

**Florida Council of Instructional Technology Leaders  
Instructional Technology Leadership Award:  
2013-14 Innovative Principal of the Year  
Nomination Form**

**District Name:** Volusia

**Nominating FCITL Voting Member Information**

**Nominating FCITL Member (must be voting member for district):** Jessica Levene

**Street Address:** 200 N. Clara Ave

**City/State/Zip:** DeLand, FL 32720

**Country:** US

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**FCITL Voting Member Email:** [JLLevene@volusia.k12.fl.us](mailto:JLLevene@volusia.k12.fl.us)

**Principal Nominee Information**

**Name:** Susan Persis

**Professional Title:** Principal

**School Name:** Pine Trail Elementary

**Work Address:** 300 Airport Road

**City/State/Zip:** Ormond Beach, FL 32174

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# Susan S. Persis

Three Tidewater Drive  
Ormond Beach, Florida 32174  
386-299-0404  
[spersis@cfl.rr.com](mailto:spersis@cfl.rr.com)

## Professional Description

An innovative and enthusiastic educational leader, who believes integrating technology, is paramount in educating students for today and preparing them for tomorrow.

## Administrative Experience

Principal-Pine Trail Elementary	June 2010-Present
Principal-Indian River Elementary	June 2003-June 2010
Assistant Principal-Middle and Elementary	July 1993-June 2003

## Education

### Master of Education

Educational Leadership Nova University	October 1988
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### Bachelor of Science

Elementary Education Florida State University	June 1977
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## Affiliations/Awards

State President of Florida Association of School Principals, 2010-2011  
State President of Florida Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals, 2009-2010  
Federal Relations Representative for Florida (Lobbied in Washington, DC 2006-2010)  
First Volusia County Principal of two schools during the same year, 2007-2008  
President of Phi Delta Kappa, 2001-2003  
Music Administrator of the Year, 2004  
Volusia Association of School Principals  
Florida Association of School Principals  
Florida Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals

## References

Dr. Margaret Smith, Superintendent, Volusia County Schools  
Annette Martinson, Former Assistant Superintendent, Volusia County Schools  
Dr. Mary-Patt Kennedy, Former Assistant Superintendent, Volusia County Schools

## **Professional Background**

When parents, students and community members talk about Pine Trail Elementary today, the words technologically advanced, outstanding teachers and the best school, are catch phrases that are repeatedly used. When I was appointed the principal in 2010 the school was a wonderful and friendly school, however, the staff was woefully behind in regard to technology. Since I love new things and had embraced technology at my previous schools, I knew this school had the potential to become the premier technology school in Volusia County. So the work began.

One of my greatest strengths lies in having a vision for a school. My plan was to have effective technology integration within each of the classrooms. With a focus on developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in both teachers and students, I designed a professional development program centered on communication, collaboration, and creation. Beginning with the end in mind, I created a series of trainings aimed at both experienced and new users of technology tools, ensuring that the end goal was to have all teachers and students comfortable using technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The training programs I implement incorporate a wide variety of classroom strategies and technological resources. The core of technology resources encompasses the three C's; collaboration, communication, and creating. Classroom tools which are utilized in trainings include:

- Edmodo
- KidBlog
- Google Docs
- Animoto
- Class Dojo
- Remind 101
- Weebly
- Glogster

My new direction spearheaded several efforts to increase access to technology for all students. I asked and was granted to have Pine Trail participate in the District's Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) program, which not only enabled teachers and students to utilize a variety of devices in the classroom, but provided our entire campus with wireless access, greatly increasing access to the Internet and valuable resources for teaching and learning.

I was also able to bring about a shift from students receiving content to actually creating their own content to demonstrate mastery of skills. The core of my program included providing the school with a mobile iPad Lab and a thirty-six station iMac lab in the media center. Through the use of these hardware tools, teachers are leading students into the world of content creation.

I also enjoy providing training to teachers, especially using some of the Apple tools on the devices, including the following examples:

- iLife-Movie, Garageband

- iWork-Keynote, Pages
- Podcasting-SonicPics, Strip Design
- Animations-Comic Life, Puppet Pals
- Publishing-Book Creator, iBooks

In addition, teachers are trained on how to effectively use content to support applications in Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science.

Finally, I believe you have to practice what you teach so you will always see me using technology in my office, in a classroom, in a meeting, or just for fun. In fact, I have learned talking about technology is a great way to start a conversation with teachers. They are either sharing something they learned with me or I am sharing a new application I discovered with them.

My point is; at Pine Trail, technology is now part of the daily conversation and everyone wants to know how to use the newest and best teaching tools. Each day, my staff and I are learning and improving. Professional growth is no longer a one hour or one day event; it is ongoing, constant and I will continue to encourage our teachers to grow and learn with me.

### **How do you help reduce or remove barriers for effective technology use in your school or school system?**

From our first pre-planning meeting to the end of the school year, the Pine Trail Elementary faculty is encouraged to integrate the newest technology in their instruction and student learning. Monthly staff development opportunities are provided in our new iMac Lab located in the media center. We use the Teacher-to-Teacher model where teachers teach each other. They have provided the training for Edmodo, Pages, Works, Kid Blog, Glogster, iPad Apps and Goggle Docs.

In addition to the iMac Lab, we have purchased a variety of technology resources stored on mobile carts for individual classroom use. Our teachers have access to these portable labs which house laptops, net books and iPads.

Three years ago, we were also a pilot school for BYOT (Bring Your Own Technology). All students in grades kindergarten through fifth have been permitted to bring their devices to connect to the Internet. Each year, the number of students bringing devices to use for research, collaboration, creating documents and presentations has increased.

One of the things I did to gain support for my vision was to publicize this to my students' parents and the community. I made them aware of what we were doing, why we were doing it, and how they could help. The support was encouraging to the teachers and to me. We are grateful to have the full support of our PTA and the greater business community.

### **How do you evaluate the effectiveness of digital technology use in your school or district?**

When teaching mathematical concepts and skills, our fifth grade teachers integrate their instruction using smart boards, clickers, and iPads. This provides an engaging, interactive learning environment in which students receive immediate feedback. The teachers use this student data to drive and modify their instruction. Recent FCAT results revealed our fifth grade students scored better than ninety-five percent of their Volusia County peer group.

One of the leading predictors of student success is attitude. School Climate Surveys are conducted in the spring of each school year. Parent, teacher and students attitudes regarding the implementation of and learning with technology consistently ranks at the top of the list for accolades for Pine Trail.

Parents write they are pleased and proud of the high engagement and level of learning their children experience. Students are thrilled to share their expertise on their devices. Students share what they know and like with the faculty twice a year. The students demonstrate to teachers their favorite ways to learn with technology. In addition, Pine Trail was featured by the State PTA

magazine and in the Daytona Beach News Journal for raising thirty thousand dollars to install the high tech iMac Lab.

**What is your vision of how digital learning can prepare today's students to be successful in attaining college and career readiness and what have you done to move your school toward this vision?**

To be effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, citizens and workers must have a range of functional and critical thinking skills; such as, technology literacy, media literacy and information literacy. Teachers must be supported and trained so they will be able to capitalize on the learning potential of technology. My vision is every student would have access to a tablet, laptop or, iPad to use with every day learning. This offers active engagement, the opportunity to participate in groups, frequent interaction, feedback and connections to real world contexts. Using technology also enlarges access to a continued growing store of information.

At Pine Trail, I have had the opportunity to hire twenty-five teachers. The teachers I recommend are highly skilled and have experience integrating technology with daily lessons. Having new teachers, who embrace technology and who share what they know with their colleagues, has made a positive difference and changed the entire teaching and learning atmosphere.

Now all teachers have a class web site so parents and students can stay informed about daily assignments, homework, future projects, and upcoming events. Our PTA has shown their full support by purchasing document cameras, Mobi's, iPads, laptops, Apple TV's, and online computer programs.

In summary, the Pine Trail faculty understands digital technology is the future and the future is now!

**How is the use of technology assisting your school's endeavors for monitoring student academic progress?**

Technology at Pine Trail has changed the way our teachers prepare, teach, and evaluate their lessons. The digital world has opened brand new paths to learning, which provide the teacher multiple ways to meet the diverse needs of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century students.

The traditional role of the Pine Trail teacher has been flipped through the integration of technology. Our teachers have now taken on the roles of coaches and advisors to our students and families. Gone are the days of worksheets, folders and work packets.

With each teacher having a class website, students, parents and teachers are now able to continually monitor strengths, weaknesses and ongoing progress with the integration of technology in real time. While these websites provide a great way for students and their parents to stay current about class assignments, homework, and upcoming events, these websites and the

District's online grading system also enable our teachers to carefully review the academic progress of each student.

At Pine Trail, technology is no longer prohibited. Indeed, technology is not the enemy! Technology is our friend and we welcome the variety of devices, apps, online learning programs, software programs, and websites, which we can use to help students be better prepared for the world in which they will have careers. This same technology provides immediate feedback to both students and teachers, which serves to improve instruction and increase learning.