



# HOW TO ASSESS PARTNERS' READINESS TO DEVELOP P-TECH 9-14 SCHOOLS

## Selecting & Engaging Partners

The P-TECH 9-14 school model begins with a strong partnership consisting of the school district, college, and employer. The partners essentially comprise a three-legged stool, with each leg critical to the success of the school and its students. P-TECH 9-14 schools differ from other specialty high schools by integrating the skills, resources and goals of high school, college and employer.

### 1. SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNER

The School District Partner should have a clear school reform vision, as well as a number of functions in place in order to enable the P-TECH 9-14 school's success. This clear reform vision should include a commitment to increasing opportunities for underserved students and their families, a clear commitment to the needs of local employers, and a collaborative vision for working with the college.

#### Support for new school development

The School District Partner should have the experience and flexibility to create a new school within its district, or develop an autonomous school model within an existing school. The P-TECH 9-14 school needs to be a coherent structure with dedicated staff and students.

#### A process for selecting a school leader

The School District Partner should have the capacity to select a school leader to help plan the school, ideally 9 months to a year prior to opening the P-TECH 9-14 school.

#### Staffing for the startup phase and continued support beyond

The School District Partner must designate a decision-maker with understanding of new school development, who will devote time to participate in regular planning meetings during the start-up phase, and in monthly meetings once the school is underway.

The School District also must devote considerable time to its relationship with the Employer partner and the college as part of its long-term commitment to the school.

#### A school choice process to determine how students will enroll

For many School Districts, enrollment is typically determined by where a student lives (i.e., students are "zoned" for specific schools). When launching a P-TECH 9-14 school, the School District Partner needs to be able to support a "school choice" process. Students and families must have the ability to choose to attend a P-TECH 9-14 school through a fair and equitable process.

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## **Policies in place that allow the principal to select teachers for the new school**

Rather than operate with a seniority teacher placement or transfer system, the principal needs to be able to select teachers who are a good fit for the P-TECH 9-14 model. Key characteristics ideally include a background in the industry, experience with CTE education, experience working with struggling or “at-risk” students, familiarity with advisory or other student support systems, a willingness to work in a non-traditional school schedule, and a willingness to work closely with college faculty and industry employees.

## **Flexibility and autonomy for the school to develop a P-TECH 9-14 curriculum**

The P-TECH 9-14 school curriculum, which features a Scope & Sequence mapped to in-demand industry skills, differs from a traditional high school's curriculum because it is designed to work with students of all ability levels, and includes a significant amount of project-based and other “hands on” learning opportunities. School Districts will likely need policies to support “dual credit” coursework (meaning allowing college courses to satisfy high school requirements).

## **Sufficient funding to support a new school**

While the majority of the costs of a P-TECH 9-14 school are covered by the local School District's typical funding formula, there are additional costs associated with the school start-up process. For example, because new schools open with a 9th grade cohort, the ratio of administrators to students may be much lower than for fully- developed schools. The School District Partner will need the resources to support this start-up phase.

## **Professional and instructional resources for the school**

The School District Partner will be responsible for working with the school to identify and provide best practice training for teachers for the model that is being developed, in collaboration with the employer and the college.

## **Inclusion of Workplace Learning as a key strand**

The School District Partner will be responsible for funding a Workplace Learning Coordinator for the school who will managing all of the various workplace learning opportunities for the students, including mentorships, internships, apprenticeships and workplace visits.

## **Reflective questions to assess a School District's readiness:**

- Does the School District have a clear school reform vision? What needs will the school serve?
- Are there systems in place to work with employers in identifying their needs?
- Are there clear systems in place for opening new schools in the district
- Are there departments/appointed people at the district level that are committed to the success of the school?
- Does the School District have a pre-existing relationship with the proposed college partner?
- Does the School District have a sound relationship with the state department of education?

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## 2. THE COLLEGE PARTNER

The College Partner plays a fundamental role in the P-TECH 9-14 school model and selecting a partner that understands the model and shares a commitment to its goals and approach is essential.

### **Associate degrees aligned to employer needs**

The College Partner must offer associate degrees in the fields that link to job needs of the employer partner, and be willing to work with the employer to ensure coursework is up-to-date and provides excellent training for entry-level positions.

### **Ability to offer high school students college credits**

The college president and/or provost must support the goal of offering college courses to high school students. The college should be flexible about where the courses are offered, with professors willing to teach courses in a high school setting if necessary.

### **Agreement on how the credits will be funded**

Because the P-TECH 9-14 model prohibits charging students and families for college courses, the College Partner needs to be in agreement with the district on how college credits will be funded.

### **Establish standardized eligibility**

The College Partner needs to recognize high school standards and/or assessments (e.g. New York State Regents exams) as part of proficiency for enrolling in their college courses. If no eligibility requirements exist, then the college needs to work with the district to create a placement exam or a standard (e.g. a "B" in a specific high school course) so that there are clear expectations around student enrollment and eligibility.

### **Professors willing to work with high school teachers and industry employees**

Because the P-TECH 9-14 model blends high school and college experiences, the college should demonstrate a willingness and ability to work closely with the high school faculty, think creatively about how to ease the transition to college work, and make challenging content accessible for students in the program.

### **Be an active and equal partner on the school steering committee**

The College Partner must designate a decision maker with a broad purview of the college's course offerings and resources, who will devote time to participate in weekly meetings during the start-up phase, and in monthly meetings once the school is underway.

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## Fund and hire an Early College Liaison

The College Liaison serves as the intermediary between the College Partner and the P-TECH 9-14 school, and s/he is responsible for registering students for their college courses, tracking student performance (with the active support of the school), and managing budgets (as appropriate or relevant) for college course-taking, books, and supplies. The College Liaison is also responsible for convening high school and college faculty on a regular basis to examine student work and performance, shared pedagogical approaches, and interventions and supports for students.

## Reflective questions to assess a college's readiness:

- Does the college understand the model, and will it commit to its goals and approach?
- Does the college offer associate degrees that align with industry needs?
- Is college leadership committed to investing the significant time and thought leadership required to ensure the success of the school?
- Are there college leadership representatives who are willing to invest significant time as members of the Steering Committee?
- Is the college partner willing to hire a dedicated College Liaison?
- Does the college have prior experience working with high schools and high school students?
- Is the college willing to work closely with the high school faculty to develop and support an integrated Scope & Sequence of high school and college courses to ensure that students are prepared for college level work?
- Is the college willing to work closely with industry partners to align coursework with relevant technical skills and workplace competencies?
- Is the college willing to be flexible yet rigorous in its requirements

## 3. THE EMPLOYER PARTNER

The Employer Partner must have a culture that is ready for this new approach. Company leaders should have a vision for how they can contribute to education and schools, grounded in actual experience as a funder and/or partner. Knowledge of educational best practices and schools as well as a willingness to learn from educators is key. Overall, the Employer Partner needs to understand that they are as responsible as the High School and College Partners for preparing students to be ready for jobs within their industry.

The functions and elements that an employer should have in place to support the creation of a new P-TECH 9-14 school, include:

### Ability to mobilize company resources

The Employer Partner must be able to allocate staff, volunteers, in-kind contributions and other supports that will enable the company to participate as a full partner with educators. Importantly, the employer must understand that this partnership goes far beyond community service. They have to see themselves as part of the school; embedded in its fibers and an active partner in school design and development, as it also implements a host of activities such as skills mapping, mentoring, worksite visits, and setting up events, competitions, guest speakers, internships, and various learning opportunities.

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## **Ability to define skills for successful employees in the field**

Employees and industry experts need to be able to help both the high school and college partner understand what it means to be a successful employee at their company. The principal, teachers, college leaders and professors need to have a deeper understanding of what jobs their students are working toward. This means offering externships for the teachers, as well as summer professional development seminars and shadowing opportunities for all partners.

## **Create and annually validate an up-to-date skills map for their company that identifies relevant and realistic job requirements**

The promise of the 9-14 model is that students will be able to garner in-demand jobs upon graduation. This cannot happen unless they graduate with skills that employers need. Skills mapping is a key component of school development and needs to be done before the school ever opens. This map should outline the technical skills and workplace competencies identified by the employer so that it can inform and guide the curriculum.

## **Create workplace learning opportunities, including professional mentoring, site visits and credit-bearing and/or paid internships**

The Employer Partner's commitments provide the foundation for career readiness and should adapt over the course of a student's participation in the school. Employer Partners play a key role in the design and development of the school's workplace learning strand, including the workplace learning curriculum, mentorships, worksite visits, speakers, and project days. The Employer Partner also needs to be able to provide paid, skills-based internships for students at the P-TECH 9-14 schools and work with the school and partners to develop the mechanisms for creating other internship opportunities. Finally, Employer Partners must provide professional development opportunities to school leadership and faculty at the high school and college so that they can prepare students to be career-ready.

## **Be an active and equal partner on the school steering committee**

The Employer Partner must designate a decision-maker, optimally with experience in corporate citizenship and education, that will devote time to participate in weekly meetings during the start-up phase, and in monthly meetings once the school is underway.

## **Hire an Industry Liason**

The Industry Liaison is responsible for the overall coordination and execution of employer-specific projects at the school to ensure the school's long-term commitments and goals. The Liaison will also oversee the broader industry coalition initiatives for the P-TECH 9-14 school.

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## **Strongly consider graduates for jobs or make students first in line for jobs**

Industry needs to deeply consider a commitment to having graduates be “first-in-line for jobs” at their company. This commitment ensures a level of responsibility on the part of the company to ensure students are well- prepared. It also sends a strong signal to other industries that there is a deep belief in the students and a commitment to breaking down any prejudices that might exist against them. It also signals to the students that the industry believes in their abilities, which offers motivation and inspiration.

## **Reflective questions to assess an employer’s readiness:**

- Is the employer ready to be an active and equal partner on the school steering committee?
- Is the employer willing to provide dedicated staff to work on the initiative, who are steeped in corporate citizenship and have good knowledge of education, including a dedicated Industry Liaison position to work with the school?
- Is there a long-term ability to sustain participation and dedicated resources to the school’s development?
- Does the employer have the capacity to create an up-to-date skills map for their company that identifies relevant and realistic job requirements prior to the school opening?
- Is the employer prepared and willing to work with the school and college faculty to align technical skills and workplace competencies with College Partner offerings and other curricular resources?
- Is the industry partner prepared to take the lead on the work-based learning curriculum sequence?
- Is the employer willing to create other increasingly complex and valuable workplace learning opportunities, including professional mentoring, site visits, speakers, project days, and credit-bearing internships and convene additional companies that they can work with to do so?
- Is the employer willing to strongly consider graduates for jobs or make students first in line for jobs?

**For more information about the P-TECH 9-14 model, please visit [ptech.org](http://ptech.org)**