

# HIGHLANDS TODAY

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## Cracker Students Catch the WeatherBug

By MARC VALERO

SEBRING - Cracker Trail Elementary students have literally caught the WeatherBug with a weather tracking station perched atop a covered walkway at their school.

The school recently installed the WeatherBug weather station, which provides live data that can be viewed on the school's Web site and on smart phones.

Fourth-grade teacher Ian Belanger believes the tracking station and accompanying software will allow the students, staff and community to more effectively understand the science of meteorology.

Instead of just using the textbook to teach students the difference between the Fahrenheit and Celsius temperature scales, Belanger will use the live and historical data from the school's weather tracking station.

The thermometer illustrations in the book are not very exciting to the students, he said.

With WeatherBug, "you can very quickly make it meaningful for a kid," he said. "I can pull up the last 30 days of data and look at the temperature highs and lows."

Addressing his students, Belanger said, "We are comparing the wind speed with the temperature. What do we notice? When the wind speed goes up what happens to the temperature?"

A girl responded, "The temperature goes higher."

Checking the time of the day, Belanger noted that overnight the wind speed is lower or near zero while the temperatures are lower.



Fifth-grader Everett Hurst holds a digital readout monitor that provides information on the weather including current temperature, humidity and wind speed readings. This information is broadcasted daily from Cracker Trail Elementary's television studio.

In the school's television studio, fifth-grader Everett Hurst explained that a digital readout monitor in the studio provides current temperature and humidity readings and wind speed and direction for the student serving as the weather person during the daily morning broadcasts.

Previously, the weather person went on the Internet to a Tampa-area television station's Web site to get weather data, he said. "We used to have to do that before the show and it could change a lot. That was kind of a problem," Hurst said. "Then we got WeatherBug, which helped us a lot and that just gave us live instant data so we didn't have to worry about it being wrong."

WeatherBug has many lesson plans outlined for teachers and instructional videos, Belanger noted.

"It's really going to improve our science teaching and across the entire curriculum with math today and then writing and so on," he said.

Belanger had made a request for the weather station to the school district's science committee, which funded the purchase.

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## Cracker Students Catch the WeatherBug...Continued



Ian Belanger introduces his fourth-graders to WeatherBug on Thursday at Cracker Trail Elementary in Sebring. The WeatherBug monitoring station provides live data which can be viewed on the school's Web site.

Want local weather?

For a check of the weather at Cracker Trail Elementary, go to [www.highlands.k12.fl.us/~cte](http://www.highlands.k12.fl.us/~cte). For more live weather data, select "staff" and then select Ian Belanger to view his class' home page.

Also, at [www.weatherbug.com](http://www.weatherbug.com), local weather data from Cracker Trail Elementary can be viewed by entering a local zip code.

### FAST FACTS

Belanger had made a request for the weather station to the school district's science committee, which funded the purchase along with a grant.

WeatherBug is a brand of AWS Convergence Technologies, Inc., Germantown, Md.

Highlands Today reporter Marc Valero can be reached at 863-386-5826 or [mvalero@highlandstoday.com](mailto:mvalero@highlandstoday.com)