

Kristinna Sanchez
Hernando Christian Academy, Hernando County
2025 NIE Educator of the Year Grand Prize Winner

Kristinna teaches science at Hernando Christian Academy in Hernando County.

She was chosen as the 2025 Grand Prize Winner for integrating the Tampa Bay Times into her biology, anatomy and physiology, forensics, physical science and chemistry classes in imaginative and innovative ways.

For example, Kristinna's forensic students studied the case of Dr. Steven Schwartz, a Tarpon Springs doctor whose 2014 murder is still making headlines. They dug into the crime scene details, forensic techniques, and investigative processes like real detectives. Kristinna writes, "It gave them a meaningful way to apply what we've been learning."

In biology, Kristinna has used articles about how Florida's native wildlife adapts to unexpected weather events like freezes and storms as a tie-in to units on ecosystems, adaptation and biodiversity.

And, in physical science, a story about the Pentagon investigating unidentified flying objects sparked conversations about motion, flight and the scientific method and got students thinking critically and asking great questions.

Kristinna writes, "Using the Tampa Bay Times in my classroom at Hernando Christian Academy has completely changed the way I teach and how my students see the world around them. I love connecting our lessons to real-life news stories that make science feel relevant and alive."

