

The purpose of this article is to share information about the bridge program at [John J. Duggan Middle School in Springfield, MA](#), including information about Duggan students' participation in a recent mini-bridge tournament.

Before I cite links to some great reports on Duggan students' participation in the mini-bridge tournament and events thereafter, please allow me to set the context for the formation and operation of Duggan's bridge club.

Some information from Wikipedia about Springfield: Springfield is a city of more than 150,000 residents. Like many cities of the industrial northeast, Springfield underwent a protracted decline during the second half of the 20th century, a decline from which the city is recovering. Income levels in Springfield, a city with a highly diverse population base, are about half the Massachusetts average.

Duggan is an "Expeditionary Learning" magnet school. In part because students' performance on standardized tests was considerably below the state average, certain specific school-wide priorities were selected for focus by school administrators in developing the [Duggan School Operation Plan](#). One of the priorities selected is to improve the school culture. Among the strategies to support that priority is developing a robust enrichment program that is available to all students.

Because of efforts by Springfield area bridge players, including Bob and Shirley Derrah (and Mike Wavada, who is from Connecticut), and the support of Duggan administrators – including the Derrahs' grandson, vice-principal Matt Sullivan –, one of the enrichment program offerings is ... a bridge club. Many Springfield area duplicate bridge players meet once weekly with separate sixth and seventh grade student groups at Duggan, during the school day, and teach them to play bridge ... and to learn about problem solving, planning, executing a plan while adhering to ethical rules of conduct, and partnership cooperation and trust.

Eleven of the Duggan Middle School students and six other new-to-bridge students from two other District 25 school bridge programs recently participated in a mini-bridge (that is, bridge without bidding) tournament. The tournament was hosted by [The Bridge Spot](#) of Woburn, MA and its owner Dean Panagopoulos.

Now ... to the links I promised, and which, I can ensure you, will make you proud to be a bridge player:

[Mike Wavada's write-up and photos from the mini-bridge tournament and the Duggan students' day.](#)
(Mike is also webmaster of D25.)

[Local TV station's piece about bridge club and students at Duggan](#)

As president of New England Youth Bridge, Inc., the sponsor of the mini-bridge tournament and a tax exempt charity with a mission of teaching bridge to youth, I was privileged to meet the Duggan participants. What a great bunch of kids! Now that many of them are learning bidding, we look forward to having them join us in District 25 youth tournaments next school year.

-- Jeff Lehman, President
New England Youth Bridge, Inc.