



Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026
Denver Marriott Tech Center



"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together."
— African proverb



PRESENTED BY



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Teacher Leadership Advancing Policy and Practice for Student Success

Brittany Sharp, Atlas Prep High School

Rachel Shearer, Lotus School for Excellence

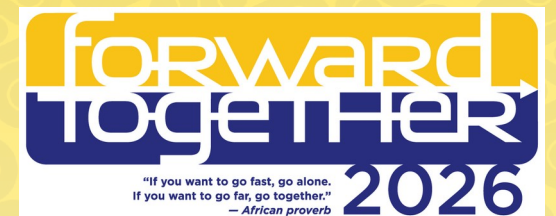
Garfield Warren, DSST Green Valley Ranch High School

Karen Amidon, Colorado Policy Manager, Teach Plus

**Aspen Amphitheater
February 27, 2026 | 11:00 a.m.
Advocacy & Policy**



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**



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conference
at your
fingertips.



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Colorado League of
Charter Schools



We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



Be a part of the action.





Teacher Leadership in Practice and Policy

Presenters:

Brittany Sharp, Atlas Prep High School

Rachel Shearer, Lotus School for Excellence

Garfield Warren, DSST Green Valley Ranch High School

Karen Amidon, Teach Plus Colorado





+ Session Objectives

By the end of this session, you will:

- + Hear concrete **examples** of teacher leadership shaping practice and policy
- + Reflect on the **conditions** that enable meaningful teacher leadership
- + Identify one **move** you could make to strengthen teacher leadership

slido

Please download and install the Slido app on all computers you use



**How do teachers current lead
in your school or network?
Select all that apply.**

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.



We often define teacher leadership as roles.





What changes when teachers are
trusted partners
in shaping the conditions
that drive student success?

Why teacher leadership and advocacy matter:

- + Stronger student outcomes
- + Higher teacher retention
- + Greater network capacity
- + Credible, trusted charter advocates





TEACH | + PLUS |

-
- + Develops teacher leaders
 - + Connects classroom expertise to policy
 - + Advances student opportunity statewide

Equip. Amplify. Connect.



Teach Plus Colorado Fellows & Leaders



132 Teach Plus alumni

37 school districts represented

27 fellows enrolled in the 2025-2026 cohort

42 charter schools

68 district schools

11 innovation schools



Our teacher leaders are influencing:

- + Funding and accountability decisions
- + Postsecondary and workforce readiness
- + Early literacy implementation
- + Educator workforce pipelines
- + State education policy conversations
- + The public narrative around education

Classroom teachers

Policy fellows

System partners

Leading change in practice.

Shaping policy conversations.

Strengthening implementation at every level.

Teach Plus Charter Advocacy Fellows



Brittany Sharp
Atlas Prep High School



Rachel Shearer
Lotus School for Excellence



Garfield Warren
DSST Green Valley Ranch HS

As You Listen...

- + Where is teacher leadership shaping outcomes?
- + What conditions made that leadership possible?
- + What might translate to your school or network?

Educational Policies and the Passion for Change: A Teacher's Dilemma—How to Prevent Burnout with Passion-Driven Solutions

How the passion for systemic change can fuel your advocacy into action

In the Classroom and the Network:

- Advocacy sets and re energizes educational goals for inside and outside the class
- Advocacy at a district level around PWR
- Student's eyes light up and express newfound confidence through representation

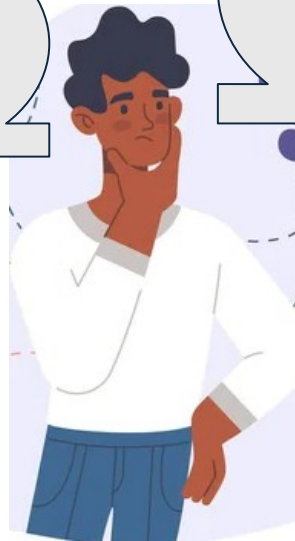
Beyond the School Walls:

- Fight Systemic Barriers through access
- Find gaps in policies that perpetuate inequality
- Funding streams for overlooked marginalized communities

Advocacy recentering my why through action.

Highlight and address gaps in structures that impact my students

Garfield Warren
Denver School of Science and Technology
Green Valley Ranch High School



Advocacy through Action

- + **Transformational talent** - As a member of the Transformational Talent Team at DSST—a **teacher-led group**—I help guide **strategic planning initiatives**, including recruiting more teachers of color and shaping core network programs. We also **develop solutions** to expand equitable access to college-level courses.
- + Teach Plus has **strengthened my leadership, boosted my confidence**, and given me a platform to engage in meaningful work that impacts students and educators across the district.
- + **SB 315** - provides **funding for PWR readiness programs** in the state, working with PWR on how to **highlight success and gaps** around PWR access, teacher credentialing and programming

“When you become a fellow, it transforms the way you see your role as an educator when it comes to how your impact can be felt beyond the classroom.”



Leadership and Advocacy at Atlas

Teacher Fellowship

Places a first-year teacher in a veteran teachers classroom to receive feedback and guidance prior to acquiring their own classroom



Leadership and Advocacy at Atlas



+ Financial Literacy

- + + Leading with Yes
- + + Pilot program during Q4, 23/24 SY
- + + Moved to 1 class for 24/25 SY
- + + Increased to 2 periods in 25/26 SY

Adaptive Leadership

- + **More than permission:** Empowering teachers empowers our youth.
 - + Approaching colleagues with **curiosity** and **intention**, rather than control or negative consequences for innovation, begets **trust, sense of ownership, creativity**, and a more **comprehensive network of collaborative support** for *students and families*.



Adaptive Leadership

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) - Positioning and empowering **students** to propose and negotiate **policies**, within and beyond the classroom and school space, that affect them directly.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) - Instead of reliance on just your department or grade level chairs, what opportunities exist within your **professional learning communities**?

- + Supports **coalition building** - Whose combined skills are best to address needs?

- + **Collaboration** between colleagues and administration → derived from **root cause analysis** of problems within their specific and systemic **contexts**.



Adaptive Leadership

- + **Community Partnerships** - **Teach Plus**, volunteer and community **opportunities**, and career **partnerships** (postsecondary workforce readiness – PWR)
- + **Sunshine Committee** - Building **communities of care**
 - + **Beyond the job**: who are your colleagues? What drives them when they're not at work? Building **holistic** opportunities to spend time intentional time together creates **communities of care**, rather than value equated solely to outcomes.
 - + **e.g.**, monthly staff happy hour, book club, movement / meditation groups
 - + **Celebrating** each other as school culture: birthdays, big life events, degrees, certifications, personal pursuits



Leadership Reflection

Using the handout:

- + Select 2-3 questions most relevant to your context
- + Focus on a real challenge
- + Identify one concrete next step





Leadership Reflection: Glows & Grows

What wins have you had with your teacher leaders?

Is there an initiative, idea, etc., that a teacher leader has put forth that is working really well?

If you can't point to any wins YET, what is holding you back when it comes to teacher leadership?

How might you access and empower these teachers?



The challenges in education are complex.



The expertise to solve them is already in our schools.



How will you shift from engaging teacher input to leveraging teacher leadership?

- + *Who is one teacher you can empower to lead?*
- + *What is one action you can take to elevate teacher leadership?*

Commit to a next step & share it with someone before you leave today.

**TEACH
+PLUS**

**NOMINATE A TEACHER
for the 2026-27
TEACH PLUS FELLOWSHIP**



Stay Connected with Teach Plus

www.teachplus.org

Karen Amidon, Policy Manager

kamidon@teachplus.org

**“
Your
feedback
helps us all
move forward
together**



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**



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