



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 24, 2014

Ames students shine on international test

AMES —A cross-section of Ames High School sophomores and juniors has debunked the notion that all American students lag behind their international peers in terms of academic prowess. The randomly selected 15-year-olds in Ames who took the OECD test, an international test of science, mathematics and reading skills, scored toe-to-toe with global powerhouses like Singapore, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong this year.

Ames School officials say they expected Ames High School scores to outflank those of five other high-performing Iowa high schools that partnered with the Governor's STEM Advisory Council this year to take the test. Historically, Ames' schools score above the state averages on the Iowa Assessment, and Ames High School scores above the state average ACT test scores, according to Associate Superintendent Mandy Ross, who leads the district's curriculum and instruction department.

"We were extremely pleased, however, that Ames students scored so well compared to the international scores," Ross said. "Among international peers, only Shanghai's scores surpassed Ames' scores."

Superintendent Tim Taylor said the test was voluntary and the average grade point average of the 15-year-old Ames High School students who participated is 3.14.

"The results tells us that our typical students—not just our highest achievers—have what it takes to be successful in a global society," Taylor said.

Seeing students who are high school underclassmen perform so well on the test confirms the effectiveness of the whole district's instructional framework, Ross said

"These results tell us a great deal about how well our district is preparing students from prekindergarten on, rather than focusing solely on our high school performance," she said. "The test is designed to show problem-solving skills and higher-order thinking. These are bedrock components of our instructional strategies at all grade levels."

Ross said the district was rolling out strategies for personalized instruction and teacher leadership development before state legislators took on education reform, and has been asked to consult on reform policies.

"We have more evidence that our success comes from the hard work of helping teachers update and hone their skills and developing the data and tools that allow our students to receive personalized instruction," Ross said. "As a district, we're also strengthening our support of students and families by engaging parents and the community in partnerships," she said.

Ames educators won't rest on their laurels, however, Ross said.

“Now we’re very motivated to drill deeper into the strategies that are contributing to such success and apply them more consistently at every level of our instruction,” she said.

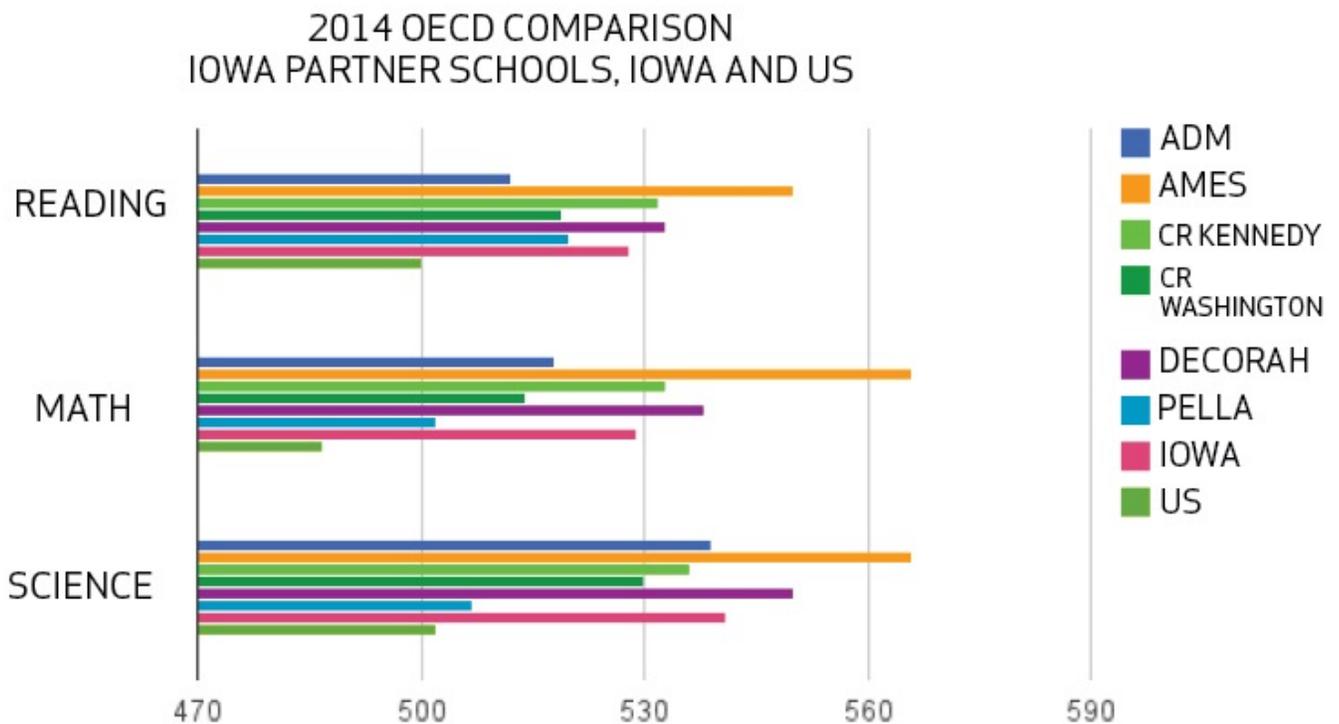
The six Iowa high schools, Adel-DeSoto-Minburn (ADM), Ames, Decorah, Cedar Rapids Kennedy, Cedar Rapids Washington and Pella, were invited to participate in the OECD Test for Schools based on their average ACT test scores, size and geography.

According to a press release from the Governor’s STEM Advisory Council, Iowa's partner high schools collectively performed in the top 10 among 65 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, the press release said.

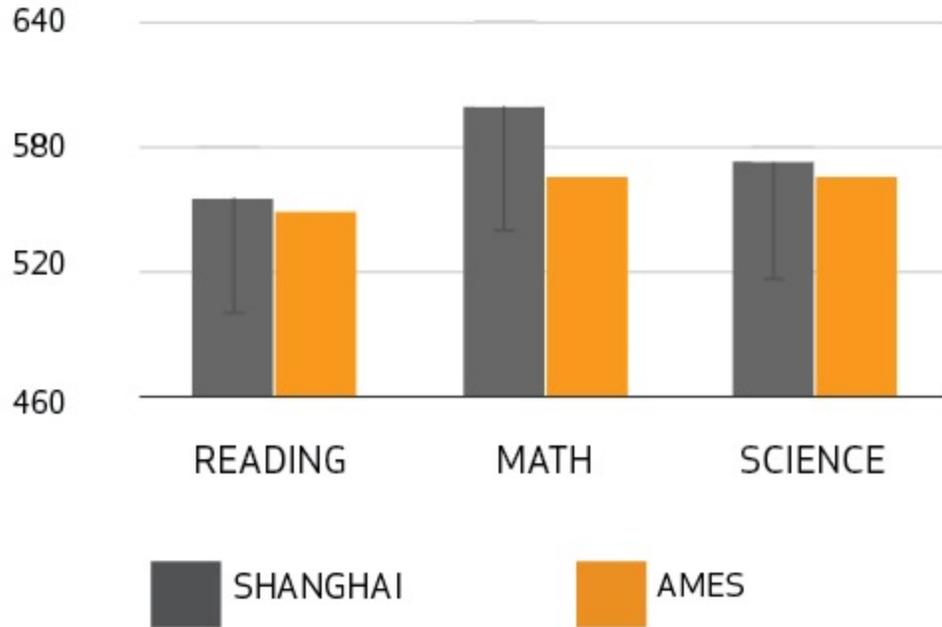
TABLE 1

	Ames	Shanghai	ADM	CR Kennedy	CR Washington	Decorah	Pella	U.S. Mean
Reading	550	556	512	532	519	533	520	500
Math	566	600	518	533	514	538	502	487
Science	566	574	539	536	530	550	527	502

FIGURE 1



2014 OECD COMPARISON AMES AND SHANGHAI



All sources from Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

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