
A HOT LINK TO HOMEWORK

Tropical Elementary School

Plantation, Florida

When Tropical Elementary School wanted to increase the avenues for communication between teachers and families, they turned to *schoolnotes.com*. *Schoolnotes.com* is a free online service provided to educators around the world. The easy-to-use format allows teachers to design classroom web pages for a variety of uses. It does not require advanced computer skills or a great deal of time. Teachers can use the system anywhere there is Internet access.

Starting in August 1999, the fifth grade team at Tropical Elementary used *schoolnotes.com* to post daily assignments, announcements, and messages, as well as offer email capabilities for parents to contact teachers. The teachers informed fifth grade parents and students about the program in a letter sent home on the first day of school and during Open House. Additionally, teachers taught all fifth grade students how to access *schoolnotes.com* on their home computers.

The major challenge the team faced was how to provide equal access to information for the small fraction of students whose families did not have Internet access at home. To meet this challenge, teachers continued to record daily assignments on classroom boards and in students' daily planners.

Although the team has not yet formally measured results, the feedback from the parents, students, teachers, and administration has been very positive. Parents are especially pleased to be able to access their children's assignments and communicate with the teachers during absences.

As a result of the success experienced by the fifth grade team, Tropical Elementary teachers are implementing this program at other grade levels. The goal is for every classroom in the school to use this mode of communication between families and teachers.

Deborah Hysell and Patricia Fritz, Action Team Members
(954) 797-4330