

**Dr. Mary Jo Grdina, recipient of an International Leadership in Education Program (IEP/ILEP) grant implemented through IREX**

*“I cannot believe the new doors opening to me at this point in my long career in science education. Visiting Chennai, India and working with high school science teachers to introduce them to inquiry-based instruction was an amazing experience. The fifty-three teachers who completed the three days of the workshop come from a tradition in which pedagogy is teacher-centered and lacks methods beyond lecture and oral drill of facts. The participants were eager to learn something new from the U.S.A. In spite of the lack of resources, they embraced new ideas and designed creative lessons to incorporate into a rigid curriculum. The lessons that I learned about education in India were eclipsed by the lessons I learned about the wonderful people of Tamil Nadu. Despite the heat, I was able to enjoy visits to temples, an ashram, the IIT University, and even a Hindu wedding. I came back with a greater appreciation for what we have here at Drexel and in the U.S.A, a greater understanding of possible educational partnerships, and a greater desire to become a global educator.” – Mary Jo Grdina*

**Mary Jo Grdina, Ph.D.** is currently an associate professor in the School of Education of Drexel University. She recently conducted a series of workshops for 53 high school science teachers in Chennai, India (June 22-26, 2009.) The presentation, *Improving Science Curriculum and Instruction: Incorporating Inquiry and Literacy Goals in Science Education Frameworks*, introduced Indian teachers to inquiry-based instruction, the 5E model for lesson planning, Backward Design and higher order thinking skills. This was funded by IREX under the International Educators’ Program (IEP) and International Leadership in Education Program (ILEP) Small Grants Program.

Dr. Grdina brought to this project a vision, creativity and the experience of over 40 years as a science educator. Her history includes a rich background of chemistry research, college and high school teaching, and school district supervisory and curriculum work. There are two educational/philosophical beliefs that have driven leadership and decision making during her career: first, that science and math education should be integrated; second, science should be taught in a real – world context.

In addition to teaching future educators in the School of Education here at Drexel, Dr. Grdina (as *Physics in Philadelphia™*) partners with groups such as the National Girls Collaborative Project (NGCP), the PA STEM Initiative, and the Science Leadership Academy to explore opportunities for supporting STEM awareness and career education in the city of Philadelphia. She also works with the College of Engineering on the NSF GK12 program by teaching science methods to research fellows and their partnered teachers.



