

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS FOR  
COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS:  
RESOURCES FOR THE  
NEW YORK STATE BUSINESS  
COMMUNITY



## Dear New York Employer:

Today's business leaders understand that success in the global economy depends on a quality workforce. ***But too many students leave high school unprepared for college and the workforce.*** They aren't gaining the critical thinking, communications and problem-solving skills they need to succeed in the real world. These challenges affect employers' ability to find talent.

In 2010, the New York State Board of Regents took an unprecedented step forward to address these challenges by adopting tough, new academic standards that are designed to get students ready for both college and career. Now that the hard work of implementation is underway, business support for these efforts is critical to New York's future. The standards are more challenging, the tests that students take are tougher and test scores have been lower. Tougher tests and lower scores have led some people to push for a slowdown in implementation. ***New York's employers and the people who work for them need to speak out about the importance of staying the course with our new system.***

The Public Policy Institute of New York State, thanks to a grant from the Committee for Economic Development, has developed ***Partnering with Schools for College and Career Readiness*** for business leaders who want to align their companies' philanthropic and community engagement strategies with college- and career-ready education reform. The resource kit showcases a range of ways in which New York employers are supporting their local schools and includes resources you can use internally with your employees and externally with your networks. We've also created a resource entitled ***Common Core Standards: What Every New Yorker Needs to Know***, which you can share with others in your workplace or community.

Thank you for joining us in learning about and supporting these important changes underway in New York's schools.

Sincerely,



Heather C. Briccetti, Esq.  
President  
The Public Policy Institute of New York State, Inc.

# Supporting College and Career Readiness: Good for Business, Good for New York

Chances are, your employees and customers care deeply about education. According to a poll conducted by the Siena Research Institute in November 2013, two-thirds of New York voters think improving public education should be one of New York's highest priorities.<sup>1</sup> More than any other issue, those polled said improving public education should be at the top of the list.

## What is NYS P-TECH?

The New York State Pathways in Technology Early College High School program (NYS P-TECH) is a partnership among school districts, private sector companies and community colleges with the goal of ensuring that students are prepared with academic, technical and soft skills — such as critical thinking — needed for success post-high school. Upon graduation, P-TECH students will have earned a high school diploma and an associate degree in applied science.

## What Can Businesses Do?

New York's business community is making strategic investments in education. These investments take many different forms, as highlighted in the following pages—from philanthropic donations to op-ed articles, from small-scale internship placements to extensive public/private partnerships such as the NYS P-TECH model.

Businesses can send an important signal about their priorities by supporting college and career readiness. This kit contains resources, examples, and ideas designed to help you:

- **Think strategically about your company's support for education**
- **Share information with your employees**
- **Take your message into the community and to your policymakers**
- **Work directly with local schools**

## ■ Think Strategically About Your Company's Support for Education

### Issues to consider:

- What are you currently doing to support education and the workforce of tomorrow? If you haven't yet forged a strategy, now is the perfect time.
- Is your strategy focused on preparing students for college and future careers, or does it merely reinforce the status quo?
- Does your strategy make clear to your community partners, grantees, and employees that your focus is on college and career readiness?
- Does it promote your company's long-term interests?

<sup>1</sup>Siena College Poll. Loudonville, NY:  
Siena Research Institute, November 18, 2013  
[www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY](http://www.Siena.edu/SRI/SNY)



### Next steps:

**Learn more:** Meet with your human resources office to learn about the specific challenges your company is facing in recruiting qualified candidates. Ask for data that will help you prepare for upcoming meetings regarding your company's education strategy. Prepare specific suggestions about how your company can best support college- and career-ready efforts in New York or your community.

**Brief your team:** Pull together the people from across your company who are responsible for education investments, school partnerships, employee volunteerism, communications, and government affairs. Brief them on college- and career-readiness reform efforts, making sure to explain why the reforms benefit your company. Invite an educator to join the conversation.

**Draft the strategy:** Engage the team to design a comprehensive strategy that focuses available resources on college and career readiness.

**Communicate the strategy—then use it:** Brief company leaders on the new strategy, gain their feedback, and build support. Share the strategy companywide and with external education partners. Use the strategy to guide decisions.

## ■ Share Information With Your Employees

**Key message:** Today's students are our future employees. They are your future colleagues. For some of you, they are your children. It is imperative that they graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge that prepare them for college and careers.

### Strategies:

- Write about education in your company newsletter or listserv. One of the easiest steps you can take is to include news articles about local schools or districts. You can also share what your company is doing to support education. Once you begin to speak out, you'll find that many of your employees are already active in their local schools—on school boards, as mentors, and as volunteers in their children's classrooms. This can make for great feature stories.
- When you convene or e-mail employees to talk about the company's current initiatives and future direction, make sure that senior executives highlight your college- and career-readiness strategy and how the tougher standards will affect employees' children and communities. Give employees an opportunity to have their questions answered.
- Distribute the Public Policy Institute's brochure, **Common Core Standards: What Every New Yorker Needs to Know**. Contact the Public Policy Institute of New York State or visit [www.ppiny.org](http://www.ppiny.org) for additional copies.

### *Sample e-mail to share with your employees about New York's new academic standards*

The members of our team with school-aged children probably know this already, but we wanted to be sure all of you were aware of some exciting new developments underway in our schools. These changes hold great promise for creating a more highly skilled workforce and for giving our students, community, and state a better foundation on which to build a strong economic future.

At the center of it all are new standards that require students to learn at much higher levels than in the past. The work is harder, but the result will be better student preparation for college and the workplace.

Our business is supporting this development and will be reaching out to our community schools to find out ways we can help. If you want to know more, some good online resources include [www.ppiny.org](http://www.ppiny.org) and EngageNY.org.

Thank you.



*Sample article for possible use in your newsletter or listserv*

## **Local Schools Taking It to the Next Level**

Schools in our community and across New York are working to meet the challenges of a new set of learning standards that mean harder work but promise greater rewards for both students and the state as a whole. These tougher standards spell out what students must learn in math and English language arts.

What is particularly promising for our business and other employers is that the standards are focused on preparing students for both college and the workplace. Experts have been saying for years that students coming out of high school need to have a strong foundation of knowledge and skills—whether they plan to go on to college or try to find a job right away. But it has taken awhile for that research to be translated into classroom reality, and that is what is happening now. The standards also are benchmarked to those in other countries to improve our students' ability to find good jobs and succeed in a globally competitive workplace and to strengthen the nation's position in the global arena.

Before adopting the Common Core standards, New York was widely believed to have some of the strongest standards in the nation ... on paper. Unfortunately, the promise of the standards didn't translate from policy to the classroom, as reflected by New York's lackluster student performance. In 2013, on NAEP, known as the Nation's Report Card, only 40% of New York's 4th graders scored proficient in math. Even fewer of New York 8th graders, only 35%, scored proficient in reading. New York's high schools are not getting enough students even to the starting gate of college- and career-readiness. Only 74% of the class of 2012 graduated, leaving a quarter of their classmates behind. And far too many of those who go on to college are not prepared to take on the work, requiring costly additional classes. SUNY community colleges spend over \$70 million per year on remedial education.

The bottom line for all of New York is clear, and our business is joining others across the state to express support for our schools and the harder work they are doing.

Because the work is challenging, some people may push for a return to an easier system. That is why it is important for all of us to stand up for the future and make sure our schools stay the course with New York's new standards.



## ■ Take Your Message Into the Community and To Your Policymakers

**Key message:** New York's education system is going through a once-in-a-lifetime transformation, which will benefit students, teachers, and employers on a systemic level. College- and career-readiness reform initiatives will promote economic growth in your community and across New York State.

### Strategies:

- Meet with your corporate communications office to find ways to work college- and career-readiness messaging into your existing communications strategy.
- Create a quick reference list to highlight your company's or industry's efforts to support college and career readiness.
- If your CEO is speaking at a community event or to a business audience, include a call to action on supporting college and career readiness in the speech.
- Before company representatives are interviewed by the media, provide talking points on the link between education reform and business growth.
- When your business meets with policymakers to discuss economic development, make sure education reform is on the agenda.
- Work with business associations to identify opportunities for your company's leadership to co-author an op-ed article or sign a letter of support. Working through business associations can be a powerful way to promote education reform policies and harness the power of a collective business voice.
- Step up your engagement by hosting or sponsoring an event in your community: Invite reporters to college- and career-readiness roundtables with educators and leaders from your business coalition, and work with your school district to host a college- and career-readiness information night for parents.

*In February 2013, 73 CEOs signed on in support of the Common Core via an open letter in The New York Times. The following is an excerpt from the letter:*

As business leaders, we believe that ALL American children have a right to an education that prepares them to be successful in a competitive global economy. We also understand that in order to compete in a knowledge-based, global economy, we must improve the academic performance of our students. The United States is once again at a critical place in its quest for educational excellence, and the need for a strong employer voice is greater than ever. America's business leaders can make a positive difference for schools, students and the country's future if we join together and share our expectations for education and our support for the people and institutions that move education reform forward.



We support these new, tougher academic standards that are currently being rolled out in classrooms across the country. These standards will better prepare students for college and the workplace, something of critical importance to the nation's employers. The changes now under way in America's schools hold great promise for creating a more highly skilled workforce that is better equipped to meet the needs of local, state and national economies.



## ■ Work Directly With Local Schools

Help make college- and career-readiness for all students a reality in your community.

- Ask your local superintendent, school board, or school principal to describe their plan for ensuring that the new Common Core standards boost student learning. That plan should include: A clear vision of success that the community embraces; strict deadlines for important implementation milestones, such as choosing clear curriculum tied to the standards, intensive training and support for teachers, and support systems for students and parents; and explicit plans for publicly reporting progress towards that vision of success.
- Provide “real-world perspective” by speaking about the skills gap at a Common Core parent information night in your school district.
- Work with your local district or BOCES to develop ways for your business to support college- and career-readiness. Your support can range from philanthropic investments—like funding a STEM program or donating supplies for science experiments—to hands-on partnerships, like providing internships, mentorships, and job shadowing placements. This year, employers from across the state have partnered with school districts for NYS P-TECH partnerships.

### **What is BOCES?**

In 1948 the New York State legislature created Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts within the state. Today there are 37 regional BOCES, incorporating all but nine of the state’s 721 school districts. (BOCES do not include the “Big Five” city school districts: New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Yonkers and Syracuse.)

The BOCES mission is:

- Preparing diverse populations for roles in the global economy.
- Providing cost-effective shared services to school districts.
- Initiating collaboration to close gaps in student achievement.





Many business associations, economic development organizations and other institutions throughout New York and across the nation have gone on record supporting college- and career-ready standards.



For example, ***Change the Equation*** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, CEO-led initiative that is mobilizing the business community to improve the quality of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning in the United States. CTEq's coalition of members strives to sustain a national movement to improve PreK-12 STEM learning by leveraging and expanding its work focusing on three goals: improving philanthropy, inspiring youth, and advocating for change.



The recently launched ***Higher Ed for Higher Standards***—spearheaded by SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher—is a coalition of over 200 colleges and universities from across the nation that was formed to support preservation of the Common Core standards.



***High Achievement New York*** is a coalition of parents, teachers and business leaders working together to ensure that every student in New York State receives a first-rate education. Members include numerous local chambers of commerce as well as regional and statewide business groups.



## SCHOOLS MUST STICK BY NEW STANDARDS

### Higher standards will help students get the academic training and workplace skills to be college- and career-ready

*Excerpt from an Op-Ed by Stanley S. Litow, IBM's vice president of corporate citizenship and corporate affairs, and president of the IBM International Foundation, that appeared in Crain's New York Business, August 26, 2013*

New York's disappointing showing on the first Common Core Standards test for reading and math touched off a call for retreat from the new standards. That would be a huge mistake.

Supporters knew that the elevated standards would result in a tougher test and a drop in scores, as happens with any new test. But this test was both new and significantly harder, prompting a steeper decline and making comparisons with prior results impossible.

Similar outcomes are expected in every state that tests to these higher standards. Kentucky's scores fell dramatically, but educators, legislators and parents understood why and continued to support Common Core. In New York, we must do the same.



For the state to remain economically competitive, we must work together to ensure our students meet these higher standards. That will enable them to prosper in the 21st-century economy—one that will create nearly 14 million “middle-skill” jobs in the U.S. over the next 10 years. Otherwise, New York's young people face an uncertain future as our global competitiveness erodes.

My company, IBM, has always championed the need for tougher academic standards to reverse America's educational decline. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, IBM worked with governors to organize three National Education Summits. Governors from every state—along with educators, CEOs and two U.S. presidents—put individual interests aside to reach consensus on the need for better academic standards, accountability and instruction. Before that, only 14 states had standards, and they were too low.

The result was a bipartisan effort to develop Common Core—uniform, high English and math standards for grades K-12 providing a clear understanding of what students should master. Education leaders in New York came out early in support. When developed, these standards weren't arbitrary but were based on a significant body of evidence, including international tests in which American 15-year-olds ranked 13th in science and 17th in math among their peers from industrialized nations. Clearly, we have to do better.

Here in New York, IBM worked with the city Department of Education, the City University of New York and the New York City College of Technology (CityTech) to create the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH)—the first grades-nine-to-14 school in the city.



If low scores prompt us to dumb down standards and expect less from students and teachers, we will have made a grave error. Well-designed tests give us information to improve teaching and learning. The current test isn't perfect. No test is. And the preparation for both teachers and students must also improve. But this is a strong initial effort that will only get better over time. It deserves our support.

## Resources

### Change the Equation

[www.changetheequation.org](http://www.changetheequation.org)

Check out their ***Business Leader's Guide: Mobilizing State Action on STEM***, a Common Core State Standards fact sheet for business, and other helpful resources.

### Business Center for a College- and Career-Ready America

[www.businessandeducation.org](http://www.businessandeducation.org)

Find downloadable tools, templates and materials — created for and by business leaders — to bolster your efforts to support the college- and career-ready agenda. For more information about the work of Achieve, the independent nonprofit that created this site, visit [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).

### High Achievement New York

[www.highachievementny.org](http://www.highachievementny.org)

This site includes a toolkit for writing letters to the editor in support of college- and career-ready standards.

### The Public Policy Institute of New York State

[www.ppiny.org](http://www.ppiny.org)

Download additional copies of this employer resource guide as well as our handout for employees, ***Common Core Standards: What Every New Yorker Needs to Know***.

### Ready Kentucky: Building Employer Support for Student Success

[www.kychamber.com/sites/default/files/EmployerKitWeb\\_0.pdf](http://www.kychamber.com/sites/default/files/EmployerKitWeb_0.pdf)

This packet includes several items, both in hard-copy and electronic versions, designed for use in your company newsletter, e-mail messaging, and other business communications.

### U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

[www.businessforcore.org](http://www.businessforcore.org)

This site includes an e-Tool Kit and a pledge of support for college- and career-ready standards that businesses can sign.





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**OF NEW YORK STATE, INC.**

The Public Policy Institute is the research and educational arm of The Business Council of New York State, Inc. The organization's purpose is to formulate and promote public policies that will restore New York's economic competitiveness.

PPI accomplishes this mission by conducting timely, in-depth research addressing key state policy issues. The Institute is a non-partisan, tax-exempt, 501 (c) (3) organization. It depends on the support of corporations, foundations and the public.

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