

VIRTUAL PLC WINTER CONFERENCE

Conflict, clarity, assessment, time—your PLC struggles aren't setbacks, they're signals. Discover how to transform them into opportunities for growth.



DECEMBER 11, 2025
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM CST

www.firsteducation-us.com/events

FIRST Education



PLC CENTER

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Opening Keynote from 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Garth Larson: The Opportunity In Front Of You

Description: Educators face daily challenges—shifting expectations, diverse student needs, and the fast pace of change. Yet within every challenge lies an opportunity to strengthen our impact, especially when we approach the work through the power of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In this energizing keynote, Dr. Garth Larson invites educators to reframe obstacles as opportunities to learn, grow, and act together. Drawing from his experience as a teacher, principal, district leader, and global consultant, Dr. Larson shares stories and strategies that highlight how PLCs create the conditions for educators to recognize possibilities, respond collectively, and ensure every student learns at high levels. Participants will walk away re-energized and equipped to:

- Recognize opportunities hidden within the everyday work of PLCs
- Shift from problem-finding to opportunity-seeking mindsets as collaborative teams
- Recommit to the shared mission of ensuring success for all students

No matter the circumstances, the opportunity to make a difference—for students, colleagues, and communities—is always right in front of you. This keynote will inspire PLC teams to see every challenge as a chance to collectively shape the future.



Breakout Sessions from 11:15 AM - 12:00 PM

Gabe Hackett: Designing the Foundation for Impact: Tools and Protocols that Drive PLC Success

Description: The most successful Professional Learning Communities begin with a clear vision and strong foundations. In this interactive session, participants will explore tools and protocols from the PLC Center designed to help teams co-create a vision of PLCs that leads to meaningful impact in the classroom. Together, we will walk through a practical process for establishing the structures, norms, and collective commitments that form the foundation of collaborative work. Educators will leave with actionable strategies and proven protocols that ensure their PLCs develop the trust, clarity, and consistency needed to transform collaboration into classroom results.



Tony Frontier: AI with Intention: Aligning Efforts to be More Efficient and More Effective

Description: AI tools have the capacity to improve or undermine effective teaching and learning; what matters is how these tools are used. In this session we'll look at recent research on more and less effective uses of AI tools, two pitfalls to avoid when using AI tools to plan lessons or create instructional resources, and three guiding principles with practical examples to ensure teams and individual teachers are using AI tools in ways that not only create efficiencies, but help PLCs more effectively support students' learning needs.



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Becky Peppler: From Scores to Success: Shifting Collaboration Toward What Matters Most

Description: When PLC conversations move beyond percentages and test items, collaboration becomes the driver of real impact. In this session, we'll explore how defining clear student and teacher success indicators around standards, learning targets, and assessments builds shared clarity, consistency, and confidence across classrooms. Participants will leave with practical prompts and tools to guide collaborative dialogue that focuses on learning—not just numbers.



Featured Session from 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Jenni Donohoo: Collective Efficacy and Collaboration: When Teams Believe They Can, They Do

Description: What separates a PLC that spins its wheels from one that realizes collective impact? Research demonstrates that collective teacher efficacy—a team's shared belief in its ability to make a difference for students—has the highest effect on student achievement, teacher well-being, and professional satisfaction. Yet this powerful force remains elusive in many schools, especially when PLCs face the inevitable struggles of collaborative work. In this interactive session, we'll unpack what it really takes to build collective efficacy within professional learning communities. You'll discover how collaborative challenges strengthen teams and how educators can intentionally create the conditions where efficacy grows. Drawing on real examples from schools navigating the messy middle of PLC implementation, we'll explore the four sources of collective efficacy and how to activate them through the work teams are already doing.

Participants will leave with concrete strategies to:

- Cultivate teams' shared belief in their collective impact on student learning
- Tap into the sources of collective teacher efficacy
- Use evidence of progress—even small wins—to fuel momentum and persistence
- Create the psychological safety necessary for honest reflection and joint problem-solving

The opportunity isn't just in fixing what's broken in PLCs—it's in building teams who genuinely believe that together, they can reach every student. This session will show you how.



Model School Roundtable Session from 1:45 PM - 2:30 PM

Charlie Bakker - Principal, Princeton Middle School & Annandale High School, MN

Alycia Hakes - Assistant High School Principal - Loudoun County, VA & Supervisor of Integrated Professional Learning - Prince William County, VA

Sonja Franklin - Principal, Lake Placid Elementary School, NY

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Closing Session from 2:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Gabe Hackett and Garth Larson

Description: Dr. Garth Larson and Gabe Hackett provide an interactive closing session designed to bring the conference theme—The Opportunity within PLCs—full circle. Together, we'll reflect on the key ideas from our keynote, feature session, and model school breakouts, highlighting practical next steps to turn opportunities into meaningful action in your schools and teams. This is also your chance to engage directly with Gabe and Garth through a live Q&A, share insights, and leave inspired with clear strategies to keep the PLC momentum going beyond the conference.

About the FIRST Education PLC Center

At the PLC Center, we believe that real change in schools begins with empowered educators working together. Born from a passion to connect collaborative research to reality, the PLC Center was created to help schools move beyond meetings and into meaningful, student-focused teamwork. Our mission is simple: to equip collaborative teams with the tools, mindsets, and support they need to make a measurable impact in the classroom. Grounded in research and refined through real-world experience, we partner with schools and districts to build strong team cultures, implement the Observable Impact Model, create a lasting PLC framework using the PLC 2.0 tools and protocols, and foster collective teacher efficacy. We know that when educators work together with clarity, purpose, and trust, students win.

About FIRST Educational Resources

FIRST Educational Resources, founded in 2010, was created to fill a growing need for affordable, authentic, and impactful professional learning opportunities for educators. The organization's mission is rooted in the belief that all students can succeed when teachers and leaders are provided with meaningful, customized professional development. Since its inception, FIRST Education has partnered with more than 2,500 school districts across the United States and around the world, offering in-person professional learning, consulting, and coaching designed to help schools make lasting improvements in teaching and learning.

What sets FIRST Educational Resources apart is its personalized approach. Rather than offering pre-packaged programs, the organization works closely with schools and districts to understand their unique needs and design support that is powerful, affordable, and sustainable. Their work spans nine comprehensive divisions—Artificial Intelligence, Assessment and Grading, Collective Efficacy, Co-Teaching, Secondary Literacy, Instructional Coaching, Math, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and Leadership—reflecting their broad expertise in both instructional and organizational improvement.

Beyond direct support, FIRST Education also provides a robust collection of free resources for teachers and administrators, emphasizing its commitment to continuous learning and equitable access to professional growth. Through its partnerships, events, and innovative frameworks, FIRST Educational Resources has become a trusted leader in helping schools build clarity, collaboration, and collective impact to improve outcomes for all learners.

