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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connecticut Science Center and Smith STEM School Celebrate Ongoing Partnership *Event honors five years of transformative inquiry-based training via innovative whole-school model and looks to future of partnership*

Hartford —September 30, 2016—The Connecticut Science Center and Florence E. Smith STEM School in West Hartford are proud to celebrate five years of a partnership that has helped improve teaching and learning through participation in the Inquiry for Teaching and Learning Series. Beginning in 2011, teachers at Smith STEM School have engaged in a unique whole-school model of professional learning which engages educators across disciplines and grade-levels as well as school administrators. The partners celebrated the occasion at a school assembly with a banner presentation with honored guests from the community.



(Left to Right) Assistant Superintendent Paul Vicinus (WHPS); WHPS Board of Education member Carol Blanks; State Representative Andy Fleischmann; WHPS Board of Education member Dave Pauluk; Smith School STEM Coordinator Sharon Zajack; Superintendent Thomas Moore (WHPS); Smith School Principal Teresa Giolito; incoming CSC V.P. of Programs Cheryl Tokarski; CSC V.P. of Programs Hank Gruner; Education Consultant at the CT State Department of Education Ron Michaels; Director of Advance Manufacturing at the CT Board of Regents Tracy Ariel

“The Science Center and Smith STEM School are excited to honor this partnership. As one of the earliest adopters of the Science Center’s whole-school model of professional learning, Smith STEM School has taken a leadership role in establishing a culture of inquiry throughout their curriculum,” said Cheryl Tokarski, Director of the Connecticut Science Center’s Mandell Academy for Teachers. “The result—higher achievement for students and increased confidence for teachers—is not limited to science classrooms, but to all students and teachers throughout the school.”

The inquiry process harnesses students’ curiosity and desire to learn. Lecturing and memorization are replaced with student-driven lessons in which they formulate and answer their own questions. Teachers learn to encourage the application of reading, writing, reflection, and communication strategies to the sciences. The training teachers receive in instructional practices enables them to integrate science and engineering into their whole curriculum.

"The Connecticut Science Center has been with us since our inception as a STEM school," said Teresa Giolito, Smith STEM School Principal. "Our partnership has been pivotal in the development of the transformative and innovative practices here at Smith STEM."

Since 2011, the Science Center has built relationships with schools and districts in every part of Connecticut. New partners in 2016 include Darien Public Schools, which completed the Science Center's Introduction to Inquiry (ITI) program in June, and Winchester Public Schools, which completed ITI for 40 teachers in August.

In addition, the Mandell Academy for Teachers is helping schools prepare for the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). With Connecticut's adoption of the NGSS, schools across the state are looking for ways to integrate NGSS practices into their classrooms. To help answer this need, STEM professionals and educators at the Science Center's Mandell Academy for Teachers are providing teacher training that will prepare educators and administrators for challenging new curriculum standards, while new partners are helping pilot-test professional development programs that will soon be available to schools and districts throughout Connecticut. As the State of Connecticut's premier professional development partner, the Science Center is helping transform student and teacher learning experiences with training specifically focused on NGSS, as well as with expanded and updated inquiry-based professional development.

As NGSS is implemented in the coming years, the Connecticut Science Center will deliver ongoing professional learning opportunities to partner schools and districts throughout the state.

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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 more than 2 million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten galleries covering 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 provides professional development programs for educators, offering training that supports rigorous science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) instruction and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Our programs transform classroom instruction, giving teachers the skills, tools, and confidence to increase interest and performance significantly in the sciences as well as other subjects.

Offerings range from multi-day workshops and week-long classes to multi-year, full school engagements with embedded Connecticut Science Center STEM Education Professionals for schools and leaders who have a vision for significant, lasting transformation in their teaching and learning environments.

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) 520-2179.