Saddleback Valley Education Association “SOARs” to New Heights with Strength-Based Member Engagement

SOAR is a positive approach to strategic thinking and planning that allows organizations to construct their future through collaboration, shared understanding, and a commitment to action. The acronym refers to Strengths - Opportunities - Aspirations - Results

SVEA members were asked to imagine that they fell asleep and didn’t wake up for 5 years. During those 5 years, the Association changed dramatically and their best dreams for SVEA and its members had come true.

IFT asked, What are the members saying? How have things changed? Beyond teacher advocacy, what is SVEA doing that has increased member support, commitment and involvement at all levels? What does the SVEA structure look like? How do leaders engage members? Why do teachers want to be part of SVEA?

Through this strength-based member engagement project, members shared their positive professional experiences and discovered new strengths in themselves and their colleagues.

Jacqui Ochoa, SVEA Secretary, thanked IFT staff for their involvement. “We realize that there will be challenges ahead, however, this is a collaboration unlike any I've known in my career before and I'm honored to be a part of it.”

Here’s an update from the SVEA President, Denise Bradford...

“Overall, the response to the SOAR Membership Engagement Project has been extremely positive. Our Reps enjoyed the positive environment of the strength-based interview conducted at Rep Council. SVEA has also introduced SOAR to our Superintendent and School Board.

Several of our sites have already held their member engagement activity. SVEA has received the data they collected and is excited to plan activities for members. At our recent SVEA Executive Board meeting it was decided to connect with Reps to confirm when they will be completing their activity and reminding them to introduce the Flipgrid and the IFT Strength-Based HUB technology. To view the Flipgrid videos, please visit (www.flipgrid.com/svea, strengthbasedhub.org)

One of our goals embedded in the SOAR project is for members to recognize that SVEA is incorporating their strengths, opportunities and aspirations as part of the overall strategy and direction for the association.”
Supporting Educators Around Teaching and Learning Could Be the Key to Future Member Engagement

During its meeting on September 27, the IFT Board of Directors asserted that the future of our Union will be determined, in part, by our ability to connect with our members around instructional issues and the passion they feel toward teaching and learning. Focusing laser-like on membership engagement and retention, members of the Board articulated strong visions for the future of the Institute for Teaching. All appeared to agree that the strength-based, teacher driven work being done by the outstanding educators working with the IFT will be an integral part of CTA’S overall member engagement work.

**Board members were asked to envision the future of strength-based teacher driven change. Their visions, in part, project where the Institute for Teaching could be five years down-the-road.**

“IFT/CTA is not bound by any limitations, we have the opportunity to continue to be creative, pushing the limits of imagination and challenging our educators to develop and implement ideas in a strength based construct that improves the environment in which we operate.” - E. Toby Boyd, Elk Grove TA

“Teacher leadership projects are important and authentic to the work being done on the ground. Continual education on what works in the classroom and amplifying it to allow other educators to tap into those resources.” - Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez, Montebello TA

“IFT has helped inspire a critical mass of California teachers that have had a strong influence on the quality of public education for students. The classroom experience for our students has finally met the needs and interests of all types of learners.” - Eric Enriquez, Hayward TA

“The Institute for Teaching (IFT) is the preeminent leader for the professional development of educators, an accessible network for sharing of best practices among educators, and major funding source of educator driven, passion projects which enrich & enhance the body of pedagogical knowledge and student success.” - Michelle Heffner, Covina Unified EA

“IFT & CTA collect, cultivate and curate resources and tools that amplify/simplify educational individualization. This allows teachers to walk every student through learning at their own pace organically alongside their peers while still participating in group topics & tasks to prepare them for an adulthood of collaborative problem-solving, with families and districts no longer living & learning at the whim of textbook companies, consultants, or politicized special interests.” - Justin McGehee, Stockton TA

The September 2017 Board meeting featured Capistrano Unified EA member Julie Hamilton and Girish Venkat, (above) CEO of Thrively. Thrively is a personalized learning tool that helps educators focus on the strengths and interests of their students. Teachers at Ladera Ranch MS in Orange County, are utilizing Thrively as part of a schoolwide strength-based transformation project.

(Below) Board Member Eric Enriquez discussed the potential of Thrively’s strength-based student assessment and interest inventory. Board members David Goldberg, Gabriela Orozco-Gonzalez and Theresa Montaño discussed how and whether this tool was appropriate for students from diverse backgrounds who live with poverty, trauma, and other pressures.