



Institute for Teaching Annual Report: 2008-2009

California Teachers Association Foundation for Teaching and Learning

The IFT supports California teachers because teachers support the IFT

Thanks to the willingness of CTA members to invest a portion of their dues in the CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning, the Institute for Teaching has been able to support teacher-driven reform projects in a number of schools around the state.

The Institute for Teaching was formed in 1967 by the CTA Board of Directors and established as a 501(c)(3) corporation to assist public education in ways that the Association alone was unable to address.

The CTA IFT is attempting to bring a new approach to school change. Based on earlier work with the Gates and Packard Foundations, the IFT 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. Strength-based models provide an asset-based approach that teachers can use to emphasize talents over weaknesses and strengths over deficits to create a learning environment that supports and encourages every student to do their best.



In support of this philosophy, IFT Board members have voted to support projects designed to reduce high school dropouts, enhance early childhood education and promote the development of higher level math skills. See the stories below for details.

The Algebra Project Twin Rivers begins to grow at Allison Elementary

This project began with two teachers from Allison Elementary School, Wendy Gallimore and Danalynn Zacharias, who were inspired by the work of Bob Moses and the Algebra Project. While the project grew over the course of two years to become a larger partnership involving the Sacramento Valley Organizing Community/IAF, the CTA IFT, the Twin Rivers Unified School District and UC Davis CRESS Center, it has remained true to the ideals and vision of the teachers who conceived it.

Recognizing that algebra is a gate-keeper course for higher mathematics, the purpose of the APTR is to support algebraic reasoning in the upper elementary grades; prepare students for middle grades mathematics and Algebra 1 by the eighth grade, thus, preparing students for college preparatory mathematics in high school, and the mathematical knowledge required for college entrance, success in college courses, and lifelong civic engagement.

The Algebra Project uses mathematics as an organizing tool to ensure quality public school education. As such, APTR brings together and engages families, students, teachers, administrators, and community members in ways that support student well-being and collaborative community school partnerships.

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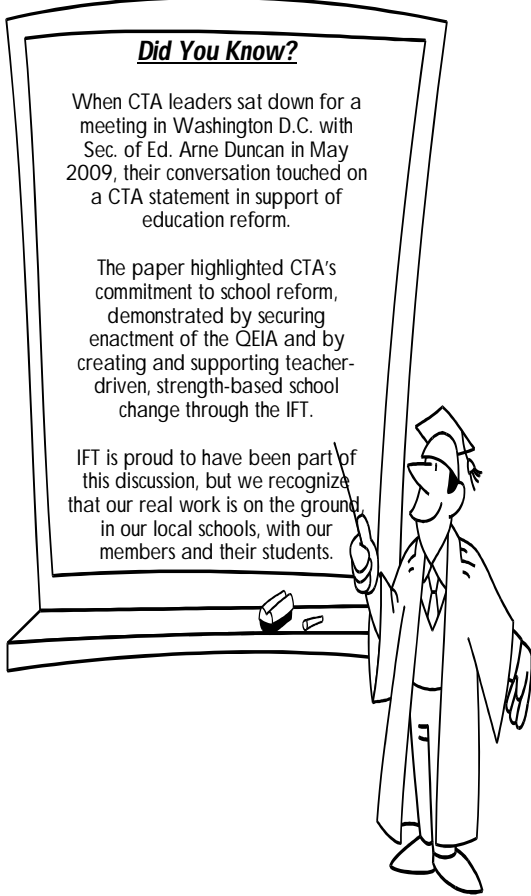
www.teacherdrivenchange.org

Did You Know?

When CTA leaders sat down for a meeting in Washington D.C. with Sec. of Ed. Arne Duncan in May 2009, their conversation touched on a CTA statement in support of education reform.

The paper highlighted CTA's commitment to school reform, demonstrated by securing enactment of the QEIA and by creating and supporting teacher-driven, strength-based school change through the IFT.

IFT is proud to have been part of this discussion, but we recognize that our real work is on the ground in our local schools, with our members and their students.



Early Childhood Education Alliance

The Early Childhood Education Alliance is designed to facilitate and empower individuals within local preschool communities to drive their communities forward to maximize their resources and heighten child potential.

The goal is to provide support to preschool teachers and other ECE professionals by honoring their existing strengths and encouraging them to apply these strengths in new ways in their classrooms.

Working under a grant from the Packard Foundation, IFT has promoted the use of online technology to help the ECEA create collaborative action communities and connect these communities across the state of California.

A three-week virtual ECE conference is planned for Oct. 27-Nov. 13, 2009. For more information go to www.whatworksconference.org

Positive Deviance Intrigues Teachers

The Merced High School Positive Deviance Project is designed to reduce dropouts under a grant from The Hewlett Foundation. A team from the Merced Union High School District attended the IFT Dropout Conference in August 2008 and then applied for and was accepted for this program.

The initial meeting of Merced High School stakeholders was held in late February 2009, with Mark T. Munger, of the Positive Deviance Initiative of Tufts University, serving as the consultant.



Discussions among students and staff at Merced High in May led to a series of "Last Word" assemblies in June during which graduating seniors spoke with underclassmen about what it takes to stay in school.

The project is based on a fundamental idea. In every high school there are students that are practicing behaviors that are keeping them in school. In every high school there are teachers, administrators, and parents practicing behaviors that are keeping students in school.

The Positive Deviance approach is designed to identify behaviors and practices that keep students in school and encourage the rest of the student community to adopt them. The IFT believes the potential for the Positive Deviance approach to reduce high school dropouts is vast and largely untapped.

Munger points to the current PD work being done at Merced High as an example of how the community owns the entire process. The emphasis is on transferring behavior instead of knowledge. Munger shares the PD mantra- *"We need to act our way into a new way of thinking instead of thinking our way into a new way of acting"*

In addition to Merced High, association leaders and teams of teachers from Desert Hot Springs HS, Santa Maria HS, Duarte HS, Valencia HS, Hillcrest Academy HS, Pioneer HS, Hiram Johnson HS, Loara HS and Western HS expressed interest in the Positive Deviance process.

Bev Bricker, President of the Palm Springs Teachers Association attended one of the two spring workshops sponsored by the IFT. She said, *"this approach is a far cry from mandates we live under and something that will make much more of a difference than test scores."*