



FOREST
CHARTER SCHOOL
Nurturing the Love of Learning



Reach New Heights

with Forest Charter School

Why Personalized Learning Works



Jeff Rice,
Founder/Director,
APLUS+ The
Association of
Personalized
Learning Schools &
Services

“Personalized Learning is the leading education delivery model to help guide students to be productive, successful citizens in order to meet the rigorous, diverse and rapidly changing needs and demands of the 21st century. Personalized Learning truly puts every student first by honoring and exploring each student’s unique and special gifts, talents, and aspirations; by addressing and accommodating each student’s individual needs and challenges; and by offering each student a personalized learning plan that supports choice and flexibility in how, what, when, and where each student learns.

Personalized Learning values and nurtures the core, mentor-based relationships between each student and his/her circle of primary adult teachers, bringing together in an ongoing collaborative partnership each student’s parents or guardians, assigned teacher, subject-based teachers and counselors to assist in guiding each student toward an engaging, successful and rewarding educational experience.”

Imagine a school where students are free to pursue what matters to them. Where parents don’t have to ask, “What did you do in school today?” — because they already know. Where teachers give one-on-one attention to their students.

What would that school look like?

It might look a lot like Forest Charter School.

Forest Charter School is an accredited public charter school that specializes in personalized learning, where the student, parents and teacher work as a team to customize an educational plan for each student.

Since starting in the 2002-2003 school year, Forest Charter School has grown to accommodate the diverse needs of its students in grades K-12. Today, the school’s 33 teachers serve 700 students in Nevada, Placer, Yuba and Sierra counties. There are three sites: the main campus in Nevada City, Foresthill and Truckee.

While there are three physical locations, Forest Charter realizes that school can be anywhere — a family’s living room, a community college, a local dance studio or a backyard garden. School also can take place anytime — after a ski practice or a few hours one day in a classroom and a few hours more that night.

That’s part of why personalized learning works for so many students. They could be artists or athletes with rigorous practice schedules. A high-achiever who wants to learn at a faster pace. Or students who flourish with more personalized attention.

“But one of the main reasons parents come is for support,” says Peter Sagebiel, executive director at Forest Charter School. “They come for the flexibility to be able to pursue the education that they want for their kids.”

Enrolling in Forest Charter School starts with an interview, where families are informed of expectations and options. Going to school at Forest Charter takes a different kind of commitment. Parents are expected to be part of the educational team and the most successful students learn to be self-motivated, Sagebiel says. Those expectations create a level of maturity in the students as they take responsibility for their education and prepare for life in college and beyond.

“We have 700 students in our school and we have 700 distinct educational programs. No two are exactly alike.”

Peter Sagebiel,
executive director, Forest Charter School

“It’s much more like a college schedule in that you are given work and expected to do some on your own,” he says. “But we are much more hands-on than a college. We have a lot of checks

along the way to make sure the kids aren’t slipping through the cracks.”

The person in charge of making sure students are meeting their benchmarks is the supervising teacher. The supervising teacher develops a curriculum that meets state standards while remaining true to the student’s unique interests, learning style and learning pace.

“We have 700 students in our school and we have 700 distinct educational programs,” Sagebiel says. “No two are exactly alike.”

Families have a buffet of options for education, from co-op academies and independent study to home schooling and learning center classes. The “blended model,” as Sagebiel describes it, means students can spend 2-3 days a week in a co-op classroom while being engaged in home schooling and independent learning at home. Students also can take enrichment classes in anything from drama to advanced math to art.

With so many personalized options, a program like Forest Charter’s hinges on teamwork.

“I think we’ve been successful because we create good relationships,” Sagebiel says.

During his eight years at Forest Charter, Sagebiel says he’s enjoyed seeing this model work for so many kinds of students.

“After graduation, our students do everything from continuing on in the family business to going to an Ivy League college,” he says. “As the director I take immense satisfaction in seeing our students pursue their passions and goals.”



Student Baily Burns learns about acorns during a science lesson in her co-op classroom at Forest Charter School.

Photo by Kim Palaferri

Education That Nurtures a Love of Learning

by Michelle Carl

Forest Charter makes school as unique as each of its students

A Chance for Greatness

by Mike Blount

Students pursue their Olympic dreams while keeping up with schoolwork

There was never any doubt for Lila Lapanja when it came to skiing. She's a third-year member of the U.S. Ski Team and she hopes to compete in the Winter Olympics in 2014 as an Alpine ski racer. Lila realized her passion for the sport early on. But taking those aspirations to the next level was a challenge until she enrolled in Forest Charter School.

Lila needed to travel to Colorado and Oregon for several weeks at a time to train. Eventually, the demands of high school and training began to take their toll on her. Both Lila's parents and she agreed they needed to find a school that would allow a flexible schedule, but still offer a good education.

"I was actually considering going to a ski academy on the East Coast," Lila says. "But it was a giant step, and I wasn't sure if I wanted to take it and be so far away from my family. A lot of my competitors and teammates went to charter schools, so we decided to look into it."

Lila says Forest Charter School offered her the best option because of its independent study program. It allowed her to complete her schoolwork on the road and turn it in when she returned. The teachers also worked one-on-one with Lila and her mother to make sure she was staying organized and focused.

With the school's flexibility and her hard work, Lila was able to graduate in 2013 at age 18, so she could concentrate on skiing full time.

"[Forest] understood how important skiing was to me and I loved having them there to help me. ... Looking back, I don't see myself anywhere else if I had to do it again."

Lila Lapanja,
Forest Charter School student

"[Forest] understood how important skiing was to me and I loved having them there to help me," Lila says. "They were as supportive of my racing as my parents were. Looking back, I don't see myself anywhere else if I had to do it again."

Bryce Bennett feels the same way about Forest Charter School. Beginning in the fourth grade, he started training to become a competitive skier.

"My dad would pull me out of school early and take me to the mountain to train, but once I hit high school, I was gone for months traveling to [places like] Canada and Colorado to compete in different races," Bryce says. "It became nearly impossible for me to keep up [in school]."

Bryce and his parents tried several different schools to accommodate Bryce's needs. But only Forest offered him the kind of environment he needed to flourish, allowing him the flexibility to travel while also working with him one-on-one on his schoolwork.

Bryce graduated in 2010 and is now focused on his goals as a U.S. Ski Team member. Today, the Olympic hopeful competes in several skiing events, including slalom, downhill ski racing and super giant slalom. But he looks back fondly at his time at Forest Charter School, which he says taught him a lot about being an adult.

"Forest really cares about you and there are so many good people there that want to help you learn and guide you through your schoolwork," Bryce says. "Forest taught me about time management and how to focus instead of being told what to do all the time. It taught me a lot about the real world and those are skills I use every day."

Pursue Your Passion

Students at Forest Charter School are free to follow their passions. Whether they dream of becoming a world-class athlete, artist or musician, students are encouraged to do what they love through Forest's unique school environment.

- Students can choose from a menu of options, allowing them to learn at their own pace.
- Credentialed teachers encourage students to challenge themselves and learn through their interests. Independent study gives students more time to pursue their passions, while also teaching time-management skills.
- Teachers work one-on-one with each student and his or her parents to ensure educational goals are being met.



Lila Lapanja was able to pursue her dream of competing in the Winter Olympics while attending Forest Charter School.

Photos courtesy of
Jen Schmidt Photography



Zed Friedman II and his father, Barry Friedman, enjoy the learning opportunities offered through the co-op program at Forest Charter School — a hybrid of site-based classroom learning and home schooling.

Photo by Kim Palaferri



The Wonder Years

by Mike Blount

Co-op program offers learning that caters to students

Sixth-grader Zed Friedman II is interested in how things work. One minute he's carefully putting together the pieces to make a functional gumball machine out of Lego blocks, and the next he's figuring out how to balance himself on a unicycle. So when his parents, Ann Keeling and Barry Friedman, were looking to find a school where Zed would thrive, a cooperative program at Forest Charter School stood out.

Zed's co-op program offers a unique, personalized learning experience based on the PACE (peace, art, creativity, environment) philosophy — the idea that curiosity, the impulse to inquire, should be the driving force of education. And because the program is a hybrid of on-site classroom learning and home schooling, it also gives Zed's parents an opportunity to take an active part in his education.

"What we've seen is they look at the kid and figure out what they're interested in and how they learn, and they make it work," Barry says. "They are just very open to what will make the learning experience richer for Zed. It's a good fit for us."

Cooperative programs are available at all Forest Charter School learning centers. Students in the co-op program attend class three days a week, with optional enrichment classes available. At some locations these classes are available on a fourth day. Teachers work with the parents one-on-one to ensure

A Teacher's Perspective

Mark Keim has taught at Forest Charter School since 2006 and started the Tree Top co-op at the Truckee Learning Center in 2010. The program promotes individualized learning styles through community engagement, including field trips and guest speakers. Keim says one of his favorite things about the co-op programs is how he can bring lessons alive for his students.

"We average about a field trip a month to get these students to apply what they're learning," Keim says. "It is important that the students see the things they are learning have a real-world application. It makes them compassionate about the education they are receiving."

Keim adds the model is successful because of the individual interaction he

can have with each student. He is able to provide constant feedback while working with the students and their parents.

"I like that the classes are very small and that there's great parent involvement," Keim says. "It's like a pie graph that I envision as a peace sign, where it is drawn up into thirds with each of us being a third — one is the teacher, one is the student and the other is the parents. You really can't have 100 percent without all three."



the student is achieving his or her educational goals for the home-schooling component.

Zed says he enjoys learning this way because he gets to explore several different things that he's interested in during a school year.

"There's this sign that we had in the class that said, 'You hear, you forget. You see, you understand. You do, you remember,'" Zed says. "I like that because at our school, [we have so many

options]. In the morning I have circus games ... and then I go to guitar class, then art and then computer science. There's a whole variety of classes you can take and I think that's pretty cool."

Because Zed's teachers noticed that he learns better in a group setting, many of Zed's classes involve projects, which he is responsible for researching, planning and executing. For example, in history class Zed and

his classmates designed a time capsule and decided what items to put into it. Zed's parents say it is another example of how the teachers at Forest Charter School work to help every student succeed.

"[Zed] works very hard ... We see it lighting him up and having him love learning from the inside out," Ann says. "It's just well-rounded learning for his whole brain."

"[Zed] works very hard ... We see it lighting him up and having him love learning from the inside out."

Ann Keeling,
Zed's mother

Sierra Spaulding practices her part during choir class. She says she has formed many meaningful relationships at Forest Charter School.

Photos by Kim Palaferri

Finding a Perfect Fit

by Mike Blount

Student builds meaningful relationships at new school

Sierra Spaulding says she sometimes felt lost at her previous school. She decided she wanted a smaller school environment that would allow for more one-on-one time with her teachers and her peers. So when she began thinking about transferring to a different school, Forest Charter School — with its small class sizes — was No. 1 on her list.

“I first heard about Forest Charter School after a representative came to our middle school to talk to us about it, and I immediately liked the idea of the school,” says Sierra, now a high school senior. “About halfway through my sophomore year, I started looking at it closer and went in to meet with the vice principal. Once I had my meeting, I knew I wanted to go there. I really liked the dynamics and the people that worked there.”

After she transferred, Sierra says she instantly felt the sense of community. Since students are only in class a few days each week, both the students and faculty spend more time with each other, both inside and outside of class. As a result, she is able to go to her teacher when she needs to talk about school or just something going on in her life. Sierra says she’s built meaningful relationships at Forest Charter School.

“The last two years have been hard for me,” Sierra says. “[At Forest Charter School] I can call my teacher and go and have coffee with her to talk about things. It’s nice to have someone like that.”

She also credits Forest Charter School with helping her grow as a person. Because she spends a lot of time at home on her own, she’s learned valuable skills, such as time management.

“With the way the school is set up to also include independent study, I have to be an adult about things,” Sierra says. “I’m responsible for making sure that things get done. There isn’t someone over my shoulder telling me what to do, and it’s prepared me for a college lifestyle where you have to build your own schedule.”

Sierra is looking forward to graduating, and she’s already on track to go to college. But for now, she says she’s

going to concentrate on enjoying her final year at Forest Charter School.

“I love it here,” Sierra says. “It’s definitely not for everyone. But if you want a school where you can explore the things you like and find yourself, Forest Charter School gives you the ability to do the things you love.”

“With the way the school is set up to also include independent study ... I’m responsible for making sure that things get done.”

Sierra Spaulding,
Forest Charter School student

A Nurturing Environment

Forest Charter School offers an environment that promotes individualized learning, where the student is recognized, respected and supported through:

- Small class sizes
- A human connection with a caring, credentialed supervising teacher
- Personalized instruction catered to each student
- A variety of site-based and home-school offerings
- Performing and visual arts
- Online classes
- Tutoring
- A campus with an emphasis on communication and safety
- Opportunities for learning in individual and group settings



Choosing a Charter

by Michelle Carl

Mom finds enriching environment for her children

Science fairs? Field trips to Costa Rica? Gluten-free cooking? Forest Charter School has exposed Pam Barram's children to all of these things, things she says she wouldn't have been able to provide if she was home-schooling on her own.

"[Forest Charter School] has definitely helped make our experience be much more well-rounded and fulfilling," she says.

Pam decided to be more active in her child's education when her eldest son was in first grade. She wanted a school that matched his needs and enrolled him in a private school, which became too expensive. That's when Pam started home-schooling Josh and later his siblings. After the family relocated to Browns Valley, Pam eventually discovered Forest Charter School and enrolled all three of her children — Josh, who was then in 10th grade; Zachary, a sixth-grader; and Cassidy, who was in third grade.

"I felt it gave me more security to feel that I was going to be in compliance [with state educational requirements] — that I would have available support," she says. "I also wanted to find a group of like-minded people."

A supervising teacher from Forest Charter helped make sure Pam's children were meeting expectations and found curricula that matched their interests. Through the school, Josh was able to go to an environmental

conference, travel to Costa Rica, attend a youth leadership conference in Washington, D.C., and, as a result, was invited to attend President Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009.

"It was amazing how Forest expanded his horizons," Pam says. "I just really feel like it helped him discover his leadership skills. He's really smart, but if we didn't have those experiences, then he might not have been able to put [those skills] to use."

"I have felt I had permission to make choices that best served my kids' education, and that sets them up for a lifetime of learning enjoyment."

Pam Barram,
parent of Forest Charter School students

Today, Josh is an aeronautical mechanical engineer who graduated from UC Davis.

Those enhanced educational opportunities have continued with Pam's younger children, who currently are in their senior and sophomore years with Forest Charter. Zach and Cassidy's school week is a mix of independent study, home schooling with Pam, and site-based tutoring and classes. Mornings could be spent studying AP Calculus or French with mom. In the afternoons, they may drive to Nevada City for Zach's college advisory session at the school or to a martial arts studio for Cassidy's Kuk Sool Won lesson. Cassidy also pursues the culinary arts (she's currently researching gluten-free recipes) and cockatiel training, while Zach has attended workshops on computer science and taken part in science fairs. Pam is able to utilize the instructional budget to provide many of these outside learning experiences.

The schedule works well for Pam and husband Scott Barram, who run a construction company that buys and renovates homes for resale. When the children were younger, the whole family would often travel to construction sites for days at a time. Forest Charter School's flexible education model allowed Pam to "take the school with them."

Pam also appreciates how home schooling has strengthened the connection she has with her children. The family has learned about communication skills, conflict resolution and teamwork — all of which have created a nurturing learning environment.

"I have felt that our association with Forest has accommodated and enhanced all of these aspects of my relationship with my kids," she says. "I have felt I had permission to make choices that best served my kids' education, and that sets them up for a lifetime of learning enjoyment."



Pam Barram says going to school at Forest Charter has brought her and children Zach and Cassidy closer together.

Photo by
Kim Palaferri

Support for Parents

Parents don't have to go it alone when it comes to educating their children. Forest Charter School offers a wide array of support, including:

SUPERVISING TEACHERS

Supervising teachers assist in the selection of core curriculum items and document student progress.

MATERIALS

An extensive collection of library books, reference materials, standards-based textbooks, audiovisual aids, study guides and test-prep materials are available for checkout.

ASSESSMENT

Instructors make sure students have a demonstrated mastery of subjects using a variety of tools.

STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

A solution-oriented team that supports students with their academic needs.

COMMUNITY VENDORS/INSTRUCTORS

Outside vendors provide educational opportunities based on student interest, from ballet lessons to computer-science courses.

ONLINE

Forest Charter School's online portal connects parents to school resources, such as course materials, class offerings and attendance records.

FUNDING

Parents have access to an instructional allowance to spend on educational opportunities for their children.

Helping Students Grow

by Shannon Springmeyer

Teacher touts advantages of personalized-learning approach

Valerie Hiestand-Stuart, an art and writing teacher at Forest Charter School, loves her students. Just ask her to recall a student who has left a lasting impression during her nine years of teaching. Flooded with memories, she struggles to pick just one.

From the many students whose triumphs she's shared, Valerie finally settles on Mary. Mary (not her real name) was floundering at her traditional school, Valerie says, held back by her slow learning pace and low test scores. Her parents decided to try a different approach and enrolled her in Forest Charter, where Valerie became her assigned supervising teacher. Forest Charter offered a personalized approach, allowing Mary to work at her own pace.

"In this particular case it just worked wonders," Valerie says.

Math had always been a challenge for Mary.

"She hated her drills and her textbooks," Valerie explains.

But at Forest Charter, Mary had the freedom to learn differently. She started a small business raising and selling goats. She learned measurement and multiplication skills through building their pen. Charting their growth taught

her about graphs. She saw math's relevance in keeping track of her expenses and profits.

"Math became a very natural part of her experience," Valerie says. By the time she attended high school math classes at Forest Charter, "Mary's math teacher was astounded by how much she knew," Valerie says.

Mary had completely caught up to grade level by 10th grade and exceeded grade level by 11th. Forest Charter's flexible schedule also allowed Mary to pursue her passion: dance. Mary,

at one time behind her peers, was able to accelerate her studies to graduate a year ahead of them so she could accept a place at the renowned Joffrey Ballet School in New York. She will graduate this year and is applying to dance companies around the world.

Mary's story is just one of many that illustrate what Valerie loves about teaching at Forest Charter: the flexibility to personalize the learning experience to each unique student.

"The ability of kids to move at a much faster or much slower pace is our greatest asset," she says.

A hybrid approach, in which independent studies are supported through several hours weekly of small-group instruction, offers numerous advantages, Valerie says.

"I hear kids all the time say they love learning in smaller groups," she says.

Through small group classes, students learn how to respect the needs and feelings of others.

"It's a really good thing for them to know — to care about a big group of people," Valerie says. "We're a pretty positive place. Kids feel they are respected."

Forest Charter is also defined by "our love of learning," Valerie notes. "We try to make sure learning is something kids want to do and that they will do beyond school."



Teacher Valerie Hiestand-Stuart, with student Sierra LaPierre, appreciates the flexibility and opportunities for individual attention offered by the Forest Charter School model.

Photo by Kim Palaferri

"We try to make sure learning is something kids want to do and that they will do beyond school."

Valerie Hiestand-Stuart,
teacher at Forest Charter School

Academic Options Abound

Forest Charter School meets the unique needs of students by offering a varied menu of options for learning. Each student enjoys a personalized learning program that blends one or more of the following offerings:

HOME SCHOOLING/ INDEPENDENT STUDY

Students complete their studies at home, with regular one-on-one check-ins with a supervising teacher.

Benefits:

- Ample parent-involvement opportunities
- Flexibility in the scheduling and pacing of learning
- Support from a fully credentialed teacher
- Access to an instructional budget for learning materials

COOPERATIVES

Co-ops (sometimes called academies) offer a program of on-site classes in core disciplines, with related coursework completed at home.

Benefits:

- Small, interactive classes comprised of students in multiple grade levels
- A community of learners who explore a theme or focus together
- Instruction and support from credentialed teachers
- Thematically linked lessons incorporate multiple subject areas

LEARNING CENTER CLASSES

These stand-alone, on-site classes can supplement independent study and co-op learning plans. Students meet on average one to two hours a week on campus per class and complete remaining coursework independently.

Benefits:

- Small classes taught by credentialed, highly qualified teachers
- Schedule and pacing remain flexible
- Core academic, elective and enrichment classes available

ADDITIONAL CHOICES

Students' needs and interests can be met through the following options:

- Tutoring
- Online courses
- Community and vendor-provided classes
- Educational field trips
- College courses
- R.O.P. work-based learning



Start Your Journey



Find more information about Forest Charter School

Would Forest Charter School be a good fit for your student? Find out by contacting the school to schedule an interview appointment.

FOREST CHARTER SCHOOL
www.forestcharter.com

NEVADA CITY/GRASS VALLEY LEARNING CENTER

470 Searls Ave., Nevada City
530-265-4823

TAHOE/TRUCKEE LEARNING CENTER

10725 Pioneer Trail, Truckee
530-550-7205

AUBURN/FORESTHILL LEARNING CENTER

23221 Foresthill Road, Foresthill
530-265-4823



**Let Forest
Charter School
help you get
there**

- **Serves grades K-12**
- Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
- Personalized learning approach: An educational plan is tailored for each student
- **Small class sizes**
- California-credentialed supervising teachers
- Supports a dynamic home-school program
- Competitive instructional budgets
- **Tuition-free California public school**
- Flexible schedule and approach to support student needs and interests
- Learning Center classes available
- Cooperatives: A blended classroom/home-school program
- High school College & Career Center
- Strong college acceptance list including UCs, highly selective universities and art schools
- **Community college classes**
- Flexible curriculum options
- Tutoring services
- Collaborative parent, student, teacher approach
- Special education services
- ROP classes
- **Online classes**
- Field trips and field studies
- **Serving Nevada, Placer, Yuba and Sierra counties**