

# Bipartisan Education Bill Signed

BY RAY JOHNSON

A new innovative education model is coming to Colorado: P-TECH (Pathways in Technology Early College High School). In May, Governor Hickenlooper signed bipartisan legislation to bring P-TECH to Colorado. The education bill was spearheaded by House Majority Leader Crisanta Duran, and cosponsored by Rep. Mike Foote and Senators Nancy Todd and Laura Woods, along with overwhelming support from the Colorado General Assembly.

P-TECH prepares students for highly skilled jobs by bringing together school districts, institutions of higher education, and employer partners. Co-developed by IBM, P-TECH is reinventing high school and preparing youth to go beyond high school, earn an associate degree at no cost to their families, and enter the workforce with skills that employers need. Within six years, students move through a clearly structured, integrated six-year program (grade 9 to 14) with industry-aligned curriculum and are first in line for jobs with participating industry partners upon graduation. Students are paired with business mentors and have access to paid internships and workplace visits. The model helps young people to be college and career-ready with science, technology, and engineering, and math (STEM) skills – disciplines that underpin some of the fastest growing industries in the U.S.

Currently, less than 25 percent of Colorado high school graduates are able to attain the post-secondary training and credentials necessary for middle-class jobs. Colorado also has a significant diversity gap. Hispanics are the state's fastest growing population and women comprise nearly half the workforce, yet both are significantly underrepresented in STEM fields in the state. And with more than 16 percent of the STEM workforce close to retirement, Colorado must find a way to keep up with 21st century skill demands. P-TECH is accessible to any young person with an interest in technology and the desire to succeed, with no admissions testing or any other form of special selection.

The funding provided by the legislation will help bring three schools to Colorado, slated to open in the fall of 2016, through a competitive process designed by the Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Department of Higher Education. Colorado Succeeds, a business voice for education reform, will lead the effort to recruit Colorado businesses to collaborate with local school districts and community colleges.

P-TECH links education to regional economic development needs through industry partners and creates a local talent pipeline. Modeled after the nationally recognized IBM partnership in New York City, which is graduating its first class of students, this year, the new Colorado schools will join a

robust international network of partnerships in ensuring that Colorado youth are equipped with 21st century skills needed to compete in the global economy.

From that first school in Brooklyn that IBM opened in partnership with the New York City Department of Education and the City University of New York in 2011, the P-TECH network has grown to 27 schools across three states — New York, Illinois and Connecticut — in just four years. By this fall, a total of 40 schools expect to be operational. And by 2016, the additional P-TECH schools in Colorado, along with Rhode Island and Australia, will raise the number to an estimated 100 locations across five states and two countries serving tens of thousands of students.

In the U.S. alone, 100 companies — including IBM, ConEd, Microsoft, SAP and smaller regional businesses — will collaborate with school districts and community colleges this fall to serve as corporate partners to P-TECH schools. Participating companies understand the important role they can play in the economy and in the greater society. They also understand the value of creating and nurturing a pipeline of talent to meet the needs of industry, and the tremendous positive impact that education and employment have on individuals and their communities. These P-TECH partners are seeing in their own schools what IBM has seen in the first school -- record levels of attendance and achievement, and lives transformed.

