2013-14 Algebra Success Academy is Spreading the Love for Math

CTA members and families from Paradise to Chula Vista are sharing positive math experiences.

The IFT’s Algebra Success Academy is kicking off the 2013-14 school year in 13 districts throughout the state. Thanks to a second-year grant from the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, ASA is able to organize these district kick offs, which are a critical part of the parent engagement portion of the ASA program. Families are invited to school to share a meal and an evening together, with nothing else being asked of them. All the events are unique and help build relationships and trust between the teachers and schools and their families.

The kick offs are followed by Family Math Nights, where parents (and families), teachers, and students enjoy playing math games and interacting around mathematical concepts. In Fresno County, more than 750 people attended activities in the Riverdale Joint USD. School staff and families have shared everything from root beer float festivals to pizza parties to barbequed fair food. But, the eating is followed by learning, as families play card games, compete in math races, and “ski,” ASA-style. Program leaders believe these relationship-building activities help establish firm roots in their participating school communities.

In addition, ASA fellows are able to strengthen their skills and, hopefully, rediscover a sense of joy in their profession. IFT also believes that participating students are experiencing an enriched educational environment and better learning conditions.

Several of the participants in this year’s CTA Region 2 Leadership Conference in Reno attended IFT’s “Teacher-Driven Change: New Opportunities Lead to New Possibilities” workshop. They were enthusiastic about ASA’s expansion into their districts (Paradise and Amador County Unified). They said that not only were their students benefitting from the enhanced math teaching, but that as teachers they had never felt so supported in their pedagogy.

ASA Fellows (below left) traversing the Toxic Swamp challenge as part of the ASA training held at the CTA Office in Natomas. Happy to report, they came away unscathed. (Below right) As the ASA program came to the Vallejo District for the first time, more than two dozen of their most enthusiastic teachers participated in ASA professional development trainings. They returned to their classrooms with new tools to engage their students in a concrete way around algebraic concepts.
“People Don’t Care What You Know, Until They Know That You Care”

As part of an IFT strength-based project, two CTA members from Emory Elementary School in San Diego County embarked on a journey of discovery. Their goal was to visit the homes of each of their 66 sixth-graders and to meet their families.

Dana Tomlinson and Erin Ecclefield brought with them a backpack full of essential school supplies and left with a whole lot of knowledge about the dreams that these parents have for their children.

Dana described a recent visit to the family of April Castro. “They showed us around their house, shared some family photos and we talked about how wonderful April is- kind, strong, outspoken, athletic. We explained how some of the programs at our school work and what she can expect from us this year, and how we can best help April.

We also had her take a survey to discover parental strengths on the Chrome book that our students are using this year.

Dana and Erin joined nearly 300 PTHVP conference participants who gathered in California for a chance to dig in, share strategies, solve problems, celebrate successes and move forward.

According to Carrie Rose, Executive Director, “At a time when so much in the education world focuses on the negative, we have something to offer- an inexpensive, replicable and effective strategy that brings families and schools together, provides a foundation for the kind of family educator engagement that produces results and helps students achieve their dreams.” Learn more at www.pthvp.org.

Former CTA Executive Director Carolyn Doggett receives the first-ever Jocelyn Graves Distinguished Service Award from the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project’s Board President Howard Lawrence, as IFT Manager Dick Gale looks on. Carolyn met founding parent Jocelyn Graves, who died in 2007, and become an early and ardent supporter of the project.