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**EINSTEIN MAY OUTRANK BRITNEY SPEARS  
BUT SURVEY SHOWS SCIENCE EDUCATION NEEDS HELP IN UNITED STATES**

*Data gives new look at the opinions and thoughts of Americans on the critical topic of science*

**CHICAGO, March 20, 2008** – The good news is Albert Einstein trumps Britney Spears. The bad news is Spears trumps Stephen Hawking. The worse news is nearly half of Americans couldn't name Einstein, Hawking or any other current scientist as a science role model for today's youth, according to a new study on "The State of Science in America," by Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, conducted by Harris Interactive®.

When asked who today's youth look to as role models, half of U.S. adults listed off athletes and entertainers such as Britney Spears or Paris Hilton. But when asked about science role models for kids today, 44 percent were stumped. Only 4 percent could name a living scientist such as Hawking or Bill Nye, while 6 percent named businessman Bill Gates and the same percentage cited former vice president and environmentalist Al Gore.

Although they may not be able to name a scientist, U.S. adults do recognize the importance of science, as close to nine in ten (87 percent) agree they personally benefit from science every day. But when it comes to grasping science concepts, most admit they're not sure they get it. Only one in four (26 percent) feel they have a good understanding of science.

Although the United States was the first nation to put a man on the moon and led the way in harnessing the energy of atoms, U.S. adults are now not impressed with how seriously America is taking science and the education our children are receiving in this discipline. In fact, 70 percent believe America is not currently the world leader in science. Looking ahead, U.S. adults are also pessimistic about the country's ability to regain its leadership position as only 35 percent think the U.S. will be the world leader in science in the next 20 years. Almost all U.S. adults agree this is a detriment to our nation – 96 percent say it is important for the U.S. to be a leader in science education.

"This study is unique in that it's one of the first to define the concerns of average Americans about the state of science education," said Dr. Walter Massey, former head of the National Science Foundation, President Emeritus of Morehouse College and Trustee of the Museum of Science and Industry. "Americans are truly worried about how our deteriorating science education will affect the country's future. And while it used to be only on the minds of leading scientists and educators, it's now clear that the public has their own concerns and even better, ideas on how improvements should be made in their schools and communities."

Science Education in America

While there are many factors influencing the perceived science leadership position of the U.S., certainly a significant factor is the science education children are receiving. For example:

- Eight in ten (79 percent) agree science is not receiving the attention it deserves in our nation's schools.
- 44 percent feel the overall quality of today's science education is worthy of a "C" grade or lower. Only 12 percent feel it is worthy of an "A" grade.

- Nearly nine in ten (87 percent) U.S. adults agree that, as a nation, we must begin to devote more funding toward science education.

Despite these daunting challenges, Americans recognize there are many ways to improve science education, some of which include providing:

- More hands-on classroom activities (97 percent).
- More professional development and training opportunities for teachers (94 percent).
- More parental involvement (94 percent).

In addition to these, there are many other things that can be done to increase engagement and involvement in science from America's youth. In particular, parents and family have a role to play as nearly all (93 percent) of U.S. adults agree interest in science must be encouraged from an early age. Additionally, (93 percent) of U.S. adults agree science museums can help improve the quality of science education.

“The United States is and should remain the world leader in science,” said David Mosena, President and CEO of the Museum of Science and Industry. “Our future prosperity is heavily dependent on our ability to innovate, develop new products and solve critical problems in key areas like energy independence, medical care, national security and climate change. To create the brilliant scientists of tomorrow, parents, teachers, schools and government leaders must commit to getting kids excited about how the world around them works. Children need to learn that exploring the world of science is fun and interesting—and this exploration can happen in their classrooms, backyards or at museums that aim to bring science alive.”

#### **About the Museum of Science and Industry and “The State of Science in America” Study**

As a Museum whose vision is to inspire and motivate our children to achieve their full potential in the fields of science, technology, medicine and engineering, the staff of the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago was eager to seek the opinions of Americans on the state of science and science education in our country. This desire was on the heels of dismaying reports of declining science test scores and increasing competition in science and technological innovations from other nations.

The Museum has a long and distinguished history as an institution dedicated to inspiring young minds in the sciences. It first opened its doors in June 19, 1933 and was founded to be America's first center for “industrial enlightenment” and a vehicle for public science education—a place where visitors could interact with the exhibits, not simply view static displays and artifacts. Now, 75 years and more than 175 million guests later, the Museum continues in its commitment to make science come alive for children of all ages. Professional development for teachers, after-school science clubs, teen volunteer programs, interactive science demonstrations, cutting-edge learning labs for students, and original and compelling exhibits are just some of the ways that the Museum seeks to encourage children and young adults to love, and seek out, science in their lives. It is the Museum's belief that offerings like these can ignite an interest in science in our youth and help improve the state of science in our country.

For more information about the Museum of Science and Industry, visit the Museum's Web site at [www.msichicago.org](http://www.msichicago.org).

#### **About Dr. Walter Massey**

Dr. Walter E. Massey is the ninth president of Morehouse College, the nation's largest private four-year liberal arts college for men; former director of the National Science Foundation; and former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Massey also served as vice president for research and professor of physics at the University of Chicago, director of the Argonne National Laboratory, dean of the College and professor of physics at Brown University, and as assistant professor of physics at the University of Illinois.

Massey was also provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at the University of California. In this position, the second most senior position in the UC system, he was responsible for programmatic oversight of

the three national laboratories the University manages for the Department of Energy: Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Laboratory and Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory.

**Survey Methodology**

This study was conducted by telephone within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry between November 28, 2007 and December 16, 2007 among 1,304 U.S. adults ages 18 and over. A full methodology is available upon request.

**About Harris Interactive**

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