

## **Kaylin Schemmel** **Oak Park Elementary School, Hillsborough County** **2024 Runner-Up**

Kaylin teaches science at Oak Park Elementary School in Hillsborough County.

Kaylin was chosen as a 2024 Runner-Up for integrating the newspaper into her science curriculum.

Kaylin uses the newspaper weekly to keep up to date on any current events in the community or developments in science that reflect what students have learned in the classroom in the real world.

In addition, the newspaper is an important component of two major annual projects: the fall STEM Fair and a spring poster project.

The STEM Fair project runs for four weeks between Thanksgiving and Winter Break. Students work on creating their own experiment to help a group in the community, shelter animals, or the environment. Students utilize the newspaper to come up with topics and ideas relevant to the surrounding community. Once students have chosen a topic, they utilize the newspaper as one of their resources during the research portion of their project. After the STEM Fair, students create community outreach projects based on their STEM Fair topic and experiments.

In the spring semester, students participate in a research poster project. They use the Times and other resources to research freshwater ecosystems in Tampa and the surrounding area. They then make a poster to share their findings. This research and poster project culminates in a field trip to learn about how invasive species, humans, plants and animals all impact the freshwater ecosystem.

Kaylin writes, “Many times students think of science in the real world as only being in a lab or in space. By using the newspaper, we are able to see how science is used in many different ways daily. Seeing current events also helps us think about if there is a way we could solve problems in our community by using the scientific skills we have learned. By having a direct connection to examples in the real world, students are able to strengthen their learning in the classroom each day.”



