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Conference

"We're trying to broaden the conference from concentrating just on PLTW to examining the entire STEM education area," says Blais. "We see PLTW as part of the greater movement to improve science and math education throughout the nation."

Concurrent sessions for state leaders and affiliate directors, as well as sessions on new schools and Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) Summer Camps, take place on Thursday morning.

Attendees must register online for the conference and reserve rooms at the Marriott. Registration for the entire conference is \$350, but events are also priced individually (see box below). The registration deadline is January 31, 2007.

For updated information about the conference and to register and make hotel reservations, visit www.pltw.org and click on "PLTW National Conference."

Full Conference Ticket

(\$350 per person) includes:

Tuesday:

Kick-off dinner and keynote address

Wednesday:

Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and all sessions

Thursday:

Breakfast, lunch, and all sessions.

Wednesday Ticket

(\$225 per person) includes:

Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and all sessions on Wednesday only.

Thursday Ticket

(\$135 per person) includes:

Breakfast, lunch, and all sessions on Thursday only.

Wednesday/Thursday Ticket

(\$275 per person) includes:

Wednesday:

Breakfast, lunch, dinner, and all sessions

Thursday:

Breakfast, lunch, and all sessions.

Wednesday Luncheon Ticket

(\$50 per person) includes:

Lunch on Wednesday only.

Dinner Tickets

(\$150 per person)

Tuesday dinner ticket includes:

Kick-off dinner with keynote speaker.

Wednesday dinner ticket includes:

Dinner with speakers.

Vice-President's Corner

By Richard Blais

Students Need Both Rigor and Relevance

The term "rigor" has become synonymous with school transformation initiatives. The assumption is that the more "rigorous" the course content, the better a student's preparation for postsecondary education and life success.

Seemingly validated by sources such as the annual *Newsweek* magazine ranking of America's top schools, the push to increase enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses has caught favor as the solution to bringing more "rigor" to the nation's curriculum.

"Rigor" alone, however, without a context for learning, will not increase the problem-solving and critical thinking skills of students. Successfully completing a challenging course and meeting a level of competency on one examination does not assure that students will be able to apply the concepts to real-world situations.

It also does not ensure their retention in postsecondary programs. A controlled

comparison between students who

took AP courses and students who took a non-AP curriculum strong in mathematics and science found no significant differences in early college GPA or retention (Klopfenstein and Thomas, University of Dallas, June 2006).

Project Lead The Way curriculum combines "rigor" with "relevance." The result is that students successfully completing PLTW courses have a higher college attendance and retention rate than comparable students not exposed to PLTW courses (TrueOutcomes, 2005). In addition, analysis of a sampling of college transcripts suggests that PLTW students earn an overall GPA above 3.0, and average a B or better in challenging college courses in Calculus, Physics, and Chemistry (TrueOutcomes, 2006).

The nation's continued competitiveness will benefit from and be ensured by students exposed to both "rigor" and "relevance" in their learning experience.



Photo Courtesy: PLTW

PLTW SPOTLIGHT

Liebich Wins Social Entrepreneur

PLTW CEO Richard Liebich has been honored with the Sixth Annual Manhattan Institute's Social Entrepreneurship Award.

He received the award at a dinner in New York City on November 14, 2006. The Social Entrepreneurship Award recognizes nonprofit leaders who have created innovative solutions—with little or no financial aid from the government—for some of America's most prevalent social problems. Organizations are assessed according to several criteria, including energetic founding leaders, strong

vision, committed volunteers, and creative and entrepreneurial ways of conceiving and meeting goals.

The Institute is recognizing the impressive progress PLTW has made in just 10 years as an organization. Currently, more than 1,700 schools in 46 states across the country are using PLTW curriculum to better prepare students for careers in engineering.

"It is an honor for me to accept this award, and I am overjoyed that PLTW is getting the recognition it deserves for the incredible work every employee has done to help students