



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### MEDIA CONTACTS:

Karin P. Koser      KPK & Co.    404-636-9311    [karin@kpkco.com](mailto:karin@kpkco.com)  
Mitch Leff        KPK & Co.    404-636-9311    [mleff@kpkco.com](mailto:mleff@kpkco.com)

## Georgia PRISM Presents Best Practices to Educators, Business Leaders

*Accepting the STEM Challenge Conference* brought together educators, business leaders and policy makers to create an open dialogue about math, technology, engineering and science-based education

ATLANTA, September 24, 2008 – Vicky Butler, an educator in Oconee County, GA, is dedicated to ensuring that her students have all the tools and opportunities to take advantage of what The National Science Board describes as “the most innovative, technologically-capable economy in the world.” In the United States there has been a growing decline in students’ interest in science and math-based subjects. To combat this, Butler and other educators throughout Georgia and the nation attended the *Accepting the STEM Challenge Conference*, held last week in Atlanta.

The first-ever *Accepting the STEM Challenge Conference* was the focal point of Georgia PRISM’s (Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics) efforts to enact the **MATH+ SCIENCE = SUCCESS University System of Georgia Presidents’ Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative**. The initiative aims:

- ✓ to increase the number of K-12 students interested in mathematics/science/engineering,
- ✓ to increase the number of students in college who pursue the STEM disciplines,
- ✓ and to increase the number of teachers who are better able to keep K-12 students in the STEM pipeline.

The 325 attendees of the *Accepting the STEM Challenge Conference*, hailing from 18 states, were provided with opportunities to share best practices while gaining insights on how others are addressing the challenges associated with STEM education. They heard from the first woman to walk in space, a former Wyoming governor, Georgia State Superintendent Kathy Cox, a leader within New Tech Schools, and from many of their colleagues who offered best practices’ workshops.

The conference featured a panel discussion on the topic: *Reversing the Downward Spiral of Science and Mathematics Education in the United States*. The panelists, including former Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer, addressed the question of “how can actions taken across the domains of power and policy be aligned in a better way to reverse this downward spiral and drive up the number of highly qualified science and mathematics teachers?”

Day one of the conference focused on best practices for business and organizations. The first day's keynote speaker, Susan Traiman, director of Public Policy at the Business Roundtable, spoke about a variety of topics, including best practices from the Roundtable's "Tapping America's Potential" campaign, which seeks to double the number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates with bachelor's degrees by 2015.

Day two, which targeted educational track attendees, provided a special treat as Kathryn Sullivan, PhD, director of The Battelle Center for Math and Science Education Policy at the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at Ohio State University gave the Keynote Address. The first of only seven American women to walk in space, Dr. Sullivan was selected as a NASA astronaut in 1978. Dr. Sullivan addressed the need for collaboration among business and education sectors, citing that the United States was being bested by countries who teach problem solving and critical thinking; both skills that can be attained through STEM education.

"I'm proud to be ending my career on such a high note," said Jan Kettlewell, outgoing University System of Georgia Vice Chancellor for P-16 Initiatives and PRISM Principal Investigator. "***The Accepting the STEM Conference*** brought together all the important elements, business, education, and government leaders, to have an open dialogue about STEM education in Georgia. It's this dialogue that will bring about change."

### **About PRISM**

Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics (PRISM) is a five-year initiative funded by the National Science Foundation and administered by the University System of Georgia with the primary purpose of improving student achievement in science and mathematics at all levels of education throughout Georgia. PRISM is working actively in four diverse regions of the state with partners at the university and P-12 level in each region. For more information about PRISM, visit [www.gaprism.org](http://www.gaprism.org).

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