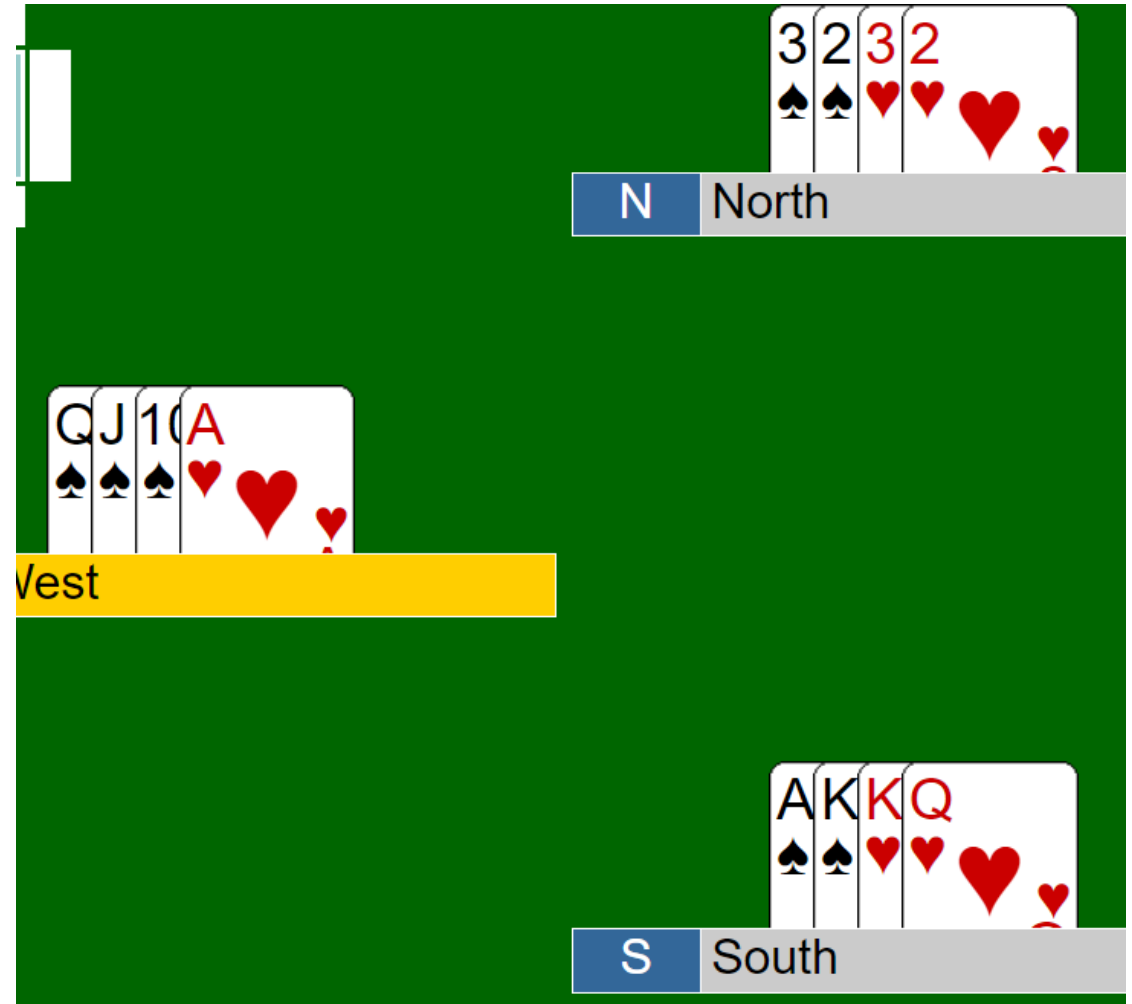


Foto: Kurt-Ove  
Thomassen

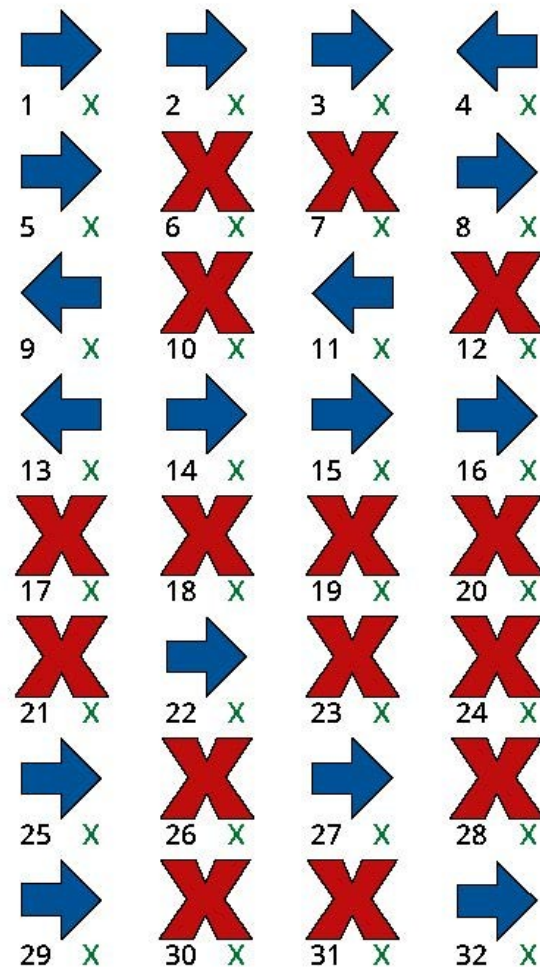
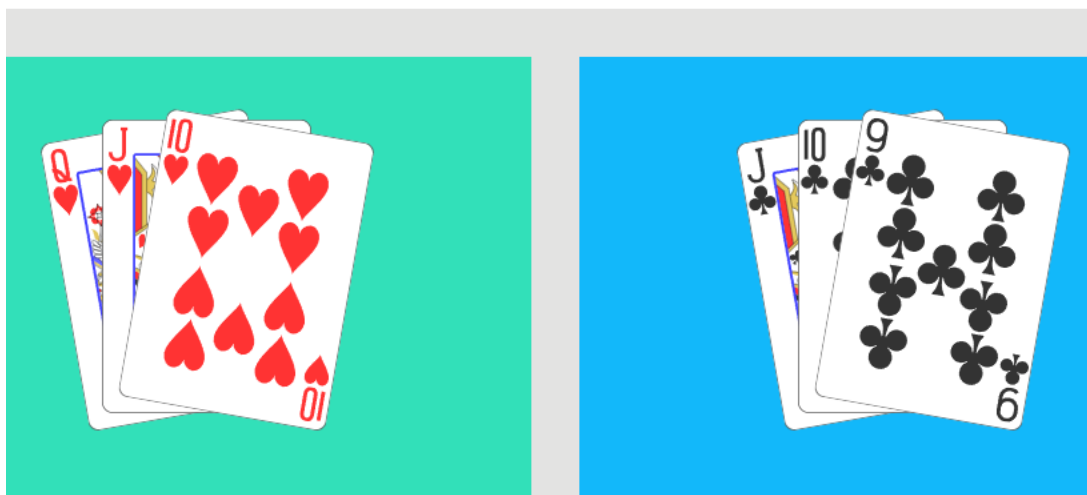


# Balance progress vs comfortable learning pace

- A kid with high learning potential, will pick it up and do it when you say «Lead top of sequence»
- Everyone else will have to practice, multiple times.
- Break down the problems
- Quicker, everyone gets to practice the same problem. Repetition!
- Possible to differentiate without any of the kids noticing



# Tools for breaking down problems





# Factors for long lasting activity

- **Safety.** The kids must feel seen and welcome.
- **Predictable.** The kids must know what is going to happen.
- Good environment, **socially.**
- «**Carrots**», literally and figuratively.
- Look forward, allow **play**. Talk about what we're going to do in weeks to come.
- Allow the kids to explore



# Motivations

- What motivates kids isn't necessarily the same thing as motivates adults.
- It is rarely only the game itself
- Food, drinks, travel
- Being part of the group
- Excitement, play, exploration
- Interacting with others
- Their motivation may change as they learn more





# The importance of including all kids

- No matter what their motivation is (it might be the food, loneliness, being with friends or the game itself), we need to see, accept and include all kids.
- They will learn at different paces, you don't know who will come to love the game of bridge for life
- The group dynamic depends on us treating every kid in a respectful way
- Also, we must succeed on this point for parents and school to embrace us





A group of children are seated around a green-clothed table in a classroom, playing the card game bridge. The child on the left, wearing a red and white Santa hat and a green hoodie, is pointing at a card on the table. The child in the center wears a red and blue beanie with 'OH DEER!' and a black sweater with a Santa and peace sign pattern. The child on the right is a boy with red hair in a green hoodie. In the background, other children are visible, including one in a yellow hoodie looking at a phone. The table is covered with playing cards, card racks, and an orange envelope. A candy cane lies on the table. A large white text overlay reads 'Rule nr. 1 in bridge'.

Rule nr. 1 in bridge



# First day of after-school bridge

- Time: prolongation of school day
- How many will show up? How do we prepare?
- What is important to make the kids feel seen, safe, welcome and included?
- Motivate to repetition: What do we do to make them return?
- Establish contact with parents



# Key challenges

- Challenge 1: Prejudices and myths amongst bridge players
- Challenge 2: Missed one generation. Our members are too old to teach their kids, they are already grandparents
- Challenge 3: Building organizations for juniors: Challenging, time consuming, but utterly necessary
- Challenge 4: Implementing the right learning method/progress and social frame to retain learners.



# Ministry of Education Norway:

- «We can see that teaching bridge could be beneficial for students at all levels in school» January 2020.
- Teachers may choose their own methods for teaching the learning points in the curriculum
- Although definitely one of our main goals, it is not imperative to NBF to get bridge into the curriculum, as long as we may have short introduction classes during school hours





# Bridge into the curriculum



## Primary school

- Own and run by *municipality*
- A few private schools



## Secondary school

- Own and run by *municipality*
- Elective subjects – selection decided by Ministry of Education (MoE)



## High school

- Own and run by the *county*
- More freedom of choice. If you choose Top Sports, bridge may be your sport

- Primary school: Our main strategy is to fit introduction classes during school hours, and start after school activities. Offer bridge teacher.
- Secondary school: Work in progress to get bridge as elective subject.
- High School: From august 2021 Top-level sports 1 Bridge ([IDR3013](#), curriculum code [IDR05-02](#))

# Key opportunities I

- Schools and governing bodies are positive to bridge
- **Bridge Top-level sports:** Getting bridge into the curriculum as an elective subject in high school from 2021
- Digital classes allowing students from all parts of Norway to participate: 1809 km between the northernmost and the southernmost student



# Key opportunities II

- Enormous potential in teaching juniors to organize their own bridge events and run their own bridge clubs
- Trained to be bridge teachers, TDs and board members
- Hoping to expand this project to other countries





# Our top tips for organizers wanting bridge in school hours



1. Read the curriculum – find learning points bridge may support



2. Write a curriculum for bridge. Use the right format and terms



3. Be patient: build the organization before starting



4. Offer the full package: Game, friends, travel

# Recipe to copy this: Do your homework!

1. Change perspective to «What can bridge offer the kids, school and parents?»
  - Inclusive activity, independent of physical abilities, mental stage, economy, race, age
  - Train problem solving skills in cooperation with others, drawing positive and negative inferences, algorithmic thinking
  - Must cooperate; train social skills, fair play,
2. Read the curriculum thoroughly!
  - Find the exact parts where bridge fits. Make a document.
3. Get funding!
  - Foundations, heritage, members, government, EU





## Funding

- What do you want to do? Make a rough plan of your project.
- Sparebankstiftelsen DNB. Could have been any other of these:
  - Gjensidigestiftelsen
  - Olav Thon stiftelsen
  - OBOS stiftelsen
  - SR bank
- Do you have such foundations in your country? I was only recently aware of them and the opportunities.
- Erasmus+



# A four hour challenge for you: Try it!



- **Study the curriculum.** Besides helping the kids to learn dynamic problem solving, communication, cooperation, fair play, logical interference; find specific paragraphs where bridge can assist learning, and use these in the communication with the school principal
- **Contact your local school,** make an appointment with the principals: the bridge club has a special offer this month, a 2 hour free bridge course for the kids aged 11-12. These are the benefits: a,b,c
- **Find helpers,** local volunteers, 1 pr 4 kids. Train them briefly.
- Run a **2 hour** mini-bridge course. Ask what the kids think.



# Norwegian School Championship

- National and regional – every other year
- Stay at schools, lots of social activities
- Around 15-20 boards a day
- BAM - 5 board matches (1 hour)
- April 2026 already 19 teams entered
- Everything free for players and team leaders



# Norwegian junior championship U26

- 129 players
- Most experienced play for national title
  - Around 90 boards
  - 24 pairs – “all” prioritize the tournament
- Recruitment pairs – most popular twice
  - Around 60 boards
  - 23 pairs
- Mini recruit – U13
  - Need to know how to follow suit and how bidding box works
  - Around 30 boards
  - 15 pairs
  - Fully duplicated!







# Our teaching videos in English

- <https://bridgemindsport.org/school-and-youth-bridge/>
- Thank you to BAMSA for translating them





Questions?