

## Building a Presence for Science in North Carolina

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Building a Presence for Science is a program of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) with funding from Exxon Mobil. The vision of the initiative is to lessen the isolation of classroom teachers and to promote inquiry and standards-based science teaching throughout the United States. Begun in Texas in 1996, 12 states including North Carolina were part of Phase I implementation. Now in its second phase, Building a Presence has programs in 23 states. The vision of lessening isolation is becoming a reality with an extensive electronic network of science advocates and the dissemination of information and professional development to science leaders is promoting the use of inquiry in science classrooms in the participating states.

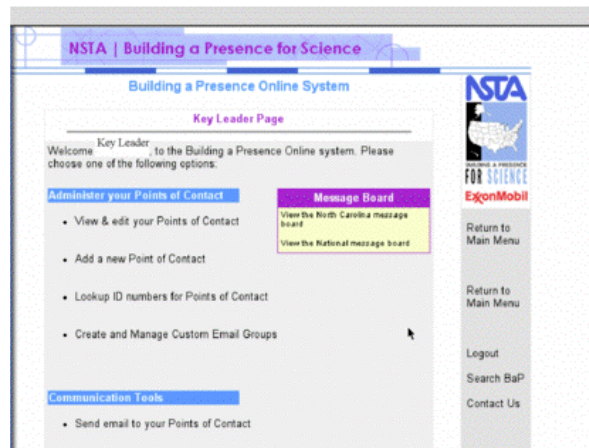
The Building a Presence for Science network is made up of state partners, which are typically non-profit organizations and businesses that promote science education, a state coordinator, science leaders, and elementary, middle and high school teachers. At the core of the network are Key Leaders who are recruited from each participating county or school district. The Key Leader finds a teacher, called a Point of Contact (POC), for each school in the district and maintains the network database for the POC's in their district. The POC's serve as liaisons to the Key Leader and as advocates of inquiry and standards-based science teaching at the site level. In North Carolina there are 77 Key Leaders and 1307 teachers who are part of the network. Fifty-three percent of all schools in the state are currently represented in the program.



As Building a Presence for Science participants, the Key Leaders and POC's receive information from the state coordinator and NSTA regarding all events and professional development opportunities that are occurring in the state and the nation, thus lessening the isolation experienced by so many classroom teachers.

A website, which is an excellent source of information regarding state and national issues in science education, is available to all state participants and through the website the coordinator and Key Leaders can easily communicate with all teachers and partners in the program.

Both national and state partners are supportive resources for Building a Presence for Science. NSTA provides continuous support to each participating state program. A program manager is available to assist with any issue or initiative of the program. A technical director, a newsletter editor, and a professional development coordinator provide supportive material and other resources for the state coordinator. State partners work closely with Building a Presence to forge a connectedness among the organizations advocating for excellence in science education and science education reform. State partners in North Carolina include the State Department of Public Instruction, North Carolina Science Teachers Association, North Carolina Science Leaders Association, the Science House, the Science and Mathematics Network, several private colleges, and museums including the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science. State partners provide in-kind services such as facilities for meetings and workshops, shared member lists, and information and opportunities for state participants. A state Advisory Board consisting of representatives from state partner organizations, teachers, and science leaders assist the state coordinator in recruiting Key



Leaders, seeking new partners, and planning the implementation of professional development for state participants.



Building a Presence for Science sponsors professional development for state participants at state and national conferences, through partnering organizations, and as regional workshops through funds and resources provided by NSTA. The advantage of the network professional development is that the content and activities reach a large number of teachers as the workshop is disseminated through the network. A workshop provided to Key Leaders is disseminated to POC's who are then able to extend the impact of the workshop even further by sharing activities with all teachers at the school site.

In 2003 the Key Leaders in North Carolina will participate in a workshop, Toolkit for Professional Development: Science as Inquiry. The workshop will utilize the network message board to give participants an opportunity to receive and discuss follow up activities, to assist each other in overcoming any barriers to implementation of the activities, and to share successes. As a result of a one-day workshop and a four-week follow up, the participants will have the resources to promote a deeper level of understanding of the many ways that inquiry can be used effectively as an approach to teaching science content standards in their schools throughout the state. Participants will become familiar with more than a dozen definitions of inquiry and will be able to facilitate activities that use hands-on investigations, data interpretation, and case studies as methods of inquiry. The workshop activities can be adapted to any grade level. Beginning in the fall of 2003, Key Leaders will disseminate the toolkit to network schools across the state.

The potential impact of Building a Presence for Science is great. Goals for Building a Presence for Science in North Carolina have been established for the current year to increase the impact of the program. The goals are: 1) Recruit an active Key Leader in all 100 counties of the state including underserved counties in the far west and northeast; 2) Provide a face-to-face workshop, resources, and follow-up activities on inquiry to promote and support a state-wide effort to bring these activities to every school in the state; and 3) Seek additional state partners to forge a connectedness of the state resources aimed at promoting excellence in science teaching at every grade level. Through the attainment of these goals, Building a Presence for Science is a program that can connect two vast resources that already exist in North Carolina. In the schools across the state are literally thousands of teachers who are seeking better ways of teaching science. Within the state there are a variety of organizations that have rich human and material resources to promote excellence in science teaching. The Key Leader and POC network established through the state participant structure of Building a Presence for Science makes it possible to connect the two.



For more information on Building a Presence and becoming a Key Leader or Point of Contact visit [www.nsta.org/bap/](http://www.nsta.org/bap/).

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