



CTA Institute for Teaching

CTA Board Report:
June 2014

Thirty Eight Strength-Based Grants to be Awarded to CTA Members for 2014-15

Pending approval of the IFT Board of Directors, the IFT Grant Selection committee is recommending **38** strength-based teacher driven grants for the upcoming school year. The grants, which total **\$398,335**, are funded by CTA members' voluntary dues contributions to the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning.

The 2014-15 grant recipients were selected from a group of 118 applications, 70% more than were submitted during the previous grant year. Unfortunately, there were many worthy proposals that were not recommended for funding due to budget constraints.

The successful proposals were chosen because of their connection to IFT's "seven factors in the school culture of success." Although they vary by grade level and subject area, the grant projects all reflect the passions and interests of CTA members from around the state.

Among the group of recommended projects, nearly one-third are whole school, cross-curricular and cross-grade level projects, while one-fourth of the projects are STEM-related. In addition, there are multiple projects supporting school gardens, fine arts, parent engagement and physical fitness. The projects come from twenty-nine separate local associations.



*Members of the IFT Grant Selection Committee gathered in Oakland in May to evaluate grant applications for 2014-15. The committee is made up of educators from around the state who have a grounding in the strength-based approach advocated by IFT. They include (from left) **Carlos Solis** (Middle School Teacher from Ontario-Montclair); **Anita Benitas** (IFT Staff); **Barry Wissman** (Elementary School Teacher from Palm Springs); **Kelly Iwanoto** (Elementary School Teacher from Inglewood), **Liane Cismowski** (High School Principal from Mt. Diablo) and **Dave Orphal** (High School Teacher from Oakland). The Committee uses the IFT strength-based matrix as the lens to view each of the grant proposals.*

Grant Projects Increase Students' Connections to their Communities



Students from the Merced Union High School District pose with their teacher, Sarah Morgan (far right) in front of materials for their museum exhibit. Read about their work on page 2.

Two current IFT Grant projects are helping build community connections for students and their teachers. The **Merced Summer History Project** brings Central Valley history to life. Students visit several museums and then, working in collaboration with UC Merced, they create three one-room museum quality history exhibits, and a virtual online museum. The exhibit opens on June 26th.

Another project, **San Jose Walks & Talks** is a student-run walking tour company started by a local history teacher. Grant recipient, Greg Adler bills the program as, "Downtown Walking Tours Led by Students Who Did Their Homework about the City of San Jose."

According to Adler, who teaches social studies at Santa Teresa High School, it was also an ideal way to teach entrepreneurship, especially when teenagers are having a hard time finding part-time jobs. His start-up company has been a hit among locals and tourists alike and, even more importantly, "has connected kids to their community in ways no one could have imagined."

Teen Historians Prepare for Big City Exhibit

*This story, by Jonathan Whitaker, appeared in the **Merced County Times** on June 5, 2014 and is used with permission.*

It's one thing for teens to study history in high school, but it's another, very special thing for them to research their own hometown, and then organize their findings in a real exhibit at a public museum to commemorate a once-in-a-lifetime event.

"This type of research is a lot of work," said 16-year-old Jessica Setiawan of Merced High School. "You can't just Google everything about the history of Merced. It doesn't come up anywhere. And a lot of the information hasn't been synthesized. So whatever you do find, you kinda like have to analyze it on your own."

Setiawan is one of about 20 local high school students participating in the Summer History Project, or SHiP. This year's project is to create an exhibit to coincide with Merced's 125th anniversary celebration. Some 20 teens from campuses in Merced, Atwater, and Livingston are chronicling the changes and progress made in government, business and culture over the years.

The SHiP effort is the brainchild of three Merced High School educators: **Joel Sebastian, a U.S. History teacher; Rich Sandoval, a World History teacher; and Sarah Morgan, Teacher-Librarian.** "We work really well together, and we are always thinking what next can we do for the kids," Morgan said. "It's a result of all our ideas coming together." Grant writing also helped as the trio was able to attract \$20,000 in funds directed by the Institute of Teaching through the statewide teacher's union.

"It's totally different than any other school project."

With the investment SHiP was put into play for all students enrolled in the Merced Union High School District, with the exception of outgoing seniors. Participants – selected through an application process – have a chance to earn 5 units of credit toward graduation, and also community service hours for their senior honors. The grant also helps fund field trips to history museums around the state, and reimburse the Courthouse Museum for supplies and instructional materials.

One student said she was surprised to learn that Merced was considered a larger city than Fresno at one point. Another said she found it interesting how the city has been guiding the redevelopment of South Merced. Interested residents can expect the upcoming exhibit to be full of historic pictures of Merced and information about significant milestones in the city's growth.

One student team – including Theodore Lotz, 17, of Merced High; and Yailin Alvarado, 16, of Livingston High – is working on an interactive computer map that if successful will allow users to click on a highlighted historic building in Merced and bring up past and current photos along with pertinent information on the site. The pair are also looking into developing interviews with residents about the history of Merced so that audio storytelling can be incorporated into the exhibit.

On Merced High student, 16-year-old Erica Bricky, told the Times she has been going to the Courthouse Museum since she was a kid when her mother would take her. Today, however, she has a new perspective as she walks through the old halls conducting research.

"I really enjoy history and I just wanted to do something to show the people of Merced – especially people my age – that there are great things about the city we live in ... Sometimes people ignore what makes are city great, and some people even trash it. ... I don't want the younger people in Merced to think that their city and its history is not important."

She also added, "I know by the end of the summer, I will have a deeper appreciation for what we have done here as a city."



Summer History Program Grant- Museum Exhibition- June 26, 2014- Merced
IFT Workshops at CTA Presidents Conference- July 19-20, 2014- San Jose
San Jose Walks and Talks Grant- Field Trip- July 20, 2014- San Jose