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New Haven Public Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**New Haven Public Schools Taps Connecticut Science Center's
Mandell Academy for Teachers to Provide Professional Development**
Two-year program empowers teachers by improving teaching practices for Grades 3–5

Hartford, CT, May 15, 2015 – New Haven Public Schools is taking great strides toward improving teaching practices and student achievement by implementing powerful teacher professional development programs delivered by the Connecticut Science Center's **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**. The programs increase teachers' science content knowledge, thereby enhancing their ability to confidently teach the core science principles of Connecticut's K–8 Science Curriculum Standards.

Twenty-four teachers from Wexler Grant and Hill Central schools are participating in a two-year program designed to improve science teaching and learning for grades 3–5, and to introduce core science and engineering practices from the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Year one focused on content knowledge instruction, and was undertaken over four half-days during 2014. In year two, teachers will enroll in the Connecticut Science Center's **Inquiry for Teaching and Learning** series, which will introduce the Inquiry method and guide teachers through Inquiry-based professional development focused on content knowledge and teaching strategies. In both years, a part-time science "coach" provides support to teachers, meeting with teams and modeling effective science instruction.

According to Richard Therrien, Science Coordinator for New Haven Public Schools, the district realized that building the capacity of elementary teachers to effectively teach science is the key to improving science teaching and learning. This is especially evident at neighborhood schools, particularly those who have struggled with issues surrounding student performance, literacy, teacher turnover, and time for instruction.

"The Connecticut Science Center has been extremely successful in partnering with other schools, which have shown impressive gains in science literacy after working with their Mandell Academy for Teachers," said Mr. Therrien. "We are confident that the Connecticut Science Center's team of STEM Educators will help the teachers at Wexler Grant and Hill Central gain the confidence and skills to excite third, fourth, and fifth graders about science."

Although New Haven has made recent gains in Connecticut Mastery Test scores, many schools, including Hill Central and Wexler Grant, are in the process of accelerating in science achievement. Examination of the issue shows that students continue to struggle in earth and physical science; students consistently earn the lowest test scores in these areas. In many cases, urban students do not have access to state-of-the-art science labs and don't have the earth science experiences required in the Science Curriculum Standards. To address this, the partnership between New Haven Public Schools and the Connecticut Science Center features a unique combination of formal and informal science education that goes beyond teacher professional development. With the guidance of school officials, Science Center exhibit designers have created STEM Discovery Rooms at the New Haven partner schools, which offer lab experiences similar to what students would find at the Science Center. These spaces are tailored to each school's specific needs and function as extensions of the classroom. Here, teachers engage students in hands-on

experiments and engineering challenges to reinforce content knowledge and integrate engineering design, positioning their classrooms well for new standards laid out in the NGSS. STEM Discovery Rooms include iconic interactive elements that directly relate to science curriculum standards, such as wind tunnels, LEGO® engineering labs, Light and Sound labs, and vertical garden terraria.

As teachers from partner schools receive professional development to help them understand the principles of the NGSS, they also bring their students to the Science Center for field trips, which include 45-minute lab sessions in the Science Center's Discovery Center. Teachers observe these labs and learn how to effectively use the spaces, resources, and iconic elements in their schools' STEM Discovery Rooms.

"We applaud New Haven Public Schools' commitment to empowering their educators with research-backed methods and science coaching," said Matt Fleury, Connecticut Science Center President and CEO. "Combining instruction and job-embedded skills is proven to increase effectiveness in the classroom. As we continue to expand our capacity in-state and beyond, we are truly excited that our powerful Mandell Academy professional development programs can help advance science education in one of our state's largest districts."

For more information about the Connecticut Science Center and the Mandell Academy for Teachers, please visit CTScienceCenter.org.

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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. Serving 1.8 million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten 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 ongoing events 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. The Connecticut Science Center is also the home to the **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**, offering powerful Professional Development for educators. More information: CTScienceCenter.org or (860) SCIENCE.

About the Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers at the Connecticut Science Center The Mandell Academy for Teachers is the Connecticut Science Center's high-impact professional development program for educators, offering training that supports rigorous science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and core curriculum standards. Mandell Academy for Teachers programs transform classroom instruction, resulting in engaging learning experiences that lead to achievement for all students. The Mandell Academy offers student engagement strategies, science content and practices, engineering practices, science coaching, STEM Units, Inquiry for Teaching and Learning, and more. With accreditation by Charter Oak State College, educators who participate in the Inquiry for Teaching and Learning series will earn graduate credits (3 credits per year for 3 years) toward a master's degree. For more information, visit CTScienceCenter.org/Mandell, or call (860) 520-2111.