

Rachel Kingdom
Central High School, Hernando County
2023 NIE Teacher of the Year Runner-Up



“Critical-thinking and creativity go hand-in-hand. My students use the Tampa Bay Times to look up information related to what we are studying. If they are unable to find what we are learning about, they will attempt to find something new. They will use their textbooks to locate the material in upcoming chapters and discuss their newly found knowledge. It is great to see interaction among students. That is when true understanding takes place.”

Rachel teaches science at Central High School in Hernando County.

Rachel was chosen as a 2023 NIE Teacher of the Year Runner-Up for her ongoing use of the Tampa Bay Times to teach environmental science.

Rachel structures her lesson plans in order to incorporate local, national and global current issues and events pertaining to the environment.

Throughout the year, her students use the Tampa Bay Times to research and understand concepts such as water quality, water pollution, food insecurity, sustainability, the greenhouse effect, global warming and climate change and the impact these have on our local communities.

They then combine what they have learned from the Times with information other resources, such as their textbooks, to create products such as brochures, short tutorials, investigations, voiceovers, biomes-in-a-box, informational posters based on concepts learned, and even formal laboratory reports.

One such project was "Withlacoochee River Watershed Excursion," a Webquest designed to engage students with the subjects of water quality and water pollution.

Students worked in small groups to investigate and research the topics using the Times and other resources. They then collaborated to come up with a product that could be used to reduce water pollution. The exercise was designed to both bolster students' critical-thinking skills and engage their creativity.

Finally, Rachel encourages her students to take their involvement a step further and become advocates for the environment by participating in various “citizen scientist” initiatives with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

This year, Rachel participated in an NIE project on water source protection by helping to write a teacher guide and conducting a teacher webinar.

Rachel was also honored as a Runner-Up in 2022.

