

EDUCATION

Mainstreaming vs. tracking Examining the pros and cons of two educational systems

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me.

Children are taught this mantra in an effort to deal with name calling, labeling, and teasing. Names and labels are just words that don't necessarily mean anything. However, they are attached to emotions that can often cause harm and pain.

Students are teased by their peers on a variety of topics: levels of intelligence, confidence, and ability to fit in with social groups. Each student handles being teased differently. Some are able to ignore mean comments while others genuinely believe them.

Two methods schools use to determine class placement for students are mainstreaming and tracking. Each has its own set of benefits, disadvantages and labels.

Mainstreaming is when all students, regardless of intellect and ability, are placed within the same classroom.

Highly motivated students and unmotivated students share the same learning environment with one teacher whose job is to educate the varying levels of abilities at the same time.

Mainstreaming provides many benefits. When students of all abilities are learning together, they learn from each other. Motivated students serve as role models for those who lack a desire to learn. Students of different abilities are enriched by those with more advanced skills.

When students who are less motivated than others are held to higher standards, they are required to rise to the occasion by putting forth more effort to complete tasks.

In such situations, these students perform better and exceed their own expectations,



By Vicki Isacowitz

ON THE CHALKBOARD

while other students with advanced abilities continue to be challenged and are not overlooked.

A major disadvantage of mainstreaming is when teaching is aimed toward the lower level of achievement. When this happens, students experience boredom, class performances diminish, and desire to learn faces extinction.

The greatest challenge of mainstreaming is meeting the needs of every student in the class. Highly motivated students are disregarded while uninspired students stay indifferent to learning and undergo feelings of inferiority.

Although there is no official labeling within mainstreaming, students create names for themselves and their peers when differences of abilities are apparent, stifling promotion of learning.

Tracking places students within three paths: above, at, and below grade level. Courses are usually called honors, regular and general, respectively. Students carry these labels with them throughout their secondary education, believing they are only capable within their labeled ability.

On the flip side, tracking allows students of similar learning levels to move at a faster or slower pace.

Learning becomes easier when students are given a greater ability to focus. There

is less opportunity for students of different skill levels to be left behind, neglected or bored. There are still varying degrees of levels and abilities within tracked classes, but they are less severe than those found in mainstreamed classes.

When students consistently stay in the same track, whether it is above, average or below, their levels of confidence and self-worth are affected in both positive and negative manners.

Mainstreaming often results in students slipping through the cracks, being disregarded while they are shuffled through the system. Simultaneously, students are challenged and given a chance to work with other students, regardless of their abilities.

Decisions are currently being evaluated regarding whether or not certain schools in Tahoe Truckee Unified School District will track their classes.

Arguments against tracking include the removal of foreign language and elective choices. Favoring tracking recognizes the ability to continue educating those students who are at and above grade level while focusing on getting those students below grade level up to par.

— Vicki Isacowitz is a Secondary English teacher who has been educating students since 1996. She is co-founder of Clever Minds Educational Services, providing tutoring for students in grades K-12. For more information, or to comment on her column, please call (530) 584-1791 or e-mail: vicki@cleverminds.org.

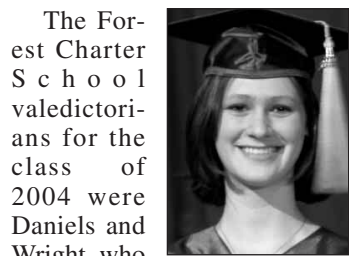
Forest Charter graduates 18

STAFF REPORTS

Forest Charter School held its third graduation ceremony at the Grass Valley Veteran's Hall on Saturday, May 29.

The 18 graduates from the Tahoe and Truckee areas include Michelle Blas, Kathleen Brunell, Stevie Buschmann, Christopher Colpitts, Kathryn Daniels, Keely Durham, Timothy Eddy, Heather Franklin, Leah Gray, Angela Johnson, Nicholas Ray, Ben Rice, Kasandra Sigafosse, Erin Spohr, Joshua Toft, Daniel Vaughn, Sean Wichert and Rachael Wright.

Brunell plans to attend junior college in either New York or Southern California; Daniels will be attending Sara Lawrence College, New York; Ray will be attending Cal Poly San Luis Obispo; Sigafosse will be attending University of Nevada, Reno; Toft deferred attending Harvey Mudd College for one year to establish his computer business locally; and Wright will be attending University of California, Santa Barbara.



Kathryn Daniels

The Forest Charter School valedictorians for the class of 2004 were Daniels and Wright, who co-authored the class graduation speech. The speech was presented by Wright and Toft during the ceremony. Forest's graduation ceremony keynote address was provided by retired superintendent of the Twin Ridges School District, David Taylor.

Forest Charter School is a personalized learning program, which allows students to tailor their schooling to their individual academic needs, providing a better fit for them than the traditional full-time classroom model.

The class of 2004 featured high school graduates from Truckee, Grass Valley, Nevada City, Auburn and Tahoe City. Graduates were honored not only for their achievements in



Rachel Wright

earning their high school diplomas, but also for their future chosen paths. Forest Charter School graduates plan to attend four-year colleges, local campuses of Sierra College, and others will be pursuing careers in dance, music, medical technology, cosmetology, gunsmithing and construction. Three graduates have excelled as athletes, and are representing the U.S. internationally in skiing, snowboarding and inline skating.

Forest Charter School is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and is sponsored by the Twin Ridges Elementary School District.

The school serves more than 300 kindergarten through 12th-grade students who reside in Nevada, Placer, Sierra and Yuba counties.

BRIEFLY

Summer drama camp

Lights! Camera! Action! Arts For the Schools is pleased to announce our second annual Summer Drama Camp for students ages 8-16 years old on Aug. 2 - 6, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Kings Beach Elementary School/Boys & Girls Club facility. This summer camp will feature two professional actor/directors offering training in theatre arts, camera technique, commercial audition technique clinic, cold-reading clinic and beach fun. Every camper will receive a personalized souvenir DVD or tape of the week's performances, including their own "commercial audition and screen test," complete with professional lighting and camera. A bathing suit and towel will be needed for some afternoon fun at the beach. Instructor Janet Lazarus has more than 20 years experience as an actor, acting coach, show producer and college-level theatre teacher. Founder of Tahoe Acting Workshop, Brad Thompson is a credentialed teacher in California and Min-

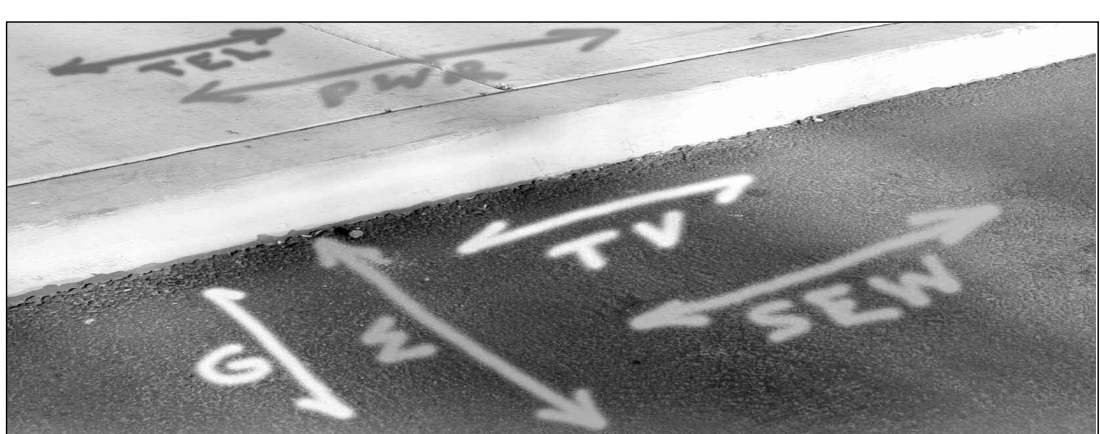
nesota with more than 20 years in acting, writing, directing and designing. Tuition for the entire week, including a souvenir audition tape, is \$195.

Space is limited — send in your registration tuition now to Arts For the Schools, P.O. Box 230, Tahoe Vista, CA 96148. For more info, please call (530) 546-4602.

Parents' Night Out

Parents' Night Out will be held on Friday, July 16, from 6-10 p.m. at the First Baptist Church of Tahoe City. Children from newborn to 12 years of age are welcome. A donation of \$5 per child is requested. Activities include: Bible story, crafts, music, and a movie. Please feed your children dinner before bringing them. This is a drop-in program and no pre-registration is necessary. The church is located at 390 Fairway Dr. in Tahoe City. For more information please call the church at (530) 583-1534.

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I, Robot PG13
Starring: Will Smith
Fri: 6:45 & 9:30 • Sat & Sun: 4:00, 6:45 & 9:30
• Mon-Thurs: 6:45 & 9:30

COBBLESTONE CINEMA
475 N. Lake Blvd., Tahoe City, CA
Presented in DOLBY DIGITAL

Spider-Man 2 PG13
Starring: Tobey Maguire & Kristen Dunst
Fri & Sat: 6:30 & 9:30 • Sun: 3:30 & 7:15
Mon-Thurs: 7:15

BROCKWAY TWIN THEATRE
8707 N. Lake Blvd., Kings Beach, CA
Presented in ULTRA STEREO

Fahrenheit 9/11 R
Starring: Michael Moore
Fri-Thurs: 6:45 & 9:30

King Arthur PG13
Starring: Clive Owen & Keira Knightley
Fri-Thurs: 7:00 & 9:35

MARTIS VILLAGE THEATRE
Hwy 267/Palispades Dr., Truckee, CA
Presented in DTS DIGITAL

Anchorman PG13
Starring: Will Farrell
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• Sun: 4:30, 7:00, & 9:30
• Mon-Thurs: 7:00 & 9:30

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We have many week-day children programs which include Big A Club, A+, My Morning Out, Parents Night Out, and Youth activities which take place all year round. Our children's programs and worship services are open to all who wish to find peace with

God and themselves. If you need more information please call us at (530) 583-1534 or (530) 583-6266. First Baptist Church is located in Tahoe City at 390 Fairway Drive.

"Visitors are welcome and strangers expected!"
PASTOR DAN HOLZER