

## Amy Grat: Building Student Infrastructure through International Trade

### MEMBER PROFILE



*Amy Grat (International Trade Education Programs, Inc. Chief Executive Officer and WTS-LA member),  
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Poet Denise Levertov said, “Very few people really see things unless they’ve had someone in early life who made them look at things.” International Trade Education Programs, Inc. (ITEP) chief executive officer and WTS-LA member Amy Grat is making each new generation of students look at things—and see a whole new world.

“We help to create ambition where before there was no awareness,” says Grat of ITEP. Founded in 1999 and supported by the Port of Los Angeles and the international trade sector, ITEP is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that connects the international trade business community to the classroom to develop career-ready, college-prepared high school students.

“We’re the bridge between what’s happening in the classroom and what industry needs in terms of a qualified workforce that will help them succeed in a global economy. We marshal the social, intellectual, and financial resources of the industry and transfer that knowledge to young people. But it’s also the technical expertise of an accountant and a web designer—all of the functional areas of a business. We want our young people to know that working in transportation is more than being a truck driver.”



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With a BA in English from San Diego State University, an MA in international affairs from George Washington University, and an MBA from USC’s Marshall School of Business, Grat is well prepared to lead ITEP. She also currently serves on several boards including the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, the Los Angeles Air Cargo Association, the Harbor Association of Industry and Commerce, and the

College of Business Administration and Public Policy at CalState University, Dominguez Hills. So, how did she find her way to ITEP?

“I was at one of the countless rubber-chicken lunches I had to attend and I was in a room with 800 schmoozing women and men. I looked across the sea of suits and saw this table of young people all wearing very smart navy blue shirts with a small globe logo. They were confident, composed, young Hispanic men and women. And they were striking. And they were the first graduating class of Phineas Banning High School’s International Trade Academy. When they were called to the podium and told their stories, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. So I approached Carol Rowen [ITEP founder and former Port of Los Angeles (POLA) Harbor Commissioner] and said, ‘Carol, how can I help?’ If you know Carol, you can figure out how I arrived in the CEO’s chair...”



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Grat knows that ITEP and WTS-LA have a very strong, close relationship. In addition to POLA, many of ITEP’s founders were from WTS-LA. And WTS-LA continues to support ITEP. How does that make Grat feel?

“I’m new to WTS-LA. But everyone I’ve met from the chapter is a first-rate professional. And they understand exactly what our mission is and why it’s important. They know we need volunteers and support. And in many ways, we have a shared mission and vision.”

“Very few people really see things unless they’ve had someone in early life who made them look at things.” Through her work at ITEP, Amy Grat is making each new generation of students look at things and see a whole new world.