When talking in class is a good thing

Cribbage brings people together

By MARY NUGENT
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CHICO — Wednesday morning in Kelli Ruley’s sixth grade class at Nord Country School, there was a lot of talking going on. It was a friendly, noisy din.

That’s because there was a project going on that encouraged conversation. Susan Levine hosted her third annual “Partners and Pegs” for Ruley’s class. It’s one of the many ways she shares the game of Cribbage, which was invented in the early 1600s in England.

Wednesday she brought two generations together to play Cribbage in Ruley’s class. It was Levine’s third annual “Partners and Pegs.”

“In this particular situation, the teacher wanted emphasis on social skills. It was more about that than game skills, and I brought in adults to play against the kids,” said Levine.

“Cribbage connects generations. When people sit down together with something to manipulate, they connect. The situation allows them to talk to each other.”

A GREAT TOOL

Ruley said Cribbage offers so much for children. “For math skills, etiquette, respect — cribbage is a great tool,” she said.

Levine, a retired library clerk who worked at Nord and Citrus schools, believes the use of strategy required of cribbage players is valuable. And the game itself is fun.

“There is an emphasis on social skills and this is an extension of that. Children who play learn to interact with people, instead of just not talking.”

Having shared her love for the game with hundreds of children and adults during the past several years, Levine has more recently brought the game to Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, where she teaches the game to her peers as part of Chico State University’s learning-in-retirement program (see sidebar.)

COMBINING THE AGES

Mike Musgrove, semi-retired, was one of her students at OLLI and helped out with “Partners and Pegs” on Wednesday.

“This is the second time I’ve helped out with this. I like the idea of combining all ages,” he said.

Tessa Bell, one of the sixth graders, was playing opposite Musgrove. “It’s really a fun game. It’s educational and it helps with math. I like being able to correct my mistakes and it’s fun to play with older people, too.”

One participant was not a sixth grader or a senior. Josh LaMota, 18, learned to play Cribbage years ago with Levine. He has been volunteering to help her teach children since he was 15 and has won championships in the north state. “I’ve always liked this game,” he said.

Levine said sharing her love of Cribbage is not a solitary effort. Besides her acquaintances at OLLI, she has help from former teachers at Nord and Citrus schools. Her husband, Bernie Levine, also plays.

“Cribbage involves a lot of talking,” said Levine. “And that’s a good thing.”