Two months into the 2011-12 school year, sixth-grade mathematics instruction in one Sacramento-area school district is garnering very positive feedback from all who are involved in the IFT-sponsored Algebra Success Academy (ASA).

In partnership with Twin Rivers Unified School District, Twin Rivers United Educators and the UC Davis CRESS Center, the ASA has expanded to two schools and three 6th-grade classrooms. And, according to ASA lead teacher Wendy Gallimore, she hopes and believes there are many more to come.

Janet Schafer, one of the new 6th-grade teachers who volunteered to participate, remarked that her students were more on-task, had improved attendance and a more positive attitude about school. She also noted a greater number sense, as well as “a broadening of their view about what they want to be.”

Her comments were echoed by Susan Excell, a fellow Rio Tierra Junior High 6th-grade teacher, who said “the kids are really buying into this.” She noted that the program’s activities really improve her students’ ability to work together in groups.

Joyce Childs said that neighborhood families want to send their children to Rio Tierra. She added that other TRUSD teachers have begun to ask about the ASA’s approach to algebraic instruction.

One of the essential ASA tools is an annual project known as the Tripline. Based on an actual event, this year a field trip to a Ropes Course, students learn how to use symbols and icons to graphically represent the activities of the day.

By placing the events in chronological order along a number line, each event is assigned a numerical value in relation to other events that came before or after. Students and teachers can then utilize the Tripline to tell a common story and chart movement along the number line. Thus, abstract concepts like positive and negative numbers can be conveyed in concrete terms for students.
“Be it ever so humble...there’s no place like home.” This essential bit of wisdom is even more pertinent if the home is a place where a dedicated local teacher visits with a student’s family members to discuss their hopes and dreams for his/her future.

Led by Carrie Rose and the staff of the Sacramento-based Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project, their recent National Conference invited partners from eleven states to Reno, Nevada to affirm their common belief in the value of parent/teacher home visits. IFT Manager Dick Gale was pleased to present a welcoming speech affirming CTA’s fierce advocacy of this approach to improving student achievement.

All participants shared five core values: 1) The visits are voluntary; (2) The visits build the capacity of both educators and families; 3) The visitors are trained, go in pairs and are compensated for their time; 4) The visits take place with all families and are not targeted to struggling students; and 5) The visits are strategically designed to boost the educational success of pre K-12 students.

Nearly 200 teachers, support staff, parents and school officials joined together for the Fifth Annual National Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project National Conference in Reno. Program participants from Montana, Colorado, Virginia, Ohio, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nevada, Washington D.C., Minnesota, Oregon as well as California, were represented. Organizers are pleased that the annual event has nearly doubled in size each year during its five-year history. IFT provides an annual contribution to the support the work of the PTHVP.