Palm Springs TA Grants Create Value for Students, Parents & Teachers

The Association was awarded $29,900 as part of the 2012-13 IFT Grant Program

Demonstrating their commitment to enhancing educational outcomes for families in Palm Springs and Desert Hot Springs, the Palm Springs Teachers Association implemented two IFT Chapter Grants totaling nearly $30,000 during this school year. Led by their veteran Association President, Beverly Bricker, the grant projects succeeded in enhancing connections between local schools and their parents and strengthening school-wide relations, two of the seven major factors IFT has identified in the School Community Culture of Success. One project focused on the creation of a culinary academy at a local middle school that had been demoralized over their chronic labeling as a Program Improvement school. The other focused on parents with children in the Early Childhood program. Using CABE’s “Project 2 Inspire” training, teachers worked with parents to sustain and improve their child’s learning experience in the classroom and at home. As part of the Family-School-Community Engagement program, the goal is to teach parents how to engage, motivate and support their children’s success in school. PSTA believes that when schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life.

(Above) On a warm evening in March, hundreds of parents, students and staff from Desert Hot Springs MS gathered to honor outstanding academic achievement among the school’s 7th & 8th-graders. The awards ceremony was the culmination of an 18-month strength-based school transformation project spearheaded by DSMS staff members (Right) Steve Syfert, P.E., Vivian Hernandez, Special Ed. and Amy Lond, Counselor.

(Above) Palm Springs TA Vice-President Mark Acker joined CTA Vice-President Eric Heins and CTA Board Member Jose Alcalá at a graduation ceremony in March honoring more than two dozen parents who completed Level 1 of the PSTA-sponsored “Project 2 Inspire” program. Offered in conjunction with the CA Association for Bilingual Education, the program had an enormous emotional and educational impact. IFT has recognized Beverly Bricker (far right, with IFT Program Consultant Anita Benitas) as a “Model Association President” for her commitment to teacher-driven change.
IFT is honored to represent classroom practitioners in discussions around the state of California around improving opportunities for students to engage in high-quality STEM instruction both in school and during out-of-school time. Unquestionably, momentum is building for the creation of partnerships between K-12 institutions, colleges and universities, community organizations, the business community and Regional STEM Networks.

One such network is the Cal State East Bay Institute for STEM Education. Their Director, Stephanie Couch, organized an Education Summit on February 26th at the Bayer Healthcare offices in Berkeley to bring State Superintendent of Instruction Tom Torlakson and other officials from the CA Department of Education, to discuss how the greater community can work together to create opportunity and advancement for all California students.

The *Powering Up Science Education for California’s Future* conference was an opportunity for educators, business leaders and graduates of some of the state’s best science education career pathway programs to discuss major improvements that are happening now and what else needs to be done.

In a panel designed to focus on the public schools, the emphasis was on the practitioners. It was agreed that teachers and community members must join together to design ways to build on existing strengths and assets to develop STEM learning opportunities that inspire students. Students need to learn about the practices of scientists and engineers right in their own backyard and the many ways that mathematics is applied to challenges that they and their families face every day.