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Battelle to provide \$750,000 to enhance science education in Washington state

Funding will expand successful science reform effort to state high schools

Columbus, Ohio – Battelle will give \$750,000 to enhance science education in Washington state, with most of the money going to expand a program that has improved teaching and learning, and demonstrated an ability to help school districts raise test scores on the state's WASL science achievement test in lower grades.

Washington Governor Chris Gregoire made the announcement this morning at the annual OSPI January Conference at the Washington State Trade & Convention Center in Seattle.

The gift will enable the Washington State Leadership and Assistance for Science Education Reform (LASER) partnership to help school districts improve curriculum and instruction, and strengthen professional development in high schools over the next three years. Participating high schools will work to improve student achievement in science through the National Academy for Curriculum Leadership, a nationally-recognized curriculum leadership program.

A portion of the Battelle gift will support a LASER science materials resource center located in the Tri-Cities.

The bulk of the Battelle funding will amplify and accelerate the LASER program and enable it to play a major role in strengthening science education in Washington state. In December, Governor Gregoire released her proposed state budget, calling for investments in science and math education — including a significant expansion of the LASER program.

“Science and math skills are critical for success in our innovation economy,” said Governor Gregoire. “The LASER program is an exciting public-private partnership that brings world-class resources to our teachers and enables our students to learn science better through hands-on, minds-on instruction.”

The legislature is expected to take up the Governor's budget proposal later this month and, if approved, funding will start in July. The Battelle gift will jump start the LASER expansion effort and may be followed by subsequent Battelle gifts to LASER and other science education reform programs in Washington and the Tri-Cities region over the next two years.

Battelle manages the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (www.pnl.gov) in Richland, Wash., and has more than 4,000 staff in Washington state.

“Battelle has a longstanding commitment to improve science and math education, particularly in states and communities where we operate,” said Battelle President and CEO Carl Kohrt. “But in doing so, we don't presume to tell professional educators how to do their jobs. Instead, we look for existing education programs that have proven effective, and then we add resources and expertise to amplify and accelerate them. The LASER program and resource center have proven to be effective in creating positive, sustainable change in science education, and Battelle will serve as a catalyst to broaden their impact.”

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At the Seattle OSPI conference, Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson highlighted the unique role Battelle plays in the LASER partnership. “Battelle provides much more than financial support to science education in Washington state,” she noted. “Through their involvement in science education efforts at the national level, Battelle helps us identify best practices and build effective partnerships like LASER.”

The LASER model to improve science education was launched in 1999 and features a focus on six elements found in effective science education programs – instructional materials, professional development, materials support systems, assessment, administrative and community support, and integration with reading, writing, communications and mathematics.

Led by Battelle and Seattle’s Pacific Science Center, LASER’s initial focus was on grades K-8. Since 1999, 151 school districts that serve 75 percent of students in Washington have adopted the LASER model for improving science education in lower grades. Schools that have fully implemented the LASER model have documented as much as a 20 percent increase in the number of students reaching proficiency on the WASL exam. To date, the WASL science test has been used only as an indicator of science achievement, but scoring “proficient” on the science exam will become a graduation requirement for the class of 2010.

In 2004, Battelle and the Pacific Science Center launched a pilot project to move the LASER program into high schools in 16 school districts. They established a three-year leadership institute in Richland, Wash., where science teachers and administrators from across the state have been learning about proven science education models for improving the teaching of science. The pilot project has been successful and the Battelle funding will allow it to expand into more schools and school districts.

About \$100,000 of the Battelle gift is earmarked to support the Battelle Science Materials Resource Center in Kennewick, Wash. The center supplies hands-on science education materials to classrooms – such as live organisms, mineral samples, and scales – and provides professional development opportunities for teachers. Battelle established the center in 1999 with a \$250,000 grant. In 2005, Battelle committed another \$212,000 to support expansion of the facility, which now serves students in 16 districts in eastern Washington. More than 700 teachers are using the kits with 25,200 elementary and middle-schoolers.

“I am absolutely convinced that the United States will retain its economic competitiveness only if we transform the way science and math are taught,” said Kohrt. “And as one of the world’s largest science and technology organizations, Battelle has the responsibility and resources to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in our communities and nationwide.”

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Battelle is the world’s largest non-profit independent research and development organization, with 20,000 employees in more than 120 locations worldwide, including five national laboratories Battelle manages or co-manages for the U.S. Department of Energy. Headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, Battelle conducts \$3.7 billion in R&D annually through contract research, laboratory management, and technology commercialization. Battelle provides innovative solutions to some of the world’s most important problems including global climate change, sustainable energy technologies, high performance materials, next generation healthcare diagnostics and therapeutics, and advanced security solutions for people, infrastructure, and the nation. Battelle has a long history of developing successful commercial products in collaboration with its clients, ranging from products to fight diabetes, cancer, and heart disease to the development of the office copier machine (Xerox). As a non-profit charitable trust with an eye toward the future, Battelle actively supports and promotes science and math education.
