

## Students launch their talent

### Math, Science, Engineering prelims held in Santa Cruz

By TARMO HANNULA  
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

SANTA CRUZ — Students from Santa Cruz and Monterey counties tested their skills and knowledge Saturday at the annual Math, Science, Engineering Achievement Day Preliminary Competition at UC Santa Cruz.

About 400 students from middle and high schools showcased the results of many trials and errors over the past few months in 20 different events before a cast of more than 25 area industry and business pro-

fessionals and 75 university staff, faculty and students in the blowout competition.

Students, many operating in teams, were able to run final demonstrations and tests of their entries. Categories during the day-long event included mousetrap cars, civil structure craft-stick bridges, egg drop, crystal display, model science, speak easy, team math, manila mechanics and cyber surfing. Results will be announced later this week.

"Building our trebuchet was hard," said Alianza Charter

School seventh-grader Salvador Medina. "Getting the right angles was the hardest part of all. Getting the weight right and then getting your materials to stay in the right place takes a lot of time. You have to learn how to support everything before it even begins to work right."

Indeed, Medina and his team of Alianza students were up against tough competition as they launched a small ball out into a measured grid at the

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Edsel Aceves (from left) and Salvador Medina, seventh graders from Alianza Charter School, launch their trebuchet Saturday during the 2008 MESA Day Preliminary Competition at UC Santa Cruz. The trebuchet, a form of catapult, was invented in China in about the fourth century BC and brought to Europe.

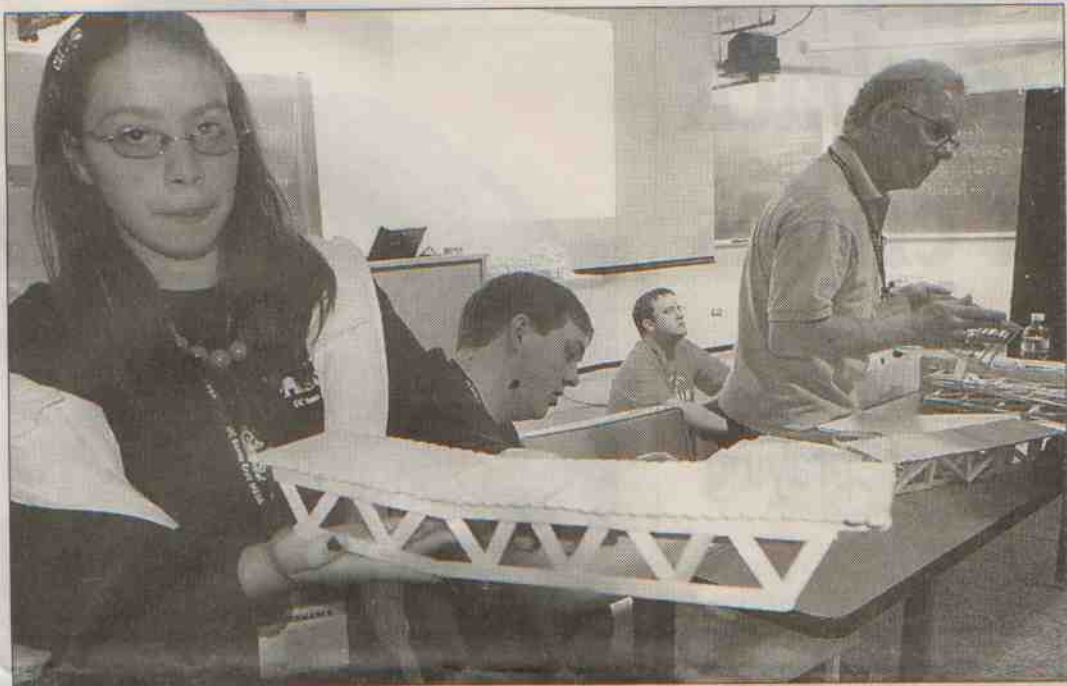
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**ABOVE:** Lakeview Middle School sixth-grader Yossilyn Herrera shows a craft-stick bridge that she and team member Aldrin Herrera built for the MESA Day event. **BELOW:** Watsonville High freshmen Daidy Loza and Nathalie Flores constructed this model of a heart to compete in the MESA Day event.

## MESA

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UCSC Jack Baskins School of Engineering courtyard as scores of other school teams looked on.

Every inch of the launch was measured and documented by a host of judges.

Over the past several months students have been developing their MESA-developed projects while working with their MESA advisers to refine their competition entries.

"We want to encourage bright minds to stay in math science and engineering and dream big and not lose their interest in these fields," said Carol Moran, executive director of the UC Santa Cruz Educational

Partnership center. "MESA is an important part of our ongoing efforts to build college bound communities, and this event helps celebrate students' success and rewards their hard work."

MESA Day also provides an engaging climate for students to meet and interact with engineers, university faculty, researchers, undergraduates and business professionals. Volunteers from Cisco Systems, Lockheed Martin, Kaiser Permanente and other such organizations also take part in the event.

Watsonville High principal Murry Schekman was on hand Saturday to watch the competitions unfold.

"Watsonville High has done real well at these competitions

each year," Schekman said. "These kids are our junior engineers. I'm impressed each year with the level of talent that is displayed at MESA Day."

Lakeview Middle School sixth-grader Yossilyn Herrera brought a craft-stick bridge, about 14 inches long, to the event to be tested inside a Standard Stress Analyzer 1000. As

about 100 students looked on, the bridge eventually began to crack beneath the weight.

"It took our team about a week to build," she said, "We had a lot of collapses on the first bridge. You really have to think about how a bridge is built. One thing I learned is that people who make bridges sure must know a lot."

Pajaro Middle School sixth-



grader Melisa Bolaños said she was competing in the Team Math and the Speak Up events.

"We prepared with about 25 math problems, like fractions, circumferences and equations," she said. "I guess I feel prepared. I'm a little nervous."

Sylvia Bennett, who runs the computer lab at Pajaro Middle School and helps students with the MESA after-school program, said she has been impressed with how seriously students take the competition.

"They come and get to work on the projects," Bennett said. "It's very encouraging to see how much effort they put into the projects."