Tuesday, July 29

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration	Richardson Prefunction
	Continental Breakfast	Richardson B
8:00–9:45 a.m.	**Keynote**—William M. Ferriter *Decoding the DNA of Highly Effective PLCs: Using the Three Big Ideas of the PLC at Work Process to Build the Collaborative Foundation of Your School*	Richardson C
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	**Breakout Sessions**	See pages 2–3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	**Breakout Sessions**	See pages 2–3.
2:30–3:00 p.m.	Break	
3:00–4:00 p.m.	**Keynote**—Jason A. Andrews *Shared Responsibility: Leadership and Culture in Advancing the PLC Journey*	Richardson C

Wednesday, July 30

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration	Richardson Prefunction
	Continental Breakfast	Richardson B
8:00–9:45 a.m.	**Keynote**—Anthony Muhammad *Transforming School Culture 2.0: Why Culture Is Important Today, Tomorrow, and Forever*	Richardson C
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	**Breakout Sessions**	See pages 2–3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	**Breakout Sessions**	See pages 2–3.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	**Team Time**—*Presenters aid in your collaborative team discussions.*	Richardson C

Thursday, July 31

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Richardson B
8:00–9:30 a.m.	**Breakout Sessions**	See pages 2–3.
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Break	
9:45–11:45 a.m.	**Keynote**—Luis F. Cruz *Resistance to PLC Implementation: How to Confront It and Win*	Richardson C

Agenda is subject to change.

Breakout Sessions at a Glance

Rooms are listed beneath titles in *blue italics*.
A red asterisk* indicates a session will be repeated.

Presenter	Tuesday, July 29		Wednesday, July 30		Thursday, July 31
	10:00–11:30 a.m.	**1:00–2:30 p.m.**	**10:00–11:30 a.m.**	**1:00–2:30 p.m.**	**8:00–9:30 a.m.**
Casey R. Ahner	Teaching Essentials Is Not a Game of Horseshoes! Close Is Not Good Enough *E216D*	Serving Special Education Students: As Easy as Riding a Bike *E216D*	Students Don't Learn Until They're Engaged* *E216D*	We've Got Data: Now, Can We Make It Useful? *E216D*	Students Don't Learn Until They're Engaged *E216D*
Jason A. Andrews	Building a Culture of Collective Responsibility to Support Every Student *E216B*	From Cooperation to Collaboration: Building Highly Effective Teams in a PLC *E216B*	From Resistance to Commitment: Building Ownership of the PLC Process* *E216B*	Turning Missteps Into Milestones: Avoiding Common Pitfalls in the PLC Process *E216B*	From Resistance to Commitment: Building Ownership of the PLC Process *E216B*
Anisa Baker-Busby	Shift Happens: Intentional Instructional Shifts That Accelerate Learning to Grade Level Every Day *E216A*	Engage, Assess, Succeed: Creative Approaches to Accelerating Learning for All Students *E216A*	Cracking the Code: Using Common Formative Assessments to Close Learning Gaps *E216A*	Grading Practices That Communicate Learning: Shifting Focus to Growth and Mastery *E216A*	
Luis F. Cruz			PLC Versus PLC Process: The Difference Between PLC as a Noun and a Verb *E212A*	Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student *E212A*	All Done—Now What? Turning Your PLC Institute Experience Into Action at Your Site *E216C*
William M. Ferriter	Doing the Right Work: Tools and Templates for Effective Team Collaboration *Richardson C*	Using AI Tools to Make Differentiation Doable* *Richardson C*	Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Designing Effective Secondary Intervention Periods *E216C*	From Isolation to Collaboration: Building Effective Teams for Singleton Teachers *E216C*	Using AI Tools to Make Differentiation Doable *Richardson C*

Presenter	Tuesday, July 29		Wednesday, July 30		Thursday, July 31
	10:00–11:30 a.m.	1:00–2:30 p.m.	10:00–11:30 a.m.	1:00–2:30 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
Anthony Muhammad	Collaboration Is a Lifestyle, Not a Meeting! *E212A*	Moving From PLC *Lite* to PLC *Right*! *E212A*	"So, How Do We Get Buy-In?" Leveraging the Guiding Coalition to Build Consensus *Richardson C*	Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change *Richardson C*	We Are Ready for PLC Greatness! How Do We Go Back and Convince Others to Join In? *E212A*
Maria Nielsen	Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Student Learning *Richardson A*	The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work* *Richardson A*	Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools *Richardson A*	Cool Tools for Common Assessments *Richardson A*	The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work *Richardson A*

Agenda is subject to change.

Session Descriptions—Day 1

William M. Ferriter

Decoding the DNA of Highly Effective PLCs: Using the Three Big Ideas of the PLC at Work Process to Build the Collaborative Foundation of Your School

In this session, William M. Ferriter dives deep into the heart of what it takes to create a thriving professional learning community. Much like the double helix of DNA, a school's mission, vision, values, and goals are tightly interwoven, forming the backbone of everything we do. Participants in this session discover how to craft a foundation that is both dynamic and adaptable—one that drives collaboration, fosters continuous learning, and nurtures a culture of professional growth, just as DNA serves as the blueprint for life itself.

Participants in this session:
- Understand how the DNA metaphor illustrates the foundational structure of effective PLCs.
- Recognize the critical roles mission and vision play in defining a PLC's culture and direction.
- Explore ways to strengthen collaboration and communication by aligning team efforts with the three big ideas of the PLC at Work process.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Casey R. Ahner

Teaching Essentials Is Not a Game of Horseshoes! Close Is Not Good Enough

Teams can hit any target as long as they have focus and clarity. In this session, Casey R. Ahner explores how to help teams focus on essential tasks while maintaining autonomy.

Participants in this session:
- Develop tight and loose essential actions of their teams.
- Recognize how teams can create products as evidence of effectiveness.
- Use team products to coach and inform next steps.

Jason A. Andrews

Building a Culture of Collective Responsibility to Support Every Student

Collective responsibility is the cornerstone of a successful professional learning community. It reflects a shared belief that all students are capable of learning at high levels and a commitment by all staff to ensure every student's success. To effectively provide students with additional time and support through a systematic and responsive approach, a culture of collective responsibility must be firmly established. Participants gain practical tools and strategies to assess their current

school culture and identify opportunities to strengthen collective responsibility. Through reflective activities and actionable insights, they learn how to align beliefs and actions, build trust and accountability among staff, and create an environment where everyone is committed to the success of all students. Whether you're looking to initiate or deepen this cultural shift, Jason A. Andrews empowers you to lead the charge in fostering collective responsibility in your school or district.

Participants can expect to:
- Learn how to evaluate their current school culture to identify strengths and areas for growth in fostering collective responsibility.
- Explore strategies and protocols to align staff beliefs and behaviors with the shared commitment to ensuring all students learn at high levels.
- Develop actionable plans to build trust, accountability, and shared ownership among staff, creating a culture that provides systematic and effective interventions to students.

Anisa Baker-Busby

Shift Happens: Intentional Instructional Shifts That Accelerate Learning to Grade Level Every Day
Anisa Baker-Busby empowers educators to accelerate student learning to grade level or beyond through intentional instructional strategies. Participants explore the shifts required to design effective, grade-level-focused lessons that close learning gaps while fostering conceptual understanding, engagement, and reflection. Dr. Baker-Busby equips teachers with tools to plan high-impact lessons, integrate foundational skills just in time, and use student-centered strategies to enhance learning outcomes.

Participants in this session:
- Understand the importance of teaching grade-level standards daily while addressing foundational knowledge.
- Explore strategies to accelerate learning, including scaffolding, feedback, and student reflection.
- Develop lesson plans that incorporate conceptual understanding, active engagement, and meaningful differentiation.
- Identify ways to balance whole-group and small-group instruction to maximize learning opportunities.

William M. Ferriter

Doing the Right Work: Tools and Templates for Effective Team Collaboration
Professional learning communities are one of the most effective strategies for improving instruction and ensuring high levels of student learning (Hattie, 2024). Yet, many teachers are skeptical about the value of collaboration (Prothero & Solis, 2023). Often, this skepticism stems

from inexperience with structured teamwork. Participants in this session explore practical strategies and tools to help teams focus their work, foster purposeful collaboration, and make the most of their time together.

Participants in this session:
- Explore a graphic organizer that outlines the essential work of effective collaborative teams.
- Learn processes for completing the technical work of teams, including unpacking essential standards, writing assessments, and analyzing data.
- Discover how AI tools can support teams in tackling technical tasks more efficiently and effectively.

Anthony Muhammad

Collaboration Is a Lifestyle, Not a Meeting!
Anthony Muhammad addresses the collaborative characteristics of a high-performing PLC. Participants explore how teachers, support staff, school administrators, and central office all work together to improve school performance. Dr. Muhammad addresses the issue of staff resistance to change and the leader's role in building consensus. Two key areas are explored: creating a culture of collaboration and creating an environment in which people embrace collective responsibility.

Participants in this session learn:
- How to construct and protect productive collaborative relationships
- How to create organizational coherence and ensure collaboration at every level of the school community
- The balance between support and accountability

Maria Nielsen

Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Student 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.

Casey R. Ahner

Serving Special Education Students: As Easy as Riding a Bike

The individual actions to ride a bike are not difficult. Putting it all together is much tougher. The changing requirements and technology make education a challenge as well. Participants in this session look at how to best serve all students, especially students receiving special education support.

Participants can expect to:
- Explore how to make decisions based on best practice versus "the practice I like best."
- Determine how to adjust to the ever-changing fields of education and special education while doing what's best for students.

Jason A. Andrews

From Cooperation to Collaboration: Building Highly Effective Teams in a PLC

While collaboration is a foundational principle of the PLC process, true collaboration requires more than simply bringing teachers together for meetings. As DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, et al. (*Learning by Doing*, 4th ed., 2024) emphasized, to ensure all students learn at high levels, educators must work collaboratively and take shared responsibility for student success. Jason A. Andrews takes a deep dive into developing genuine collaborative cultures within schools. Participants explore the distinction between cooperation and collaboration, examine the essential work of collaborative teams, and learn how to utilize tools and protocols that foster deeper, more meaningful teamwork. Through practical examples and hands-on activities, participants gain strategies to help their teams move beyond surface-level cooperation and achieve the transformative benefits of true collaboration.

Participants can expect to:
- Learn to identify the key differences between cooperative efforts and true collaboration, understanding how meaningful collaboration impacts student outcomes.
- Explore strategies for developing a collaborative culture, fostering trust, and ensuring teams are focused on high-impact work aligned with the four critical questions of a PLC.
- Gain practical tools and protocols to guide team processes, ensure productive collaboration, and build shared responsibility for the success of all students.

Anisa Baker-Busby

Engage, Assess, Succeed: Creative Approaches to Accelerating Learning for All Students

Struggling students don't need to go backward to move forward. Traditional remediation often traps students in a cycle focused on past gaps, but the key to achieving grade-level proficiency is through accelerated learning. Anisa Baker-Busby equips educators and teams with the tools,

strategies, and frameworks needed to implement an acceleration pathway that ensures high levels of learning for all students.

Participants in this session:
- Learn to foster a community of learners by creating an inclusive, collaborative learning culture.
- Focus on strengths by replacing deficit-focused narratives with language of high expectations, rigor, and hope.
- Learn to integrate foundational skills directly into on-grade-level instruction at the point of need.
- Develop systems that include preassessments, daily check-ins, formative assessments, and unit tests to guide instruction and track progress.
- Develop processes to implement RTI/MTSS systems that group students based on diagnostic needs and deliver prerequisite skill building in focused, two-week intervals.
- Learn to help students track their own progress to build confidence and efficacy.
- Plan for goal setting, step-up meetings, and celebrations to ensure continuous improvement.

William M. Ferriter

Using AI Tools to Make Differentiation Doable
Participants are encouraged to bring a fully charged computer or tablet to take full advantage of their time in this session.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are reshaping everything about education, offering innovative ways to enhance both teaching and learning. Participants in this session explore how tools like ChatGPT can help reduce the time, energy, and effort required to effectively differentiate instruction.

Participants in this session:
- Develop a clear understanding of what differentiation is and why it is essential for meeting diverse student needs.
- Explore practical ways to use AI tools like ChatGPT to streamline planning and delivery of differentiated instruction.
- Identify strategies to leverage AI for creating personalized learning experiences that support both initial reteaching and extension of grade-level essential standards.

Anthony Muhammad

Moving From PLC *Lite* to PLC *Right*!
The PLC at Work process has been accessible to educators for 27 years. Schools and school districts have been enamored with the concepts, and many have attempted to implement the

process at scale. Unfortunately, not nearly enough schools have fully implemented the process; most settle for a modified, scaled-down version called *PLC Lite*. In this session, participants explore the key leverage points that will guide any school into PLC excellence!

Participants in this session:
- Understand the importance and interdependence of the six "tight" elements of a PLC.
- Benefit from over 26 years of PLC research on the most effective practices used to secure full staff commitment to the PLC process.
- Examine surveys and rubrics to measure and assess a staff's current reality in the PLC process.

Maria Nielsen

The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work
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.

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE
Jason A. Andrews

Shared Responsibility: Leadership and Culture in Advancing the PLC Journey
In a professional learning community, leadership is not confined to a title; it's a shared responsibility that empowers every educator to drive meaningful change. Jason A. Andrews explores how shared leadership, the role of an effective guiding coalition, and a healthy, collaborative culture are essential for ensuring high levels of learning for all students. Drawing on the foundational principles of the PLC process, Dr. Andrews highlights how leadership at every level—from classroom teachers to school and district leaders—plays a critical role in advancing the work. Participants learn how to effectively establish and sustain a guiding coalition that embraces a shared vision, fosters trust, and models the collaborative behaviors essential for student success.

Participants can expect to:
- Explore how shared leadership at all levels drives the success of the PLC process and ensures collective responsibility for student learning.

- Gain insights into the role of guiding coalitions in fostering collaboration, building trust, and modeling the behaviors that sustain a thriving PLC culture.
- Leave inspired with actionable ideas to create and sustain a culture of trust, respect, and accountability that empowers every educator to contribute meaningfully to the PLC journey.

Session Descriptions—Day 2

Anthony Muhammad

Transforming School Culture 2.0: Why Culture Is Important Today, Tomorrow, and Forever

This decade has proven that there is only one constant, and that constant is change. We have experienced a global pandemic and different political parties leading the government. Despite all this change, children still need to be educated, and the best way to educate them, regardless of external dynamics, is to operate as a professional learning community. Schools that create healthy, strong cultures produce an environment where PLCs can thrive. Participants in this session explore why a focus on healthy school culture is timeless and why it is our responsibility to create a learning-focused environment today, tomorrow, and forever.

Participants in this session:
- Understand the contemporary factors that impact school culture and why these challenges must be addressed effectively.
- Understand the interdependent relationship between professional habits, behaviors, and student learning.
- Learn practical ways to improve their school culture immediately in the pursuit of PLC greatness.

Casey R. Ahner

Students Don't Learn Until They're Engaged

Students returned to school after COVID-19 less interested than ever before. We are competing for their time and attention, and we must engage them if we want them to learn. Participants examine reasons why students may not be engaged and discover effective strategies to increase their engagement and ownership of their learning.

Participants in this session:
- Acquire a toolkit of effective, research-based engagement strategies.
- Recognize the reasons why students don't engage or stop engaging with the learning.
- Discover ways to make their content more meaningful and authentic to students.

Jason A. Andrews

From Resistance to Commitment: Building Ownership of the PLC Process

While resistance to change is a natural part of any transformative process, effectively addressing it is key to building a thriving professional learning community. Jason A. Andrews equips participants with practical strategies to understand and overcome staff resistance while fostering

a sense of ownership and shared commitment to the PLC process. Through an exploration of real-world scenarios, participants learn how to engage reluctant team members, address concerns with empathy, and create an environment where every educator feels valued and invested in the collective work. Participants gain tools to build trust, clarify the *why* behind the PLC process, and inspire a collaborative culture where all voices contribute to achieving high levels of learning for all students. Whether you're an administrator, instructional coach, or teacher leader, Dr. Andrews provides actionable insights to turn challenges into opportunities and resistance into momentum.

Participants can expect to:
- Learn to recognize common reasons for staff resistance to the PLC process and develop strategies to address concerns with empathy and understanding.
- Explore techniques to foster trust, clarify the purpose of the PLC process, and create a shared sense of responsibility among team members.
- Gain practical tools and communication strategies to transform resistance into commitment, enabling teams to work collaboratively toward achieving high levels of learning for all students.

Anisa Baker-Busby

Cracking the Code: Using Common Formative Assessments to Close Learning Gaps
Assessment is more than a measurement tool; it is a process that fuels collaboration, drives intentional instruction, and ensures all students achieve at high levels. Participants explore the critical role of assessment in improving student outcomes by analyzing student learning and instructional practices to address individual needs.

Through interactive discussions and hands-on activities, participants:
- Understand the keys to creating meaningful common formative assessments that foster student investment and provide actionable data.
- Acquire practical tools and strategies to align instruction, assessment, and interventions in their schools.
- Examine how to analyze assessment data and student work to discover student proficiency levels and plan Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.

Luis F. Cruz

PLC Versus PLC Process: The Difference Between PLC as a Noun and a Verb
A school becomes a PLC when the entire staff not only embraces but also effectively utilizes the PLC process. But what does it really mean to *become* a PLC, and how do staff *use* the PLC process? In this session, Luis F. Cruz explains the distinction between a school that is a PLC and how the staff actively engage in the PLC process. Dr. Cruz introduces the key adult behaviors necessary for achieving systemic change that supports high levels of learning for all students.

Participants in this session:
- Explore the non-negotiables identified by Rick DuFour and Robert Eaker—the original architects of the PLC process—that are essential for a school or district to truly become a PLC.
- Discover how Dr. Cruz refers to these non-negotiables as the five vessels—critical elements that, when embraced by staff, lead to systemic change and drive high levels of learning for every student.
- Gain insight into why some staff may perceive PLCs as initiatives that have already been attempted in the past and failed.

William M. Ferriter

Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Designing Effective Secondary Intervention Periods

Creating time during the school day for targeted interventions is critical for ensuring every student masters essential grade-level standards. In this session, William M. Ferriter explores the key steps secondary schools can take to develop flexible intervention periods that provide timely reteaching of grade-level essentials without sacrificing access to extension opportunities. Participants discover strategies for addressing scheduling challenges, avoiding common implementation mistakes, and designing intervention periods targeting grade-level essential standards that work for all students.

Participants in this session:
- Analyze the characteristics of effective secondary intervention periods that are designed to provide students with additional time and support to master grade-level essentials.
- Identify strategies for balancing skill-focused interventions with extension opportunities for students who are already proficient.
- Develop actionable steps to implement or refine intervention periods that target mastery of grade-level essentials.

Anthony Muhammad

"So, How Do We Get Buy-In?" Leveraging the Guiding Coalition to Build Consensus

In his more than 23 years as a PLC leader, the question Anthony Muhammad gets most often is: How do we get buy-in? In this session, Dr. Muhammad provides research guidance on responding to resistance and strategically building consensus for the PLC at Work process. Participants in this session lean on the change management framework presented in *Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders* (Solution Tree Press, 2019) coauthored by Anthony Muhammad and Luis Cruz. This framework leverages four critical leadership skills proven to build consensus: 1) communication, 2) trust building, 3) capacity building, and 4) accountability.

Participants can expect to:
- Learn how to organize and sustain a functional guiding coalition.
- Learn how to apply the *Time for Change* framework to real-world problems.
- Learn how to properly assess their culture and strategically plan to overcome resistance to change.

Maria Nielsen

Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools
Schools that function as PLCs must ultimately do two things: 1) foster an all-means-all culture of collective responsibility, and 2) create structures and systems that guarantee students additional time and support for learning when they need it.

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.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Casey R. Ahner

We've Got Data: Now, Can We Make It Useful?
We really can use student data to inform effective instruction, remediation, and enrichment. Participants in this session examine how to effectively use student data to first improve their professional practice and then respond to student needs by name and by skill. Participants explore a data analysis protocol and experience how they can move from analysis to impact.

Participants in this session:
- Determine what data will help them move the needle on student achievement.
- Examine the data analysis protocol and experience how it can focus the work of their teams.
- Develop their *not*-to-do list of useless practices.

Jason A. Andrews

Turning Missteps Into Milestones: Avoiding Common Pitfalls in the PLC Process
The PLC process is a powerful framework for improving student learning, but even experienced teams can encounter challenges that derail progress. Participants explore common mistakes schools and districts make when implementing the PLC process, such as losing focus on the four

critical questions of learning, misusing collaborative team time, and failing to develop a results-oriented culture. Whether you're just beginning your PLC journey or refining your practice, Jason A. Andrews provides practical strategies to foster systemwide fidelity to the foundations necessary for successful PLC implementation. Participants examine how to align their work with the three big ideas of a PLC: ensuring a relentless focus on learning, fostering a culture of collaboration, and using evidence of student learning to drive action. Through real-world examples, reflective discussions, and actionable solutions, participants leave equipped to overcome obstacles, strengthen their collaborative teams, and sustain a results-driven PLC culture in their schools or districts.

Participants can expect to:
- Recognize and understand the most frequent mistakes made during implementation of the PLC process and their impact on student learning and team collaboration.
- Gain practical strategies to avoid missteps and maintain a consistent focus on the three big ideas and four critical questions of a PLC.
- Leave with tools and insights to reflect on their own practices, adapt their approach, and build a resilient culture of continuous improvement within their PLC teams.

Anisa Baker-Busby

Grading Practices That Communicate Learning: Shifting Focus to Growth and Mastery
Are your grading practices effectively supporting student learning and growth? Participants explore strategies to shift grading from a tool for compliance to a system that motivates students to learn, improve, and demonstrate mastery. Through practical examples and discussions, participants reimagine grading systems to build a culture where students ask, "How can I improve?" rather than, "What's my grade?" Educators leave with actionable strategies to implement grading practices that align with learning goals and communicate progress effectively to students and families.

Participants delve into:
- Grading practices that prioritize descriptive feedback, self-assessment, and student-generated evidence
- The impact of separating work habits from achievement to provide clearer, more actionable feedback
- Policies that support reassessment and proficiency-based grading while addressing concerns around time management and equity

Luis F. Cruz

Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student
In the world of education, initialisms like PLC and RTI often come with the promise of improving student outcomes, but they can also lead to confusion when educators struggle to see how these

frameworks fit together. In this session, Luis F. Cruz, coauthor of *Taking Action: A Handbook for the RTI at Work Process,* 2nd ed. (Solution Tree, 2024), guides participants in making sense of the many initialisms and how they align to create a unified, student-centered approach. Participants leave with a clear understanding of how to connect the dots between PLC and RTI, ensuring a coherent strategy that supports all students in reaching their highest levels of learning.

Participants in this session:
- Understand how multitiered systems of support (MTSS) complement and strengthen the PLC process, creating a seamless system of support for all students.
- Explore how a guaranteed and viable curriculum is essential in developing common formative assessments (CFAs), and how this foundation supports the effectiveness of MTSS.
- Participate in an interactive activity designed for immediate application, enabling them to support and share the learning with colleagues who were unable to attend.

William M. Ferriter

From Isolation to Collaboration: Building Effective Teams for Singleton Teachers
Collaborative learning is a cornerstone of effective teaching, but for singleton teachers and those in small schools, it often feels out of reach. William M. Ferriter provides practical solutions by diving into four innovative models for building meaningful professional learning teams: 1) forming vertical teams to focus on cross-disciplinary skills, 2) leveraging interdisciplinary groups to tackle student engagement challenges, 3) restructuring teaching assignments to create shared subject areas, and 4) connecting teachers with peers through powerful digital tools. Discover strategies to ensure every educator has a team to grow and learn with, no matter their context.

Participants in this session:
- Identify key structural challenges that hinder collaboration for singleton teachers and educators in small schools.
- Explore four models designed to foster effective professional learning teams for singleton teachers.
- Begin crafting an actionable plan to integrate singleton teachers into the work of a PLC.

Anthony Muhammad

Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change
Participants in this session explore the connection between personal and institutional mindsets and academic achievement gaps. While the issue of inequality in student learning outcomes has been studied and debated for many years, Anthony Muhammad seeks to establish that the primary culprit in the fight to overcome the achievement gap is our thinking.

Participants can expect to:
- Examine their responsibility to educate *all* students—without exception!
- Understand the power of mindsets and their influence on educator effectiveness.
- Understand how to shift from damaging mindsets (Superiority and Inferiority) to high levels of efficacy (Liberation).

Maria Nielsen

Cool Tools for Common Assessments

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.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

Casey R. Ahner

Students Don't Learn Until They're Engaged

Students returned to school after COVID-19 less interested than ever before. We are competing for their time and attention, and we must engage them if we want them to learn. Participants examine reasons why students may not be engaged and discover effective strategies to increase their engagement and ownership of their learning.

Participants in this session:
- Acquire a toolkit of effective, research-based engagement strategies.
- Recognize the reasons why students don't engage or stop engaging with the learning.
- Discover ways to make their content more meaningful and authentic to students.

Jason A. Andrews

From Resistance to Commitment: Building Ownership of the PLC Process

While resistance to change is a natural part of any transformative process, effectively addressing it is key to building a thriving professional learning community. Jason A. Andrews equips participants with practical strategies to understand and overcome staff resistance while fostering a sense of ownership and shared commitment to the PLC process. Through an exploration of real-world scenarios, participants learn how to engage reluctant team members, address concerns with empathy, and create an environment where every educator feels valued and invested in the collective work. Participants gain tools to build trust, clarify the *why* behind the PLC process, and inspire a collaborative culture where all voices contribute to achieving high levels of learning for all students. Whether you're an administrator, instructional coach, or teacher leader, Dr. Andrews provides actionable insights to turn challenges into opportunities and resistance into momentum.

Participants can expect to:
- Learn to recognize common reasons for staff resistance to the PLC process and develop strategies to address concerns with empathy and understanding.
- Explore techniques to foster trust, clarify the purpose of the PLC process, and create a shared sense of responsibility among team members.
- Gain practical tools and communication strategies to transform resistance into commitment, enabling teams to work collaboratively toward achieving high levels of learning for all students.

Luis F. Cruz

All Done—Now What? Turning Your PLC Institute Experience Into Action at Your Site

After gaining a wealth of skills and strategies from today's Institute, participants may face the challenge of bringing those ideas back to their schools and convincing colleagues to embrace the PLC process. How do we foster a culture of collaboration and commitment among staff, especially those who weren't able to attend? In this session, Luis F. Cruz shares proven strategies for getting colleagues to think differently, feel differently, and ultimately do differently, ensuring that the PLC process takes root schoolwide.

Participants in this session:
- Gain insight into how to guide staff through necessary technical changes (the structural aspects of the PLC process) to ensure that all students achieve at high levels.
- Learn how to promote a cultural shift (the human aspect of the PLC process) that supports and sustains those technical changes, creating lasting transformation in their school's community.
- Walk away with actionable resources to facilitate both technical and cultural changes, empowering them to effectively implement the PLC process at their site.

William M. Ferriter

Using AI Tools to Make Differentiation Doable

Participants are encouraged to bring a fully charged computer or tablet to take full advantage of their time in this session.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are reshaping everything about education, offering innovative ways to enhance both teaching and learning. Participants in this session explore how tools like ChatGPT can help reduce the time, energy, and effort required to effectively differentiate instruction.

Participants in this session:
- Develop a clear understanding of what differentiation is and why it is essential for meeting diverse student needs.
- Explore practical ways to use AI tools like ChatGPT to streamline planning and delivery of differentiated instruction.
- Identify strategies to leverage AI for creating personalized learning experiences that support both initial reteaching and extension of grade-level essential standards.

Anthony Muhammad

We Are Ready for PLC Greatness! How Do We Go Back and Convince Others to Join In?

After spending two transformational days learning about the power of PLC, most participants are ready to return home and get to work! Unfortunately, many of their colleagues did not share the experience. So, how do we go back home and get others on board? Anthony Muhammad outlines

a process that will not only sustain the momentum experienced at this institute, but equip participants to convince others to join them on their PLC journey. Dr. Muhammad: 1) establishes philosophical agreement and shared purpose, and 2) addresses staff frustration and discomfort with change. Participants gain an abundance of practical strategies to start the process of transforming their culture when they return to their school.

Participants can expect to:
- Learn how to address counterproductive belief systems and form a cohesive team of student advocates.
- Understand how to analyze and manage staff frustration.
- Learn ways to understand and confront emotional barriers to improve their professional practice.

Maria Nielsen

The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work
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.

KEYNOTE
Luis F. Cruz

Resistance to PLC Implementation: How to Confront It and Win
Implementing the PLC process inevitably generates resistance from staff. Instead of questioning why resistance occurs, the real challenge is learning how to identify and address both rational and irrational forms of resistance. In this keynote, Luis F. Cruz draws on insights from his bestselling book coauthored with Anthony Muhammad, *Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders* (Solution Tree, 2019), to equip participants with the knowledge and strategies needed to confront resistance effectively. Participants gain practical tools for guiding their colleagues through the challenges of PLC implementation and ensuring deep, lasting commitment to the process.

Participants in this session:
- Understand the difference between rational and irrational forms of resistance to change and how to respond to each.

- Learn who holds the primary responsibility for addressing resistance to change during PLC implementation and how to empower those leaders.
- Leave inspired and well-equipped to implement the "real" PLC process—versus a watered-down, "PLC Lite" version—ensuring meaningful change in their school or district.