“What was really amazing was learning about what other teachers are doing and how the IFT is supporting so many innovative projects. We have been encouraging other teachers to write grants also because it opens doors for students to experience a more well-rounded education than what our current system can provide for them.”

This comment from San Diego EA member Stacy Williams is more than just words. Stacy and her partners have been opening doors for their students with their “Babies and Beads” program for the past several years. Babies and Beads is a non-profit organization that provides job training, mentoring, advocacy education classes, career planning and program services to students who are at-risk, ages 18 to 22 years old.

Stacy’s project partner is Robert Rochin, the Director of the Exceptional Family Resource Center at San Diego State University. He remarked, “It was great to talk to other teachers and work out some of their challenges with grant writing and help them come up with some ideas for possible proposals.”

“I appreciate all that CTA is doing to ensure all of our students are successful. These grants have been truly transformative, and we need to get more teachers involved in leading this change!”

Daniel Frank, Rocklin H.S. Engineering Teacher

Keara Simon, an Expo participant from Victor Elementary TA, said that she truly enjoyed the day. “The conference was great. I am inspired by the IFT Grants and as I become more involved in CTA, I realize we must fight to ensure that our future generations have quality public education experiences in California.”

After a session on her “Restorative Justice Peer Program,” Tracie Bowden, a middle school teacher from the Simi EA, summed up the day, “I left feeling hopeful for the state of education in California.”

Honored guests at the February 2nd Teacher Innovation Expo included Michelle Heffner, teacher-member of the IFT Board, Lori Easterling, CTA’s Legislative Relations Manager and CTA President Eric Heins. They are pictured below with IFT Staff Sheila Bell and Dick Gale.

Expo participants (top) gathered for networking following the final general session. Chico Unified TA members, Linda Elliott and Reta Rickmers (center) shared insights gained from their combined sixty-plus years of teaching. Their “ARTrepreneurs” program at Pleasant Valley High School gave their art students an opportunity to form teams with classmates to design and pitch workable, salable, and scalable business ideas. Anaheim High School teacher Ryan Ruelas (bottom), along with former students, Rudy Acevedo and Daniel Ayala, discussed his “Students Leading Students-Creating Change” grant project. These young men and women were trained on civic engagement, conflict mediation, and the skills needed to talk about issues pertaining to the community. The students then trained students at three other high schools on the east side of Anaheim. Their goal was to create real-world change in the city by mentoring students at the elementary and junior high schools, engaging in community service projects, and hosting conferences relevant to the world in which they live.
Grant Field Trip Brings Students, Parents Together
Elementary Students from Different Counties Join Forces to Examine Water Quality Issues

Rebecca Cihak of Rocklin and Karen Levy of Pacific Grove have a lot in common. Not only do they both teach 4th-grade, but they are also Association activists and passionate educators who believe that sometimes the best classroom is the outdoors. The two veteran educators teamed up this year on a joint grant project to provide a social studies and environmental education program. Their aim is to connect students, parents, and our communities in a shared interest of studying the history and environmental impact of human activities around California’s watershed from the mountains to the sea.

Rebecca Cihak (left) of Sunset Ranch Elementary and Karen Levy of Robert Down Elementary joined forces on January 24-25 in Pacific Grove for an extraordinary field trip opportunity.

Accompanied by an enthusiastic group of engaged parents, the Rocklin students descended on their partner school in Pacific Grove to jointly explore field research results and to take a class at the famous Monterey Bay Aquarium.

The teachers’ goal is to assist their students to lead others toward becoming better stewards of fresh water, our state’s greatest natural resource.

One of the most outstanding examples of the grant’s strength-based focus is the incredible parent involvement in support of the project activities.

More than a dozen mothers & fathers transported carloads of 4th-graders hundreds of miles across California, so they could join their Monterey County counterparts for a dinner and a “camp out” in the Multipurpose Room at Down Elementary.

Early the next morning, the combined classes and chaperones gathered for breakfast at a restaurant located just across the street from the Monterey Bay Aquarium. After exploring the many and varied exhibits on their own in small groups, the combined classes gathered for timely instruction from the Aquarium staff.

“Dream It
Believe It
Apply for IT
Achieve It.”

-Anna Mumford

Important Information About IFT Grants

- Now in its ninth year, the IFT has awarded 262 grants totaling more than $2.9 million. All CTA members are eligible to apply for an Educator grant (up to $5,000) or an Impact grant (up to $20,000).
- This is a competitive grant program and grants are evaluated by the IFT Grant Selection Committee, made up of five educators from around the state.
- Applications are due no later than April 30, 2018.

The seven-factor IFT Strength-based Matrix is the lens used by the committee to evaluate all grant proposals.

Blaine Boyer, a veteran teacher and member of the Temecula Valley EA, was a two-time IFT grant recipient. Blaine is planning to retire this year after many years as a continuation high school teacher. He wrote to IFT recently to share some of the “tangible victories” he has achieved because of his successful grant projects.

“These are 2 of my graduates from the solar program, (which was only possible because of your grant program). They are working full-time, at prevailing wages, ($50/ hr.) on a solar farm being built on the outskirts of Temecula.”

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