Business Council president, SUNY chancellor focus on transforming New York education

Heather Briccetti is pushing educators to more explicitly connect the dots between what high school students learn in the classroom and the potential applications when they enter the workforce.

"There's not a connection between what you do in the business world and what you're doing in school," said Briccetti, the president and CEO of the Business Council of New York State Inc.

Briccetti was referring to the traditional education model. She addressed members of the 16 teams that are developing early college high schools during a work session at the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering in Albany, New York Wednesday.

A new education model known as P-TECH, an acronym for pathways in technology early college high schools, students graduate from six-year programs with both a high school diploma and an associate degree. The schools are formed through public-private partnerships with representatives from K-12, higher education and business.

The goal is to better prepare high school and college to enter the workforce with the skills that employers need. Sixteen new P-TECH schools will open this fall.

Educators and business executives are teaming up to transform education as employers work harder to remain competitive by improving the pipeline of talented young workers as they finish school.

"It's a revolution in how you think about high schools," said Stanley Litow, president of the IBM Foundation. The IBM Foundation was a partner in the development of the P-TECH school in Brooklyn, which opened in 2011.

Nancy Zimpher, chancellor of the State University of New York, also is a big supporter of the model. Hudson
Valley Community College, a two-year SUNY college in Troy, is a higher education partner with two of the three P-TECH schools in the Capital Region.

Zimpher stressed the need to develop tools to measure the success of P-TECH and to specify what practices are most successful so the model can be replicated. Zimpher said the model has the potential to be applied to the health care and social services industries. The first round of P-TECH schools is focused heavily on the manufacturing, technology and engineering.

As SUNY encourages K-12 teachers to incorporate more project-based learning into classrooms to engage students, the colleges also must change their delivery model, which Zimpher said would be the "biggest transformation on the planet."