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PASCO Contact:

Kathleen Dixon

Dixon Communications

408-871-7765

kathleen@kdixon.com

Project Tomorrow Contact:

Laurie Smith

949-609-4660

lsmith@tomorrow.org

New Speak Up Report Shows Hands-on Activities Integral to Science Education

Project Tomorrow and PASCO scientific to Present Key Findings at
National Educational Computing Conference

SAN ANTONIO, Texas—June 30, 2008— PASCO scientific and Project Tomorrow today announced a new report on science education that is based upon the authentic, unfiltered views and ideas of over 367,000 K-12 students, teachers, parents and school administrators collected through the annual Speak Up online surveys. This report documents for the first time the disconnection between how students in kindergarten through 12th grade want to learn science, what tools they want to use to explore science, and what is actually happening in their science classrooms.

Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow, a national education nonprofit group, will present the findings from “Inspiring the Next Generation of Innovators: Students, Parents and Educators Speak Up about Science Education” to educators attending the National Educational Computing Conference here. The presentation will take place at 10 a.m. Tuesday at PASCO booth 9190 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. The report provides insight from parents and educators, and discusses students' experiences with science education and how they might be improved so that they will be successful in the 21st century.

“The report shows that hands-on science activities are integral to science teaching and learning from the elementary grades through high school,” says Evans. “The importance of hands-on learning activities was echoed by teachers and students throughout the study, with most teachers agreeing that animations, simulations and using hands-on lab tools hold the greatest potential for increasing student achievement in science.”

On the subject of the importance of science education, two-thirds of parents, teachers and school and district administrators agree that improving science education should be a top

national priority; and over 55% of middle and high school students say that learning science is important for success in high school and college.

“It’s evident that most people recognize that science education must be elevated to a level of national importance so that students can participate successfully in a global economy,” says Wayne Grant, Ph.D., chief education officer for PASCO. “This research gives us insight into what educators and students need and what they value. The results of this project validate PASCO’s long-held belief that hands-on, inquiry-based learning not only engages students, but also gives them a deeper level of understanding of science and makes it more relevant in their lives. From parents to educators to students, this study shows great awareness of the value of high-quality science education.”

In the report, students share their ideas about the relevance of science education to their future, experiences with science education, recommendations for the ultimate science classroom, and strategies for recruiting them to STEM careers. In addition, educators share their views about teaching science in a 21st century classroom and the barriers they face in developing scientifically literate students.

Highlights cover what tools are used in K-12 schools, and to what degree.

- In kindergarten through fifth grade, teachers primarily use hands-on activities, followed by inquiry-based demonstrations and the use of kit-based materials. Lectures are not one of the top five instructional strategies for these grades.
- Hands-on activities also top the list of instructional strategies for middle school teachers, followed by lectures, inquiry-based investigations and demonstrations.
- However, high school science teachers are more likely to use a lecture format in the classroom than hands-on activities.

Students also give voice to what science means to their education.

- 40% say that it helps develop problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- 46% acknowledge that they may want a job someday in science and learning science is important for that goal.
- The study shows that 20% of students in grades 3-5, 17% of students in grades 6-8, and 21% in grades 9-12 are very interested in a job in science, math, technology or engineering.
- Additionally, 34% of students in grades 3-12 say they may be interested in a career in a STEM field if they knew more about those jobs.

Other highlights include the views of middle and high school students and parents on how to improve science education.

- A teacher who is excited about science was the number one response from parents and students.
- In grades 6-12, 48% of students say they want to use animations to visualize difficult concepts, or interactive simulations to practice what they have learned.
- 46% say conducting real research on interesting topics is important.
- 45% put using technology based tools to conduct scientific investigations at the top of the list.

- Only 20% of the students say, “reading the textbook” would improve science education for them.

The complete report will be available July 1 on the PASCO website:

www.pasco.com/SpeakUp and on the Project Tomorrow website:

www.tomorrow.org/speakup/scienceReport.html.

About PASCO scientific

PASCO scientific is a leading developer of innovative, technology-based solutions for hands-on science. PASCO's team of over 165 includes former and current teachers, educational researchers, engineers and many more. Throughout its more than 40-year history, PASCO has focused exclusively on science education--designing, developing and supporting better ways of teaching and learning science. Teachers and students in more than 100 countries throughout the world use PASCO solutions.

About Project Tomorrow and the Speak Up Project

Project Tomorrow (formerly known as NetDay) is a national education nonprofit organization committed to insuring that every student is well prepared to become tomorrow's innovators, leaders and engaged citizens of the world. Project Tomorrow's mission is to support and promote the effective and appropriate use of science, math and technology resources in K–12 education so that every student has the opportunity to fully participate in today's global economy and community. Since 2003, the Speak Up Project has collected the authentic views of over 1.2 million K-12 students, parents and educators about science, technology and 21st century education and the annual data informs national, state and local policies and programs to improve education for all children.