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“THE STATE OF SCIENCE IN AMERICA” SURVEY

As an institution whose vision is to inspire and motivate our children to achieve their full potential in the fields of science, technology, medicine and engineering, the Museum of Science and Industry recently commissioned Harris Interactive® to seek the opinions of Americans on the state of science education in America.

The nationwide survey reveals, for the first time, what average Americans think about: their own knowledge of science, the state of science education in our country, and the leadership role the United States plays in science.

Some of the interesting findings from the survey results include:

- **Scientists are not seen as role models.** When asked who today’s youth look to as role models, most adults named an entertainer (31 percent), athlete (19 percent) or parent (17 percent). But when asked about science role models, 44 percent could not identify one.
- **Americans understand the importance of science, but feel that they don’t have a good understanding of the subject.** Nearly nine in 10 (87 percent) of respondents agree they personally benefit from science every day, but only 26 percent feel they have a good understanding of science.
- **Americans feel the quality of science education is falling short.** Eight in 10 (79 percent) agree science is not receiving the attention it deserves in our nation’s schools. Most give the quality of science education a “C” grade or lower (44 percent). Only 12 percent give it an “A,” while 37 percent give it a “B.”
- **Many Americans feel more time should be spent on science in the classroom.** More than half of respondents (51 percent) believe today’s youth spend more than 60 minutes a day learning science. Nearly half believe that they *should be* spending anywhere from 75 minutes to two hours. But the reality is that students are only exposed to an average of 15-30 minutes per day, according to the Center on Education Policy.
- **A majority believe science education deserves increased funding and attention.** Nearly nine in 10 (87 percent) agree that, as a nation, we must begin to devote more funding toward science education. Eight in 10 (79 percent) agree science is not receiving the level of attention it deserves in our nation’s schools.
- **Americans recognize there are a variety of ways to improve science education:**
 - **Teachers need support.** Most adults surveyed agree more professional development and training opportunities are needed for teachers (94 percent), and that science teachers should be certified to teach science or have a degree in science (91 percent).
 - **Spend more time learning science.** Although U.S. students spend an average of 15-30 minutes learning about science in school, according to a 2007 survey by the Center for Education Policy, most respondents (81 percent) thought students should spend almost an hour more on science in the classroom.
 - **Parents and families have a role to play.** Americans agree that interest in science must be encouraged at an early age (93 percent), and that more parental involvement would improve science education (94 percent).

- **Museums have a role to play.** Most adults agree science museums can help improve the quality of science education (93 percent). Women are more supportive, as 64 percent of them strongly agree (and 70 percent of women ages 18 to 34) compared with 55 percent of men.
- **Find more ways to teach kids about science.** More than nine in 10 adults agree more hands-on classroom activities (97 percent) and science-related field trips (93 percent) would be effective ways to improve science education.

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