



# SOUTH TAHOE HIGH SCHOOL

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Deans of Students

**To:** Parents, Students, and Counselors  
**From:** STHS Science Department  
**RE:** Biology vs STEAM 1 and Chemistry vs STEAM 2

Hello! We understand that there are questions about the new STEAM courses, and we wanted to address some of the confusion.

Biology and STEAM 1 are both "life sciences" so they satisfy the same graduation and UC "a-g" requirements. Similarly, Chemistry and STEAM 2 are both "physical sciences." The biggest difference is in the classroom environment.

STEAM courses are collaborative, group-based, and focused on problem-solving or practical application of science principles. They're good for kids who like working in groups, who don't mind doing art, and aren't afraid of giving presentations. The Biology and Chemistry courses are more of a "pure science" style and may be a better fit for more independent learners who enjoy inquiry-based lab sciences and experimentation, as well as learning deeply about a wide range of topics.

Biology and Chemistry are more similarly structured to "classic" university courses and may help a student become more familiar with that type of environment. However, many universities are shifting to more "STEAM-like" collaborative, problem-based methods as well. Finally, it is important to know that these courses do not represent "tracks." Students may choose to take either STEAM 1 and STEAM 2, or Biology and Chemistry, or combinations of the two. Both styles of courses prepare students for upper-level coursework as well.

It's a tough decision to make! It depends on the student's personality and learning styles, and what type of classroom would be a better fit for them. It's about putting them in an environment where they'll be more comfortable learners. Hope that helps! Feel free to contact me if you have any further questions about making this decision.

Sincerely,

Barbra Bedwell, M.S.  
Dean of Students, Former STHS Science Department Chair