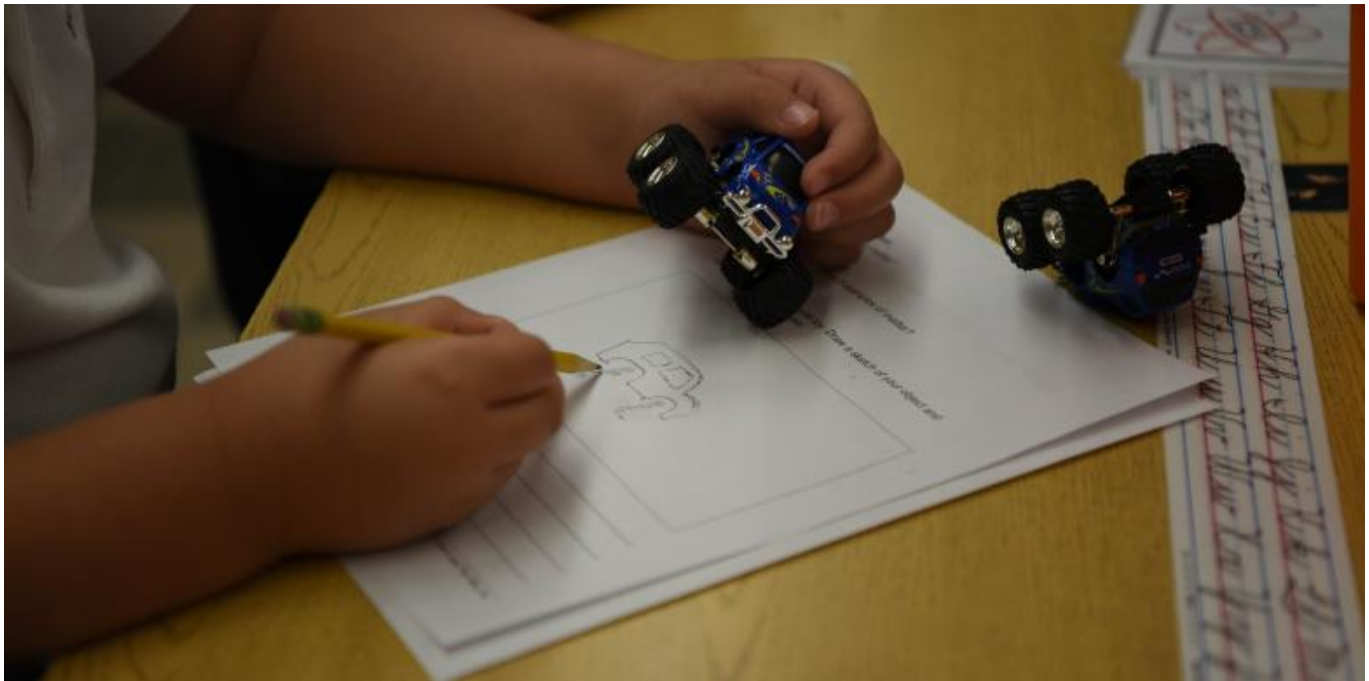




## Guest Post: PLTW Empowers Students to Connect the Classroom to the Real World

GUEST POST BY DR. ANGELA ANDERSSON | PLTW LAUNCH AND PLTW GATEWAY PRINCIPAL | KENOSHA SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED CURRICULUM (KTEC) | KENOSHA, WISCONSIN



*Dr. Andersson is the principal and co-founder of the Kenosha School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum. She is passionate about teaching students in innovative ways to prepare students for careers that we cannot even imagine yet. Her educational career has allowed her to work with students of all ages from preschool to graduate students. Angie brings these experiences to her work as the Project Lead The Way Wisconsin K-8 State Leader.*

Technology is woven into every aspect of the world we live in. Students need to be taught a new way of thinking to see the connection between STEM and all other areas of their lives and learning.

*“Project Lead The Way takes them through that elementary design process. They have to actually work through the steps. It is problem-based learning. They work as a team. It is amazing, those higher-order thinking skills that the kids are using. In one lesson, they had to come up with a compound machine to save an animal stuck in a moat. There were no directions. The kids were completely OK with that. The stuff they came up with was so cool.”*

– Airielle Hodges, KTEC STEM teacher and PLTW Master Teacher

PLTW Launch allows our school, KTEC, to integrate this kind of learning from a student's first day of kindergarten. They become skilled at innovative thinking, working in a group, evaluating, and connecting what they're learning across all subject matter and to the world around them. They don't see mistakes as personal failures. They simply experience an "engineering failure" and try again.

By learning these skills early on, each consecutive grade level is able to accomplish more because our students know how to work together and follow the design process. This saves valuable learning time because it isn't spent on redirecting behavior. Students aren't as frustrated when their outcome isn't what they expected, and they are able to identify what they would do differently to improve on their design. By the time our 6th grade students start PLTW Gateway, they don't need to start at the beginning. They are able to jump into more complicated challenges and concepts. KTEC students regularly enter high school having met standards well above students from other schools.

But it doesn't matter how great a lesson is if the students aren't paying attention. The number-one constant across all grade levels and students using PLTW at KTEC is engagement!

*"It is all about student engagement. When students are engaged, they learn a whole lot more. Before you would have the one smart kid in the group and all the other kids would just sit and watch that kid do all the work. With PLTW, everybody has a stake in it. Everybody wants to try it. Sometimes the kids that we think are the best academically are not necessarily the best hands-on students. It brings that different kind of thinking and different skill set to the table." – Sarah McMillian, KTEC 6th grade science teacher and PLTW Master Teacher*

The simple fact is that Project Lead The Way has provided us with the ability to give **all** our students the skills needed for their future success, whether it is in or out of the science field. Character is built through the collaboration required. Communication skills are honed through presenting ideas and solutions. Confidence and pride come with every solved problem. Patience and resilience are learned through repeating the process until they get it right. They view the world as a whole, not parts without relation. PLTW provides our students the ability to make the connections they need, no matter what the subject matter.

*What are some of your PLTW stories and/or best practices in education? We want to know! **[Complete our submission form \(https://www.pltw.org/sharestory\)](https://www.pltw.org/sharestory)** to share your story.*

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