

P-Tech comes to the Valley

Classes start in the fall at four New York State funded Hudson Valley schools designed to graduate students with extensive technical knowledge and real-world skills. The program promises to help manufacturers meet future workforce needs.



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In our dynamic world, preparing students for a future career is a real challenge, especially since many of their jobs will likely be in positions or fields that don't exist today.

Enter the P-Tech solution. This new school model, "Pathways in Technology Early College High School," is designed to graduate students with extensive technical knowledge and real-world skills as well as with both a High School and an Associate's degree. And it's coming to the Hudson Valley.

"It's an energized program and will get these kids excited about a career path," says Frank Falatyn, president of Fala Technologies. "We need to offer students options, different types of schooling, and this is one of those rare opportunities where we can try something different."

"This country should be doing everything it can to give more kids the chance to go to schools like this," said President Obama on his October 2013 visit to the nation's first P-Tech in Brooklyn, NY.



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P-TECH
Pathways in Technology
Early College High School

“We are making sure our students are more prepared for life after graduation by linking up the skills we teach in the classroom with the needs of 21st century employers... These public-private partnerships are a model for success for our students, our employers and our regional economies.”

Governor Cuomo

Although the six-year program, begun in 2011, has yet to send off its first graduating class, P-Tech has been quickly-embraced by nearly everyone who is seriously grappling with education reform. After the program launched, in Brooklyn, NY, Chicago soon started four similar schools and New York City added two more sites. By 2013, President Obama was citing P-Tech in his State of the Union address as a welcome innovation in education. In August 2013, Governor Cuomo announced funding for 16 similar programs statewide and these schools expect to welcome their incoming freshman classes this fall.

Students in the innovative six-year program will earn both a high school and an Associate's degree without incurring any tuition costs. Along the way, they will have opportunities to work with area businesses in internships, mentor programs and, for some, summer employment.

The Hudson Valley Region has received state funding to start four new P-Tech programs and the plans for them are as diverse as is the region. Newburgh will host a program focused on Information Technology while the upper Hudson Valley program (Dutchess, Ulster, Sullivan and Orange counties) will focus on Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) and manufacturing. Rockland

will focus on training in IT as well as the engineering and health fields, while Yonkers' emphasis will be on architecture. The fields may be diverse, but the premise is the same.

“This is the integration of three different things: high school, industry and college,” says Kevin Rothman, who will be the new principal at what the Newburgh school district has named Excelsior Academy. “P-Tech is looking for students who, historically, would have difficulty completing high school and/or an Associate's college degree. We're really preparing kids to have the thinking and problem-solving skills that, no matter the profession they choose, will help them be successful.”

P-Tech offers a comprehensive approach to learning. The inaugural



“When it comes to strengthening our schools, we know one size doesn’t fit all students. We have to innovate... The P-TECH model brings business, schools and colleges together to help students prepare for college and career success. We know the P-TECH model keeps students engaged in school and learning. And we know it provides excellent career opportunities for students when they graduate.”

State Education
Commissioner
John B. King, Jr.

program in Brooklyn replaces 40-minute classes with block scheduling, has introduced a longer school day and extended the standard 180-day school year. Aside from covering the standard academic subjects and rounding students out with athletic teams, P-Tech offers specialized evening and enrichment programs. Parents are actively involved in school activities and the partnership with IBM—designers of the concept—is inextricably linked with everything the school does. Each student has a one-on-one mentor from IBM, which brings the company to the school and the students to the workforce.

Stanley S. Litow, president of I.B.M.’s International Foundation, the company’s philanthropic arm, and a former deputy schools chancellor in New York, has said that the P-Tech curriculum was actually mapped backward: I.B.M. employees were polled to discover the nature of the skills that were truly required to do their jobs and would be of value for students to learn.

On an average day, traditional classes like math and English are interspersed with technology and business-centric courses, such as “workplace learning,” which teach networking, critical thinking and presentation skills. In their second year, students can take classes in physics and global studies as well as the business-specific courses and college-level courses in speech, logic and problem solving.

That business partnership is a key component of P-Tech’s promise. “Great outcomes are achieved by working together,” says Harold King, executive director of the Council of Industry, which, along with Mediacom, is the lead business partner for P-Tech in the upper Hudson Valley. “P-Tech is much more flexible and dynamic than traditional education or vocational programs. Our members will be very interested in supporting this.”

The business component of the Upper Hudson Valley P-Tech will be somewhat different from Brooklyn’s. Council of Industry members—



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P-Tech Can't Solve Everything

It will be six years before the first class of P-Tech graduates start providing skilled workers to local manufacturers, so the program doesn't provide a solution to immediate workforce problems. Devon Luty, president of Dorsey Metrology, currently struggles to find employees and training programs that can produce the workers she needs. She credits the efficacy of existing adult education programs in manufacturing, but many are multi-year, part-time programs, which are not suited for people who have other employment and fiscal obligations.

"What would be ideal is finding people who are younger, interested in formal education and creating a program to train them that way," she says. "By the time I've found individuals I want for a job they already have families. They can't take a leap of faith to go to these training programs."

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Kevin Rothman
Principal, Excelsior Academy

producing a wide range of products and the majority employing fewer than 100 workers—generally seek more diverse skill sets than their larger counterparts. "Students will be able to see many aspects of a company," says King. "This is a chance to demonstrate to kids, early on, that there are lots of opportunities and mobility in smaller companies, that you can advance very quickly within them and that, with the STEM training as a fundamental basis, the possibilities are limitless."

He believes that as P-Tech students visit and interact with the companies over the years, they'll ultimately develop a better idea of real world opportunities, such as in information technology, human resources, sales or production.

"And when jobs open up, the P-Tech students' resumés will be at the top of the pile," says King. "This is a pipe-line. It's a long-term solution for supplying those mid-level skills that are missing in our workforce."

The training in STEM at the upper Hudson Valley P-Tech school can't come soon enough for some area employers. However—as the STEM school involves four counties, 47 school districts and crosses the Hudson River—it is one of the most complex of the schools to implement. Most P-Techs are operating within a single school district and partnering with local community colleges and businesses. They often become an independent school within a school.

"There are some challenges," admits Bonnie Meadow, grant coordinator for Ulster BOCES. "But we believe they can be overcome. We're dealing with our reality and the demands of our circumstances."

One reality that is driving interest in this school's formation is that the region's manufacturing companies are not able to find skilled workers to replace their older and retiring employees. Unless a new skilled workforce crops up soon, there will be huge problems throughout the region.

Organizers of the Upper Hudson Valley P-Tech, which will likely be located in Kingston, expect about 50 freshman students for its inaugural year. The school could expand to serve about 120 students in each grade,



with an expected average total of 700 students in attendance when it reaches capacity.

It is going to take a degree of trust for parents to enroll their children in the innovative P-Tech program, says King. "I think the attraction will be different for different people. Some parents may predominantly be attracted by the free degree (possibly with the chance to earn it in under the 6 years.) Others will want their children to have the extra shot at a good career. And some will see this program as a way to keep kids interested when they don't function optimally in a traditional high school."

"We'll have to make the extent of the work involved clear to the parents," says Newburgh's Rothman. "The kids are going to be expected to work harder. We have goals for these students and expect them to be successful."

"We are committed to trying to solve problems, to deliver STEM education in the region," Meadows says. "The area needs this option."

P-Techs Coming to the Hudson Valley

Information Technology

Business: IBM

Higher Education: SUNY Orange;

K-12: Newburgh Enlarged City School District

Computer Information Technology, Engineering and Health & Green Building Technology

Businesses: Avon, Fairway Testing, All Bright Electric, Hightech Security Services and Wick Arborists

Higher Education: Rockland Community College, Westchester Community College and SUNY IT;

K-12: Regional consortium led by Rockland BOCES with fiscal lead North Rockland Central School District

Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM)

Businesses: Council of Industry, MediaCom

Higher Education: Ulster Community College, Dutchess Community College, Orange Community College, Sullivan Community College and SUNY New Paltz;

K-12: Regional consortium led by Ulster BOCES with fiscal lead Kingston City School District

Architecture

Businesses: Fuller D'Angelo and Yonkers Workforce Investment Board

Higher Education: Westchester Community College;

K-12: Yonkers Public Schools

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