

# Denis Riel 2024 NIE Teacher of the Year Fivay High School, Pasco County

Denis is a Career and Technical Education teacher at the Fivay High School Criminal Justice Academy in Pasco County.



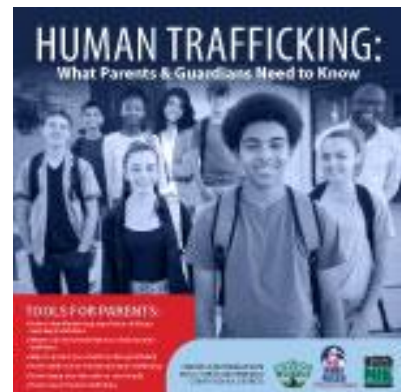
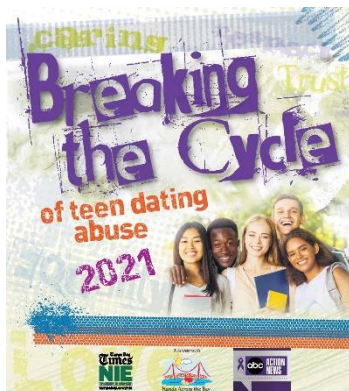
Denis was chosen as NIE Teacher of the Year for integrating the Tampa Bay Times into his criminal justice curriculum with the goal of helping his students develop critical thinking skills and media literacy.

Denis prefers the print newspaper as a way of exposing students to the full breath of this news medium. He writes, “The ability to introduce (students) to actual sections has allowed me to structure conversations around the concept of ‘Is this objective news or someone’s opinion?’ and ‘How can you tell?’”

These initial conversations led to the creation of a Navigating the Newspaper unit of instruction and assignment. Students are introduced to the newspaper with a scavenger hunt, where they learn how a paper is organized and what each section is and does. They then conduct a close reading analysis with a partner.

Denis’ classes rotate the responsibility of a bi-weekly Current Events in Law Day. Students are tasked with reviewing the past week’s newspapers, finding and cutting out relevant articles, and adding them to a current events bulletin board. Students explain why they chose the article, determine if it is news or opinion, and identify how it is related to criminal justice or law.

With his more advanced classes, Denis uses NIE curriculum supplements as examples of effective crime prevention messaging.



In Criminal Justice 2, students are introduced to crime prevention as a new concept. The students' capstone exercise is to create a school-based crime prevention initiative. Denis uses the NIE curriculum supplements Breaking the Cycle of Teen Violence and Be Vape/Smoke Free as examples of well-messaged crime prevention initiatives and sources for the students' prevention projects.

In Criminal Justice 3, students study the communication process and how it should be leveraged for crime reduction in greater depth. Students dissect the essential messaging contained in Breaking the Cycle and Be Vape/Smoke Free while also finding ways to disseminate those messages through other mediums. In so doing, they use the entirety of the communications process to include audience identification, feedback, noise identification and mitigation strategies, and medium delivery methods.

Denis introduced a third NIE curriculum supplement, Human Trafficking, to his dual enrollment Criminology course as a capstone research assignment in spring 2024.

Denis writes, "In each of these activities and projects, the NIE resources encourage a strong level of inquiry (and) present an opportunity to focus on collaboration, while utilizing writing and close reading strategies. NIE greatly enhances my classroom learning environments by providing new and interesting strategies which add additional tools from which students can achieve standards mastery. This diversity of teaching approaches cannot be overstated from students' point of view in terms of keeping their interest."