New IFT Website Invites Members and the Community to Explore Strength-Based Teacher-Driven Change

We know that April showers bring May flowers. But, did you also know that Spring 2012 also marks the blossoming of the new IFT website?

Our members, and the rest of the community that cares so passionately about public education and success for students, now have a comprehensive educational resource with a singular focus on strength-based teacher-driven change.

The website reflects the philosophy and approach of the IFT Board of Directors. The IFT believes school change should focus on what’s working; the great teaching taking place in our classrooms. Further, if we want to know why children are successful, talk to successful students and their parents.

The IFT believes that the best strategy for school improvement is to investigate what’s working, not what’s broken. By focusing on what works in our schools and encouraging teacher independence and increasing capacity, we are more likely to have success.
Teachers Spreading the Word about Their Work and Their Support from IFT

Outstanding educators from all over California have been working beyond their traditional classroom duties to inform CTA members about critical teacher-driven work that is changing outcomes for students. During the past conference season, five CTA members affiliated with the Institute for Teaching have presented workshops to fellow educators highlighting successful programs such as the Algebra Success Academy in Twin Rivers USD. ASA Lead teacher Wendy Gallimore and her partner Jennifer Holmes presented a sample math lesson based on the Chinese Zodiac to an enthusiastic group at the Good Teaching Conference-South. At that same gathering, David Orphal, a social studies teacher at Oakland’s Skyline H.S. expanded on his recent TEDtalk about his vision and hope for the future of teaching profession. David serves on the IFT Grant Selection Committee, and participates in the IFT East Bay Teacher Think Tank. Earlier in March at the Equity & Human Rights Conference, Ashley Gray, social studies department chair from South San Francisco H.S., delivered a passionate and powerful endorsement of Sojourn to the Past. This award-winning Civil Rights education program was started by Jeff Steinberg, then a teacher at San Bruno H.S. Finally, a La Mirada High-based group of educators, led by IFT Grant recipient Norma Williamson, traveled to Sacramento to present a Project-Based Learning Unit exploring the sustainability of alternative energies at the Educating for Careers Conference in February.

(At left) Skyline High School teacher David Orphal (right) meets with IFT Manager Dick Gale at the 2012 CTA Good Teaching Conference in Garden Grove. Dave presented a provocative session called “What the Heck is Teacherpreneur?”

(At Right) Allison Elementary Algebra Success Academy teachers Jennifer Holmes (far left) and Wendy Gallimore (far right) work with a group of fellow teachers in their session, “Wind Your Mind Around Math.” Nearly 30 CTA members attended the Saturday morning workshop.

(At left) IFT Grant coordinator Norma Williamson (in black) stands with her student and staff colleagues in support of their work on the Solar Academy/Green Jobs Prep School at La Mirada High. (Above) California students and teachers have an opportunity to change their lives as they embark on a 10-day trip to the South to meet the surviving leaders and to visit the landmarks of the Civil Rights movement of the sixties as part of the IFT-supported Sojourn to the Past project.