Discover, Dream, Design & Deliver

Orange County’s Strength-Based Education 2.0 Summit Focuses on Appreciative Inquiry

Over the past 10 years, the Institute for Teaching has developed a body of knowledge representing some of the best teaching and student learning in California. Our approach has been simple: Emphasize what is successful about the public schools and create opportunities for teachers to build on that success.

To expand this critical work, members of IFT’s South Orange County Teacher Think Tank (Laguna Hills) envisioned a meeting of educators where they could discover the greatness in our school-communities, dream what a strength-based teaching and learning environment would look like, design a strength-based school community and deliver on Creating a Culture of Success for All.

What resulted was a two-day gathering for nearly three dozen Southern California educators in Orange. This Appreciative Inquiry Summit was designed to achieve equality of voice as the Summit participants were asked to speak about their vision of the true, the great, and the possible.

The Appreciative Inquiry Summit helped build momentum and success because it believes in teachers, public education, and the school community.

The IFT thanks Think Tank members Judy Blakeney, Denise Bradford, Heidi Chipman, Tricia Hyun, Stella Kim, Debbie Schroeder, Trent Stillman, Karla Turner and Camie Walker for their inspiration. Their great work with Dr. Yale Wishnick, IFT Think Tank facilitator, allowed each Appreciative Inquiry Summit participant an opportunity to discover the exceptional and the essential about public education.

IFT Board Will Consider a Record Number of Grant Recommendations for 2017-18

A record 49 grant recommendations will be taken to the IFT Board of Directors for approval on Thursday, June 15th. Once approved, the 2017-18 grant class will set several records: First, the 49 grants are the highest number ever awarded to CTA members in a single year. Second, these grant recipients were selected from the largest-ever grant application pool of 132 proposals. All applicants will be notified about their grant proposal status by the end of June. Each of the grant applications was judged on a 21-point scale, based on the seven factors in IFT’s Strength-Based matrix. The total awarded statewide to support next year’s strength-based program will be $586,529.

IFT thanks the members of the Grant Selection Committee (from left): Peter Somberg, Inglewood TA; Barry Wissman- Palm Springs TA; Liane Cismowski- Mt. Diablo H.S. Principal & IFT Board Member; Sarah Morgan- Acalanes EA; Anita Benitas- IFT & Beth Micari- Exeter TA.
The Institute for Teaching is Striving to Shape the Future of the California Teachers Association

The CTA Institute for Teaching is proud to be the non-profit arm of the California Teachers Association, a union of educators that has represented school employees in California for more than 150 years. The IFT is privileged to be able to invest our members’ voluntary dues contributions in support of our common work around teaching and learning. It is clear that IFT’s strength-based, student-centered philosophy represents a vision for education that is being increasingly embraced by CTA members and leaders.

This Spring, the CTA Board of Directors and the CTA State Council of Education were presented new information about the progress of this transformation. Included in this update were a number of activities sponsored and supported by the Institute for Teaching. Specifically, the Long Term Strategic Plan Workgroup stated:

“CTA has gone beyond language in supporting the concept of professional capital, specifically in programs that are transforming the profession.

- Initiatives such as the Instructional Leadership Corps, strength-based grants from the Institute for Teaching, and the locally-based teacher leadership support programs that many local Associations are engaged in are changing the face of CTA to our own members and to the public.
- Union-sponsored events like the New Educators Weekend and the IFT Teacher Innovation Expo bring together our newest members and create a place for them to experience how their Association supports them in their teaching and in making connections with their peers.”

Beyond strategic planning, CTA Communications has chosen to highlight a distinct student-centered focus as part of their new teacher information.

The work of the CTA Foundation is being promoted to ensure that our members see the union as a strength-based partner in their professional lives.

CTA emphasizes that the work of the Institute for Teaching not only promotes innovative educational ideas, but also engages union members around the work they are doing in their classrooms and in their school communities.

Such knowledge becomes an effective antidote to the prevalent narrative that all unions do is protect “bad” teachers. The IFT knows that nothing could be further from the truth.

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 ift@teacherdrivenchange.org