

ODYSSSEY

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A PUBLICATION OF FUND FOR TEACHERS

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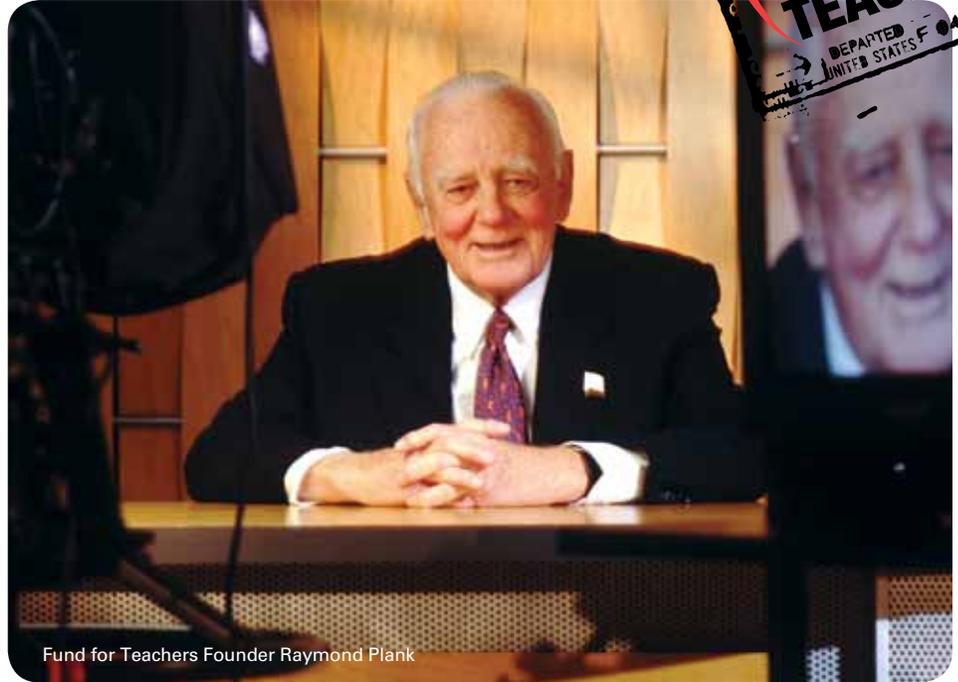
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By the Numbers

The 2010 grant application process closed on January 29th, revealing an increase in the number of teachers applying for funding, schools represented, and total applications. Our largest increase in applications came from the Los Angeles, the Rural School & Community Trust, and Washington DC programs. The 2010 class of Fellows will result from selection committees held across the country during February and March, and applicants will be notified by March 31st. Good luck!

A Piece of π

On March 14th (3.14), Fund for Teachers celebrates Pi Day by recognizing our newest initiative, encouraging math fellowships. Fund for Teachers' Pi Society, founded in July 2009 and spearheaded by Apache Corporation's Chairman and CEO Steve Farris, is a pool of funding earmarked specifically for math-related fellowships. Understanding that a mastery of mathematical concepts is integral to competing on the international business front, Pi Society donors hope to inspire the current generation of math students by funding their teachers' math fellowships. Our 2010 class of Fellows will include our inaugural Pi Society Fellows. To contribute to this fund, please contact our national office at 1-800-681-2667.



Fund for Teachers Founder Raymond Plank

Record Gift Secures Fund for Teachers' Future

Founder Raymond Plank Gives \$5 Million Gift

America's top teachers may direct their thank you notes to Mr. Raymond Plank. The Fund for Teachers founder closed out the year by honoring the non-profit he created 10 years ago with a \$5 million gift – perpetuating his original commitment to provide teachers with global opportunities that keep them inspired and engaged in their classrooms. His gift will help fund teachers' summer fellowships, offset administrative costs, and fund the annual Plank Fellowship Award, presented to those Fellows making the most significant impact with their experiences upon returning to school.

"I've always felt teachers deserved considerably more recognition and respect," explained Plank when asked about the motivation behind his gift. "I decided to make this donation now because I believe we are in an economic downturn and I want to make a positive statement on behalf of teachers, on whose shoulders rest so much of our hope for the future."

Plank likened his feelings for the organization he founded to standing on a hot Texas airstrip during World War II: "It just makes me tingle with pride at being part of it. It's very obvious that these teachers are touched and they are sincere in their appreciation. What else is life about? The rest of it is pretty carnivorous. People are so caught up with self – we need more balance in our society and you get that balance and added dimension by impacting teachers' lives."

"Fund for Teachers began in Raymond's office when he envisioned honoring the influential role teachers played in his success," explained Karen Kovach Webb, Fund for Teachers' executive director. "What started with an initial gift to his high school in Minneapolis evolved into, in my opinion, his legacy: Recognizing the power of teachers to transform the world."





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From the Executive Director

Much has changed since we launched Fund for Teachers ten years ago. But our core concepts of honoring the value of PreK – 12 teachers and supporting their learning and development remain guiding constants. We have consistently offered to teachers the latitude and freedom, within the structure of our guidelines, to design their own learning experiences. Be it through traditional or innovative odysseys, more than 3,600 teachers and their students have benefited from a FFT fellowship.

Over the years we have enjoyed a steady expansion of our outreach. Our first year, we offered grants in only three locations. Now, we're completing the application cycle for summer 2010, receiving proposals from 1,839 teachers working in 963 schools across the country. In their proposals, teachers raised their own questions and made critical decisions about how to seek answers. Selection committees, convened in 17 geographically diverse communities, make the difficult decisions determining which of these applications will be funded. We know from experience the teachers ultimately awarded funding for their summer quests will, as in all learning, have some of their assumptions challenged and will formulate new responses. All will culminate in inspired teachers ready to challenge students back in the classroom to raise their own questions. Students, schools and communities are benefiting.



Karen with one of 300 attendees at Horn Elementary's Ocean Awareness Night, led by 2009 Houston Fellows Karin Davis and Darlene Varga (right).

Entering our second decade, I am excited to announce important board leadership changes. In November, Pat Graham, Justin Stamen Arrillaga and Fred Bohen completed their tenure as board members after leading FFT through our early years of growth. Fred passed the chairman's gavel to John Gulla, who after serving several years as a director, assumed a newly expanded role as chairman. Joining John and the remaining directors are Chris Santiago and Dottie Engler, both long-time volunteers for FFT. We're grateful to all of these good friends for their belief in and dedication to our mission.

During the next several months we plan a number of innovations to our Web site, many focused on Fund for Teachers' Fellows back in their classrooms. Changes will include more links to videos, interviews and photo albums. I hope that you will continue to log onto fundforteachers.org to watch the progress and view the content that you make possible. As always, we welcome suggestions.

Raymond Plank's vision, generosity and leadership spawned Fund for Teachers. The consistent commitment and support of corporate donors and sponsors, like Apache Corporation, Baker Botts, Jones New York, Staples, NASDAQ, News Corp., our wonderful directors and many, many others have made the first ten years possible. We are excited about 2010 and the decade ahead.

I am challenged and so pleased to be on this FFT *Odyssey* with all of you.

The journey continues,

Karen Kovach Webb



Our Mission

Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and their school communities.

Students Personalize Cherokee Nation's Trail of Tears



Top: April takes a break with a Cherokee chief in Cherokee, NC

Left: Sitting outside the entrance of the American Indian Museum in Washington, DC

The Trail of Tears marks a bleak period in American history, and one that April Cole's students – 65 percent of whom are Native American – found barely touched upon in their text books. April's Fund for Teachers fellowship sought to fill in the gaps as she traveled from Oklahoma to Washington, DC and North Carolina to bring home the art, history and culture embedded in her students' heritage.

"My kids didn't understand the impact the Trail of Tears had on their ancestors. It was inconceivable to them that America could uproot an entire people, thousands strong, and force relocation to a strange land," explained April. "My students also found it amazing that our state owed a large part of its existence to this tragic period. They were disappointed when they realized this portion of our history was relegated to only two paragraphs and a map in our history book."

After returning from her fellowship, April created a research project empowering students to document their own connection to the Trail of Tears, using oral histories of ancestors as primary source material. Artifacts April gathered at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in Cherokee, NC, and the American Indian Museum in Washington, DC helped students answer questions about their genealogy, including: What tribe do I belong to? Who was my first ancestor to reach Oklahoma? Where did their journey begin? What terrain did they cross? Did they stay in Oklahoma, or return home?

In March 1836, officials of the US government and representatives of a minority Cherokee political faction ratified the Treaty of New Echota, which legally and forcibly removed the Cherokee Nation to Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma). Native Americans' plight, previously unexplored in the high school textbook, now comes to life with honor 176 years later as descendants at Barnsdall High School re-discover the strength and courage inherited through a forced march west.

FFT Opportunity Extended to Title I Teachers

The Wisconsin Department of Education joins Fund for Teachers in a partnership that extends our reach in 2010 to educators in the state's 138 Promise Schools of Recognition. Tapping federally designated funds for incentivizing Title I teachers, Wisconsin is collaborating with Fund for Teachers to honor teachers in schools helping disadvantaged students making academic progress.

"Our partnership in Wisconsin signifies an exciting future for both the state and Fund for Teachers," said Karen Kovach Webb, Fund for Teachers' executive director. "The Wisconsin Department of Education found a way to utilize funds available to the state through federal legislation and we're so pleased that they turned to Fund for Teachers to reward educators with an opportunity to pursue their passions."



Fund for Teachers is a proud partner of



JONES NEW YORK
IN THE CLASSROOM

Fellow Notes

 *Yoga Chicago* printed the story of 2009 Chicago Fellow Kim Goldsmith in its November-December issue, detailing her journey through India exploring the role of yoga in special education.

 Dierdre Cuffee-Gray, 2009 ELS Fellow, discussed her fellowship (touring 19 colleges to create a college-readiness website) in the online version of *Black Enterprise*.

 Two-time Houston Fellow Lynn Gerbode received the Houston Museum of Natural Science's 2009 Wilhelmina C. Robertson Excellence in Science or Mathematics Teaching Award.

 Sha Carpenter, 2009 Oklahoma Fellow, named Clinton Public School Teacher of the Year.

 Melissa Evans, 2009 Rural Fellow, named Kentucky Middle School Teacher of the Year.

 Karen Weiss, 2009 Oklahoma Fellow, named Grove Valley Elementary School Teacher of the Year.

 Iraise Garcia, 2009 LA Fellow, shared a presentation about her FFT fellowship with the San Gabriel School District board in February.

 Michael Gallagher, 2009 Chicago Fellow, spotlighted by the Chicago Teachers Union in its October newsletter.

 2009 Houston Fellow Debra Mabry profiled on the television news show *Viva Houston!* in January.

If you have an accolade or achievement to share, please contact Carrie.Pillsbury@fundforteachers.org.

Earth Day 40

The 40th anniversary of Earth Day (April 22), culminates a year-long "Green Generation" campaign designed to encourage one billion acts of green. Fellows and their students can take credit for a few of those acts of environmental kindness stemming from "green" fellowships last summer. Among them:



Kris' students learn the anatomy of a turtle.

Melinda Bernabe and **Joanna Miller**, 2009 Los Angeles, conducted marine research on Kenya's Wasini Island with Global Vision International and observed the negative impact of tourism and drought on animal welfare throughout the country's wildlife reserves. Their seventh and fourth grade students at Norma Coombs Alternative School joined the expedition stateside in a peer/mentor research project with older students serving as professors and teaching "courses" on the environment.



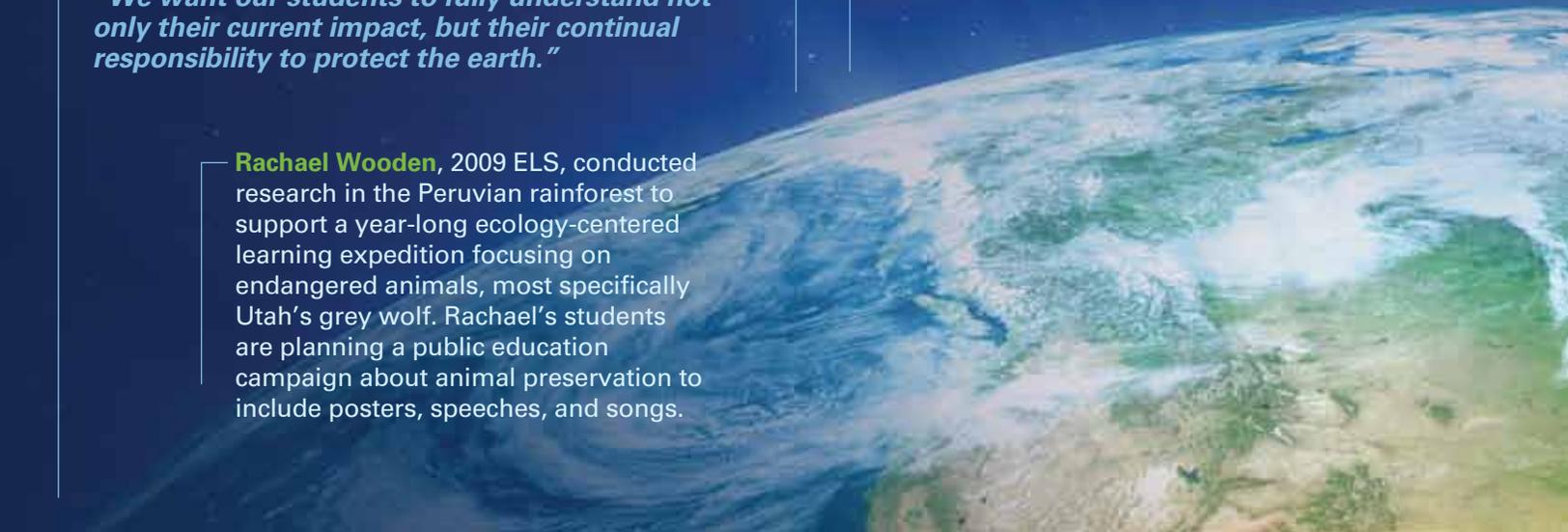
Students touch the sticky nectar of the pitcher plant native to Georgia's Wetlands.

Kara Brunk, **Kris Cunnane** and **Janie Evans**, 2009 Oklahoma, traveled to Costa Rica to assist Ecology Project International in authentic research of sea turtle conservation. Now, their students at Tulsa's 6th & 7th Grade Center are raising funds to adopt one of the sea turtles the team observed last summer and plan to track its migration patterns and hatch data from the past five years. Earth Day will be spent canvassing the school and surrounding neighborhood, picking up trash and recording data about the items found. They will then use the experience to create commercials for the school broadcasting system on waste reduction.

"As science teachers, we value the opportunity to educate our students and community about the impact that each person has upon our planet, both locally and globally," said Kara. "We want our students to fully understand not only their current impact, but their continual responsibility to protect the earth."

Charon Kirkland and **Lorrae Walker**, 2009 Atlanta, attended a tropical ecology and conservation workshop on the Caribbean island of Dominica to learn ways of more effectively teaching ecology. In February, an educational outreach coordinator from the Atlanta Botanical Gardens spoke to their third graders about the importance of preserving Georgia's Wetlands. Charon and Lorrae's students also took a field trip to the Chattahoochee Nature Center to look for animal tracks, explore native plants and trees, and learn how they can directly help with conservation efforts.

Rachael Wooden, 2009 ELS, conducted research in the Peruvian rainforest to support a year-long ecology-centered learning expedition focusing on endangered animals, most specifically Utah's grey wolf. Rachael's students are planning a public education campaign about animal preservation to include posters, speeches, and songs.





Katie's students proudly display trash retrieved from their playground.

Katie Schneider and **Meghan O'Connor**, 2009 Chicago, after observing the proactive measures implemented across Germany and Switzerland, were inspired to instill the same level of environmental stewardship in their own classrooms in Chicago's first "green" school. In January, students at Tarkington School of Excellence wrote Green Resolutions for 2010 and cleaned up the school's playground at recess – their collaborative Green Resolution.

"Our aim is to instill conservation, as a standard of living, in our students," said Katie. "Having a clear reference point and using artifacts from our fellowship has brought our environmental unit to life and our fellowship experience motivated us to thread these values through the curriculum year-round."



One of Alicia's kindergarteners plants seeds in a biodegradable container.

Alicia Arenas, 2008 Oakland, volunteering with Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms in Puerto Morelos, Mexico, learned how to create and maintain an organic school garden. In January, her kindergarteners planted seeds in biodegradable containers which they will later transplant into the school's outdoor garden. The project is generating questions from students like: "How does a seed open?" "Can it grow in one day?" and "What do we need to give the plants to grow?"



Mustang Valley Elementary students drag a string through water to learn how workers clean up oil spills in oceans.

Photo courtesy of Mustang News

Carol Scott and **Robin Combs**, 2009 Oklahoma, traveled to the Gold Coast of Australia to study ecosystems, conservation and culture in order to help students understand the importance of coral reefs. In January, the team hosted "Dive in Down Under" for the Mustang Valley Elementary Science Club. The after-school affair focused on oceans, water and the Great Barrier Reef, with "Reef Explorers" investigating the properties of feathers and the effect of oil and pollution on the water where birds live and feed; playing a game of Survival and Disaster to learn about natural and man-made events that help or harm the development of coral reefs; and participating in an interactive videoconference with the Reef HQ Aquarium in Townsville, Queensland, Australia, to learn about the animals and habitat of the Great Barrier Reef. "Students learned that, although we are widely separated on the globe, we all rely on the same water and atmosphere and the importance of working together as stewards of these natural resources," said Carol.



Karin explores a simulated sea shore with students at Horn Elementary's Ocean Awareness Night.

Darlene Varga and **Karin Davis**, 2009 Houston, enrolled in an ocean science program at UC Santa Cruz to benefit from classroom and field experiences in their study of various aquatic habitats. In February, they hosted an Ocean Awareness Night, bringing together experts from Houston's Downtown Aquarium, the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, Galveston Bay Foundation, Houston Conchology Society, City of Houston Drinking Water Operations, and Sea Center Texas. Exhibits included a presentation by ExxonMobil on its new algae into bio-fuel project, a "petting zoo" of tide pool animals, sand samples from all over the world, and a water cycle game.



Local Partner Spotlight

When Jones New York in the Classroom first awarded Fund for Teachers a grant in 2004, the company earmarked a portion of the funds for Chicago teachers. Although we didn't have a relationship there at the time, Fund for Teachers researched various options before tapping the Chicago Foundation for Education as our local education foundation partner. Since then, more than 200 Chicago Public School teachers have received \$750,000 to broaden their horizons through a Fund for Teachers fellowship.

The Chicago Foundation for Education (CFE) increases the academic achievement of Chicago's public school students by supporting the educators who serve, guide and teach them. CFE provides financial resources, facilitates collaborative networks, and offers leadership opportunities to engage teachers through every stage of their career. Since 1985, CFE has invested more than \$4 million in supporting Chicago's teachers, individually impacting nearly 30,000 teachers and more than 1 million students.

"Our partnership with CFE serves as a model in several respects," said Karen Kovach Webb. "First, it's an example of our entering markets designated as priorities by our larger donors. Also, it's a synergistic relationship: we gained a reputable representative in the community and CFE capitalized on our new alliance to expand their impact beyond elementary into middle and high schools."



For more information about CFE, please visit www.chicagofoundationforeducation.org.

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FFT Welcomes Expertise and Commitment of New Board Members

Preparing for our next decade of awarding teacher grants, Fund for Teachers added program and corporate experience to our board of directors.

As director of special projects for Boston Plan for Excellence, Dottie Engler originally brought Fund for Teachers to Boston in 2004. In her role with BPE, Dottie helps create a system of effective schools and is responsible for developing and executing external programs, including Fund for Teachers and the Annenberg Scholarship Fund. We look forward to benefitting from Dottie's extensive background in education policy and programming, most recently plied at Harvard Graduate School of Education, to Fund for Teachers on a national level.



Dottie Engler

Christopher Santiago, Vice President, Global Corporate Services for NASDAQ OMX Group, sits on the board of Chicago Foundation for Education, a Local Partner for Fund for Teachers. Therefore, he already actively supports FFT locally and now adds a valuable corporate voice to our board. Throughout his 11 years with NASDAQ, Chris routinely collaborates with key decision makers of publicly traded and private companies, as well as influential members of the investment banking, legal, venture capital and private equity groups. Those relationship-building skills, coupled with his proven commitment to FFT, help set our course for 2010 and beyond.



Christopher Santiago

Dottie and Chris join the remaining board members under the new direction of John Gulla as board chairman. John, head of school for The Blake School in Minneapolis, has served on the FFT board for the past five years and assumed the role of chairman when former chair Fred Bohlen rotated off of the board.

New Decade, Renewed Vision

by, John Gulla



John Gulla

About 12 years ago I received my first telephone call from Raymond Plank. I was then in New York, but about to assume the responsibilities as headmaster of The Blake School, Mr. Plank's alma mater. He had an idea he wanted to discuss with me. Having been the fortunate beneficiary of many good teachers in his life (there was one in particular, Noah Foss, who had a lasting influence on him), Raymond Plank wanted to do something "to put a smile on the face of good teachers." I was all ears.

Fast forward a dozen years. I am honored and humbled to begin a term of service as the board chair of Fund for Teachers. Raymond Plank's inspired idea has become a national program with 17 programs that in 9 years has awarded more than \$12 million to 3,500 teachers who have pursued projects in 113 countries.

Through the excellent work of Karen Kovach Webb, Fund for Teachers' executive director, and a dedicated and talented staff, Fund for Teachers has grown to become a bright beacon beckoning to teachers, suggesting that there are those who believe deeply in the profound importance of the work teachers do. Since 1998, I have been involved with this program as it grew from an idea, to a pilot program, to a fully established 501(c)3 organization with a multi-million dollar endowment. I am honored to have served for the last five years on the board, ably led by Fred Bohlen. Fund for Teachers has benefitted immeasurably from the wisdom and guidance of several board members whose terms of service are now ending, but we will benefit from those who'll continue in this role and those new and committed trustees who'll assist in the governance of this still nascent organization in the years to come.

In working with my fellow board members, with the great Fund for Teachers staff and those who support this mission, I pledge to do my best to continue to pursue the exciting dream of our program's founder.

Los Angeles Area Elementary School Experiences "Reading Revolution"

Six Teachers and a Fund for Teachers Grant Fuel School-Wide Reading Transformation

The Cat in the Hat, Horton, and the National Education Association plan to celebrate Dr. Seuss' 106th birthday on March 2, Read Across America Day. For students of Moorpark Unified School District's Arroyo West Elementary, though, the celebration has lasted all year long. Arroyo West sent six K-3 teachers to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) Institute at Columbia University last summer and the team returned to re-engineer reading at their school.

On their Fund for Teachers fellowship, Arroyo's "Love2Teach" team—Irene Garcia, Janet Pultorak, Sharon Knecht, Jennifer Fernandez, Penny Harrah, and Lisa McCarter—spent their week at TCRWP benefiting from keynote speakers and participating, alongside teachers from 48 states and 19 countries, in comprehensive morning and afternoon sessions tailored to varying grade levels and individual needs and interests. "Every day was a collaborative effort to choose as many lunchtime and closing workshops as we could – we wanted to soak up as much knowledge as possible!" wrote Knecht on the team's blog. **"Reading consumed our summer. New York City enlivened our senses and sparked our passion for reading; it gave inspiration and voice to our writing. We are impassioned and empowered and bring the joys of the Workshop to our students every day."**

The secret weapon taught at TCRWP is *leveled reading*. Rather than teachers choosing a single book for an entire class to read and then facing the challenge of a classroom of students at many different reading levels, leveled reading empowers the teacher to offer different books to students based on individual reading levels and encourages students to choose books appealing to their interests. The result is a more engaged student who, reading at his proper level, is rewarded by the experience. **"I've been teaching since 1969, and this is the first time teaching seems authentic,"** said Garcia. **"I have a renewed excitement and enthusiasm for teaching because I now have the right tools to meet every child's unique need."**

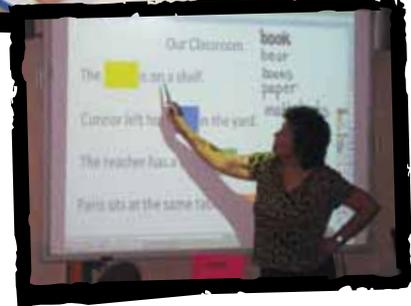
"Before our teachers attended the Institute, I would go into classrooms and be concerned seeing every child with the same book open to the same story – knowing it was not challenging for some and too hard for others," explained Arroyo West Principal Susanne Smith-Stein. "Now, children are curled up in corners reading, laying on their backs with books in outstretched arms, or reading quietly with a partner. Every child is reading at his/her independent reading level. Nothing is more gratifying."



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Penny holds a conference with a first grader.



Irene teaches 2nd graders a word attack strategy on the interactive whiteboard.

As a result of the new reading program, each classroom now requires its own diverse library with teachers responsible for filling the shelves. At Arroyo West, resourceful teachers have recycled aluminum and plastic and sold pumpkins from the school garden in order to purchase books at library and garage sales around town.

"Students grumble now when we don't read" laughed Fernandez. "They wrote letters to our principal, begging that 4th and 5th grade teachers learn the Workshop method so they can continue to enjoy reading next year, too." And the principal got the message. A team of 4th and 5th grade teachers submitted their Fund for Teachers application in January, and are hoping to travel to TCRWP this summer for training. **"Without the Fund for Teachers grant, there's no way – with the budget situation in California – that we could have sent six teachers to a seminar in New York,"** said Smith-Stein. "Now, every K-3 teacher shares multiple reading success stories and our 4th-5th teachers want that experience, too."

Arroyo West will celebrate Read Across America Day with teachers dressed as the Cat in the Hat. Children will spend the morning enjoying readings by community members including: the Moorpark Mayor, a fireman, two officers from the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, a professor at California Lutheran University, two authors, an alumni/actor and a parent recently returned from duty in Iraq. In the afternoon, the celebration continues with a read-a-thon and book exchange.

Arroyo West isn't the only Los Angeles area school transforming its reading program with the help of TCRWP. Over the past four years, Fund for Teachers has sent 16 teachers to TCRWP from Robert F. Kennedy Elementary, Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, Presidents Avenue Elementary and Sunny Brae Elementary, as well as Arroyo West.

"This teaching technique really saved me this year with my K/1st grade combo class," said Harrah. "I'm able to teach everyone on their own level. One morning, I watched five kindergarten boys reading and singing poems together, happy and having the time of their lives reading. It was better than pay day."



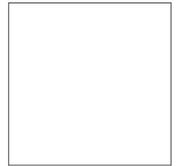
Penny, Lisa and Irene become Columbia students for a week.



Penny, Lisa, and Irene meet Lucy Calkins, founding director of the TCRWP.



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Mr. Marsalis (far left) performs on stage with Reginald's students at Atlanta's Woodruff Center. Photo Credit: Scott King

Students in the Jazz Band directed by **Reginald Colbert**, 2009 Atlanta Fellow, performed on stage at the Atlanta Symphony Hall with Wynton Marsalis in "Conversations of a Note: The Marriage of Classical Music and Jazz." Reginald and his wife, **Natalie**, also an FFT Fellow, used their FFT fellowship to attend the Verbier Festival Academy in Switzerland, where they observed and researched strategies used in masterclasses and chamber music coaching.



Mariya celebrates a successful performance with her stars/students.

2009 Houston Fellow **Mariya Priymak**'s fellowship attending the International Song & Dance Festival in Latvia inspired her to direct Sylvan Rodriguez Elementary's "Around the World in Ten Dances" in December in an effort to raise cultural awareness and sensitivity among students, teachers, and parents.



Aaron Reedy at the TEDxSMU conference.

Aaron Reedy, 2008 Chicago Fellow, joined world-renowned speakers answering the question "What Will Change Everything?" at the TEDxSMU conference in Dallas. Aaron's Answer: "Teachers who pursue their passion and bring it into the classroom." Aaron went on to speak about his fellowship focused on water quality.

