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Merck Institute for Science Education Launches Three-Year Program to Improve Science Teaching in New Jersey and Pennsylvania Public Schools

Whitehouse, N.J., August 4, 2008 – The Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE) announced today that it has launched The Academy for Leadership in Science Instruction, a new three-year program to improve science instructional practice within public schools in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Academy is the latest initiative in MISE's 15 years of work to help achieve the nation's STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education objectives and make a lasting difference in education reform.

"The Academy for Leadership in Science Instruction offers educators a unique experience to come together to build a vision of effective science instruction in our public schools," said Dr. Carlo Parravano, Executive Director, MISE.

"Participants will bring back to their schools this fall new experiences and professional relationships that will help improve their teaching of science and that can help improve student performance. Strong science education in our schools is essential for the economic development and well-being of our communities. MISE is proud to have an opportunity to collaborate with such a committed team of educators during the inaugural launch of the Academy."

Nearly 120 teachers and principals from 22 schools within the school districts of Elizabeth, Hillside, Linden, Rahway and Readington Township, New Jersey, and North Penn, Pennsylvania, will participate in the program, which begins this week with the first annual five-day residential Academy. Over three consecutive years, Academy participants will also attend two full-day academic-year sessions, four quarterly two-hour team meetings

throughout the academic year, and two outreach experiences to engage colleagues in providing effective science instruction.

The Academy will provide opportunities for educators to deepen their knowledge and develop effective leadership skills to improve science instructional practice, science curriculum and science assessment in their schools.

The Academy is a natural next step for MISE and is an outgrowth of the work the Institute is already doing in developing professional learning communities in and among schools and districts. Throughout the past 15 years, MISE has developed a partnership with the six districts that are participating in the Academy primarily around professional development and improving student achievement in science.

"Our district is fortunate to have been a member of this partnership for so long," said Caroline Crew, Coordinator of Elementary Science and Mathematics for the North Penn School District. "So many of our teachers, and therefore our students, have benefited from the high-quality professional development to which we have access as a result of the partnership. It was not difficult to recruit team members for this year's group as teachers and administrators recognize the quality of the professional development and how it will support improved science instruction in their schools and district. We are looking forward to all of our schools participating in the Academy over the coming years."

About MISE

With a \$38 million commitment by the New Jersey-based pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., Inc., MISE was founded in 1993 as a non-profit organization dedicated to improving science education from kindergarten through 12th grade and influencing education policy. During the past 15 years, MISE has become a model for how corporations can support the nation's STEM education objectives and make a lasting difference in education reform by committing to long-term partnerships focused on the specific goals of:

- Developing and delivering research-based professional development opportunities to enhance teacher knowledge and skills
- Providing access to high-quality curriculum materials and resources

- Building communities within a school that are committed to strengthening science teaching and learning within and across schools and school districts
- Promoting local, state and national policies that support effective science education

MISE has made a significant impact on the character of teaching and learning science in its partner school districts, according to research performed over the past 15 years. Analysis of student performance on standardized tests by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education found that students receiving science instruction from teachers who participated in MISE professional development activities over several years outperformed students whose teachers had only one or no years of MISE training. Additionally, in spring 2008, another external evaluator, Horizon Research, Inc., analyzed student achievement data in New Jersey on the state's Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment and found that the race/ethnicity achievement gap is significantly smaller in science for students of teachers who participated in coaching than for students whose teachers did not participate in coaching. MISE provides academic content and pedagogical support for these coaches.

In 2006, MISE was included as a best practice in "Innovation America-Building a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Agenda," published by the National Governors Association.

For more information, visit www.mise.org

To arrange an interview with Dr. Carlo Parravano or participants in this week's Academy, please contact Maggie Kohn at maggie_kohn@merck.com or 908-423-5655.

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