

# What Schools with a Record of Continuous Improvement Do to Improve Student Achievement on the Grade 5 Science WASL

Prepared for:



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By:



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## ***Background***

The Washington State Leadership Assistance in Science Education Reform (LASER) began its statewide effort in 1999. Washington State LASER supports annual Strategic Planning Institutes and curriculum showcases and a network of LASER Alliances that provide the ongoing professional development, materials support, and technical assistance needed to implement inquiry-based science instruction in participating schools. Funding for the regional LASER Alliances is derived from a combination of state, private, and school district sources.

Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Battelle (the world's largest non-profit R&D organization), and the Pacific Science Center (a science education center for children located in Seattle) provide the leadership for Washington State LASER.

Washington State LASER has supported several studies that examined the impact of professional development on the use of inquiry-based science instructional materials on student achievement. The study that is the focus of this paper was different from previous studies because it examined schools that have successfully improved student achievement regardless of their relationship to LASER. The purpose of this study was to:

- Identify elementary schools that have demonstrated a consistent increase in the percentage of students who meet the science standard on the Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).
- Interview the staff at those schools to determine what they attribute their success to.

## Identification of Schools

RMC Research worked with the LASER leadership to develop the following criteria for identifying schools for this study:

- Served Grade 5 students.
- At least 10 Grade 5 students completed the science WASL in 2004, 2005, and 2006.
- The percentage of students who met the Grade 5 WASL science standard increased by at least 17.5% between 2004 and 2006.
- The percentage of students who met the Grade 5 WASL science standard increased by at least 6% between 2004 and 2005 and between 2005 and 2006.
- At least 20% of Grade 5 students met the WASL science standard in 2004.

Exhibit 1 lists the schools in Washington State that met these criteria. The Alliance column indicates whether the schools are in a district served by a LASER Alliance. The Institute column indicates whether the schools were in a district that participated in a weeklong LASER Strategic Planning Institute. The State MSP column indicates whether the schools were in a district that participated in one of the state-funded Mathematics and Science Partnership projects. The NSF MSP column indicates whether the schools participated in the North Cascades and Olympic Science Partnership funded by the National Science Foundation.

Of the 40 schools that met the criteria, 18 (45%) were in districts served by a LASER Alliance, 31 (78%) were in districts that participated in at least one LASER Strategic Planning Institute, 10 (25%) were in districts that participate in one of the state Mathematics and Science Partnership projects, and 4 (10%) participated in the North Cascades and Olympic Science Partnership.

**Exhibit 1—Highly Successful Schools in Science**

School District	School	% Met Std. 2004	% Met Std. 2005	% Met Std. 2006	Alliance	Institute	State MSP	NSF MSP
Bainbridge Island	Odyssey Multiage Program	62.5	83.3	92.9	No	Yes	No	Yes
Burlington-Edison	Edison Elementary	32.1	43.3	52.5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central Kitsap	Silverdale Elementary	20.7	38.8	50.7	No	No	No	No
Central Valley	Chester Elementary	33.3	59.3	67.9	No	No	Yes	No
Cheney	Windsor Elementary	46	53.7	63.8	No	Yes	Yes	No
Clover Park	Oakbrook Elementary	23.8	38.3	68.4	Yes	Yes	No	No
Deer Park	Arcadia Elementary	23.9	30.6	52.5	No	No	No	No
Everett	Woodside Elementary	37.5	44.3	66.2	Yes	Yes	No	No
Evergreen (Clark)	Image Elementary	35.2	48.1	55.2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Issaquah	Briarwood Elementary	32.3	39.8	51.7	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kennewick	Lincoln Elementary	29.4	49.3	55.6	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kennewick	Washington Elementary	37.2	50.5	62.1	Yes	Yes	No	No
Kent	Grass Lake Elementary	26.6	44.2	51.4	No	Yes	No	No
Kent	Horizon Elementary	20.7	30	38.6	No	Yes	No	No
Lake Washington	Blackwell Elementary	55.4	62.3	84.9	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lake Washington	Dickinson Elementary	45.4	57.7	64.7	Yes	Yes	No	No

School District	School	% Met Std. 2004	% Met Std. 2005	% Met Std. 2006	Alliance	Institute	State MSP	NSF MSP
Lake Washington	Rose Hill Elementary	29.2	38.8	54.5	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lake Washington	Thoreau Elementary	27.8	46.7	53.8	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lynden	Vossbeck Elementary	44.4	55.4	64.4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marysville	Sunnyside Elementary	20.6	29	40	No	No	No	No
Mukilteo	Mukilteo Elementary	25.8	38.6	53.5	No	Yes	No	No
Nine Mile Falls	Nine Mile Falls Elementary	45.7	57.6	66.7	No	Yes	No	No
Nooksack	Nooksack Elementary	41.5	68.2	80	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Kitsap	Richard Gordon Elementary	32.5	52.1	65.9	No	No	No	No
Northshore	Maywood Hills Elementary	48	58.9	72.1	No	No	No	No
Richland	Jefferson Elementary	24.1	34.5	42.4	Yes	Yes	No	No
Richland	Sacajawea Elementary	30.9	47.8	58	Yes	Yes	No	No
Seattle	Maple Elementary	26	40.3	46.6	No	Yes	Yes	No
Seattle Shoreline	Salmon Bay Parkwood Elementary	38.1	57.1	76.7	No	Yes	Yes	No
Seattle Shoreline	Parkwood Elementary	33.9	40.8	52.7	No	Yes	No	No
Snohomish	Riverview Elementary	29.3	37.5	57.7	No	No	No	No
Spokane	Hutton Elementary	50	62.5	72.9	No	Yes	Yes	No
Spokane	Wilson Elementary	41.4	62.8	87.8	No	Yes	Yes	No
Tacoma	Skyline	21	39.6	51	Yes	Yes	No	No
Tacoma	Washington-Hoyt	32.7	47.2	54.5	Yes	Yes	No	No
Tacoma	Whittier	21.7	37.9	53.7	Yes	Yes	No	No
Tahoma	Glacier Park Elementary	43.4	51.5	62.5	No	No	No	No
Tahoma	Shadow Lake Elementary	37.7	50	61.7	No	No	No	No
Wenatchee	John Newbery Elementary	30.9	42.5	48.9	No	Yes	No	No
Wenatchee	Washington Elementary	32.5	44.6	53.2	No	Yes	No	No

## *Conducting Interviews*

RMC Research worked closely with the project leadership to develop a structured interview protocol (see Appendix A) that was used to collect information from staff at each school identified for the study. The protocol employed a 2-part approach. In the first part the interviewer summarized the school's success meeting the Grade 5 WASL science standard and then asked, "What is your school doing to improve science teaching and learning? To what do you attribute this success?" The purpose of this part of the interview was to capture the interviewees' initial responses to the questions. During the second part the interviewer asked specific questions about the science instructional materials, the professional development provided for teachers, the assessments used, and the support for science education in the school administration and the community. For schools in districts participating in LASER, the protocol included additional questions about participation in a LASER Alliance or the LASER Strategic Planning Institute. The interview concluded by prompting interviewees to make 2 recommendations to other schools seeking to improve their students' performance on the Grade 5 science WASL.

All of the interviews were conducted during December 2006 and January 2007 by a group of 4 interviewers composed of RMC Research staff and graduate students from the science education

program at Portland State University. All interviewers had been trained on the interview protocol and the data collection and summarization procedures in November 2006.

Prior to the interviews OSPI sent to the principals of the schools identified for the study a letter that described the purpose of the study (see Appendix B). The interviewers then contacted the principals, who selected the interviewees who could best provide insight into the schools' success on the Grade 5 science WASL. In some cases the interviewee was the principal or a Grade 5 teacher, and in other cases the interview involved a group of staff members. Interviews were conducted with 39 of the 40 schools identified for the study. The interviewers summarized the results of each interview in a separate document, and the results of all of the interviews were compiled into a single document and analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques. The remainder of this report summarizes the findings from this study.

### ***Summary of Findings***

This section provides a summary of the findings in decreasing order of the frequency at which the finding was evident at each school.

#### **Finding 1—Inquiry-Based Instructional Materials**

All 39 schools used inquiry-based instructional materials (modules) and approximately half (19) attributed their success on the Grade 5 science WASL to a recent shift to the use of inquiry-based instructional materials. FOSS was the most commonly identified set of instructional materials, although Science and Technology Concepts (STC) and Insights were also mentioned. A few schools used inquiry-based science kits that were either extensively modified versions of commercially available materials or materials developed by their district. In a few cases the modifications were described as rendering the materials more “WASL-like.”

Most of the schools reported supplementing the modules to address topics not covered. Schools in districts not served by a LASER Alliance supplemented the modules with a wider range of materials and activities including textbooks, guest speakers, field trips, science camps, science newspapers, nonfiction books, and so on.

Schools not served by a LASER Alliance stored the modules at a central location in the district or at the school (primarily in classrooms), whereas schools served by a LASER Alliance made greater use of district or Educational Service District (ESD) science materials centers. A greater number of LASER Alliance schools assigned the modules to teachers according to a predetermined rotation schedule, but a mixture of predetermined and teacher-determined module scheduling was evident in both LASER Alliance and non-LASER Alliance schools. Similarly, schools reported a variety of mechanisms for refurbishing the modules after classroom use. Non-LASER Alliance schools indicated a slightly greater dependence on the district and schools to refurbish the modules, whereas LASER Alliance schools tended to rely on a science materials center to refurbish the modules.

#### **Finding 2—Preparing Students for the Science WASL**

When asked, “To what do you attribute your success?” 21 of the 39 schools reported engaging students in some form of preparation for the science WASL. However, during the second part of the interview when asked whether they used released WASL items or Powerful Classroom Assessments (PCAs), 37 schools reported using them to prepare students for the WASL. Most used the released WASL items and only 1 school reported using the PCAs. Many schools used the released WASL items to practice a few weeks prior to the WASL implementation. Others used the released WASL items as the basis for assessments administered throughout the school year. Several schools reported teaching students WASL vocabulary and using the released items

to familiarize students with the format of the Grade 5 science WASL. A few schools had begun using the released WASL items with Grade 4 students.

When asked about the use of other assessments, only one school identified a district-level assessment other than the WASL (the Measure of Academic Progress). Twenty-one schools administered no other science assessment than the WASL to all Grade 5 students. Ten schools indicated that teachers regularly used the assessments provided with the science instructional materials. Four schools reported that they had an organized approach for administering practice science WASL assessments mostly adapted from released items. Two schools administered science assessments developed by teams of teachers to all Grade 5 students in their respective schools.

When asked about formative assessment strategies, many interviewees claimed that teachers were solely responsible for conducting formative assessments of student understanding. Many of the responses suggested a lack of understanding of the nature and utility of formative assessments. Many interviewees cited summative or fact-based assessments and described how the results were used formatively. Several reported that teachers reviewed student science notebooks and one indicated that teachers made widespread use of exit cards.

Only one interviewee expressed the opinion that the assessment practices did not positively impact Grade 5 students' success on the science WASL; 2 others were unsure. The remainder of the interviewees believed that their assessment practices—specifically use of the released WASL items—positively impacted their students' performance on the Grade 5 science WASL.

### **Finding 3—Professional Development**

Eighty-two percent (32) of the schools indicated that teacher professional development contributed to improving student WASL scores. The professional development in districts not served by a LASER Alliance tended to focus on use of the modules and the WASL. Professional development in districts served by a LASER Alliance was much more diverse. In addition to use of the modules and the WASL, the professional development in LASER Alliance schools addressed journaling and science notebooks; leadership; science content; science inquiry; coaching, mentoring, and the use of outside science consultant; and Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs). In addition, these schools were more likely to utilize an organized approach to providing school-based professional development such as lesson studies or book studies.

Eleven LASER Alliance schools reported using time afforded by the late arrival or early release of students for school-based professional development. Non-LASER Alliance schools cited late arrival and early release time less frequently, but did indicate a higher incidence of using common planning time for school-based professional development. Schools reported the following professional development activities and topics (in decreasing order of relevance):

- Training on the WASL.
- Examining student work.
- Consulting with science experts.
- Aligning vocabulary with science WASL vocabulary.
- Developing assessment items similar to WASL items.
- Conducting structured sharing.
- Examining the EALRs and science standards.
- Training on brain research.
- Training on the framework of poverty.

- Training on inquiry writing.

#### **Finding 4—Science Advocate**

Most of the schools (30 of 39) attributed their success on the Grade 5 science WASL to the influence of science education advocates. These advocates were passionate about science and contributed energy and initiative to the wide variety of roles they performed. In 16 of the schools the science advocate was a designated district- or school-level science education specialist. In some cases a school-level science specialist provided most or all science instruction at Grade 5. In 9 schools the advocate was a science teacher leader designated to participate in leadership professional development to assist other teachers in the school with the use of the science instruction modules. In 6 schools a teacher or team of teachers took it upon themselves to become science education advocates. Three schools reported that their advocate was a community member, and 2 schools identified a school administrator as the science education advocate. There was no difference between schools in districts served by a LASER Alliance and schools in districts that were not with respect to the presence of a science advocate.

#### **Finding 5—Curriculum Alignment to the EALRs and GLEs**

Fifty-one percent (20) of the schools attributed the success of their students to an increased emphasis on the alignment of their science curriculum to the EALRs and GLEs. No difference was observed between schools in districts served by a LASER Alliance and schools that were not.

#### **Finding 6—Instructional Time**

Thirty-eight percent (15) of the schools attributed their success at least partially to increased science instructional time. Again, no difference was observed between schools in districts served by a LASER Alliance and schools that were not.

#### ***Impact of LASER***

It was unclear how to interpret the interviewees' comments regarding the impact of Washington State LASER. Many in districts served by a LASER Alliance were uncertain of the role of LASER. They were, however, well aware of the services provided by the LASER Alliance and most attributed their students' success on the Grade 5 science WASL at least in part to those services. This finding is partly explained by the fact that LASER Alliances were implemented through large school district, ESDs, or other agencies that serve schools—thus school staff frequently associated the services with the agency that provided the services rather than LASER.

Interviewees in districts that had participated in a LASER Strategic Planning Institute were also asked about the impact of the plan that had been developed and implemented. Because participation in a LASER Strategic Planning Institute is a district-level activity, most of the interviewees did not know enough about the role of the strategic plan that was developed at the Institute to comment on its contribution. Interviewees who did respond to this question suggested that the plan had contributed to their school's overall success.

#### ***Recommendations***

One of the final interview questions asked, "What 2 recommendations would you give to the staff of another school working to improve science teaching and learning that would improve student performance on the science WASL?" The responses varied considerably. The following 6 recommendations were cited most frequently:

- Approximately half (18) of the schools recommended using released WASL items and Powerful Classroom Assessments to develop the skills students need to be successful on the WASL.
- Approximately one third (13) of the schools recommended that schools provide teachers with adequate professional development, particularly with respect to the use of the instructional materials and the WASL.
- One quarter (10) of the schools recommended increasing the amount of science instruction time students receive.
- A little less than one quarter of the schools (9) recommend engaging students in hands-on, inquiry-based science activities.
- Approximately a sixth (7) of the schools recommended that schools provide time for teachers to collaborate on planning and delivering science instruction.
- Fifteen percent (6) of the schools recommended aligning the science curriculum with the EALRs and GLEs.

To learn whether these recommendations differed according to the achievement level of the students, RMC Research disaggregated the recommendations by the percentage of students who met the Grade 5 WASL science standard in each school in 2006. RMC Research grouped the 39 schools interviewed into 4 groups: less than 50%, between 50% and 60%, between 60% and 70%, and greater than 70%. More than 2 out of every 5 schools were in the between 50% and 60% category.

Exhibit 2 shows that schools with the highest percentage of students (greater than 70%) who met the Grade 5 WASL science standard recommended increasing instructional time most frequently, whereas schools in which 50% or fewer students met the standard most frequently recommended the use of released WASL items and professional development.

**Exhibit 2—Recommendations**

<i>Recommendation</i>	<b>Interval of Students Who Met the Grade 5 WASL Science Standard</b>			
	<i>&lt; 50%</i> <i>(n = 5)</i>	<i>50–60%</i> <i>(n = 17)</i>	<i>61–70%</i> <i>(n = 11)</i>	<i>&gt; 70%</i> <i>(n = 6)</i>
Use released items/PCAs to develop WASL skills	40% (2)	59% (10)	36% (4)	33% (2)
Professional development	40% (2)	47% (8)	9% (1)	33% (2)
Increase science instruction	0	29% (5)	18% (3)	50% (3)
Inquiry/hands-on/ student engagement	0	23% (4)	36% (4)	17% (1)
Collaboration time for teachers	20% (1)	29% (5)	9% (1)	0
Align with EALRs and GLEs	20% (1)	12% (2)	9% (1)	33% (2)

Note: Percentages in the body of the table denote the percentages of the schools in the respective group that made the recommendation.

## ***Conclusion***

More similarities than differences were evident among the successful schools that participated in aspects of LASER and successful schools that did not. Furthermore, Washington State LASER

actively promotes most of the strategies for improving student achievement in science that are evident among the highly successful schools and outlined in this report:

- **Inquiry-based instructional materials**—LASER provides schools with access to inquiry-based instructional materials through curriculum showcases, provides professional development on the use of the materials, and supports science materials centers that coordinate the sharing and storing of materials and module refurbishment.
- **Preparing students for the science WASL**—Although LASER does not give a high priority to students merely practicing for the test, LASER does provide professional development regarding the use of Powerful Classroom Assessments (PCAs) that give students and teachers experience working with WASL-like assessment items.
- **Professional development**—LASER provides professional development on the use of the inquiry-based instructional materials and topics including science content, science inquiry, using science notebooks, integrating literacy and science, and science leadership.
- **Science advocacy (leadership)**—Through the ongoing development of a cadre of teacher leaders, LASER has helped install science advocates in schools throughout Washington State. Furthermore, LASER promotes support for science education by fostering relationships between educators (teachers and school administrators) and community members—particularly in the business and informal science sectors.
- **Alignment of the science curriculum with the EALRs and GLEs**—LASER professional development addresses alignment with the EALRs and GLEs, and LASER Alliances have developed documents that link the inquiry-based instructional materials to the EALRs.
- **Increased science instructional time**—Through the successful implementation of a coherent plan for the use of inquiry-based instructional materials in many school districts, LASER has increased the amount of science instructional time in many schools that provided little or no science instruction previously.

Although many interviewees were not fully aware of the role of LASER—primarily because of how the services were provided—they were aware of the services provided by LASER and identified those services as contributing to the success of their Grade 5 students on the science WASL.

**Appendix A**  
**Highly Successful School Interview Protocol**



## Highly Successful School Interview Protocol

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

### Opening Statement for Principal:

Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ from RMC Research Corporation and I am calling on behalf of OSPI and Washington State LASER. We noticed that the percentages of your school's students who met the science WASL at Grade 5 increased between 2004 and 2005 and between 2005 and 2006. RMC Research is conducting a series of telephone interviews with highly successful schools such as yours to learn how you achieved this success so that other schools may follow.

*NOTE: If it appears that they are unfamiliar with Washington State LASER, you may need to provide a brief overview. For more information see <http://www.wastatelaser.org/>*

Are you the most appropriate person to talk to about your school's success on the Grade 5 science WASL?

*If yes* The information collected during the interview is confidential. When all of the interviews are completed, RMC Research will summarize the data and present the results in aggregate form only to conceal the source. Are you willing to answer a few questions that will help us understand how you achieved this success?

How long have you been in your current position? (*Record position and how long they have been in that position*)

*If yes skip to Question 1.*

*If no* Who in your school should I talk to?

When would be a good time to talk to this person?

*Schedule interview with new contact.*

### Opening Statement for School Science Contact:

Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ from RMC Research Corporation and I am calling on behalf of OSPI and Washington State LASER. As you know, your school's students who met the science WASL at Grade 5 increased between 2004 and 2005 and between 2005 and 2006. RMC Research is conducting a series of telephone interviews with highly successful schools such as yours to learn how you achieved this success so that other schools may follow. The information collected during the interview is confidential. When all of the interviews are completed, RMC Research will summarize the data and present the results in aggregate form only to conceal the source. Your principal indicated that you are the most

appropriate person to talk to about the science program in your school. Are you willing to answer a few questions about how your school achieved success on the science WASL?

*If yes:*

How long have you been in your current position? (*Record position and how long they have been in that position*)

*Go to Question 1.*

*If no* Who in your school should I talk to?

1. The percentage of students who met the Grade 5 science standard on the WASL increased from \_\_\_\_\_ % in 2004 to \_\_\_\_\_ % in 2005 to \_\_\_\_\_ % in 2006. What is your school doing to improve science teaching and learning? To what do you attribute this success?

*Probe for specifics regarding:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Changes in science instructional materials

\_\_\_\_\_ Changes in science instructional time

\_\_\_\_\_ School- or district-level science initiatives or grants

\_\_\_\_\_ Increased emphasis on science EALRs and/or GLEs

\_\_\_\_\_ Coordinated test preparation efforts such as use of Powerful Classroom Assessments (PCAs) or WASL Released Item Documents from OSPI

\_\_\_\_\_ Participation in pull-out (i.e., workshops) science professional development that supports the instructional materials

\_\_\_\_\_ Planned school-based professional development activities (e.g., subject or grade level professional learning communities, organized examination of student work, collaborative lesson planning)

\_\_\_\_\_ Changes in school priorities

\_\_\_\_\_ Changes in school leadership or culture

\_\_\_\_\_ Changes in staff

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher incentives

\_\_\_\_\_ Other reasons . . .

### **Instructional Materials**

2. What instructional materials does your school's science program use at Grades K–5?

*Obtain the proper names of the materials.*

*If the materials are inquiry based (See list of inquiry-based instructional materials):*

- a. Where are the materials stored? *Probe for information about the use of a centralized science materials center.*
  
- b. How do teachers access the materials? *(according to a given schedule, upon request, etc.)*
  
- d. How are the materials maintained and refurbished?

### **Professional Development**

3. Have you or the staff participated in professional development that has made a significant contribution to your school's improved performance on the science WASL?

*If no, skip to question 4.*

*If yes.*

- a. What pull-out professional development has your staff participated in that has made a significant contribution to your school's improved performance on the science WASL? Please describe the nature of this professional development.
  
- b. What organized school-based professional development or other activities (e.g., subject or grade level professional learning communities, organized examination of student work, collaborative lesson planning) do teachers participate in that have contributed to your schools improved performance on the science WASL?

### **Assessment**

4. In addition to the science WASL, what other science assessments are administered to all Grade 5 students in your school?

5. What classroom or formative assessment strategies do teachers in your school use to monitor students' science knowledge and skills? How extensive or uniform are these strategies used across staff members?
6. To what extent have these assessment activities contributed to your school's improved performance on the science WASL?
7. To what extent do teachers in your school use released WASL items and/or Powerful Classroom Assessments (PCA) to prepare students?

### **Support for Science**

8. Has your school made any special effort to garner support for science education from the community? If so, please describe this effort and how it contributed to your success.
9. What role has the school administration played regarding the teaching and learning of science in your school?

### **Impact of LASER**

*If the school district is a member of one of the LASER Alliances:*

10. How familiar are you with Washington State LASER and its impact on the science program in your school?

*If the person is not familiar with LASER, skip the following questions and probe for the name of someone in the school who would be and reschedule:*

11. Has the district's participation in the LASER Alliance contributed to your school's success? If so, please describe how.

*Probing questions:*

- a. How has the professional development organized by the LASER Alliance contributed to your school's success?
- b. How has the materials support organized by the LASER Alliance contributed to your school's success?

*If the school district participated in the LASER Strategic Planning Institute:*

12. Did you know that your school district participated in a LASER Strategic Planning Institute and developed a plan for reforming science instruction in your school district?

*If no skip to next question.*

*If yes* Did the implementation of this plan contribute to the success of your school's science program? If so, please describe how.

### **General**

13. What 2 recommendations would you give to the staff of another school working to improve science teaching and learning that would improve student performance on the science WASL?
14. Can you think of any other factors that contributed to your school's success? Please explain.

### **Closing Statement**

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview. Your insights will help other schools learn from your school's success. The results of this series of interviews will be summarized in a report to Washington State LASER and OSPI in January 2007.

## **Appendix B**

### **Letter from OSPI to the Principals of Selected Schools**

November 23, 2006

Dear Principal:

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Washington State LASER project are working with RMC Research Corporation to study schools whose Grade 5 students have demonstrated consistent improvement on science portion of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Your school is one of the few schools in the state that has increased the percentage of Grade 5 students who met the science standard by at least 6% each year since 2004. We would like to interview you (or a designate) to learn to what you attribute this success. A staff member from RMC Research will be calling you in the near future requesting your participation in a telephone interview that we anticipate will take approximately 20 to 35 minutes depending upon the nature of the responses. RMC Research will summarize the information collected from all of the interviews in a report to OSPI and Washington State LASER that will be used to help other schools follow in your footsteps. OSPI and Washington State LASER request your cooperation in this important study.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:

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Sincerely,

Eric Wuersten  
Science Curriculum Supervisor  
OSPI