

Samantha Lynge
MacFarlane Park Elementary School, Hillsborough County
2023 NIE Teacher of the Year Grand Prize Winner



“Our school's subscription to the newspaper truly enhances this experience. Students are engaged in current events that are impacting their neighborhoods and their worlds, and are actively working to make a change in their communities because of that learning.”

Samantha is a fifth-grade teacher of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme at MacFarlane Park Elementary School in Hillsborough County.

Samantha was chosen as 2023 NIE Teacher of the Year Grand Prize Winner for integrating the Tampa Bay Times into her students' year-long current events research and service learning project.

This comprehensive project, called “Exhibition,” starts in September and ends in May. Students devote at least one hour a week at school to this

project, in addition to homework.

First, students identify a global issue that is important to them. After identifying this global issue, they research the topic and how it impacts our community, our nation and worldwide.

Samantha writes that “much of this research uses NIE resources to find articles and information shared locally about their topics. Not only do students use the newspaper to find articles pertaining to their topics, but many of them reach out to journalists and people working at the Tampa Bay Times and in the community for interviews.”

Next, using the information they have gleaned from their research, students write research papers outlining the background information, problems and possible solutions to the global issue they are working on.

Finally, students determine what action they can take to help the global issue in the form of aid, activism, or building awareness in the community. Each group builds and acts on a service project of their making. For example, one group worked with the Florida Aquarium on a bead drive after Gasparilla because of an article they read about microplastics in the Tampa Bay Times.

Once students' research papers and service projects are done, students present their learning and action to other teachers, community members and stakeholders at an all-day event.



