

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

District Name: Palm Beach County Schools

NOMINATING FCITL MEMBER CONTACT INFORMATION

**Name of Nominating FCITL Member: Gary Weidenhamer
(must be voting member)**

FCITL Member's E-mail Address: Weideng@palmbeach.k12.fl.us

Phone #: (561) 434-8204

Fax #: (561) 434-8392

Superintendent's Name: Arthur Johnson, PhD.

PRINCIPAL NOMINEE CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Principal Nominee: Karen Whetsell

Principal's E-mail Address: Whetsek@palmbeach.k12.fl.us

School Name: Poinciana Elementary School

**School Address: 1203 North Seacrest Blvd.
Boynton Beach FL 33435**

School Phone #: (561) 369-7094

School Fax #: (561) 364-7947

NOMINATION INFORMATION

Please provide the information that best reflects why this nominee should be selected to receive the FCITL Instructional Technology Leadership Award: Innovative Principal of the Year.

Recommended information to be highlighted:

- Principal's Background Information (number of years in current position, number of years in education, educational experience, etc.)
- School Background/Demographics
- School and Principal's Instructional Technology Accomplishments: (focusing on how nominee has provided leadership to make a positive impact on student achievement using instructional technology).

All information provided needs to be limited to two pages and sent as an attachment in Word format. Completed nomination forms and digital videos are due to Gary Evans (gary@audioenhancement.com) by December 3, 2004. Only electronic submissions will be accepted.

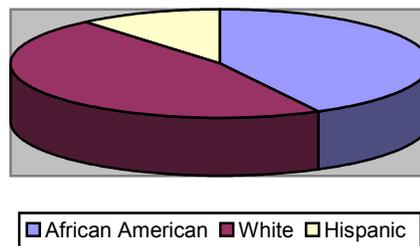
Florida Council of Instructional Technology Leaders
Instructional Technology Leadership Award: Innovative Principal of the Year



Karen Whetsell, Palm Beach County

For the last 19 years Karen Whetsell has been an educator in Palm Beach County. During this time she has been a classroom teacher, a resource teacher, an assistant principal, and a principal. She has been the Chairperson for Elementary Principals and is currently the Chair of the Principals' Technology Committee. Throughout each of these positions, Ms. Whetsell has been a continuous developer of teachers by designing and facilitating a variety of Staff Development.

As Principal of Poinciana Elementary School for the past eight years (and Assistant Principal for the same school three years prior) Mrs. Whetsell has had a tremendous opportunity to bring technology to the forefront. During the 1994-1995 school year Poinciana Elementary began its transition from a regular public school on the verge of closure to a successful state-of-the-art Math, Science, and Technology Magnet School. The school's letter grade has risen steadily over the past 6 years, with the school earning an "A" this past year. For the past 10 years Poinciana has served a racially and economically diverse student population. The school is approximately 38% African American; 42% white; and 10% Hispanic. Poinciana's Free and Reduced Lunch rate is approximately 42%.



The school is centered on the philosophy of a standards-based, science-focused, interdisciplinary instructional program. Mrs. Whetsell has instituted a Planning Model that has been a part of the school culture for the past 11 years. This planning model enables teachers to remain focused on the standards, starting with the science content first, then effectively weaving in the other standards, with technology embedded throughout. In addition to its regular role in classroom instruction, technology is a part of all other courses offered---art, music, media, science lab and math lab, and the planetarium. In addition to software instruction, students engage in technology-based engineering projects in their Technology Lab Courses. Students also utilize draw and paint programs to a high level in their art classes. Musical software is implemented during their music class time. Technology is seen as a tool.

The bulk of technology, however, is found in the classroom instructional program. Poinciana is fortunate to have at least five computers in every regular classroom. Over time the focus of the school has moved from Computer Assisted Instruction to Integrated Technology. While one will observe that *some* computer assisted instruction takes place, it is carefully planned, and is not the ONLY technology in which children are engaged. Mrs. Whetsell has utilized District purchased programs, as well as experimented with others that have resulted in District support. Through dialogue, the reading of articles, conference participation, and carefully planned staff development, Poinciana students are engaged in the use of technology as a tool for learning and presenting.

As hardware has become outdated, Mrs. Whetsell has been able to secure District funding for new machines. The staff has supported her endeavors by allocating a portion of the School Recognition Funds over the past three years to technology hardware and training.

Mrs. Whetsell has provided for her teachers regular technology integration training through the committed use of Professional Development Days. There have also been half-day trainings scheduled over the last three years to provide additional support in teacher technology development. The school's technology philosophy has evolved over time. The premise of all training is built on that philosophy, which Mrs. Whetsell consistently facilitates, communicates, and models in her faculty meetings and staff trainings. Technology is a tool for learning and

presenting. Technology has specific components that must be learned, however those components that are *strictly* technology do not need be taught in isolation. Like any good instruction those specific components can be taught in context to ensure the proper connection to prior experiences. Teachers are also afforded the opportunity to share with others what they are using technology for in their classrooms. This occurs after the half-day trainings. With this type of approach the school is able to cross-pollinate some very exciting ideas.

Mrs. Whetsell has been an advocate for enabling teachers to reach higher goals. Under her leadership five teachers have achieved their National Boards, and have coached teachers around the District to achieving theirs. She has also assisted three teachers in attaining their Master's degrees, and is currently working with two others. This number constitutes approximately 20% of her instructional staff. She has also supported a number of grants to support student achievement. Most recently, grants have been awarded for probeware and an iMac for the Science Lab, and an incredible Space Shuttle Simulator in the Planetarium. She herself was awarded a \$2,000.00 grant for literature to support the school's Science & Technology Curriculum.

On any visit to the school one will see the entire staff communicate via e-mail. Over time parameters have been set as to what is appropriate for e-mail. These parameters are not limited to those that are a part of the District policy, but rather "common sense" communication. On any given day you will see teachers integrating a myriad of technology into their lessons. Teachers use the Internet, Webquests, and a variety of other programs to teach specific lessons. One will see students engaged in video production, research, word processing, lessons, and digital photography. One will also see the implementation of probeware in the Science Lab. All of these activities are in conjunction with a specific curricular area (in addition to the technology standard) being taught in their classroom. The principal visits classrooms on a daily basis, asking students to discuss their technology use.

For the past two years Poinciana has had 100% participation in the local Technology Conference. All decisions relating to technology integration and implementation are made collaboratively with the principal and the technology committee. Committees as a whole have evolved and now the school has a curriculum committee with ad hoc committees for special areas during special times. This technology integration initiative will continue to develop over time and technology instruction become seamless.

In addition to all of her efforts at school, Mrs. Whetsell empowers her teachers to be Technology Leaders. Members of her staff are members of the District's MOD (Multimedia on Demand) Squad that provides digital video training throughout the District. The MOD Squad has been a key component in implementing the Tech Ambassadors Program, the District's ***NCLB: Enhancing Education through Technology*** entitlement grant initiative. Teachers have presented their integrated technology lessons at local and state technology conferences, and at state science conferences. Mrs. Whetsell herself has utilized digital video at her presentations for other leaders at the National Science Conferences for the past four years.

The children are the key to the future. It is important for them to have all of the tools that they need in order to make their way in the world. Mrs. Whetsell empowers her teachers, observes her students, assesses each situation, designs staff development, discusses curriculum, and loves her job. She is truly an excellent candidate for the FCITL Innovative Principal of the Year.

