



In June 2008, two Washington State LASER teacher trainers, **Mechelle LaLanne** and **Dawn Sparks**, were invited by the National Science Resource Center to travel to Wenzhou, China to train Chinese science teachers. Here is Dawn's story:

What an amazing trip! It is one of the highlights of my life. Mechelle LaLanne and I were in China to do science kit training, and we were introduced as being science experts representing the National Science Resource Center, as well as Washington State LASER. We were treated as dignitaries with the utmost respect. It was very humbling to be standing in the room knowing that all the people back home were also being represented in that room. Needless to say, it was a very proud moment in our teaching careers.



The training went very well. First, they asked if we needed to use all the parts in the kits. When we said, "Yes," the kits were moved from the hotel to the school by rickshaw! Before the training, an opening ceremony was held which was very formal with TV cameras capturing the whole event. The training was done with the help of science teachers who served as interpreters. As we did the training, we had 48 teachers with others looking on. Not only were we able to go through the mechanical use of the kit, we incorporated notebooks and the research behind the creation of the units.

The same kinds of questions came up in the training: If you train on one kit, is it necessary to train on all of the units? How do we manage the materials? The materials are very expensive (US money compared to Chinese currency) and the price of the units would be very expensive. (Several of the people in the room have been back to Washington DC and were able to see a materials refurbishment center in Virginia.) Other questions arose, such as: What do you do with students who learn the material at different rates? How do you make sure all of the students understand? (Typical questions we would also field from teachers back home.)



Professor Yu Boi was very pleased with the research we were able to provide their teachers about how people learn and the encouragement to teach with integrity to give students all skills and processes needed to learn the material. She also seemed pleased to talk about the storyline that the units provide where skills are developed and about the learning cycle on which the units were based.



After the training, we were able to tour the Experimental School where the training took place. They have a building dedicated to science with rooms for astronomy, hydroponics, robotics, and experimental design. Later, we toured around the city of Wenzhou (where the training took place), and then we had a few days of touring around Beijing.

I can't explain in words how wonderful of an experience this was. As a teacher, I will always look back to the event as a pinnacle of my career. My only wish is that my Washington friends and mentors could have been with me. Way to go Washington—to be seen as the best to represent our country internationally!