



McAuliffe's Legacy Continues to Inspire on Anniversary of Challenger Tragedy
Students in McAuliffe's Home Town Plan Community-Wide Space Science Night Attended by McAuliffe's Mother

(January 18, 2011) - Christa McAuliffe's passion for engaging students in space science is evident at the school bearing her name in Framingham, MA -- but this was not always the case. Only two years ago, students at the [Christa McAuliffe Regional Charter Public School](#) received unacceptable scores in the space science portion of a state mandated test. Inspired by a teaching grant, the school's life science teacher took the helm of a space science curriculum. As a result, in honor of the upcoming 25th anniversary of the Challenger tragedy, Dan Anderson's students will present semester-long space research projects to McAuliffe's mother and additional community members at the [Christa McAuliffe/Challenger Learning Center](#) on the campus [Framingham State University](#)(FSU), McAuliffe's alma mater.

"Although named for Christa, our school's curriculum didn't cover the topic of space," explained Anderson. "When my principal asked me to teach a subject I hadn't studied since high school, I needed additional training. I applied for and received a [Fund for Teachers](#) grant and enrolled in the [Space Academy for Educators](#) in Huntsville, AL, last summer. I stepped out of the box from my teacher role and stepped into the learner role, just like my kids."

Upon returning home, Anderson was committed to bringing his new excitement and knowledge to the school and community. He challenged his 76 eighth graders to research current space topics and sent more than 1,700 emails asking experts to serve as primary sources. Consequently, students interviewed leading researchers and scientists via teleconferences, field trips and Skype (including interacting with a Tokyo scientist who remained in his lab until 10 pm to visit with Anderson's students at 8 am EST).

After completing their research, students created tri-fold displays with materials donated by the Challenger Learning Center. On the evening of January 27th, the anniversary of the Challenger tragedy, these students will present their findings to community leaders, FSU professors and trustees, and Grace Corrigan, McAuliffe's mother. A panel of judges will review students' research, listen to presentations, and award the top three winners with autographed space suits donated from the [US Space and Rocket Center](#). The grand prize winner, determined by an additional essay contest, will earn one week at Space Camp this summer.

"Dan's students are doing real-world research, and now they're going to have people other than their teacher assessing and appreciating their work," said Mary Liscombe, director of the Christa McAuliffe/Challenger Learning Center at FSU. "This event provides them a true look down the road to the possibilities that education affords them. I believe the entire project will develop their confidence and empower them to realize that they are in charge of their learning. *Inspire, Engage, Learn* is the theme of Challenger Learning Centers, so I know Christa would be so pleased to see Dan's students doing all three."

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Fund for Teachers is a national, donor-supported organization that awards fellowships for summer learning experiences to preK-12 teachers, empowering them to pursue their passions to then pique student engagement. Over the course of a decade, Fund for Teachers has invested more than \$14.5 million in educators who, through their own life-long learning, transform classroom experiences for students. For more information, visit fundforteachers.org.

Using space exploration as a theme and simulations as a vehicle, the Challenger Center for Space Science Education and its international network of 48 Challenger Learning Centers create positive educational experiences that raise students' expectations of success, fosters a long-term interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and inspires students to pursue studies and careers in these areas. To learn more about Challenger Center for Space Science Education, visit www.challenger.org. For information about teacher professional development programs or how to schedule your middle school class for a space mission at the Christa McAuliffe/Challenger Learning Center, visit www.christa.org.

The Christa McAuliffe Regional Charter Public School is a member of the Expeditionary Learning network. For more information, visit elschools.org.