

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE

Improved test scores lead administrators to extend the Pitsco science program to more than 50 schools in Hillsborough County, Florida

Topic groupings geared toward FCAT success

About the District

- Hillsborough County Public Schools
- Tampa, Florida
- Enrollment: 194,737 (eighth largest school district in U.S.)
- Number of elementary schools: 142 (more than 50 have a Pitsco science lab)

Test Results

Following the first three waves of Mission lab implementation through 2006, results on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in science for fifth graders included:

- **Wave 1 schools** – of the 13, nine made FCAT gains and five exceeded the district mean.
- **Wave 2 schools** – of the nine, eight made FCAT gains and four exceeded the district mean.
- **Wave 3 schools** – of the 11, seven made FCAT gains and two exceeded the district mean.

Tampa, Florida – In these days of accountability and annual yearly progress, rising test scores attract attention and can lead to program expansion. Pitsco Education's elementary science curriculum is a prime example. Nine years ago, 13 elementary Mission labs were installed on an experimental basis in Hillsborough County (Tampa), Florida, one of the 10 largest school districts in the United States.

Many of the schools using the supplemental science program saw test scores rise within a few years. Consequently, more than 50 Pitsco science (Missions) labs have been implemented in the district, primarily at schools on the lower socioeconomic end of the spectrum.

"Such wonderful things come out of schools that use the Missions," said District Resource Teacher Barbara Brightman. "We had large numbers of Missions schools with big jumps (in test scores) in that third year. That's why the district allowed us to put it on our new-school purchase. Every new school that's built gets a Missions lab."

The Supervisor of Elementary Science for Hillsborough County, Shana Tirado, came in fully aware of a 2005-2006 study



that revealed the curriculum's positive impact at the first 33 schools where it was implemented. "My philosophy is, 'Don't fix what's not broken.' It's been proven to work, so we're going to continue to put (Pitsco labs) in new schools," Tirado said.

With an extensive list of Pitsco science topics available, teachers can become highly selective when determining which topics to include in their labs. Lee Elementary Missions Facilitator Becky Weinberg went a step further a few years ago and analyzed exactly which state science standards were met to the highest degree by a specific list of Missions. The end result was a set of topics that helped students to a top-10 finish out of 141 district elementary schools on the fifth grade science portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) last school year.



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Elementary Science
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