

HANDBOOK FOR THE EDUCATION LIAISON



American Contract Bridge League

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Revised May 2007

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A Note to our Liaisons

Congratulations! You have been selected by your unit or district for a challenging and exciting job. This manual was designed to help you identify what you would like to do for your unit and how to get started on a path that will allow you to accomplish your goals.

ACBL and its units need to work together to secure the future of organized bridge and to reverse the tide of declining membership.

- New players need to be recruited.
- Current members need to be retained.
- New members need to be integrated into the organization and made to feel comfortable — a member of our bridge family.

The unit education liaison's (UEL's) main job is to educate unit members about available ACBL education programs and to implement them with unit board approval.

If your unit is just establishing an education program, this information will guide you through the steps necessary to get started. If your unit has the basics in place, there is a lot you can do with unit assistance, to improve the program and spark new growth and participation. Read on.

The ACBL Education Department will be happy to assist you in developing any of ACBL's education programs. Call the Education Department at 662-253-3100, ext. 3172 or contact us by e-mail at education@acbl.org

Good luck!!

The education liaison is a volunteer appointed by the unit president or unit board who will develop and promote education activities for the unit in coordination with the ACBL Education Department, the unit board and the unit's teachers and club managers.

Getting Started

Getting started is the hardest part of any endeavor. In order to make a plan, you need to know what your unit specifically expects you to do.

Understanding the primary goals of an education liaison (UEL) is easy.

- To promote bridge by bringing new players into the organization and making them a part of our bridge family
- To increase local participation
- To retain current members

Putting together strategies to achieve these goals may be difficult.

STEP ONE

Define your unit's area. How large is your unit geographically? A small city, a large metropolitan area, a large state, several sections of several states? The area you are dealing with will help you decide how large your Education Committee needs to be.

STEP TWO

Determine the education programs your unit has in place.

Does your unit have an Education Committee?

Is there a New Player Services program in place?

Has the unit participated in a TAP (Teacher Accreditation Program)?

If yes, When _____ Where _____

Does your unit host an IN sectional or an IN regional?

Has your unit taken advantage of the ACBL's Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP)?

Does your unit have a mentoring program in place?

What other education programs have been established?

STEP THREE

Consult with the unit membership chair.

Number of unit members? _____

Unit members with fewer than 100 points? _____

What is the percentage increase or decrease in total members in the past three years? _____

What percentage of the membership plays in local sectionals? _____

STEP FOUR

Appoint an Education Committee (see page 9).

Look first to your friends.

STEP FIVE

Develop an education plan for your unit.

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

1. Determine your goals (see page 8).

2. Select the programs that will help you reach those goals.
 - a. What programs are in place?
(Consider your answers in Step Two.)
 - b. Are the existing programs fully developed?

3. Appoint committee members to head up each program.

4. Establish a timeline for your projects.

Set some goals that can be accomplished in the coming year.

Set up long term goals for the next group of volunteers to continue with.

5. Create a budget.

6. Present your plan of action to the unit board for approval.

Establishing Goals

Did you know that in most units 40% or more of the members have fewer than 100 masterpoints?

Did you know that in most units fewer than 25% of the members participate in local tournaments?

There are no quick fixes to achieve growth. This is a long term effort.

The primary goal of a unit education liaison should be growth in the number of players — both new and current — who are enjoying bridge at the club and tournament levels.

Although you were appointed (or may have volunteered) as the UEL, don't assume your unit board understands the goals of this position or knows what education programs are available.

You and your Education Committee need to establish some short term and long term goals for your position and present them to the unit board.

The growth in the number of new players enjoying the game will naturally translate into increased membership for the unit — retention of current members and recruitment of new members. Every unit needs to be actively involved in this pursuit. This was the main reason why the ACBL Board of Directors established the positions of unit and district education liaison.

Education Committee

The most effective aid to achieving your long- and short-term goals is to establish an Education Committee. No matter how much energy a single person may possess, the collective energy of a group working together is better.

Whether your unit is small or encompasses a large area, you will need a group of volunteers to work with you. Make certain that your committee members are located in all areas of the unit and will, therefore, represent all of the unit's members.

The size of the Education Committee is not as important as filling it with dedicated, positive individuals who are interested in working with you. Start with your friends!

If an intermediate-newcomer (IN) coordinator has been appointed by the unit, that person should become a member of the Education Committee and should head up all new player promotions and programs. If the unit doesn't have an IN coordinator, it is suggested that a member of the committee be selected for that position.

Here are some points to remember regarding your Education Committee.

- Let your Education Committee assist you in prioritizing and achieving short-term objectives.
- Appoint specific Education Committee members to be responsible for maintaining ongoing programs once they are established.
- Meet regularly with your Education Committee to address continued objectives, concerns and success. You can even do this on the Internet!
- Make sure your unit recognizes the importance of the work these volunteers are doing. Volunteer recognition is key to maintaining good relations with your committee members.
- Enjoy the process!

Making a Plan: The Big Five

To help you design your plan of action, we offer these ideas and suggestions.

These five activities will jump-start a new or existing program.

1. ACCREDITING PROGRAMS

- Host a TAP (Teacher Accreditation Program). You can't get new players if you don't have teachers to produce them. The TAP will develop bridge teachers who will stimulate interest in both bridge and the ACBL. This is starting at ground zero.
- Offer a Club Director Refresher Course. The ACBL Tournament Department will make arrangements for your unit to host an update course for your club directors in conjunction with a sectional or regional tournament.

2. NEW PLAYER SERVICES

This is a public relations program designed to welcome new players into the local bridge family. It is staffed by volunteers whose job is to make new players feel comfortable at local club games and tournaments by helping to create a fun, friendly and pleasant atmosphere.

3. TEACHER COMMUNICATION

The better the communication between the UEL (and the Education Committee) and the area bridge teachers, the better positioned you are to take advantage of teaching opportunities throughout your unit.

4. IN (INTERMEDIATE-NEWCOMER) PROGRAM

Be aware of the ten activities that can make or break newcomer games and tournaments and work to implement them locally.

5. MENTORING

Depending on the size of your unit and the size of the local clubs, mentoring can be sponsored by either the unit or a club (or clubs). Some units have more than one program.

Other Education Programs

If you have found that your unit has already developed a firm foundation of educational activities, you may want to explore some other projects which have proven to be both effective and popular.

SCHOOL BRIDGE LESSON SERIES PROGRAM

Go to "School Bridge Lesson Series Programs" from <http://www.acbl.org/teachers/schoolBridge.html> for information on this program and to order school promo packets.

Form a committee to work on bringing bridge into the schools by utilizing the fully-funded School Bridge Lesson Series Program subsidized jointly by the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation. There is also a program where Juniors can earn scholarship money by teaching in schools http://www.bridgeiscool.com/acbl_scholarship.html

BRIDGE ON TV (See page 24.)

ACBL has made several beginning bridge television programs with Audrey Grant and the show entitled "The Bridge Class" is available for your local public television or independent cable stations to air free of charge. This program may be tagged with local phone numbers and can be a vehicle to attract new people to lessons, games and ACBL membership.

TEXTBOOK PROGRAM FOR TEACHERS

Your unit or district can buy the ACBL Beginning Bridge Books in bulk in order to resell them to teachers at a lower price. Contact Baron Barclay Bridge Supply at <http://www.baronbarclay.com/> or phone 800-274-2221 for more information.

JOIN THE LOCAL CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU (See page 22.)

Joining your local Convention and Visitor's Bureau has numerous benefits for your bridge unit. If your unit is a not-for-profit organization (as it should be), the annual cost for this program is minimal. The benefits far outweigh the cost.

INTRODUCE BRIDGE IN NON-TRADITIONAL AREAS

It's possible to organize bridge displays and demonstrations in shopping malls and local bookstores such as Barnes and Noble. Consider being an exhibitor at a convention for Seniors or introduce the game as a lunchtime league at a local business. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

This list includes ideas that other UELs have found to be successful tools for generating growth in their units. We would love to hear about additional activities your unit has undertaken and used to achieve positive results so that we can pass on these ideas to others.

Put Your Plan Together

You should have enough information now to determine where you want to start. Your plan must fill the needs of your unit members.

1. Meet with your committee of willing, dedicated volunteers (your Education Committee) and discuss the results of your unit investigation.
2. Report on the current status of your unit's education program (where your unit stands on "The Big Five") and the unit's membership trend.
3. Identify the areas that are priorities for your unit.
4. Select the programs that the unit needs and prioritize them.
5. Establish a timeline for implementing your starting programs.
6. Create a budget.
A word of caution: Some members of your unit board may be happy with the status quo of the unit membership. They may not be interested in new ideas that could result in even modest expenditures for the unit. Although many of the programs and activities don't cost very much to implement, they may be perceived as expensive.
7. Present your plan to your unit board for approval.

Meeting with the Unit Board

Once you and the Education Committee have outlined a plan of action, you need to prepare a budget before meeting with the unit board.

If you anticipate that your unit board may have a problem with expanding the unit's education program, it's wise to be prepared. You want to show just how cost effective the proposed education programs are. This will help your position with the board and will offer them a direction that will lead to unit growth. (Most units will be more interested in your programs if you can show that the unit membership is dwindling over a period of three years — and that is the case in most units.)

Your unit may already have a defined job for the UEL. If not, it will be necessary, based on what the unit wants to accomplish, for the unit board to decide whether or not its UEL position is a volunteer or paid position. This is a commitment that can easily become a full-time job.

A unit may elect to have this position staffed by a UEL who receives a salary, an honorarium or a bonus. (A bonus could be based on the number of members the unit gains through the education activities.) What a unit can and will pay is a product of the unit budget, available funds, interest and need.

If the UEL is to remain a volunteer position, the programs undertaken will be a product of the number of unit members available to help establish them and the amount of time available for these projects.

Working with Volunteers

The three R's of Volunteering are: Recruitment, Retention and Recognition.

If you need to recruit members for your Education Committee, here are some tips in motivating people to say "yes."

- Be motivated yourself. Sincerity wins out over technique every time.
- Be clear on what you want people to do. Make job descriptions whenever possible.
- Use titles. The word "volunteer" is a pay category, not a function. It is much more appealing to be asked to become an "Education Committee Member" or something else definable, than to simply be asked to become a "volunteer."
- The more specific you can be, the better. If you ask the general question, "Who wants to volunteer?" What are you telling people about the job you need to fill? On the other hand, if you ask, "Who would like to work on the bridge in schools program?" You give people a chance to consider if they might be interested in a specific task they might be ideal for.
- Be honest. Tell prospective volunteers what the work entails including time lines and deadlines. This should be an honest but upbeat picture of the work. Volunteering should be fun!
- Identify and express the benefits to the volunteer of accomplishing the task. Every job has its payoffs and it is OK to discuss these. The best volunteering occurs when the giver benefits as well as the recipient.

- Explain why you decided to ask this particular person to help — what skills or personality traits make him or her a good candidate for the position. Keep in mind that you can never insult people by asking them to volunteer. In fact, you are usually flattering them because you imply that they have the talent to do the job.

Look to teachers, club owners and newer players as sources for your volunteers!

Just ask — they will say yes!

The best way to recruit volunteers is to ask people to help. If you never have the conversation, how can someone say yes? And if you are turned down, keep in mind that you have still helped others by reaching out to people, explaining projects underway and making others feel important for having been asked.

Remember, volunteers feel thanked when:

- Someone actually says “thank you.”
- They are told how something they did had a positive impact on the organization.
- They are invited to join in on a formal recognition event in front of their peers.
- They get a personalized note from the unit president thanking them for their contribution.

ACBL Assistance

The position of the UEL is a challenging one to say the least. To assist you in your role, the ACBL provides the following training, assistance and suggestions.

EDUCATION LIAISON WORKSHOP

Occasional workshops are provided at the NABCs. Even when there is no official NABC workshop, members of the ACBL's Education Department are available on site at the tournament to work with unit officials and UELs.

UNIT GROWTH SEMINAR (UGS)

The UGS is a six-hour seminar designed to help your unit clearly define its goals and objectives in regard to newer players while providing in-depth information on ACBL programs, activities and ideas specifically designed to promote growth. Attendees need to include the unit board members, teachers, club managers, IN coordinator, UEL and all enthusiastic volunteers in the unit. (See page 21.)

THE TAP

If you are not TAP accredited, consider taking this course. Even if you have no intentions of teaching, this program will provide information essential in working with teachers and ACBL's education programs. Each month there is a schedule of upcoming TAPs in the Bridge Bulletin and online at www.acbl.org/teachers/accredited.html.

EASYBRIDGE!

Take the Presenter's course to find out more about what the Easybridge! movement is all about. The marketing aspect of this program is pure gold and you will want to be able to talk with your club managers about the benefits of trying an Easybridge! game. Go to www.easybridge.com for more information.

BECOME A CLUB DIRECTOR

Familiarize yourself with the home-study packet and procedures for becoming a club director (directorcourses@acbl.org). When visiting an NABC, take the club director course offered there. There are update seminars for club directors that your unit can offer in conjunction with sectional and regional tournaments that you should consider bringing to your area. Contact the ACBL Tournament Department at tournaments@acbl.org.

COOPERATIVE ADVERTISING PROGRAM

The ACBL Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP) reimburses ACBL teachers, clubs, units and districts for advertising expenses for programs and lessons designed for newcomers and/or to recruit ACBL members. The CAP will refund to you 75 percent of advertising costs up to \$1000 per program specifically for beginner bridge lessons, newcomer programs and ACBL recruitment. That's a \$750 reimbursement for \$1000 or more in advertising costs. We even supply you with ACBL logos and sample ad templates for a professional look. For details go to www.acbl.org/marketing/coopAdvertising.html.

FUNDING THROUGH THE ACBL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

This group offers funding to ACBL members for special projects that promote bridge. Applications may be submitted three times a year, prior to each foundation meeting at the NABCs. For more information, contact the Foundation's secretary, Eugene Kales, at kales@pa.msu.edu.

ACBL Contacts

The Education Department is your main contact with the ACBL. Its personnel are available to offer assistance and direction at any time. The following is a list of extensions for ACBL staff members who can be reached directly through 662-253-3100.

Education Department Extensions

Director of Marketing & Education	3172
TAP Coordinator	3161
Junior Bridge Programs	3161
School Programs	3161

Other ACBL Departments / Programs

Cooperative Advertising Program	3112
Bridge Plus+ Games	3139

Judging Success

The following are some ways to help you judge if you are on the right track with the implementation of suggested programs and to see if your position has made a difference in your unit:

- Have bridge activity and interest in the area increased?
- Has the unit held a TAP within the past year?
- Has there been an increase in the number of bridge teachers offering classes?
- Are bridge lessons offered in the schools in your unit?
- Are there student and newcomer games at the local level?
- Are IN (intermediate-newcomer) sectionals sponsored by the unit?
- Is there a full IN program at all of the sectionals and regionals in your area?
- Has the New Player Services program been introduced?
- Has the unit started a book program for teachers?
- Does the unit offer promotional games and activities to encourage new players and students to participate at the local level?
- Has the unit established a mentoring program?
- Has the unit membership increased since the UEL was appointed?

Please remember, change does not happen overnight and all of the suggested programs can't be established in a short time frame.

To be successful in your position as the Unit Education Liaison, all that is required is your commitment to work for change and your ability to take the first step toward unit growth.

Good luck in your position! Remember, the ACBL is always available to assist you. Give us a call!

APPENDIX

ACBL UNIT GROWTH SEMINAR

ACBL has developed an exciting six-hour Unit Growth Seminar designed to develop ...

1. Team Work between your unit and the local clubs;
2. An understanding of membership growth;
3. Organization of your unit volunteers; and
4. Goals and programs specifically for your unit.

The net result is an increase in your Unit membership and increased interest in local games!

The unit must provide a place to hold the program and must recruit at least 10 participants to make the program costs and effort worthwhile. Your unit board and officers, club managers, teachers, and any enthusiastic volunteers should be invited. This seminar is a great opportunity to get your unit's newer players involved!

Advantages of Hosting a Unit Growth Seminar In Your Unit

TEAM BUILDING Helps to organize the volunteer efforts of the local program. The volunteers become a cohesive team working toward clearly defined objectives.

ACBL PROGRAMS & SUBSIDIES Provides a full understanding of all ACBL programs with a special emphasis on the 10-point IN program.

COOPERATIVE ADVERTISING PROGRAM Develops an understanding of the benefits of publicity, advertising and promotion.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT Instills an enthusiasm and "can do" attitude into the volunteers. Creates enthusiasm that is contagious — the key to success.

SUCCESS Instills the importance of celebrating your successes. Introduces methods of recognition and appreciation of your volunteers!

TECHNICAL SUPPORT Provides follow-up points so that the successful start of the program becomes a continuing effort among the volunteers.

For more information, please contact: Education@acbl.org

Join Your Local Convention and Visitors Bureau

Joining your local Convention and Visitors Bureau can be very beneficial for your bridge unit. The cost is minimal for not-for-profit organizations. Unit 174 (Houston) reaped many member benefits from the Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau including:

- A listing for local bridge activities in their quarterly magazine, *The Official Guide to Houston*,
- 5000 brochures inserted in a relocation package distributed by the Houston Association of Realtors,
- The services of a professional meeting planner at no charge to help with obtaining space at hotels without having to guarantee a minimum number of rooms.

Check out this opportunity in your area to see if this is something that would benefit your unit.

School Bridge Lesson Series Program

Getting Bridge into the Schools

As the unit's education liaison, you should try to establish bridge programs in the various school systems in your area. Through the ACBL School Bridge Lesson Series (SBLs) Program, your unit can make a valuable long-term investment in the future.

The SBLs is funded jointly by the ACBL and the ACBL Educational Foundation. The SBLs has become the most effective program ACBL has developed for recruiting and training new young bridge players and potential Junior members. Approximately 4,500 students are learning bridge at school each year with more programs being added all the time.

Introduce bridge to schools as an activity that will set the minds of the students in motion. The concept of a "mental sport" is a favorite with school officials when they understand that bridge will help in the development of math, logic and deductive skills. Present bridge as an activity that also helps students with their social skills. A player can't be successful without establishing a good relationship with a partner. ACBL's school promo packet provides this information. Get a copy by e-mailing education@acbl.org. You can also visit the ACBL web site at www.acbl.org/teachers/schoolBridge.html for more information.

Junior Scholarship Opportunity

A new scholarship program is now available for ACBL Youth and Junior players. This scholarship opportunity, which owes its funding to generous donations, is available to college and high school bridge players under the age of 20 who are willing to teach bridge to their classmates. ACBL encourages liaisons to make the Juniors in their units aware of this outstanding scholarship opportunity.

Note: Any Juniors you recruit to teach are eligible to take the TAP (offered three times a year by ACBL at the NABCs) free of charge.

For more information, see www.acbl.org/teachers/schoolBridge.html.

ACBL and Television

The ACBL has produced several beginning bridge television programs with Audrey Grant. “The Bridge Class,” 13 half-hour shows which use the material found in the *Bidding (The Club Series)* text, is available for your local public television or independent cable stations to air free of charge. All you or your local station pay are the shipping costs. ACBL’s television program may be used to promote bridge locally when tagged with a “for more information” telephone number. This TV show can be a vehicle to attract new people to lessons, games and ACBL membership.

“The Bridge Class” is an excellent marketing tool because it focuses on all of the positive aspects of the game. Audrey Grant is the host and eight students are shown having a good time learning and playing bridge. ACBL owns the broadcast rights to “The Bridge Class” and has both ¾" and Super VHS masters for each of the 13 shows. For more information, e-mail the ACBL Education Department at education@acbl

New Player Services Program

New players often venture into club games or their first tournament filled with fear and trepidation. Fear of embarrassment or failure may cloud the excitement of an advancing player. When the unit has established a New Player Services program, the NPS committee members can help advancing players put these fears aside. This results in a positive experience for the players — one that they will want to repeat again and again — even if they come in last.

New Player Services is a public relations program designed to welcome new players and potential new members into the ACBL family at all levels of play by helping to create a fun, friendly and comfortable atmosphere within the duplicate environment. The program will:

- Encourage more new players to play in ACBL games,
- Encourage new players to continue to play,
- Develop new members.

Go to www.acbl.org/units/units.html for a full implementation handbook.

Easybridge!

Easybridge! is a program designed by Edith McMullin, a professional educator and bridge author. It shows people how to play bridge by actually playing the game. Specifically, the Easybridge! program uses a duplicate bridge format with ten-minute “mini-lessons” at the start of each session as a powerful incentive to learn to play and to continue to play. Easybridge! promotes the enjoyment of the camaraderie of the duplicate bridge experience — long before bidding, play, leading and defense are even minimally understood — as an incentive to wanting to study the game more formally and play it with more dedication.

Some funding is available for this program through the ACBL Cooperative Advertising Program. See www.acbl.org/marketing/coopAdvertising.html.

For more information on the Easybridge! program, go to www.Easybridge.com or contact the program director, Marti Ronemus, at mronemus@comcast.net.

On the Internet

Have you visited the ACBL web site on the Internet? If not, you may be surprised at what you will find at www.acbl.org.