The IFT Research and Design Team observed public education being transformed. Students, parents, and teachers joined forces in Temecula to create a new vision for the teaching and learning process. Their words captured new realities that can create a culture of success for all students. The conversation was grounded, not in educational theory or research, but actual teaching and learning practices. It envisioned what a multitalented public school might look like:

- Embracing mistakes, not afraid to take a risk.
- Teachers are facilitators, acting as catalysts for the learning process.
- The learning process is open and flexible and provides continuing opportunities for growth.
- Parents realize the strength-based process leads to real-world learning experiences, students discovering and valuing their natural talents, and student ownership for the learning process.

Tricia Hyun is an honored practitioner in Fullerton, as well as the teacher facilitator for the South Orange County Think Tank. She believes that, “the Research and Design team works as an access point to strength-based, teacher driven change. If anyone wanted to take educational research and move it into practice, it’s the IFT that does just that!”

Tricia has been a moving force behind this approach because she fervently believes that, “each site visit lends to a plethora of ideas, thoughts, and innovations that all (teachers, community members and others) can embrace as models for strength-based, teacher driven change.” (Tricia is pictured at right with Sume Wilson, parent of Tarah, who has been part of the program since its inception.)

The Research and Design Team is comprised of outstanding members from each of the five SoCal Teacher Think Tanks. It includes Ruth Wyatt, Diana Bentley & Emalyn Leppard (San Diego TT), Henry Yzaguirre & Linda Buckley (Moreno Valley TT), Hiam Awni & Tricia Hyun (South Orange County TT), July Hill-Wilkinson & Toby Brannon (SW Riverside County TT) and Al Rabanera (North Orange County TT). They gathered for a photo in Toby’s classroom in front of the inspiration for the Aquaponics Greenhouse. Pictured with the teachers are TVEA President Jeff Kingsberg & IFT Staff members Yale Wishnick & Dick Gale.
The Temecula Valley EA Thrives with Strength-Based Member Engagement

TVEA has completed its second year of implementing the CTA IFT OVATION! Program. TVEA OVATION! has presented 52 awards to members at all 27 school sites the last two years. TVEA Site Reps work with site administration to schedule a presentation tied to a staff meeting for all to witness. TVEA OVATION! seeks to build bridges with site administration and visibility in front of a wide net of members. The power of recognition from a peer nomination is quite potent, indeed.

TVEA member Toby Brannon, a 2017-18 CTA IFT Grant Recipient was honored on May 7th by TVEA as its Inaugural "Proven Leader of Student Success". TVEA President Jeff Kingsberg presented the award in Brannon’s classroom at Temecula Valley High School during a CTA IFT visit (above left). Over the past two years, Brannon and his students have successfully implemented the $20,000 BioSustainability Grant he received from IFT to build an on-campus Aquaponics Greenhouse which provides produce for the TVHS Culinary Arts program.

Kristan Morales, TVEA’s Instruction and Professional Development Committee Chair was honored as the Association’s Committee Leader/Member of the Year at a TVEA recognition event on May 3rd at Cougar Winery in Temecula. CTA Secretary -Treasurer and Vice-President Elect David Goldberg attended and spoke at the event. With TVEA’s support, Morales has successfully started a CTA IFT Southwest Riverside County Think Tank.

The IFT believes that it would be a game-changer if all our local union leaders adopted their own version of this program and recognized their members for teaching excellence. It would help exploit the myth that all teacher unions do is “protect bad teachers.”