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Major Gift Propels Expansion of High Impact Teacher Training at the Connecticut Science Center

Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers Launches

Hartford, CT (July 2, 2013) – Thousands of Connecticut teachers will be better prepared to provide top-notch STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education to their students, thanks to a major expansion of the Connecticut Science Center’s teacher professional development program. The program will triple in size to serve approximately 1,500 educators annually through a grant by the Andrew J. and Joyce D. Mandell Family Foundation. The newly named **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers at the Connecticut Science Center** will give educators the tools they need to meet rigorous new state and national standards for STEM education and core curricula. By discovering how students learn and inspiring their natural curiosity, The Mandell Academy for Teachers at the Connecticut Science Center helps educators transform teaching from lecturing and memorization to exciting student-centered investigation. The announcement was made today at a news conference attended by Governor Dannel P. Malloy, state legislators and leading state and local education officials, and a cohort of 50 teachers participating in ongoing professional development at the Science Center.

“Working closely with educators and policy makers, the Science Center has created teaching methods and tools that have an important positive effect on student achievement. Now, with the Mandells’ generous support, we will expand our capacity to meet the growing demand for high-quality teacher training,” said Matt Fleury, Connecticut Science Center President and CEO. New nationally mandated benchmarks such as the Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core Education Standards will require teachers to seek training to improve the way they teach science and integrate it with the rest of their curricula. “We will now be able to add instructors and offer best-in-class training to many more teachers throughout the state,” Fleury said.

The Mandell Family Foundation was an early contributor to the Connecticut Science Center, providing significant support to its building campaign. Andrew Mandell has been a Trustee of the Science Center since 2009. “I’ve watched this organization carefully develop its teacher professional development program over the years, and have been impressed with the results at the schools that use it. Teachers have told me that what they learn here completely changes how they teach, and their students’ test scores have risen as a result,” Mandell said. “Joyce and I, and our whole family, want to be sure that teachers all over Connecticut have access to the kind of training they need to help their students succeed.”

“Connecticut students must leave school ready for higher education and prepared to compete in the 21st Century workforce,” said Governor Malloy. “We are investing hundreds of millions of dollars to reform our public education system, and we’ve overhauled our system of higher education so students’ classroom learning is highly relevant to today’s job market. But make no mistake, teachers are critical to the future economic strength of this state. With this expansion, the Connecticut Science Center is providing more access to the innovative ideas and techniques to support our teachers in the classroom.”

State Senator John Fonfara of Hartford added, “Connecticut has a proud history in technological innovation. We need our next generation of inventors, manufacturers and healers to be as successful as the great Connecticut thinkers who invented anesthesia, the submarine, the helicopter and the portable typewriter. The hands-on teaching methods taught here foster that spirit of innovation and discovery.”

“Better preparing Connecticut students for careers of the future entails providing ample enrichment opportunities for today’s teachers—especially in the STEM fields,” said State Department of Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor. “Through the generous support of the Mandell family, many more teachers will be able to benefit from the high quality program offered by Connecticut Science Center’s teacher-training program, which will ultimately benefit Connecticut students in the classroom.”

50 Teachers Graduate with College Credit

In addition to expanding its capacity to serve more teachers, the Mandell Academy will also award graduate-level college credit through Charter Oak State College for certain programs. Teachers completing the covered courses can earn a total of nine credits toward their Master’s degrees over a three-year period.

Ed Klonoski, President of Charter Oak State College said, “We’re excited to partner with the Connecticut Science Center to recognize the training teachers will receive through the Academy. The Science Center meets a high standard for academic merit, and helps us advance our mission of strengthening Connecticut’s workforce through continued professional development and lifelong learning.”

Just this week, 50 educators are completing an intensive professional development program and will be the first to earn graduate-level credits from Charter Oak State College as part of the new Mandell Academy for Teachers at the Connecticut Science Center.

Transforming Classrooms

The Connecticut Science Center has been providing quality teacher professional development since 2004 and has trained more than 2,000 educators, including multiple contenders and winners of Teacher of the Year honors. For example, both the 2012 and 2013 Hartford Teachers of the Year have participated in the Science Center’s professional development programs.

“We have the opportunity to create a generation of dreamers where the sky literally will be the limit,” said 2012 Hartford Teacher of the Year Keith Sevigny. “We do this by making kids curious about the world around them, allowing them to ask questions, and letting them construct their own answers. That kind of innovative teaching is what the Science Center teaches us to do.”

Sevigny teaches at the Annie Fisher STEM Magnet School, whose entire faculty has been trained at the Connecticut Science Center. School officials credit this as a factor in their students’ dramatic increase in Connecticut Mastery Test scores in every subject.

More information about course offerings and resources for teachers can be found at www.CTScienceCenter.org/MandellAcademy or by calling 860-520-2111.

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About the Connecticut Science Center The LEED-Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. With more than 1,200,000 people served since opening in 2009, visitors experience more than 150 exhibits in 10 galleries and a range of topics, including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include four educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store and café, and ongoing events and lectures for all ages. The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. More information: www.CTScienceCenter.org or 860.SCIENCE.