Instruction of algebraic concepts to upper elementary students got a boost in September when the San Francisco-based S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation awarded a two-year grant to the CTA Institute for Teaching to expand the IFT/UC Davis/Twin Rivers Algebra Success Academy.

The Bechtel Foundation, which has awarded nearly $25 million in 2012 to support Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education, strongly believes in the ASA program’s teacher driven approach and its emphasis on concrete, experiential learning prior to introducing abstract concepts.

The IFT will receive support for the 2012-2013 school year and the grant is renewable for a second year pending achievement of agreed-upon outcomes.

According to Susan Harvey, the Bechtel Program Director, the Foundation’s STEM Grantmaking objectives include:

**Early Engagement:** Increase opportunities for students in grades K–8 to experience engaging STEM learning, both in-school and out-of-school.

**STEM Pipeline:** Support students in their progression through grades 7–16 and into STEM careers.

**Educator Capacity:** Develop and promote effective and financially viable approaches to the preparation, training, and retention of excellent STEM educators, with an emphasis on multiple subject credential teachers.

“STEM Education is a primary interest area of the Foundation and the Board of Directors believes strongly in nurturing the scientific and design power of the young mind. Advancing STEM education in California is critical for preparing students to address the most pressing national and global challenges and to ensure that future generations have the basic STEM literacy necessary to be full participants in a productive economy and successful democracy.”
Parent Relations- A Critical Factor in a Culture of Success

Carrie Rose has been the Executive Director of the Sacramento-based Parent Teacher Home Visit Project since 2003. In addition, she is the mother of two public school daughters and has been both a community organizer and a lawyer. Below are two revealing excerpts from an interview IFT conducted with Carrie in September. Please go to www.teacherdrivenculture.org for the full interview and visit the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project website www.pthvp.org for information about how your school can become involved.

IFT- So what is it about the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) approach? Why does it work?

CR - I think a critical feature of our PTHVP is that we are a true collaborative, in every sense of the word. We just don’t say it, we are it. The Project values its partners - teachers, associations, parents, administrators, community organizations - and the partners value each other. Partners take care of the Project and each other.

It is not always an easy road. A true collaborative goes well beyond simple agreements. It is a commitment. A commitment not to some guaranteed outcome. Although we certainly like to hope everything we do will lead to success for our students. But a commitment to an opportunity; that together, parents and teachers, can do wonderful things for kids.

IFT- Is there one time or moment, when you really realized you were on the right track and the PTHVP was going to lead to success?

CR - Yes, there was one pivotal moment for me. Two years ago, participating teachers did a session on the topic of cultural competency and home visiting. The session was great - really got all of us thinking way beyond our comfort zone. What truly struck me, however, was how the teachers described engagement in vivid terms, where teacher-parent conversations moved beyond traditional, predictable roles.

The teachers synthesized their experiences and provided an amazing window where their

Home Visits work because…

“People don’t care about what you know until they know that you care”

The Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project is as much a process as anything else. We present an opportunity for teachers and parents to construct a new relationship around the education of children.

The Project gives teachers the space to hold essential conversations with parents. Teachers and parents go way beyond how’s Johnny or Sally doing. Teachers talk with their student’s parents not just about reading, writing, and arithmetic but have the time and space to discover common values, their feelings, concerns, fears, hopes, and dreams.

For me this not just important, it is sacred. It brings me such joy to know that our Project is helping to provide the time and physical place for teachers and parents to jointly develop mutually shared trust based on compassion - love - for children.

home visiting outreach became transformative for their understanding of their local community and their ability to better connect with students and curriculum delivery in the classroom.

Too often teachers and families connect out of compliance with federal or state mandates. Other times teachers and parents meet in well-intentioned but random activities. While both types of meetings can be positive, there is still a disconnect between the idea and the expected outcome.

What I heard from these teacher presenters was something so different. I was truly moved by the teachers’ passion for their craft and their willingness to create a time and place where all parties could work on their skills to communicate what was in the child’s best interest.