Gauer Elementary School Staff is Busy “Daring to Dream”

The Anaheim school is partnering with IFT to bring a strength-based focus

“"We are teachers because we are dreamers. We became teachers because we dream for a better society and a brighter future for all. Dreams require optimism and hope, but more than that, they require active pursuit if they are ever to become reality. Dreams will remain dreams until they are actively pursued. This takes hard work, determination, and perseverance.” (from Gauer’s IFT Grant Proposal).

Gauer’s journey toward their Dream School began in the spring 2012 when three like-minded educators came together to transform their school. Two teachers, Virginia Tibbetts & Amy Asaoka-Nakakihara, and their supportive principal, Dr. Debbie Schroeder, had a dream to change their Anaheim school. They believed they needed to do more to counter media reports that public schools were broken, students uninspired, and teachers ineffective.

Gauer serves 700 children from, many from socioeconomically struggling families. Nearly 75% of their scholars enter school with Spanish as their dominant language and 86% participate in the free/reduced meal program.

In the summer of 2012, IFT supported their effort by sending IFT staffers Dr. Yale Wishnick and Dr. Anita Benitas to facilitate the creation of a school mission statement that would articulate their dream. At their Stakeholders’ Summit, they presented a strength-based, teacher-driven philosophy that integrated the school’s successes with the Seven Factors of Success. The classified, certificated, and administrative staff, as well as Association leaders, came together to develop a mission that would focus their efforts to build Gauer Dream School.

The group at Gauer worked diligently throughout 2012-13 to apply the Seven Factors of Success to their Dream Mission. In so doing, they created a school that dares to make dreams come true. Together, they have done amazing things to inspire and cultivate the love of learning; empower their scholars in a safe, joyful, and intellectually stimulating environment; and encourage them to thrive and become well-rounded individuals. Through e-mail, grade level teams, Dream committees, staff meetings, leadership meetings, and weekly collaboration time, Gauer Dream School is making more dreams come true than they ever thought possible.

Armed with a $20,000 IFT Chapter Grant for the 2013-14 school year, the staff at Gauer and the Anaheim Elementary Education Association continue to demonstrate that the Seven Factors of Success can make an entire school community successful. In other words, they are busily creating a school culture of success.

“Creating and building Gauer Dream School has transformed the culture and climate of our school. We have a reason now to do all the "extras" without feeling burdened about having "one more thing to put on our plate." Pursuing the Dream has put the joy back into teaching and learning. Everything we do has a synergistic effect” (from Gauer’s IFT Grant Proposal).
Mariana Robles, 2-Time IFT Grant Recipient, Selected as One of 96 NEA Master Teachers in the United States

First-grade teacher Mariana Robles of Hawthorne Elementary School in Riverside has been chosen as one of 96 National Education Association Master Teachers. Robles sought the position because she saw it "as an opportunity to learn more about the Common Core Standards, to help other teachers, and to take part in this movement within CTA and NEA to take back our profession and participate in teacher driven change."

Robles has been a teacher for 19 years. With the support of IFT grants in 2011 and 2012, she helped to bring the innovative ARTECH program to Hawthorne which integrates art and technology into learning, helping to engage students and to broaden their horizons.

She said she is humbled because there are so many amazing teachers out there who deserve to be recognized. "I want to show that the teachers union is willing to step up and enrich our profession. I want the public to get rid of the erroneous idea that we are just about the contract, when the truth is we are about children and a better future."

-scenes from the Algebra Success Academy’s First Ever Family Math Night at Chula Vista’s Casillas Elementary

Everyone seemed to get involved on September 5th as nearly 300 parents, teachers and students gathered for the school’s first ever Algebra Success Academy Family Math Night. Principal Emiko Nakamura (lower right) displays one of the PTA’s “Math Night” Spirit Sticks, while Casillas teacher and local ASA leader Aundrea French (lower left with Wendy Gallimore) was quite pleased about the involvement of her colleagues and the enthusiasm of the parents and children who attended. Their conclusion? Learning math is fun!