

Linda Cox
Bay Crest Elementary and Morgan Woods Elementary Schools,
Hillsborough County
2023 NIE Teacher of the Year Runner-Up



"I believe that students need to read the newspaper at an early age so they can develop lifelong skills in critical thinking along with a passion for knowledge. The lessons I teach incorporate real-life examples that make learning fun, inspiring and interactive. Having a better understanding of the world creates life-long learners."

Linda is a National Board Certified teacher who teaches art at Bay Crest Elementary and Morgan Woods Elementary in Hillsborough County.

Linda was chosen as a 2023 NIE Teacher of the Year Runner-Up for her ongoing use of the Tampa Bay Times to not only teach art, but also to promote literacy, civic awareness and character development through art.

Linda teaches more than 900 elementary students per week at two Title I schools. She has used the Tampa Bay Times as a resource since 2015.

Linda uses the illustrations, cartoons and articles she finds in the Times to teach the definition of terms called for in the art curriculum, such as proportion, symmetry, color schemes, symbolism and utilitarianism.

She also uses the comics to engage students through art. Selected strips help her to illustrate the value of different illustrative styles. The resulting discussions encourage students to realize how their specific artistic talents are equally valid. They then create their own illustrations based on what was discussed.

She finds that the newspaper is a great vehicle for enhancing student literacy in lessons that combine art with other subjects. For example, students read the comics aloud, reinforcing the reading skills they learn elsewhere. They are also encouraged to write captions to their illustrations and explain their meaning.

One of Linda's teaching goals is to encourage interested students to consider an artistic career. Linda notes that this goal is easier to achieve by using material from the Times to discuss possible careers, not only in fine art, but also in advertising, illustration, cartooning, graphic design, architecture and other creative occupations.

In 2019, Linda received an Honorable Mention in the NIE Teacher of the Year contest, and she was our 2022 Grand Prize winner.

