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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Rigorous Iowa high schools rank in top 10 on international test**

*The Governor's STEM Advisory Council will hold a panel discussion on where we stand globally*

CEDAR FALLS, IOWA – (Sept. 2, 2014) – Six high-performing Iowa high schools partnered with the Governor's STEM Advisory Council this year to take an international test of science, mathematics and reading skills, showing where our students stand compared to peers in about 65 nations. Iowa's participation, along with Minnesota, Illinois and Tennessee, was funded by The Kern Family Foundation through a grant to the nonprofit organization Innovate + Educate. The voluntary OECD Test for Schools was taken this year by more than 300 U.S. schools. The test engages 15-year-olds in critical thinking and contextual problem solving, attributes that college and business leaders say are critical. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) produces the test. It is similar to the OECD's respected Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is taken by more than 500,000 15-year-olds around the globe every three years.

Iowa's six partner high schools collectively performed in the top 10 among international peers. Their average reading score of 528 is fifth; their average mathematics score of 529 is ninth; and their average science score of 541 is fifth, based on PISA scores 2009. Each average score is considerably higher than the U.S. average, placing these six schools alongside and in some instances ahead of traditional international powerhouses Singapore, Japan, and Korea.

The six Iowa high schools were invited to participate in the OECD Test for Schools based on their average ACT test scores, size and geography. The international standing of the schools sets the table for great community conversations across Iowa about how all of our schools can continually improve to assure we turn out globally competitive graduates. To start the conversation, the Governor's STEM Advisory Council will hold a panel discussion with school administrators from the six partner schools and STEM Council leaders at 8:30a.m. on Sept. 12 at ACT, Inc. in Iowa City.

Each partner school also will host local conversations that engage business and community partners in improving performance in an international context. Three global business partners have signed on to help the schools leverage the results: Rockwell Collins, John Deere, and DuPont Pioneer.

"I'm extremely pleased by the performance of the six Iowa high schools on the OECD Test for Schools," said Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, co-chair of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council. "Their focus on continual improvement is an important lesson as we work to give all Iowa children a world-class education."

The six high schools selected to partner with the STEM Council on the OECD Test for Schools are Adel-DeSoto-Minburn (ADM), Ames, Decorah, Cedar Rapids Kennedy, Cedar Rapids Washington and Pella.

"Iowa's business sector competes worldwide not only for customers and market share but also for talent, so these results are a welcome metric for how we stack up," said Vermeer CEO Mary Andringa, who co-chairs the Governor's STEM Advisory Council. "More important than these encouraging outcomes, the community conversations this test is driving hold great promise for advancing education in Iowa."

For more information about the Sept. 12 meeting of the Governor's STEM Advisory Council at ACT, or the local community conversations, send an e-mail to [Info@IowaSTEM.gov](mailto:Info@IowaSTEM.gov) with "Global Grads" in the subject line. For more information regarding the OECD Test for Schools, visit

<http://www.americaachieves.org/oeed>. For more information about the Governor's STEM Advisory Council, visit [www.iowaSTEM.gov](http://www.iowaSTEM.gov).

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### **About the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council**

Established in July 2011 by executive order, the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council is a public-private partnership focused on increasing student interest and achievement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and promoting STEM economic development. The Council works to engage and prepare students for a career-ready path, regain our state's historic leadership position in education, and provide a vital competitive economic advantage. The 45-member Council is chaired by Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds and Vermeer Corp. CEO Mary Andringa. For more information, visit [www.iowaSTEM.gov](http://www.iowaSTEM.gov).

### **About the OECD Test for Schools**

The OECD Test for Schools, based on PISA, is a student assessment that is linked to the knowledge base of the OECD's internationally recognized Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). While the international PISA assessment is intended to provide aggregate national results for international comparisons and to inform policy discussions, the OECD Test for Schools is designed to provide school-level results for benchmarking and school-improvement purposes. It allows schools to assess and benchmark their students' proficiency in reading, mathematics and science and to benchmark their performance against that of their peers in their country as well as in some of the world's highest-performing schools.