Grant On-Line Application Process Now Open for 2014-15

To demonstrate the effectiveness of Strength-Based approaches to learning, all CTA members are eligible to apply. Please visit the IFT website (www.teacherdrivenchange.org) for more information and read below to learn more about an exemplary IFT grant project from 2012-13.

Metal Shop Students Given a Chance to Improve Both Their Production Skills and Their Employment Opportunities

Fresno high school students were given an opportunity to learn-by-doing as part of an IFT Grant project. Their sequential instruction was developed by their teacher in conjunction with a Welding-Level One curriculum from the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). By connecting the trade with core competencies, participating students were also motivated to improve in math, science and language arts classes, as well.

When working with Fresno Unified teacher Albert Rocha, students encounter a professional who is truly committed to their long-term well-being.

He strives to bring to life a vision of their future which includes having the skills and knowledge that will allow them to succeed as a welder in the workplace here in the Central San Joaquin Valley.

Rocha’s Mobile Metal Shop grant project not only brought needed technical education to his students, but it helped focus the attention of Fresno Unified School District administrators and Board members on the importance of Career Education. With a $20,000 Chapter Grant in hand, Rocha persuaded FUSD officials to allow him to spend the 2012-13 school year as a Career and Technical Education teacher on special assignment to develop links in the Career Pathways program to Building Trades and Agricultural Mechanics.

In addition to his classroom instruction, Rocha worked with the Pipefitters, Iron Workers, Electricians and Sheet Metal Unions on employability skills and entry level apprenticeships.

He also found that local businesses like Praxair and Valley Iron were willing to make in-kind contributions in support of his IFT grant.

Mostly, though, Rocha reflects on his enthusiasm for working directly with his students. As he wrote to IFT, “the students developed a wonderful curiosity towards safety and welding that helped propel most of them to excel and be self-driven in their own learning. In fact, with only six months exposure to welding, one of his students applied and was accepted to Lincoln Technical School in Denver, Colorado to pursue multiple welding certifications.

Rocha has also served on the Board of Directors of the Fresno Teachers Association.

Fresno metal shop students from Hoover, DeWolf and Duncan Polytechnical High Schools, display their welded tables. Before these students could begin their work, they had to complete an online OSHA safety certification. In the current school year, the program expanded to a fourth high school, Sunnyside.
IFT is Working to Enhance Teacher Leadership Throughout the State

When the CTA State Council unanimously passed the CTA Strategic Plan (Our Union, Our Future) in January 2014, much appreciation was directed toward the dozens of CTA members and Staff that carefully put the plan together.

In it, they wrote, “Participants strongly believe that fulfilling the mission of CTA and building a stronger union will require an expanded group of educators who are integrally engaged in their local schools, their local unions, and their local communities.”

The Institute for Teaching believes it can play an important part in working throughout California to engage with this expanded group of educators and to help broaden the definition of “teacher leadership” within our union.

During the last five years, with assistance from our members’ voluntary dues contributions, IFT has developed a number of programs, such as the Grant Program, the Algebra Success Academy, the Positive Deviance Project and the Teacher Think Tanks, that provide opportunities for this type of teacher leadership.

IFT’s concentration on strength based, teacher driven change aligns completely with the strategic plan’s urgent and ambitious focus: to shift the social narrative on education reform toward a student-centered agenda that fully incorporates the insights and expertise of education professionals.

It continues, “As educators, CTA members know how effective public schools should operate. The plan builds a platform for CTA members to lead the education agenda, to engage local communities in that discourse and to continue to be strong and effective advocates on education policy...”

On Friday evening January 31st, after a long week of work, interested teachers gathered at the Oxnard CTA Office to discuss issues of concern, as well as the positive work they are doing to bring about success for their students. Oxnard Teacher Think Tank members Steve Johnson, Courtney Stockton, Chip Fraser and Andrea Pulido joined facilitator Margaret Wallace in welcoming a dozen of their colleagues whom they had invited to sample their work. The group was composed primarily of staff members from Westlake and Newbury Park High Schools.

Members of the Region 3 Teacher Leadership Cohort (top) welcomed IFT Manager Dick Gale in December as they discussed the progress they were making on their individual leadership projects. (Pictured above) are Adriana Perez, Tina Gruen, Ashley Cooper, Gabriela Orozco-Gonzalez, and Barbara Ransom. In January, IFT Grant Recipients (bottom), Jack Riviere of Santa Clara, Bonnie Magill of Marysville and Greg Adler of San Jose, spoke passionately with other teachers about their projects at the Good Teaching Conference-North.