The CTA Institute for Teaching is attempting to bring strength-based approaches to education. Based on our work in California schools, with Foundations and from discussions with hundreds of practitioners and students, the IFT has determined that school change must include two key factors: (1) It needs to be teacher-driven and (2) It should be based on what is working and successful in our schools and classrooms. By focusing on what works in our schools, the IFT believes strength-based models for school change add a new dimension to school improvement.

**Current IFT Programs**

- **IFT Grant Program**
  The $5,000-$20,000 strength-based grants are designed for pre-K-12 teachers and certificated support staff, ESP members and college instructors. Proposals are reviewed through the lens of IFT’s strength-based matrix by an IFT Grant Selection committee composed of outstanding teachers. In the program’s first seven years, IFT awarded 262 grants totaling over $2.9 million.

- **Teacher Think Tanks**
  IFT has organized a diverse set of CTA members to be part of IFT’s Regional Teacher Think Tanks. These Think Tanks attempt to give a voice to dozens of CTA members who are excellent classroom practitioners and passionate about sharing innovative ideas and building upon what works.

- **Teacher Innovation Expo**
  The Expo, presented as part of the pre-Good Teaching Conferences, is designed as a showcase for exemplary IFT Grant recipients to present highlights of their strength-based projects to an audience of fellow teachers. These educators demonstrate that teachers not only know what their students need, they are able to connect their local communities with their classrooms in engaging ways.

- **Positive Deviance Project**
  IFT is seeking educators to work collaboratively on a project designed to increase the high school graduation rates by focusing on those students who are successfully staying in school and thriving despite such social factors as poverty, family problems, crime and gangs. These outliers are known as “positive deviants.”

- **Parent-Teacher Home Visits**
  IFT supports home visits because they work and teachers have always done them. This practice has been enhanced with a strategic focus and collaboration dedicated to this proven strategy with positive outcomes for families, staff, and most importantly, students of all grade levels.

- **California School Garden Network**
  IFT supports CSGN’s mission to promote school gardens as a means “to enhance academic achievement, a healthy lifestyle, environmental stewardship, and community and social development.”

- **Strength-Based School Transformation**
  IFT is always looking to engage with members around schoolwide appreciative inquiry projects based on the identified strengths of their local school community. IFT encourages our educators to utilize strength-based tools like Thrively.com, as they design these field-based projects.

For more information, please visit the IFT website- [www.teacherdrivencchange.org](http://www.teacherdrivencchange.org) or join the “CTA Institute for Teaching” community on Facebook and Twitter @CTAIFT.
Since 2010, the CTA Institute for Teaching has been utilizing a portion of CTA members’ $20 voluntary dues contributions to fund strength-based teacher driven projects in school communities throughout California.

To date, CTA members have funded 262 grant projects 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).

A link to IFT’s on-line grant application and additional supporting information is available under the Grant tab on the IFT website. The grant application period opens in January and applications are due no later than April 30\textsuperscript{th}. The teachers on the IFT Grant Selection Committee meet in May. They use the seven-factor IFT Strength-Based Matrix (left) as the lens to evaluate these competitive grant proposals.

The IFT Board approves grant recommendations in June and grant funds are distributed in July to the grant recipient’s local teachers’ association.