

New York State P-TECH Work-Based Learning Toolkit

About P-TECH

NYS P-TECH is both an education and economic development initiative. The P-TECH grade 9-14 model prepares students to be the highly skilled, critical thinkers and problem-solvers that our 21st century workforce requires. Each of New York State's innovative P-TECH schools brings together three essential partners: K-12 education, higher education and industry. The model offers an integrated six-year program, combining high school, college and career training for disadvantaged students, who will be provided the opportunity to graduate with an Associate-level degree (at no cost) and will be first in line for a job with participating businesses. The school design, drawn from research-based effective practices, offers a rigorous academic curriculum, targeted technical training, comprehensive workplace learning and individualized support services and pathways. This design draws from and builds on the best of Career and Technical Education and Early College High School models.

A hallmark of the P-TECH approach is the deliberate focus on the three facets of student capabilities needed for success in the labor force: the acquisition of academic, technical and workplace/professional skills. Regardless of industry, employers consistently underscore that students must have experience and mastery in all three areas, with a growing priority on the development of professional skills. Alongside efforts to enhance the rigor and effectiveness of classroom instruction, the model requires new approaches to deliver authentic workplace experiences such as Career Mentoring, Workplace Tours, Workplace Challenges, Job Shadowing and Internships in partnership with employers. Given the increasing role of small- and medium-sized businesses as partners in local efforts, NYS P-TECH has identified the need to offer strategies and support to limit the burden on employers and increase the educational value of WBL. This toolkit has been developed to address that need, and to help P-TECH schools and their employer partners deliver educationally rich and authentic Workplace Learning experiences to all P-TECH students.

P-TECH Benefits

NYS P-TECH benefits students, schools, the community and employers in many ways. Participation in the Workplace Learning component of P-TECH broadens those benefits.

Benefits for Students

P-TECH fast tracks students to their career goals. Students pursue a Career Pathway focused on their long-term goals through the P-TECH course of study, which provides an incentive to persist and complete their education. They graduate with a high school diploma and cost-free AA/AAS degree, a “first-in-line for jobs” option with partner employers and a firm foundation for future educational and employment opportunities.

Through Workplace Learning activities, students build awareness of potential careers in a particular industry and are able to explore options and start preparing for their future. Workplace Learning provides opportunities for hands-on learning and the development of relationships with professional adult role models. Students acquire experience and build

professional workplace and occupational skills while learning about the training or education required to succeed in specific careers. Students are better able to understand real-world applications of academics, master core subjects, and answer the question “Why do I need to learn this?”

Benefits for Employers

P-TECH offers an effective and appropriate vehicle for employers to help build and retain their future workforce. The model is a direct response to the ongoing skills gap that exerts a drag on the local economy. Participation in P-TECH helps build awareness of the employer’s role in the community and offers a public relations benefit. By opening their place of business to students and providing high-value Workplace Learning opportunities, employers are able to expose students and teachers to their business and industry and benefit from productive student work. Employers can observe potential future employees in a “long-term interview” context and participate in shaping their future workforce. Students also provide access to a customer resource and point of view. An employer benefits from a more productive and engaged workforce and by offering leadership and supervisory skills development opportunities to its current workers.

Benefits for Schools

P-TECH promotes better outcomes for schools and increases high school graduation and college completion rates. It helps schools deliver a 21st century education. P-TECH’s school structure provides multiple pathways for students, opportunities for cross-disciplinary integration and offers students the opportunity for career exploration while preparing them to become contributing members of their community. Participation in P-TECH expands the school’s awareness of the economy and increases educator knowledge of area businesses and jobs as well as an understanding of the challenges industry faces.

Workplace Learning activities extend the classroom to the workplace, promote workplace knowledge among school staff and build awareness of the skills to incorporate in the classroom curriculum. It validates curriculum instructional models and provides touchstones in authentic workplaces to help make classroom learning relevant. It helps schools build relationships with the community and provides opportunities for networking to promote future collaboration with employer partners.

Benefits for the Community

P-TECH strengthens communities. It helps align education, workforce and service systems to promote a strong economic future and build an engaged citizenry. P-TECH provides a robust local talent pipeline and helps the local economy grow and retain a workforce.

Workplace Learning activities connect the community to schools and local economic development efforts, promote student civic engagement and help address community priorities and issues. Students complete community projects and are visible as productive and contributing community members.

About this Toolkit

The P-TECH Work-Based Learning Toolkit was developed by working closely with a design team of P-TECH leadership, Work-Based Learning coordinators, school leaders, teachers, employers and others drawn from the NYS P-TECH schools.

It includes:

The Work-Based Learning Continuum: a definition of the continuum of Career Awareness, Career Exploration and Career Preparation and the identification of the range of Work-Based Learning activities across the continuum—whether conducted in the classroom, the workplace or community.

Work-Based Learning Essential Elements: the essential design elements to be applied to support and enhance the educational value of any WBL experience.

The P-TECH Professional Skills: identification of the skills to be taught and demonstrated through any WBL experience. Mastering these professional skills, combined with meeting the necessary academic and occupational skill requirements for a particular job or position, indicates that the student is ready for a successful transition to work.

Work-Based Learning Activity Guides: implementation guides to help P-TECH schools and their employer partners design, structure and support effective and learning-rich work-based learning activities. Each guide includes checklists for teachers, students and employer partners, as well as an Employer Fact Sheet for decision-makers.

Guides are provided for the following activities:

- Workplace Tours
- Guest Speakers
- Informational Interviews
- Job Shadowing
- Work Experience
- Internship
- Workplace Challenge
- Career Mentoring

Application of the strategies contained in this toolkit will increase the number of authentic workplace experiences made available to P-TECH students and expand the range of those experiences across the continuum of Career Awareness, Career Exploration and Career Preparation. It will increase the educational quality of WBL activities, help build connections both from and to the classroom, and support student learning by engaging students, teachers and employers in activities before, during and after each WBL experience. Participation in expanded and enhanced WBL activities will increase teacher and school awareness of the issues facing industry, and facilitate a robust and practical connection between P-TECH schools and an expanded base of employer partners. Employers will be able to effectively engage with the education system and support the development of their future workforce, and an increased number of students will be aware of, have experience in and be prepared for the careers of the future.