

# Pella Community High School

## Pella Community Schools, Pella, Iowa

**Location type:** Town

**District enrollment:** 2,233 students

**School enrollment:** 681 students

**Percentage of students at school eligible for free and reduced price meals:** 16

### Key Takeaways

Pella Community High School participated in the OECD Test for Schools for the first time during the 2013-2014 school year. An analysis of the results revealed some interesting information. The school found that too few students were performing at levels 5 and 6 across all three content areas, too few students reported strong self-efficacy in math and science, and the school culture was not as strong as Pella would have hoped. Based on these findings, the leadership team identified four areas for growth: 1) strengthening school culture; 2) developing students' critical thinking skills; 3) better supporting students in the learning process; and 4) ensuring that Pella students, especially male students who performed less well than female students, take more challenging courses.

### Actions Taken

- ✓ Pella shared results with the district and the school staff, which prompted positive discussion throughout the year around areas of strength and areas for improvement. They have supplemented these discussions with more data about students' progress throughout the year.
- ✓ In response to the student survey results, Pella developed activities to make students feel more connected and motivated. These included days when all students received "high fives," dedicated space and time for students to play card games, and a presentation by a youth motivational speaker.
- ✓ To enhance the development of critical thinking skills, the school held professional development about driving instruction towards conceptual depth over topical breadth. The school is continuing to ensure that daily instruction is aligned with a rigorous curriculum and that students have the support to develop their higher-order thinking skills.
- ✓ To support students taking more rigorous courses and to help all students raise their achievement levels and improve their self-efficacy, the school revised its master schedule to incorporate a new strategy focused on differentiated study halls. All students participate in one of four options: (a) a 9th grade study hall focused on individual goal setting and progress monitoring, (b) an open-ended study hall for high-performing 10th and 11th graders who do not require additional help, (c) a content-specific, collaborative study hall for 10th and 11th graders who need more support, and (c) a specialized study hall through which the school's dean and teachers connect with males to encourage and support them in taking more challenging courses.

***Those wishing to learn more about the practices at Pella Community High School may visit the school's website [here](#).***