

Fewer learning to teach

At USF and elsewhere, education colleges reboot as enrollment declines and teaching gets harder.

BY CLAIRE MCNEILL
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Thunder rumbled dimly through the thin classroom walls. A dozen future teachers settled into silent reading time, with selections ranging

from *One Special Elephant to The Girl on the Train*.

Instructor Gretchen Dodson paced, encouraging her pupils at the University of South Florida to share the ritual with their own students one day.

“There comes a moment when there’s almost a magical buzz in the room,” she promised, “but it’s a silent buzz, and all you hear are pages turning.”

It was 5 p.m., mid monsoon, mid summer, and many seats

were empty — a common sight these days in teacher preparation programs around the country, including USF’s College of Education. Many of the students in Dodson’s classroom said that they often meet skepticism when they share their career dreams.

“Really?” people ask them. “You want to be a teacher?”

Between standardized tests, stagnant pay and crowded class-

rooms, teaching has become a political battleground. Since 2010, enrollment in teacher prep programs has plummeted 42 percent nationwide. At USF’s college, a major supplier of local teachers, enrollment has dropped 40 percent — despite local districts desperate for teachers.

“Even elementary teachers I had were like, ‘Don’t do it, it’s get-’”

» See USF, 7A

BROOKS KOEPKA WINS U.S. OPEN, HIS FIRST MAJOR

Powered by three straight birdies on the back nine at Erin Hills in Wisconsin, the West Palm Beach native, 27, breaks away from a tight pack and finishes the event 16 under par. **Sports, 1C**

School job cuts look unavoidable

Budget realities may offer no other choice to the Hillsborough County School District, which currently employs about 26,000 people, more than any other Tampa Bay area entity. By comparison, the Broward County district, which has 7,000 more students, has 1,500 fewer employees. **Local, 1B**

House speaker’s tactics pay off

Richard Corcoran, the Land O’Lakes Republican who spent the past year sparring with Gov. Rick Scott over Scott’s prized corporate recruitment agency, became a part of Scott’s post-legislative session “Victory Tour” after passage of Corcoran’s signature education reform plan. **Local, 1B**

U.S. shoots down Syrian fighter jet

In what marks an escalation of the ongoing conflict in Syria, the U.S. military said that it acted in “collective self-defense” of its partner forces in the fight against the Islamic State, and that it did not seek a fight with the Syrian government or its Russian supporters. **World, 4A**

Rookie’s pitching keys Rays’ 9-1 win

Jake Faria delivered a third straight impressive start, striking out nine Detroit Tigers in seven innings, while Steven Souza Jr. blasted a grand slam and Logan Morrison slugged a pair of homers. **Sports, 1C**

TODAY’S WEATHER

Tropical moisture

8 a.m. 77° Noon 83° 4 p.m. 83° 8 p.m. 81°

80% chance of rain
More, back page of Sports

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Vol. 133 No. 330
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JAMES BORCHUCK | Times

Jean Roy Jr., center, plays an educational game with his 5-year-old twins Hunter and Isabella in their Tampa home. The 48-year-old construction worker says he’s amazed at how in tune they are with each other.

REGULAR DAD AGAIN

A Tampa father battles addiction and heartbreak to reunite with his children.

BY CHRISTOPHER O'DONNELL
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Jean Roy Jr. didn’t look like father material to social workers.

The 48-year-old had a long criminal history and was struggling with substance abuse. His infatuation with the mother of his twin children was an even more damaging addiction.

Seventeen years his junior, she was an addict who used crystal meth and heroin, said Wanda Lamar, Roy’s case manager.

“My first impression was (the twins) wouldn’t be unified with mom and dad,” Lamar said. “Mom was still in the home. Dad was still engaged with mom and shouldn’t have been.”

Hunter and Isabella had been on the radar of child welfare workers since their mother ran into a neighbor’s house claiming she feared for her life but was unaware of where her children were. They were infants at the time. She was allowed only supervised visits with them after that.

At the age of 3, the twins were taken into foster care in February

» See REUNION, 9A



JAMES BORCHUCK | Times

Roy keeps photos of Isabella and Hunter in the kitchen. He says he loves watching them learn new things.

Sculptor’s career clicks into place



The Art of the Brick

Nathan Sawaya poses with a sculpture from “The Art of the Brick,” coming to Tampa thanks to the Vinik Family Foundation.

The Art of the Brick

Opens Friday and continues through Sept. 4 at 802 E Whiting St., Tampa, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesdays through Sundays. No tickets required. More information at artofthebricktampa.com.

Tampa Bay Rays

Lego artist Nathan Sawaya will throw out the first pitch — a ball made of Lego bricks — at the Tampa Bay Rays game against the Reds at 12:10 p.m. Wednesday. More information at raysbaseball.com.

Nathan Sawaya was a highly paid lawyer until he started tinkering with Legos, and art took shape.

BY SHARON KENNEDY WYNNE
Times Staff Writer

Nathan Sawaya left the world of corporate law at 31 to become a Lego artist.

That’s right. Legos. Those little colorful bricks that parents the world over have stepped on. It was a move so wild, it once prompted comedian Stephen Colbert to ask, was this the best way he could tell his parents to go to hell?

“I look at it this way,” he said, calling from his Los Angeles studio. “My worst day as an artist is still better than my best day as a lawyer.”

With admirers ranging from former President Bill Clinton to Lady Gaga, Sawaya is instead a testament to following your dreams. His blockbuster tour of Lego sculptures arrives in Tampa for a free summer exhibition starting next week. And his parents, by the way, have always been supportive.

The largely self-taught sculptor, 43, marries pop art and surrealism. He can snap a pile of Legos into a curvy shape of a woman swimming in a sea of blue bricks or into his mind-blowing *Yellow* sculpture of a man ripping his chest open with a tumble of yellow Lego bricks cascading from the cavity.

He has multiple touring shows around the globe. “The Art of the Brick,” coming to what was formerly the District 3 event space in Tampa on Friday and running through Sept. 4, will have more than 100 Lego creations set in an interlocking block of galleries. The Vinik Family Foundation is sponsoring the free show in Tampa’s Channelside area. Tampa Bay Lightning owner Jeff Vinik and his wife, Penny, have committed to bringing public art to the city. Last year, they kicked off the effort with the Beach

» See ART, 9A

Destroyer’s crew had little warning of crippling crash

Seven sailors die when the USS *Fitzgerald* is hit by a container ship.

Washington Post

YOKOSUKA, Japan — In the dark of night the weather was clear, with a swell of about 6 feet.

Near where the sea lanes converge for the run into Tokyo Bay, the USS *Fitzgerald* was on a routine mission, though in these waters, mariners say, routine should mean taking extra precautions, always.

One of the Navy’s most advanced ships, the Aegis-guided missile destroyer was equipped with the latest and most sophisticated radar equipment. On board the 8,315-ton vessel was a crew of 300. On the bridge, a full complement of officers and men was on duty. The commanding officer, Cmdr. Bryce Benson, was in his cabin, on the starboard side. It was about 2 a.m.

» See SHIP, 7A

