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## **Washington State LASER – a program of Pacific Science Center – presents the 2008 Strategic Planning Institute, June 23-28, 2008**

**SEATTLE** – At Washington State LASER’s (Leadership Assistance for Science Education Reform) Strategic Planning Institutes, school district teams learn about materials and instruction. But the real changes begin when these districts apply scientific research to plan for improving science education in their schools.

“This is the Institute’s 10<sup>th</sup> year,” said Sonia Siegel Vexler, Pacific Science Center Teacher Education Manager and Washington State LASER Program Manager. “In those 10 years, a total of 191 school districts in the state have participated. We’ve made big steps toward our goal of reforming science education by involving the teachers who are out in the trenches, so to speak. It’s something of which we are quite proud and we are thrilled to be involved.”

This year’s Strategic Planning Institute is in Richland, WA June 23-28, 2008 and while we are looking toward the upcoming Institute, it is by looking at past years that we can see the impact on participating districts.

Jack McLeod, from the Everett Public Schools, attended a LASER Strategic Planning Institute nearly five years ago. According to McLeod, since then the Everett Public Schools have implemented K-12 inquiry-based instructional programs in 25 schools, teachers have become teacher-leaders (training and guiding each other with reform-based curricula), and their Science Resource Center has evolved from a one-room portable to a 5,500 square foot facility with space to rotate over 580 K-5 modules three times a year.

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Through a six-day program of interactive sessions and discussions, leadership teams develop a shared vision about effective science learning and teaching. The goal is for the participants to leave the week with a plan for their district. Based on research from the National Science Resource Center (NSRC), these plans address six areas: (1) curriculums based upon research, (2) ongoing professional development for teachers, (3) assessment, 4) resources and materials for teachers, 5) administrators and community leaders who support the process, 6) linking science with literacy.

Being asked to participate in the Institute is not a given. All school districts that apply for participation must identify a five-person leadership team who demonstrate that they collectively have the skills, commitment, and credibility to lead a science education reform initiative in their community. School districts with fewer than 5,000 students are encouraged to form a consortium with a neighboring district and apply as a single team.

“Based on the work of the National Science Resources Center (NSRC), the Institute will help prepare school district leaders to implement hands-on, inquiry-centered science programs and to bring about systemic reform of science education,” said Siegel Vexler.

This year’s program is at the Red Lion Hotel Richland Hanford House in Richland.

Washington State LASER is a private public partnership working with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) as well as with the National Science Resource Center (NSRC) which is a non-profit science education organization sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute and the National Academies. It receives financial support from OSPI, the Boeing Company, Batelle and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Agilent Technologies Foundation and Intel.

For more information about the Strategic Planning Institute, please visit <http://www.wastatelaser.org>

Pacific Science Center inspires a lifelong interest in science, mathematics and technology by engaging diverse communities through interactive and innovative exhibits and programs. Pacific Science Center began as the United States Science Pavilion during the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair. Millions came to explore the wonders of science during the World’s Fair and upon the closing ceremonies, the Science Pavilion was given new life as the private, not-for-profit Pacific Science Center, becoming the first U.S. museum founded as a science and technology center. For more information about Pacific Science Center, please call (206) 443-2001 or visit the web site at [pacificsciencecenter.org](http://pacificsciencecenter.org). Pacific Science Center is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and relies on admissions, memberships, and donations to continue our educational mission, programs, and exhibits.