The Imperial Valley Discovery Zone (IVDZ) utilizes high school students to facilitate teacher generated NGSS-aligned lessons for elementary-aged students in the Imperial Valley Unified School District.

Pictured at left are two of these High School Explainers (HSE), Rahul Patel, who intends to pursue a degree in Chemical Engineering and Marie Alvarez, who is planning for a career in medicine.

IVDZ instruction includes field trips to local sites of science learning. In addition, IVDZ supports STEM literacy in our region by organizing engineering challenges, maintaining a Makerspace, and attending community events with informal STEM exhibits.

The project’s goal is to tap into the students’ natural curiosity and to bolster their knowledge and interest in STEM learning. The project shifts the way science is taught in favor of a more student-centered approach, making learning more enjoyable.

Veteran educators Dan Gibbs (left) and his brother Dennis, are the driving force behind IVDZ. They admit that they “completely underestimated the impact that this program would have” on the 100 plus students who are involved at Imperial H.S.

CTA Members’ Dreams Turn to 2016-17 as Grant Application Deadline Looms

There’s still time, but you’ll have to hurry! The deadline for IFT’s strength-based grant applications is midnight on Saturday, April 30, 2016.

Thanks to the generosity of CTA members, who voluntarily contribute a portion of their dues to the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning, several dozen educators throughout California, will be able to begin the 2016-17 school with the support of an IFT Educator or Impact Grant.

The upcoming school year will be the seventh since the establishment of IFT’s Grant program. In its first six years, IFT distributed over $1.7 million in strength-based grants to more than 100 CTA members.

The Grant program is driven by the passions of teachers, certificated support staff and classified staff who understand the importance of building on students’ strengths.

As part of this competitive grant program, the members of the Grant Selection Committee will gather in Mid-May to review all grant proposals. Their recommendations will be reviewed by the IFT Board of Directors in June. Grant checks will be sent to the local teachers associations in late July/early August.
Teacher Innovation EXPO showcases excellent teaching and connections to the Seven Factors in the School Culture of Success

Where can you find classrooms with flourishing Biosystems, a thriving floral shop, visiting environmental science experts and tangible connections to the notion of “thinking globally & acting locally?”

Right before your eyes, if you were one of the hundred or so participants in this year’s IFT Teacher Innovation EXPO. The April 15th Pre-Conference was hosted by members of IFT’s regional Teacher Think Tanks and attended by their guests and other CTA members from all over northern California.

The nine EXPO presenters, each of whom received a grant from IFT in 2014-15, also demonstrated tangible links between their grant projects and the seven factors in IFT’s strength-based matrix. One example are Greg Adler’s high school social studies students. Working with their San Jose Walks and Talks small business, they experience a powerful view of their own future.

Students at Curtis Creek Elementary in Sonora were able to Build Community with Community by exploring their rich local history and aligning with their sesquicentennial celebration. Liz Miller’s project became the learning vehicle for a school-wide series of student-centered projects that strengthened community relationships, developed autonomy, and built on strengths and expertise of the stakeholders involved.

Strengthening school-family relations was the focus of Dana Tomlinson’s Parent Home Visit project. She and her San Diego County teaching partner, Erin Ecclefield, embarked on an ambitious project to do home visits to the parents of all sixty-six of their combined sixth-graders.

Their visits were strength-based and focused on the parents’ hopes and dreams for their child and allowed time for each student to show something personal and meaningful to their teachers.

As part of their Out of the Box project, San Joaquin County Special Education teachers Denise Vaughn and Sandra Elliott focused on establishing a collaborative relationship between their thirty 7th-12th students and mentors from the California Waterfowl Association. Placing Duck Boxes would provide nesting space for over 100 ducklings to hatch each year. The grant also funded cameras and a website, providing real time classroom access to the nests from Stockton and Manteca school sites.

Want to learn more about these terrific grant projects? Want to engage with other teachers in sharing strength-based instructional materials and techniques? IFT hopes you will join your colleagues at the HUB.

http://strengthbasedhub.org

The CTA Institute for Teaching (IFT) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
IFT supports strength-based teacher driven change in school communities across California.
Please contact IFT at 619-683-3990 or at contact@teacherdrivenchange.org