Sold-Out New Educator Weekend Brings Energy, Vitality and Strength-Based Connections

More than 600 teachers, counselors and other educators packed the meeting rooms at the Irvine Marriott for a weekend happening that most will not soon forget. It was an event created to introduce California educators with less than 5 years in the profession to the work of their statewide union and to provide an opportunity for new educators to gain knowledge and skills that will enhance their abilities and provide broader perspectives about public education.

Attendees’ reactions on social media were quite positive

- Loved the New Teacher Conference! It’s the first conference I’ve been to where I can take what I’ve learned and apply it tomorrow!
- Education is my passion and #CTA supports that passion.
- Feeling the positive energy of the new teachers!
- Thank you, CTA, for valuing new teachers, providing excellent teacher-driven PD, & keeping these Ts in the profession!
- Strength-based learning discussions and training at the #CTANEW Educator weekend!
- Someone said this weekend was like “drinking from the firehose.” He’s right! So many new ideas, new practices, new support. Thanks.

Three outstanding teachers, Justin McGehee, Eric Enriquez and Michelle Ramos (top right) were among the expert group of planners who decided to try a new way to reach out to younger educators. All three teachers serve as members of the IFT Board of Directors and the focus on strengths was evident throughout the weekend in conference presentations and conversations among the participants.

Rick Morris, a recognized specialist in the field of classroom management and student motivation who regularly attends CTA Conferences took to social media (middle right) to proclaim that the weekend event was a cause for hope. High praise coming from an educator with more than 30 years of classroom experience.

The event opened on Saturday with an “Ask an Educator” panel discussion (bottom right) hosted by Eric Enriquez. It featured current and former teachers whose work combined success with students and association leadership. Sunday featured an EdCamp-style event where participating educators could decide their own topics of discussion.

Just got home from the CTA NEW Conf held at the Irvine Marriott. Although they had anticipated 300 teachers, 600 showed up. And, boy, howdy, was that a dynamic group of educators. Wow. In my humble opinion, there’s hope for the future.

Cheers

Rick Morris
Mentor Emeritus & Founder/CEO of New Management, Inc.
When middle school teacher Irene Sahabdool applied for an IFT grant last Spring, her dream was to provide a **Teacher-Leader Program** for her mathematics students at Mesa Linda Middle School in Adelanto. She envisioned a collaborative effort that would engage her math students with each other and the elementary students of Morgan Kincaid Preparatory Academy.

The plan was to combine teaching, learning and video production into one program. It would provide the framework for students to design, implement and reflect upon math lessons for their peers. The culminating project would be a lesson delivered to students at Doña Merced Elementary by the middle school students.

But, that dream was never fulfilled. Before school started in the fall, Irene changed jobs and became a teacher at Musser Middle School in Rancho Cucamonga in the Central School District. However, even as a brand new teacher at the school, Irene was able to make an immediate impact because her $20,000 IFT grant arrived with her.

IFT grants are awarded to CTA members, wherever they are employed. All that was required was for Irene to verify the willingness of her new Association, Center Unified TA, to act as a fiscal agent in place of the Adelanto District TA. With that, the grant check was sent to Rancho Cucamonga for Irene’s use in the 2016-17 school year.

By providing grant funds through the local teachers association, IFT grant recipients have no tax liability and CTA members can be assured that funds are being spent in accordance with local accounting procedures for items included in the approved grant budget.

Irene said that the grant dollars enabled her class members to gain see and hear local governmental leaders, representatives of local businesses, as well as a partnership with the United Parcel Service.

The award-winning students were celebrated at a schoolwide event that attracted nearly a hundred and fifty parents, other family members and community supporters. At the ceremony, recognition was also given to a group of Irene’s students who made a get-well video for one of their classmates whose sister had been stricken with leukemia.

This type of family engagement is one of seven factors in IFT’s Strength-Based Matrix. The matrix is used as a lens for evaluating grant proposals. All CTA members are eligible to apply for an **Educator grant (up to $5,000)** or an **Impact grant (up to $20,000)**. The application deadline for 2017-18 grants is April 30th.