

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

District Name: Pinellas County Schools

NOMINATING FCITL MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION

**Name of Nominating FCITL Member: Judy Ambler
(must be voting member)**

FCITL Member's E-mail Address: Judy_Ambler@places.pcsb.org

Phone #: (727-588-6115) Fax #: (727-588-6085)

Superintendent's Name: Dr. Clayton Wilcox

PRINCIPAL NOMINEE CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Principal Nominee: Denise T. Miller, Ph.D.

Principal's E-mail Address: millerd@places.pcsb.org

School Name: James B. Sanderlin Elementary School

School Address: 2350 22nd Ave South , St. Petersburg FL 33712

School Phone #: (727) 552-1700 School Fax #: (727) 552-1701

Pinellas County is proud to nominate Dr. Denise Miller for the Innovative Principal of the Year Award. She was selected from a pool of candidates by the Pinellas Computer Using Educators Association. Dr. Miller has been an outstanding educator for over 25 years serving as a principal for the past eight years. Her leadership in using technology began around 1990, at which time she was recognized as a national runner-up for a Visionary Administrator Award from *Technology & Learning*, and her passion and vision have not stopped since! She has been a principal for two Title I schools and a dropout prevention center. In 2003, she was selected to open a new school which gave her an opportunity to design the school and an innovative academic program from the ground up. She is currently the principal of James B. Sanderlin Elementary, an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme. It is a Title I school serving 565 students with a population of 43% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 10% multiracial, and 69% qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

Throughout her career, Denise has combined a compelling vision for education with a passion for technology. She truly understands how technology can make a positive impact on student achievement and brings her enthusiasm and skills to her staff, students, and parents. Her leadership in the implementation of “transparent technology” is evident in all areas of the curriculum. It has never been about the boxes and wires, but what happens with teachers and students when they interact with technology as an integral part of the learning process. While Denise acknowledges that technology-based programs can be of some value to poverty students, she strongly believes that all students should have the opportunity to learn WITH technology, not merely FROM technology. Empowering all students to use technology as a cognitive tool, levels the playing field for poverty students. By opening their world and providing them with 21st century tools and global experiences often only available to more affluent students, these students are now more academically engaged and motivated to learn.

In her first administrative position, Denise recognized the importance of student learning expanding beyond the classroom’s four walls. As an assistant principal at Blanton Elementary in 1991, she led a team in developing a state retrofit grant. Her school was one of four schools receiving that grant. The retrofit funding combined with district dollars for hardware and software helped Blanton become a leader in connecting students to the world beyond the school. She engaged parents’ interest and participation in technology through Family Fun Nights. “Sail the Sea of Technology” helped them understand how their new “connected” school could make a real difference in the lives of their children. She believes strongly in building leadership capacity and encouraged students and staff to gain expertise so they could all be part of the technology team. Designated as “Deck Hands,” staff members served as technology leaders and “Guppies” were the student leaders developed at each grade level. Collaboratively, these staff and students developed flowcharts to document their technology assistance process. This process helped teachers become more confident in using technology in the classroom because they could get immediate help as opposed to waiting for the tech specialist.

As principal of St. Petersburg Challenge, a dropout prevention center, she felt it was imperative that they provide students with the strategies and resources they needed beyond what was offered in a traditional classroom. Her building was an old hospital, making it a real challenge to retrofit. Denise recruited parents, community members, and teachers to participate in Net Days to wire her school. Denise then collaborated with the Florida Center for Instructional Technology (FCIT) at USF in a Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grant (TLCF) to build leadership capacity of a partner school in the integration of technology to increase student achievement.

During her tenure as principal at Clearview Avenue Elementary, Denise created the expectation that all students and teachers would be literate users of technology. An avid technology user herself, Denise consistently modeled its use and frequently led trainings so the staff could sharpen their skills. As a result, visitors to her school were able to observe a significant change in how technology was impacting the learning process. She encouraged "risk-taking" and always "staying on the cutting edge" with technology. In the process, she made the teachers aware of how they could analyze data for making instructional decisions by importing district data into their own spreadsheets. Through the use of software templates, teachers could easily collect and share the information in their grade level discussions. Clearview was selected to participate in TLCF grant partnering with FCIT. The resulting *No Strings Attached* project focused on the impact of a wireless environment in improving student achievement. The lessons and videos produced at Clearview under this grant were distributed statewide on a CD-ROM produced by FCIT and have also been featured on the Apple iLife website and on *Digital Learning*, a community TV show.

When developing the design for Sanderlin Elementary, Denise knew that laptops in the classroom would be a compelling force in establishing a state-of-the-art learning environment. Implementing the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme required new ways of thinking. Denise invited district staff, vendors, corporate partners, and her core teachers to share their ideas for creating a vision of a student-led inquiry and collaborative approach to teaching and learning. As a result of her planning, all teacher and student stations are laptop computers, and the entire campus is wirelessly networked. With the use of mobile labs, technology travels to the students, rather than the other way around.

“Dream how technology can not only improve education but also transform what we think of as education.” [Ron Page, 2003]. Under Denise’s leadership, Sanderlin is a school making great strides to make this dream a reality. The school has a firm commitment to helping students reach high expectations through an active and hands-on approach with real world connections. Education often takes place beyond the classroom. For example, students work outside with technology conducting experiments, scanning things from nature, and writing research notes. Students then bring this data back to create their own knowledge and then share what they have learned in an electronic presentation. In initiative to recognize students, projects and artwork are photographed by other students, and then they design a slideshow which is shared on their TV network.

Denise’s professional involvement is what distinguishes her as an outstanding educator and earns her the highest respect from her colleagues both within the district and across the state. She has served on for five years on the Technology Advisory Committee for Pinellas County Schools. She frequently presents at conferences and was an invited speaker at an FETC Principals’ Roundtable, and to present grant writing skills at FCIT. Last year she was selected to serve on a state initiative, the Laptops for Learning Task Force. Her administrative expertise as a technology leader provided that group with a comprehensive perspective of the instructional impact of wireless technology in education.

Pinellas County has recognized Denise Miller’s accomplishments in selecting her as our instructional technology leader. She is a deserving candidate for FCITL’s Innovative Principal of the Year.