

PLC at Work Institute Agenda

San Antonio, TX • July 24–26, 2023

Monday, July 24

6:30–8:00 a.m.	Registration	Stars at Night Ballroom Prefunction
	Continental Breakfast	
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Mike Mattos <i>The Urgency of the Moment</i>	Stars at Night Ballroom
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Break	
10:15–11:45 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:15–2:45 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
2:45–3:15 p.m.	Break	
3:15–4:15 p.m.	Panel Discussion —Presenters answer your most pressing questions.	Stars at Night Ballroom

Tuesday, July 25

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration	Stars at Night Ballroom Prefunction
	Continental Breakfast	
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Julie A. Schmidt <i>From Urgency to Action</i>	Stars at Night Ballroom
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Break	
10:15–11:45 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:15–2:45 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
2:45–3:15 p.m.	Break	
3:15–4:15 p.m.	Team Time —Presenters aid in your collaborative team discussions.	Stars at Night Ballroom

Wednesday, July 26

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Stars at Night Ballroom Prefunction
8:00–9:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Keynote —Brandon Jones <i>The North Star: Making Our Compelling Future a Reality</i>	Stars at Night Ballroom

Agenda is subject to change.

Breakout Sessions at a Glance

Presenters & Titles	Monday, July 24		Tuesday, July 25		Wednesday, July 26
	10:15–11:45 a.m.	1:15–2:45 p.m.	10:15–11:45 a.m.	1:15–2:45 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
Casey R. Ahner					
No More Excuses: Using the FAME Protocol to Ensure Goal Attainment	303AB			303AB	
Data Rules! Using Student Data to Inform Effective Instruction, Remediation, and Enrichment		303AB			
Are We Collaborating, Coordinating, Cooperating, or Coblaborating?			303AB		303AB
Scott A. Cunningham					
How a High-Poverty, Dysfunctional School Became a National Model PLC	305				
Help Your Team! Working Together to Solve Common Team Challenges in a PLC at Work		305		305	
Celebrating and Retaining Staff: Creating an Effective Recognition Program			305		305
Troy Gobble					
Using Your Mission and Vision as Leadership Tools	302C				302C
Bringing the Wonder Back to Your Science Classrooms: Implementing NGSS Practices Through Your PLC		302C		302C	
How to Lead for Change: The Journey to Standards-Based Grading			302C		
Jacqueline Heller					
Teams Transform Literacy Outcomes for Students in a PLC at Work	304C				304C
Creating a Culture of Collective Responsibility for Learning		304C		304C	

Presenters & Titles	Monday, July 24		Tuesday, July 25		Wednesday, July 26
	10:15–11:45 a.m.	1:15–2:45 p.m.	10:15–11:45 a.m.	1:15–2:45 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
How Can Assessment Look Different in Early Childhood? (PreK–2)			304C		
Brandon Jones					
More Than a Mission Statement: Unifying PLC and RTI to Guarantee Learning for All	Stars at Night Ballroom B1		Stars at Night Ballroom B1		
Abandoning Archaic Practices: Motivating and Preparing Generation Z Students		Stars at Night Ballroom B1			Stars at Night Ballroom B1
Demystifying Data: Making the Process Easy, Efficient, and Effective				Stars at Night Ballroom B1	
Mike Mattos					
Are We a Group or a Team?	302AB				
Taking Action: How to Create a Highly Effective, Multitiered System of Supports		302AB			
Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Secondary Schools			302AB		
Behavior Solutions: Leveraging the PLC at Work Process to Teach Essential Behaviors				302AB	
Guiding Principles for Principals: Tips and Tools for Leading the PLC at Work Process					302AB
Maria Nielsen					
Show Me What Ya Got: Student Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Learning	301ABC				301ABC
The 15-Day Challenge: Win Quick, Win Often!		301ABC			
Elementary ELA Strategies to Keep Your Students on Track			301ABC		
Common Assessments: The Key to Uncommon Results for Student and Teacher Learning				301ABC	

Presenters & Titles	Monday, July 24		Tuesday, July 25		Wednesday, July 26
	10:15–11:45 a.m.	1:15–2:45 p.m.	10:15–11:45 a.m.	1:15–2:45 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
Regina Stephens Owens					
The <i>Why</i> Effect: Intentional Systems Drive Inspirational Cultures	Stars at Night Ballroom B2 & B3				
Small Schools and Singletons: Wired for Rigor and Relevance		Stars at Night Ballroom B2 & B3			
Data Discussion for Instructional Leaders: From Data to Design to Demonstration of Learning			Stars at Night Ballroom B2 & B3		
Leveraging Technology for Learning in a PLC				Stars at Night Ballroom B2 & B3	
Coaching Competence, <i>Not</i> Compliance: Preparing Teachers to Lead by Learning					Stars at Night Ballroom B2 & B3
Julie A. Schmidt					
Protocols for Results: Using Data Discussions to Achieve Higher Levels of Learning for All	Stars at Night Ballroom B4				
Central Office Leadership: Articulate, Protect, and Promote		Stars at Night Ballroom B4			
Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools			Stars at Night Ballroom B4		
Yes We Can: Collaboration by All, for All!				Stars at Night Ballroom B4	
Windows and Mirrors: Women Who Lead					Stars at Night Ballroom B4
Sarah Schuhl					
Focusing Teams and Students With Learning Targets	304AB				
Coaching Teams and Teachers in a PLC at Work		304AB		304AB	
Every Student Can Learn Mathematics: The Question Is Not <i>If</i> but <i>How</i>			304AB		
Data, Data, Data: What Do Teams Need? What Do Teams Do With It?					304AB

Session Descriptions—Day 1

KEYNOTE

[Mike Mattos](#)

The Urgency of the Moment

As educators, we face one of the most historically challenging times in our nation's history. The years-long impact of the global pandemic has exacerbated inequities in academic achievement while creating unprecedented needs in student social-emotional health. And while more students face significant gaps in their learning, the academic rigor that all students must master for future success have never been greater. How we respond to this moment in time—this convergence of need and necessity—will have a generational impact on our students and our collective prosperity.

Fortunately, there has never been greater professional consensus on the best way to close learning gaps and ensure high levels of learning for all students: Schools and districts should function as a professional learning community. In this opening keynote, Mike Mattos sets the stage for our learning by creating a shared vision of the essential elements, thinking, and vocabulary that drive a true professional learning community.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

[Casey R. Ahner](#)

No More Excuses: Using the FAME Protocol to Ensure Goal Attainment

Our first step to become a continuously improving and highly effective school is to face our current reality head on. Casey R. Ahner demonstrates how the FAME protocol determines what we can control and how we can implement SMART goals to keep us accountable and ensure evidence of achievement.

[Scott A. Cunningham](#)

How a High-Poverty, Dysfunctional School Became a National Model PLC

Scott A. Cunningham took bold steps to help his high-poverty, dysfunctional school become a national model PLC through Solution Tree. He explains processes and strategies that turned his school around and shows how school leaders can make significant changes in the service of learning. Scott and fellow school leaders overhauled their system to create time for collaboration, added resources without receiving extra money (including Title I funding), reallocated existing resources, focused on common assessments to drive instruction, changed special education practices to a more inclusive model, and transformed a culture of low expectations to one devoted to high levels of learning for every student.

Participants in this session learn strategies to increase collaboration time and review research-based best practices for creating a culture of high expectations.

Troy Gobble

Using Your Mission and Vision as Leadership Tools

Adlai E. Stevenson High School has a clear mission statement: *Success for every student*. In this session, participants learn how to activate the mission and vision of their school to drive school improvement. Troy Gobble demonstrates how to embrace a culture of collective responsibility through staff collective commitments, administrative team structure, and communication methods.

Jacqueline Heller

Teams Transform Literacy Outcomes for Students in a PLC at Work

Reading proficiently lays the foundation for achievement in all aspects of learning, so we must ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum as well as a systematic way to provide additional time and support for students to become proficient readers.

Participants in the session gain tools to help teams:

- Create learning targets and reading progressions from essential literacy standards.
- Align purchased curriculum materials with the team's learning targets to create more opportunities for students to become proficient on the essential literacy standards.
- Use data to set, share, monitor, and celebrate student literacy goals.

Brandon Jones

More Than a Mission Statement: Unifying PLC and RTI to Guarantee Learning for All

A PLC's primary mission is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. With this goal in mind, do school support systems align with that mission? Despite our best lessons and efforts in class, we know some students will succeed only with additional time and support. Because of this, it is essential to create a system where all students are guaranteed to receive directed, specific, timely, and targeted intervention as well as extension.

Session participants identify common barriers when providing additional help to students, outline possible solutions, and explore the RTI plan of a model PLC secondary school. This session is based on the RTI research of Mike Mattos and Austin Buffum as well as action research from several model PLC schools.

Participants in this session:

- Examine their current reality and challenges regarding systematic interventions.
- Determine how a PLC addresses common challenges and helps sustain a tiered system of support for students.
- Investigate the enrichment and intervention plan of a current model PLC school.

Mike Mattos

Are We a Group or a Team?

Collaborative teacher teams are the engine that drives a professional learning community. When these teams are highly engaged in the right work, student learning accelerates ... and when they are not, learning sputters and stalls. Because teachers have traditionally been required to attend grade-level or departmental team meetings, schools often mistakenly assume that merely renaming these gatherings "PLC time" represents teacher collaboration. The act of meeting together does not make a team, but instead, merely a group.

Participants in this session:

- Assess if they are currently part of a group or a team.
- Review the essential work of teacher teams in a PLC.
- Learn how to successfully navigate team disagreements.
- Leave with specific action steps to improve your teacher team.

Maria Nielsen

Show Me What Ya Got: Student Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Learning

Maria Nielsen helps teachers move past "sit and get" in the classroom to a place where all students actively participate in learning. She shares engagement strategies to assess student understanding throughout a lesson or unit of study.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore the *nifty-nine* best teaching strategies.
- Learn how to assess student learning by implementing engagement strategies.
- Identify the differences among assessment questions, open questions, and engagement questions.

Regina Stephens Owens

The *Why* Effect: Intentional Systems Drive Inspirational Cultures

Organizational purpose, collective beliefs, and commitments affect building systems at all levels. How can we ensure that all practices and procedures are intentional and personify organizational beliefs? It all begins with the *why*. Regina Stephens Owens shares strategies to move cultures from an attitude of compliance, coercion, and fear to one that is respectful, responsive, and reflective.

Participants can expect to:

- Promote high standards of achievement for all.
- Create a collective, rather than individual, leadership focus.
- Design and sustain a values-driven culture that is evidenced by trust, transparency, reflection, and responsiveness.

Julie A. Schmidt

Protocols for Results: Using Data Discussions to Lead to Higher Levels of Learning for All

Is your system overwhelmed with data? Using protocols to transform data into information is an efficient and effective way to achieve improved results. Participants examine tools that empower teams to use data to drive instruction, impact student learning, and identify specific processes to meet district needs.

Participants in this session:

- Review research related to and examples of data-driven decision making.
- Apply multiple protocols for data analysis.
- Reflect on their school or district's current reality, while identifying tools that can be used or modified to meet specified needs.

Sarah Schuhl

Focusing Teams and Students With Learning Targets

How can students articulate what they are learning? How can assessments be created to determine whether students are learning? Learning targets bring clarity to students and teachers about expected outcomes in each course or subject area.

Participants in this session gain insight into writing clear learning targets from standards. Sarah Schuhl discusses strategies for using learning targets to help students self-assess their progress and for collaborative teams to create and analyze common assessments.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine how to write effective learning targets.
- Develop strategies for using targets to involve students in their learning.
- Discover ways to create and analyze tests using learning targets.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Casey R. Ahner

Data Rules! Using Student Data to Inform Effective Instruction, Remediation, and Enrichment

Casey R. Ahner shows participants how to effectively use student data to improve professional practice and respond to student needs by name and by skill. Participants look at the data analysis process and response.

Scott A. Cunningham

Help Your Team: Overcoming Common Collaborative Problems in a PLC at Work

What should happen when a team starts to struggle? As teachers move toward becoming interdependent teams, challenges inevitably arise. Ensuring high levels of learning for every student requires a change in thinking and practice. Participants briefly review the work of highly effective

teams, consider scenarios showing common team challenges, and work collaboratively to identify strategies for moving a team forward. This session is based on a book of the same title (Solution Tree Press, 2019), coauthored by Bob Sonju and other educators who possess a wide range of backgrounds and experiences in all levels of education.

Participants in this session can expect to:

- Understand the process of learning.
- Gain shared clarity on the essentials of student learning.
- Use targeted assessment to get to the student and skill.

Troy Gobble

Bringing the Wonder Back to Your Science Classrooms: Implementing NGSS Practices Through Your PLC

Next Generation Science Standards for science and engineering explain how to explore the universe and describe expectations for how students should engage in inquiry-style lessons. Participants in this session examine how teachers collaborate to deepen their understanding of science practices and create meaningful experiences for students.

Participants in this session:

- Gain an appreciation for NGSS science and engineering practices.
- Explore the differences between traditional teaching and inquiry-based learning through science and engineering.
- Focus on the impact collaborative practices have on student and teacher learning.

Jacqueline Heller

Creating a Culture of Collective Responsibility for Learning

If we expect high levels of learning for all in a PLC, then we must cultivate a culture of collective responsibility for learning. Teacher teams need tools that help them go from operating as a group to operating as a high-performing team working interdependently toward a common goal of learning for all.

Participants in this session:

- Develop collective teacher efficacy through short-term team SMART goals.
- Create team agendas that guard and protect collaborative time for the tasks that have the greatest impact on student learning.
- Communicate and collaborate with all stakeholders about student goals and progress.

Brandon Jones

Abandoning Archaic Practices: Motivating and Preparing Generation Z Students

We are preparing students for jobs that do not exist to solve challenges that have not yet been identified. What happens when our current practices fail to motivate, engage, and prepare the current generation of students who depend on the immediacy of the world around them? The challenge lies in the fact that their system of thinking from neural to practical is instant and problem based—the opposite of preceding generations.

In this session, Brandon Jones compares 21st century learning and traditional practices that have significant impacts on student motivation and learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Compare significant differences between this generation of students and past generations, including those of educators.
- Identify archaic practices that demotivate students.
- Identify 21st century learning practices that motivate and prepare students for their future.

Mike Mattos

Taking Action: How to Create a Highly Effective, Multitiered System of Supports

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educators face an unprecedented challenge: how to close the learning gaps created by months of school closures and uneven access to learning opportunities. In this breakout, Mike Mattos discusses specific steps that schools can take to create a highly effective, multitiered system of supports to target learning gaps and show how the PLC at Work process creates the larger, schoolwide framework required to successfully intervene.

Participants in this session:

- Gain an understanding of the guiding principles behind a multitiered system of interventions.
- Learn the essential actions that collaborative teams must complete at Tier 1 to effectively respond when students don't learn.
- Explore how to target preventions, interventions, extension, and remediation.
- Prioritize resources to best meet student needs.

Maria Nielsen

The 15-Day Challenge: Win Quick, Win Often!

This interactive session establishes, reboots, or re-energizes the work of collaborative teams. Schools nationwide are using this simple learning-assessing process to connect the dots of a PLC. Maria Nielsen helps teams see the big picture of a PLC and put it all together in a recurring cycle of collective inquiry. The 15-day challenge is a practical way to bring the PLC process to life.

Participants in this session:

- Clarify the work of collaborative teams.
- Establish steps for a guaranteed and viable curriculum.
- Explore the learning-assessing cycle in a unit of study.

Regina Stephens Owens

Small Schools and Singletons: Wired for Rigor and Relevance

Singleton teachers are accustomed to seeking solutions and understanding opportunities as they arise. Operating efficiently and effectively within a PLC can be challenging. Team members must collaborate on common denominators, work with peers to improve professional practices and student learning, leverage technology, and authentically engage in the PLC at Work process.

Regina Stephens Owens shows how to use best practices in collaboration, and participants learn how to design action plans supporting the work of schools and singleton teachers in a PLC.

Participants can expect to:

- Gain clarity on connecting in a PLC.
- Seek solutions for successful partnering.
- Learn to function effectively in a PLC.

Julie A. Schmidt

Central Office Leadership: Articulate, Protect, and Promote

This session focuses on and clarifies the critical role central office leadership plays in the implementation of professional learning communities work that supports long-term sustainability. This session is designed for those who serve in any central office role and those who aspire to serve in such a role.

Participants can expect to:

- Consider how district-level leaders must articulate what is most important.
- Learn about specific actions leaders must take to protect the work identified as being most critical to the improvement of student outcomes.
- Discover how leaders promote the work through aligned goal setting and the thoughtful allocation of resources.

Sarah Schuhl

Coaching Teams and Teachers in a PLC at Work

Instructional coaches support teachers and teams engaged in the PLC process. How can instructional coaches grow the learning of both teachers and collaborative teams in intentional coaching cycles? How is the time of instructional coaches spent to maximize teacher and student learning? Sarah Schuhl provides strategies to create meaningful and effective coaching cycles with a focus on improved student learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn listening strategies for effective coaching.
- Explore coaching plans for teams and teachers to use in coaching cycles.

Session Descriptions—Day 2

KEYNOTE

Julie A. Schmidt

From Urgency to Action

As convincingly laid out during the Day 1 keynote, educators across the nation and the world are responding to historic challenges with a sense of urgency to meet the ever-growing needs of *all* students. Not to be confused with panic, a collective sense of urgency sharpens an organization's focus on the actions it must take in order to meet the challenges laid before it. When that collective sense of urgency leads to collective research-based action, sustainable improvement over time can be expected. Make no mistake: urgency and high-leverage action do not occur by chance, but rather by an ongoing commitment to learning and leading.

In this keynote, Julie A. Schmidt addresses creating a collective sense of urgency around the right work in your school or district and takes a deeper dive into the actions teams engage in while developing and maintaining a laser-like focus on student learning in a professional learning community. Whether you are new to the PLC journey or hoping to gain clarity on your next high-leverage steps several years into the work, this keynote will inspire a *calm and clear* sense of urgency.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Casey R. Ahner

Are We Collaborating, Coordinating, Cooperating, or Coblaborating?

Casey R. Ahner shows participants the essential actions of a team as they answer the four critical questions to determine what products teams can and should create when they do the *right* work. Participants learn protocols that will increase any team's efficiency and efficacy.

Scott A. Cunningham

Celebrating and Retaining Staff: Creating an Effective Recognition Program

Recognizing the virtues and achievements of teachers and staff helps retain them. When people feel valued and respected for their work, it creates lasting morale in the building. Recognition should not be just formal, annual celebrations, but rather a daily part of school culture. As important as this is, leaders sometimes do not have the time to recognize staff—or just don't know how to. Scott A. Cunningham outlines the importance of recognition and reviews the components of an effective recognition program.

Participants in this session can expect to:

- Examine why recognition is essential to staff morale.
- Identify barriers to recognizing staff and discover solutions to these barriers.
- Explore various strategies schools use to effectively recognize teachers and staff.

Troy Gobble

How to Lead for Change: The Journey to Standards-Based Grading

Moving from a traditional points-based grading system to a standards-based system can be a daunting task. In this session, Troy Gobble dives into the relationship between grading practices and student learning and focuses on how to lead change in the grading system at the classroom, school, and district level.

Participants in this session:

- Rethink the assumptions and problems with a traditional grading system.
- Explore how an evidence-based grading system can better support student learning.
- Examine the elements required to change the culture and grading practices throughout a school.

Jacqueline Heller

How Can Assessment Look Different in Early Childhood? (PreK–2)

The collaborative and data-driven process of PLCs applies to every learner, not just those in the high stakes testing grades. PreK to second-grade teams are tasked with monitoring student learning through common formative assessments that are developmentally appropriate for our youngest learners and may look different than those in upper grades.

Participants in this session:

- Learn how to accelerate student progress toward proficiency by creating targeted learning progressions that meet each student where they are and move them forward.
- Explore assessment techniques, tasks, and tools for developing common formative assessments for academic content and social-emotional learning in early childhood.
- Use age-appropriate student goal-setting and progress-monitoring tools to consider learning for the whole child.

Brandon Jones

More Than a Mission Statement: Unifying PLC and RTI to Guarantee Learning for All

A PLC's primary mission is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. With this goal in mind, do school support systems align with that mission? Despite our best lessons and efforts in class, we know some students will succeed only with additional time and support. Because of this, it is essential to create a system where all students are guaranteed to receive directed, specific, timely, and targeted intervention as well as extension.

Session participants identify common barriers when providing additional help to students, outline possible solutions, and explore the RTI plan of a model PLC secondary school. This session is based on the RTI research of Mike Mattos and Austin Buffum as well as action research from several model PLC schools.

Participants in this session:

- Examine their current reality and challenges regarding systematic interventions.
- Determine how a PLC addresses common challenges and helps sustain a tiered system of support for students.
- Investigate the enrichment and intervention plan of a current model PLC school.

Mike Mattos

Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Secondary Schools

If the fundamental purpose of being a professional learning community is to ensure all students learn at high levels, then there must be time embedded during the school day to provide students extra time and support to succeed. In this session, Mike Mattos provides real examples showing how to create time for supplemental and intensive interventions.

Participants learn specific steps to implement a flexible secondary intervention period, including how to:

- Learn specific steps to implement a flexible intervention period.
- Determine what interventions to offer each week.
- Require students to attend specific interventions.
- Monitor student attendance.
- Allocate staff.
- Extend student learning.
- Address potential obstacles.
- Do all this within teachers' contractual obligations.

Maria Nielsen

Elementary ELA Strategies to Keep Your Students on Track

Maria Nielsen takes educators on an interactive journey to gain new and exciting ELA and writing strategies as a team. In this fast-paced session, elementary teachers gain clarity about ELA standards and explore how reading and writing go hand in hand for increased student learning. Participants also learn how to focus on year-long essential standards while using a district-prescribed curriculum.

Participants in this session:

- Gather tools and graphic organizers to connect reading and writing.
- Understand learning progressions on literacy-focused instruction and assessment.
- Overlay essential standards with district-prescribed curricula.
- Examine research-based teaching strategies to improve classroom instruction.

Regina Stephens Owens

Data Discussion for Instructional Leaders: From Data to Design to Demonstration of Learning

In a time of tremendous focus on data, it is imperative to grow a rich collaborative culture through dialogue and data protocols—moving from a deficit mindset to a growth mindset. Participants in this

session discover ways to create this culture, use data as information, and increase team capacity and student learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Focus on results through the lens of data.
- Move from data to demonstration of learning.
- Ensure their beliefs and behaviors align as they utilize data.

Julie A. Schmidt

Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools

Schools that function as PLCs must ultimately do two things: 1) build a collaborative culture to promote continuous adult learning, and 2) create structures and systems that guarantee students additional time and support for learning when they need it. After examining the key components of systematic intervention and enrichment, participants examine protocols and criteria to assess their own schools' responses and an action-planning template for next steps in raising the bar and closing the gap in the local context.

Participants examine strategies and structures to collaboratively:

- Examine the essential core beliefs that relate to all means *all*.
- Review and reflect on the essential elements of Tiers 1, 2, and 3 intervention.
- Consider high-leverage usage of resources (human, material, structural) to meet the needs of all learners.
- Examine the most common RTI mistakes.
- Reflect on critical reminders regarding process and criteria.
- Apply a current reality assessment tool while learning.

Sarah Schuhl

Every Student Can Learn Mathematics: The Question Is Not *If* but *How*

Mathematics collaborative teams are made of teachers who work tirelessly to grow student learning. Yet, despite every effort, too many students in too many schools are struggling. Why? What can be done? It starts with mathematics teams having an intentional and focused learning plan for the year, for every unit of instruction, and for each daily lesson. Participants in this session explore how teachers effectively plan for grade-level learning and identify the key criteria to consider when designing mathematics lessons.

Participants use the Mathematics in a PLC at Work™ lesson design model to:

- Examine research-affirmed teaching actions that maximize student learning during a mathematics lesson.
- Consider how to use prior knowledge routines effectively.
- Examine the balanced use of lower-level- and higher-level-cognitive-demand tasks during class.

- Embrace the balanced use of small group student discourse as part of a formative feedback process that encourages student perseverance, engagement, effort, efficacy, and participation during the lesson.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Casey R. Ahner

No More Excuses: Using the FAME Protocol to Ensure Goal Attainment

Our first step to become a continuously improving and highly effective school is to face our current reality head on. Casey R. Ahner demonstrates how the FAME protocol determines what we can control and how we can implement SMART goals to keep us accountable and ensure evidence of achievement.

Scott A. Cunningham

Help Your Team: Overcoming Common Collaborative Problems in a PLC at Work

What should happen when a team starts to struggle? As teachers move toward becoming interdependent teams, challenges inevitably arise. Ensuring high levels of learning for every student requires a change in thinking and practice. Participants briefly review the work of highly effective teams, consider scenarios showing common team challenges, and work collaboratively to identify strategies for moving a team forward. This session is based on a book of the same title (Solution Tree Press, 2019), coauthored by Bob Sonju and other educators who possess a wide range of backgrounds and experiences in all levels of education.

Participants in this session can expect to:

- Understand the process of learning.
- Gain shared clarity on the essentials of student learning.
- Use targeted assessment to get to the student and skill.

Troy Gobble

Bringing the Wonder Back to Your Science Classrooms: Implementing NGSS Practices Through Your PLC

Next Generation Science Standards for science and engineering explain how to explore the universe and describe expectations for how students should engage in inquiry-style lessons. Participants in this session examine how teachers collaborate to deepen their understanding of science practices and create meaningful experiences for students.

Participants in this session:

- Gain an appreciation for NGSS science and engineering practices.
- Explore the differences between traditional teaching and inquiry-based learning through science and engineering.
- Focus on the impact collaborative practices have on student and teacher learning.

Jacqueline Heller

Creating a Culture of Collective Responsibility for Learning

If we expect high levels of learning for all in a PLC, then we must cultivate a culture of collective responsibility for learning. Teacher teams need tools that help them go from operating as a group to operating as a high-performing team working interdependently toward a common goal of learning for all.

Participants in this session:

- Develop collective teacher efficacy through short-term team SMART goals.
- Create team agendas that guard and protect collaborative time for the tasks that have the greatest impact on student learning.
- Communicate and collaborate with all stakeholders about student goals and progress.

Brandon Jones

Demystifying Data: Making the Process Easy, Efficient, and Effective

Albert Einstein stated that “the definition of genius is taking the complex and making it simple.”

One of the final stages of team development centers around the use of information gathered from assessments. Unfortunately, this is also a tempting stopping place in the improvement process. We find that some schools and teacher teams suffer from what Waterman and Peters call DRIP—data rich information poor (2006). These teams have ample data but lack the process to turn this meaningful information into a competitive advantage.

Brandon Jones explores the most meaningful ways to analyze data in a professional learning community. Participants use simple, practical data protocols to become efficient with their work and lead them to action.

Participants in this session:

- Determine how to effectively use data in a collaborative team.
- Learn how to use a protocol to increase efficiency.
- Practice engaging in this process using a real world scenario.

Mike Mattos

Behavior Solutions: Leveraging the PLC at Work Process to Teach Essential Behaviors

The fundamental purpose of a professional learning community is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. To achieve this mission, we know that some students will need support mastering the behaviors needed to succeed in school and beyond. Every school knows this universal truth, but many schools lack the systematic processes to achieve this outcome. In this breakout, Mike Mattos demonstrates how a school can leverage the PLC at Work process to identify, teach, assess, and intervene when students lack essential academic and social behaviors.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn how the entire school—the entire PLC—must work together to teach essential behaviors.
- Apply the four critical questions of the PLC at Work process to identify, teach, assess, and intervene around essential behaviors.
- Consider systematic, tiered supports to target behavior interventions.

Maria Nielsen

Common Assessments: The Key to Uncommon Results for Student and Teacher Learning

The secret is out: Common formative assessments are the key to improving student learning! Formative assessments are powerful when teams of teachers create assessments in common, then share and discuss the results. This collaborative process leads to a dramatic increase in student learning and improved teaching practices. Maria Nielsen provides proven tools to use common assessments across grade levels and departments and illustrates practical strategies for implementing and using assessments to substantially improve student and adult learning.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the benefits of using common assessment as a grade level or department.
- Understand the balance between formative and summative assessments.
- Gain formative assessment tools to increase student and adult learning.
- Discover quick and easy ways to look at data and drill down to individual students.

Regina Stephens Owens

Leveraging Technology for Learning in a PLC

In the changing world of education, whether face-to-face or virtual environments, learning must happen. Regina Stephens Owens provides strategies to leverage technology to ensure high levels of learning for all learners, adults and students.

Participants can expect to:

- Understand how to leverage technology in support of teamwork.
- Leverage web resources with four essential questions of a PLC.
- Utilize technology for continuous improvement and to build collective capacity.

Julie A. Schmidt

Yes We Can: Collaboration by All, for All!

When teams commit to collaborating in the PLC process dedicated to high levels of learning for *all* students, a key critical step is to examine their personal and systemic beliefs about students, themselves, and learning. Then, ensure that all systems align, bringing this vision to life. Participants in this session are provided with strategies and protocols to examine mindsets and collaborative processes to drive action planning that ensure higher levels of learning for all students. This session is designed for both general and special educators.

Participants in this session:

- Examine best practices for ensuring all means *all*.
- Learn strategies to bring each of these best practices to life in your local context.
- Reflect on local current practices and policies that do and do not align with the belief that all students can learn at high levels and identify key next steps for moving forward.

Sarah Schuhl

Coaching Teams and Teachers in a PLC at Work

Instructional coaches support teachers and teams engaged in the PLC process. How can instructional coaches grow the learning of both teachers and collaborative teams in intentional coaching cycles? How is the time of instructional coaches spent to maximize teacher and student learning? Sarah Schuhl provides strategies to create meaningful and effective coaching cycles with a focus on improved student learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn listening strategies for effective coaching.
- Explore coaching plans for teams and teachers to use in coaching cycles.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Casey R. Ahner

Are We Collaborating, Coordinating, Cooperating, or Coblaborating?

Casey R. Ahner shows participants the essential actions of a team as they answer the four critical questions to determine what products teams can and should create when they do the *right* work. Participants learn protocols that will increase any team's efficiency and efficacy.

Scott A. Cunningham

Celebrating and Retaining Staff: Creating an Effective Recognition Program

Recognizing the virtues and achievements of teachers and staff helps retain them. When people feel valued and respected for their work, it creates lasting morale in the building. Recognition should not be just formal, annual celebrations, but rather a daily part of school culture. As important as this is, leaders sometimes do not have the time to recognize staff—or just don't know how to. Scott A. Cunningham outlines the importance of recognition and reviews the components of an effective recognition program.

Participants in this session can expect to:

- Examine why recognition is essential to staff morale.
- Identify barriers to recognizing staff and discover solutions to these barriers.
- Explore various strategies schools use to effectively recognize teachers and staff.

Troy Gobble

Using Your Mission and Vision as Leadership Tools

Adlai E. Stevenson High School has a clear mission statement: *Success for every student*. In this session, participants learn how to activate the mission and vision of their school to drive school improvement. Troy Gobble demonstrates how to embrace a culture of collective responsibility through staff collective commitments, administrative team structure, and communication methods.

Jacqueline Heller

Teams Transform Literacy Outcomes for Students in a PLC at Work

Reading proficiently lays the foundation for achievement in all aspects of learning, so we must ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum as well as a systematic way to provide additional time and support for students to become proficient readers.

Participants in the session gain tools to help teams:

- Create learning targets and reading progressions from essential literacy standards.
- Align purchased curriculum materials with the team's learning targets to create more opportunities for students to become proficient on the essential literacy standards.
- Use data to set, share, monitor, and celebrate student literacy goals.

Brandon Jones

Abandoning Archaic Practices: Motivating and Preparing Generation Z Students

We are preparing students for jobs that do not exist to solve challenges that have not yet been identified. What happens when our current practices fail to motivate, engage, and prepare the current generation of students who depend on the immediacy of the world around them? The challenge lies in the fact that their system of thinking from neural to practical is instant and problem based—the opposite of preceding generations.

In this session, Brandon Jones compares 21st century learning and traditional practices that have significant impacts on student motivation and learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Compare significant differences between this generation of students and past generations, including those of educators.
- Identify archaic practices that demotivate students.
- Identify 21st century learning practices that motivate and prepare students for their future.

Mike Mattos

Guiding Principles for Principals: Tips and Tools for Leading the PLC at Work Process

Becoming a professional learning community will not happen by luck, chance, or hope; it requires focused and effective leadership. In this breakout, Mike Mattos provides guiding principles, practical examples, and targeted tools to help leaders—site or district administration and teacher leaders—successfully support teacher teams.

Participants learn how to:

- Create an effective site leadership team.
- Develop and enforce team norms.
- Monitor and support the work of collaborative teams.

Maria Nielsen

Show Me What Ya Got: Student Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Learning

Maria Nielsen helps teachers move past “sit and get” in the classroom to a place where all students actively participate in learning. She shares engagement strategies to assess student understanding throughout a lesson or unit of study.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore the *nifty-nine* best teaching strategies.
- Learn how to assess student learning by implementing engagement strategies.
- Identify the differences among assessment questions, open questions, and engagement questions.

Regina Stephens Owens

Coaching Competence, Not Compliance: Preparing Teachers to Lead by Learning

In a time of great change and instability, educators and administrators more than ever need to become empowered learners. Let's move from telling to teaching and from unsupported expectations to unmatched experiences that ensure educators are prepared for continuous learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Design and develop culture for learning.
- Learn to coach competency, not just compliance.
- Build collective capacity through shared responsibility of learning.
- Invest in personal mastery that results in increased capacity, collective responsibility, and increased achievement.

Julie A. Schmidt

Windows and Mirrors: Women Who Lead

This session leads participants through a rollercoaster of emotions, connections, celebrations, and reflections on the historical and current challenges women face as they take on leadership roles.

Participants celebrate together and reflect on vulnerabilities leading to a higher level of self-efficacy and awareness.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine some of the challenges women have historically faced when making the decision to pursue a leadership position.
- Celebrate the wins—large and small.
- Reflect on our own personal journeys.
- Walk away with connections and a higher level of self-efficacy and awareness around our own uniqueness.

Sarah Schuhl

Data, Data, Data: What Do Teams Need? What Do Teams Do With It?

The third big idea of a professional learning community is to focus on results. How do collaborative teams use data to: 1) make informed decisions about assessment and instruction, 2) determine whether or not students have learned, and 3) involve students in the learning process? Participants in this session explore ways to collect and organize data and consider how to respond to the results obtained. They also learn a protocol for analyzing assessment data in a PLC collaborative team.

KEYNOTE

Brandon Jones

The North Star: Making Our Compelling Future a Reality

Poverty. Illness. Learning difficulties. Behavior and motivation problems. Social and emotional needs. Language barriers. Insufficient funding. Prerequisite skill gaps. Minimal home support. State and national requirements. Limited time and resources.

Does this list sound familiar? If the answer is yes, then you likely recognize challenges that often stand in the way of student learning. You might even have a few additions of your own.

The fact is, all schools struggle with issues that impede student learning. Yet, year after year, some schools defy the odds! These schools have a deep-seated belief that their actions can and will overcome these current realities and common challenges.

The secret is not in the next shiny program or a new, charismatic leader. Instead, the answer is an unrelenting commitment to the type of school you want to become for your students, staff, and community.

Brandon Jones outlines how to avoid tempting stopping places in your journey and be driven by your own North Star, a steadfast navigation point your team will use to make decisions that improve culture, learning, and growth for students and staff alike.