

Tuesday, August 5

| | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------|
| 6:30–8:00 a.m. | Registration and Continental Breakfast | Ballroom 6E |
| 8:00–9:45 a.m. | Keynote —Sarah Schuhl <i>Being a PLC at Work Means 3 + 4 = 6</i> | Ballroom 6ABC |
| 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. | Keynote —Maria Nielsen <i>You Are the Key to Student Success!</i> | Ballroom 6ABC |

Wednesday, August 6

| | | |
|----------------------|--|----------------|
| 7:00–8:00 a.m. | Registration and Continental Breakfast | Ballroom 6E |
| 8:00–9:45 a.m. | Keynote —Brandon Jones <i>The North Star: Making Our Compelling Future a Reality</i> | Ballroom 6ABC |
| 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. | Ballroom 6ABC |

Thursday, August 7

| | | |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| 7:00–8:00 a.m. | Continental Breakfast | Ballroom 6E |
| 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 <i>Resistance to PLC Implementation: How to Confront It and Win</i> | Ballroom 6ABC |

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, August 5 | | Wednesday, August 6 | | Thursday, August 7 |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| | 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. |
| Scott Carr | What's So Essential About Essential Standards? <i>606</i> | Authentic Learning to Increase Student Engagement* <i>606</i> | Finding Time for Intervention <i>606</i> | Authentic Learning to Increase Student Engagement <i>606</i> | Creating a Culture of Celebration <i>606</i> |
| Luis F. Cruz | Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student* <i>Ballroom 6ABC</i> | Tweaking the PLC Process to Support Emergent Bilingual Students <i>Ballroom 6ABC</i> | PLC Versus PLC Process: The Difference Between PLC as a Noun and a Verb <i>619</i> | Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student <i>Ballroom 6ABC</i> | All Done—Now What? Turning Your PLC Institute Experience Into Action at Your Site <i>Ballroom 6ABC</i> |
| Brandon Jones | Demystifying Data: Making the Process Easy, Efficient, and Effective <i>619</i> | Built to Last: Culture That Withstands the Storms <i>619</i> | Abandoning Archaic Practices: Motivating and Preparing the Next Generation* <i>Ballroom 6ABC</i> | You Are Not Alone! How to Thrive as a Singleton in a PLC <i>619</i> | Abandoning Archaic Practices: Motivating and Preparing the Next Generation <i>619</i> |
| Sharon V. Kramer | Learning for All Requires Differentiation* <i>611</i> | Acceleration: The Path to Closing Learning Gaps <i>611</i> | Is the Central Office Central to PLCs? Yes! <i>611</i> | The Learning Cycle in Action <i>611</i> | Learning for All Requires Differentiation <i>611</i> |
| Maria Nielsen | Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Student Learning <i>608</i> | The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work <i>608</i> | Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools <i>608</i> | Cool Tools for Common Assessments <i>608</i> | Elementary ELA High-Leverage Strategies for Reading and Writing on Grade Level <i>608</i> |
| Nathaniel Provencio | Building a Collaborative Culture: Moving From Havoc to Harmony* <i>607</i> | The Coach's Blueprint: Moving From Fidelity to Integrity in a PLC <i>607</i> | Community Connections and Your PLC: Moving From Apathy to Empowerment <i>607</i> | The Excellence Equation: Beyond the Basics <i>607</i> | Building a Collaborative Culture: Moving From Havoc to Harmony <i>607</i> |

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| | 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. |
| Sarah Schuhl | Acceleration: It Takes a Team!* 615 | Math Success for All: Team-Based Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions That Work! 615 | Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Secondary Schools 615 | From Scores to Learning: Effective Grading Practices 615 | Acceleration: It Takes a Team! 615 |
| Jason Williams | Assessment Results That Result in Action 613 | Brightening the Future of Inclusive Education Through Collaboration 613 | Data Don't Decide: Creating a Sustainable and Healthy Data Culture 613 | Using Generative AI in Your PLC* 613 | Using Generative AI in Your PLC 613 |

Agenda is subject to change.

Session Descriptions—Day 1

KEYNOTE

Sarah Schuhl

Being a PLC at Work Means 3 + 4 = 6

A professional learning community focuses on ensuring learning for all students, but what does that *really* mean across a school or district? How do leaders and collaborative teams in a PLC work to accomplish high levels of student learning? A school or district operating as an effective PLC at Work personifies **three** big ideas while using **four** critical questions to guide the work of collaborative teams. Within such a framework, **six** characteristics emerge. The work can seem daunting without a roadmap or vision for how to collaborate efficiently and effectively. Sarah Schuhl clarifies this work using practical tools, protocols, and examples.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Scott Carr

What's So Essential About Essential Standards?

Identifying essential standards is only the first step toward improving student learning and teaching practices. Utilizing learning targets and success criteria can improve clarity and relevance in daily lessons. This can lead to both higher levels of student engagement and increased ownership of their learning.

Participants in this session:

- Uncover strategies for identifying and aligning learning targets and success criteria.
- Learn to incorporate learning targets and success criteria into daily lessons and formative assessments.
- Explore methods for using learning targets and success criteria to encourage students to reflect on their own learning and success.

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.

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 is 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. In this session, 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:

- Discover how to increase reliability in the data that teams collect.
- Examine the three main uses for data in a collaborative team.
- Practice engaging in this process using a real-world scenario.

Sharon V. Kramer

Learning for All Requires Differentiation

To ensure all students learn at high levels, teachers need to respond to the needs of *each* student. While differentiation is a way to reach all students, it is difficult for any teacher to do alone. Sharon V. Kramer demonstrates a collaborative team process for meeting the needs of all learners in a proactive rather than reactive manner.

Participants in this session:

- Learn the difference between *proactive* and *reactive* differentiation.
- Understand how a team develops a learning plan that includes differentiation before, during, and after instruction.
- Identify tools and strategies for differentiation.

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.

Nathaniel Provencio

Building a Collaborative Culture: Moving From Havoc to Harmony

Moving a culture from teacher independence to team interdependence can be a challenge for teachers and schools. In a professional learning community, however, the work of effective collaborative teams is essential to ensure all students learn at high levels. It is even more essential that effective teams collaboratively focus on the right work and appreciate the differences, opinions, and styles each teacher brings to their collaborative team. After examining key components, structures, and resources of effective team collaboration, participants reflect on their schools' current practices and develop next steps that align with PLCs.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the current capacity of teachers and teams for collaboration and determine next steps.
- Acquire resources and frameworks to assist with building and sustaining effective collaborative teams.

Sarah Schuhl

Acceleration: It Takes a Team!

It can be frustrating when students do not advance to the next grade level or course having learned the standards required to be successful. What is your team to do? The answer is not remediation but acceleration. Accelerating student learning to grade level and beyond requires that teachers across a team determine how students will learn grade-level essential standards every day and simultaneously work to connect prior-knowledge standards through classwork, interventions, and extensions. In this session, Sarah Schuhl shares practical tools and strategies for planning and teaching in an acceleration model.

Participants in this session:

- Learn how to plan for acceleration.
- Explore instructional practices designed to accelerate student learning in core instruction.
- Consider how to accelerate learning through intentional and targeted interventions and extensions.

Jason Williams

Assessment Results That Result in Action

Questions three and four of a PLC call us to action once we have the results from an assessment. The collected data helps tell the story of each individual student. While there are many approaches for teams to respond to these questions, there are also several traps teams must avoid in order to impactfully respond to identified student needs.

Participants in this session:

- Examine what part of a student's story data may tell us and what parts it may not.
- Identify five cautionary components when analyzing data to ensure resulting actions are impactful.
- Reflect on current analysis practices and identify ways of improving resulting actions.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Scott Carr

Authentic Learning to Increase Student Engagement

Description coming soon!

Luis F. Cruz

Tweaking the PLC Process to Support Emergent Bilingual Students

While research consistently shows that the PLC process is effective in helping all students achieve at high levels, educators must make intentional adjustments to meet the needs of diverse learners—especially those learning English as an additional language. In this session, Luis F. Cruz shares his expertise in the PLC process and in working with English learners to equip participants with strategies for ensuring these students thrive within the framework of a PLC. Participants in this session discover how to adapt key components of the PLC process to promote academic success for emergent bilingual students, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all.

Brandon Jones

Built to Last: Culture That Withstands the Storms

Reforming schools to become professional learning communities takes more than changing policies, practices, and products. It requires that a school examine the foundational beliefs and behaviors on which it is built: the culture. Building (or *rebuilding*) a healthy school culture can

seem like a daunting task, especially if significant resistance is encountered early in the change process. As a result, some leaders choose to turn a blind eye to the beliefs and behaviors that impact the school's success. After all, it's easier to change the master schedule, purchase a new online program, or hand out jeans passes than it is to influence the thinking of others! Participants in this session analyze the work of Anthony Muhammad, Luis F. Cruz, Rick DuFour, and Brandon Jones to design a practical plan for creating a culture that's built to last.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine the critical components of a healthy school culture.
- Learn how to establish a culture that is simultaneously loose and tight.
- Determine key factors for supporting and influencing people in their organization.

Sharon V. Kramer

Acceleration: The Path to Closing Learning Gaps

Acceleration is the path less traveled in most schools and classrooms, especially those in which students are reading and writing far below grade level. The usual approach is to help students catch up by remediating learning or going backward to go forward. Through the examination of specific and practical strategies that administrators, teachers, teams, and schools can implement, Sharon V. Kramer takes participants on an alternate journey through the acceleration pathway that closes the achievement gap quickly enough to access grade- and course-level learning for all students.

Participants examine ways to:

- Develop an acceleration mindset.
- Build the foundation for acceleration.
- Dig into the real work of acceleration.

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.

Nathaniel Provencio

The Coach's Blueprint: Moving From Fidelity to Integrity in a PLC

Effective coaching for educators and teams can be a significant factor in growing your school as a professional learning community. Effective coaching ensures teachers and teams' actions are integral to the three big ideas and four critical questions of a PLC as opposed to the fidelity to resources and materials. After examining these key frameworks, elements, and structures, participants learn how to effectively coach their teachers and teams for peak performance in a PLC.

Participants examine strategies and structures to collaboratively:

- Examine the roles and responsibilities of effective PLC instructional coaches.
- Acquire strategies to remove the barriers of coaching for teachers and teams.
- Utilize essential resources in developing all teachers and teams.

Sarah Schuhl

Math Success for All: Team-Based Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions That Work!

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 teams effectively plan for grade-level learning in each unit and give students access to learning grade-level standards in lessons through targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.

Participants use the Mathematics in a PLC at Work™ Tier 1 and Tier 2 Intervention Framework to:

- Examine research-affirmed teaching actions that maximize student learning during a mathematics lesson (Tier 1).
- Explore team actions and strategies for accelerating student learning to grade level and above using intentional Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction.

Jason Williams

Brightening the Future of Inclusive Education

For decades, special education has often functioned as a separate entity from the rest of the system. Making shifts toward a more collaborative and inclusive system can be quite a daunting task. However, these shifts can be looked at as dimmer switches, rather than an on-off switch.

Participants in this session:

- Identify the components of an inclusive education system.
- Examine the state of their current system for aligned components and those that are not yet aligned.

- Explore examples of possible incremental improvements to shift toward a more inclusive system.

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

Maria Nielsen

You Are the Key to Student Success!

Description coming soon!

Session Descriptions—Day 2

KEYNOTE

Brandon Jones

The North Star: Making Our Compelling Future a Reality

Poverty. Illness. Learning differences. Behavior problems. Lack of motivation. Social and emotional needs. Language barriers. Insufficient funding. Prerequisite skill gaps. Limited time and resources. Increased state and national expectations. Does this list sound familiar? If the answer is yes, then you likely recognize challenges that stand in the way of your school becoming all it could be. You could probably even add to that list!

The fact is, all schools struggle with issues that impede learning. Yet, some schools defy the odds year after year. These schools consistently make progress toward the type of school they want to become despite daunting obstacles. The secret to their success lies not in the newest shiny program or a charismatic leader. Instead, the answer is much more realistic, attainable, and sustainable than you might think.

In this session, Brandon Jones outlines how to create your own North Star, a steadfast navigation point your team uses to make decisions and commitments that improve culture, learning, and growth for students and educators alike.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Scott Carr

Finding Time for Intervention

Meeting student needs with Tier 2 strategies can be challenging. A school's commitment to students and teachers should include providing protected time for intervention. Participants in this session examine the logistics and collective commitments that go into creating and sustaining a weekly intervention time.

Participants in this session:

- Explore strategies for identifying students needing support and challenge.
- Discuss effective intervention strategies for reteaching and enrichment.
- Review flexible schedules and structures to provide time for additional student support.

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.

Brandon Jones

Abandoning Archaic Practices: Motivating and Preparing the Next Generation

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.

Sharon V. Kramer

Is the Central Office Central to PLCs? Yes!

The demands of building and district leaders are extraordinary. While maintaining balance of the varied, demanding roles of educational leaders, how can the focus and responsibility of ensuring high levels of learning for every student be sustained? The central office is key to creating the conditions that support the implementation and evolution of the PLC framework in every school and classroom across the school system. Sharon V. Kramer discusses effective leadership strategies, mindsets, and practices that maximize the success of implementation of PLCs and ensure sustainability of the process.

Participants examine ways to:

- Identify how leaders cultivate the conditions that support the work of PLCs.
- Engage everyone in the right work.
- Explore how leaders manage inevitable hurdles on the journey.

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.

Nathaniel Provencio

Community Connections and Your PLC: Moving From Apathy to Empowerment

Family and community engagement is often an overlooked and underutilized area of support for schools. Effectively implementing strong family involvement and engagement has the potential to help solidify a school in their growth as a PLC. When families partner with their children's educators, both trust and support—areas of need in today's educational climate—can grow. Participants in this session learn how to leverage the three big ideas of a PLC—learning, collaboration, and results—to reframe, reignite, and re-engage parents, families, and their school community.

Participants examine strategies and structures to collaboratively:

- Tear down the primary barriers and challenges in growing family engagement in schools.
- Utilize the three big ideas and four critical questions of a PLC to engage parents and families.
- Acquire new frameworks for reigniting parent and family engagement in schools.

Sarah Schuhl

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. This session 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:

- 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.

Jason Williams

Data Don't Decide: Creating a Sustainable and Healthy Data Culture

Some school systems are data driven to the point that it's punitive and detrimental to culture. Some school systems say they are data driven, but their analysis is surface level and not action oriented. When a system is data driven, the data itself becomes the goal rather than the students represented by the data. In this session, Jason Williams focuses on the necessary shift to a student-driven mindset where focus, energy, and resources are allocated through the motivation to improve student learning.

Participants in this session:

- Compare a student-driven mindset to one that is data driven.
- Examine a framework to create and support a sustainable and healthy data culture.
- Explore concrete tools to assess current data practices and support progress with specific data practices.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Scott Carr

Authentic Learning to Increase Student Engagement

Description coming soon!

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*

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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.

Brandon Jones

You Are Not Alone! How to Thrive as a Singleton in a PLC

The evidence in support of becoming a professional learning community is clear, and the success stories are compelling. As the only 3rd grade math teacher, middle school band director, or high school graphic design teacher, you may ask: “How am I supposed to be collaborative by myself?” Behind every successful school and model PLC story is a group of committed educators who decided to not let the singleton speed bump slow them down. Participants in this session learn practical ways to organize, collaborate, and align themselves to not only support the PLC process, but to thrive as a contributing team member!

Participants in this session:

- Review the work of Brig Leane, Jon Yost, and Aaron Hansen to develop a practical plan of action for singletons.
- Learn about powerful concepts and meaningful team structures that unite singletons as effective teams of one.
- Examine the four critical questions for learning through the lens of a singleton.

Sharon V. Kramer

The Learning Cycle in Action

The PLC framework is the foundation of school improvement. Teams are guided by the four questions of learning as they move through each unit of instruction. This session sets the four questions in motion and describes the implementation of data-informed learning. The learning cycle is the anchor of the right work. Sharon V. Kramer describes the collaborative work that is completed before, during, and after each unit of instruction.

Participants in this session:

- Understand how the four learning questions are embedded in a unit of study.
- Examine their current team practices to validate their work and determine additional ways to improve the process.

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.

Nathaniel Provencio

The Excellence Equation: Beyond the Basics

Teams that work in a professional learning community are often challenged with asking and answering the fourth critical question: “How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?” Collaboratively creating and implementing strategies that provide students with choice, challenge, creativity, and collaboration supports all students, not just those demonstrating mastery.

Participants in this session:

- Leverage essential standards to identify extension and enrichment opportunities for students.
- Explore the Four Cs structure: choice, challenge, creativity, and collaboration.
- Acquire research-based strategies, activities, resources, and materials to support students.

Sarah Schuhl

From Scores to Learning: Effective Grading Practices

Teachers use grades to report student learning in grade books and on report cards. Essential questions about grading include: How do grades align with student learning and provide feedback? What is the purpose of each grade? Are grades consistent across a collaborative team?

Who uses this information? As instructional and assessment practices shift to meet rigorous standards, grades too often are afterthoughts that muddy accurate reports of student learning. Clarity is needed within districts, schools, and collaborative teams so that students and other stakeholders know the meaning of each grade reported and the evidence of student learning used to generate the grade.

Participants in this session:

- Examine challenges surrounding traditional grading practices.
- Explore grading practices that share accurate and useful information related to student learning.
- Investigate grading protocols to deepen collective responses to student learning.

Jason Williams

Using Generative AI in Your Professional Learning Community

Please bring a charged device (tablet or laptop recommended).

Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Magic School, and Gemini are being used more frequently by teachers and students. If you haven't yet explored how AI tools can be used to enhance the work of a professional learning community, this session is for you! While AI can seem quite overwhelming to learn, there are a few simple ways to get started.

Participants in this session:

- Examine ways PLC practices can be supported with generative AI with an emphasis on answering the four critical questions.
- Play in the generative AI sandbox to become familiar with tools and determine what uses will best support your collaborative team.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Scott Carr

Creating a Culture of Celebration

In an age of standards and assessments, it is easy to forget the value of celebration and recognition. Scott Carr reviews ideas and ways to create a positive culture for all in a school. By following these innovative examples, teachers can become energetic leaders in a culture that values celebration.

Participants in this session learn about:

- Various ideas to celebrate and recognize students and school staff
- Effective structures for celebration and recognition
- Becoming leaders of celebration at their school sites

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.

Brandon Jones

Abandoning Archaic Practices: Motivating and Preparing the Next Generation

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.

Sharon V. Kramer

Learning for All Requires Differentiation

To ensure all students learn at high levels, teachers need to respond to the needs of *each* student. While differentiation is a way to reach all students, it is difficult for any teacher to do alone. Sharon V. Kramer demonstrates a collaborative team process for meeting the needs of all learners in a proactive rather than reactive manner.

Participants in this session:

- Learn the difference between *proactive* and *reactive* differentiation.
- Understand how a team develops a learning plan that includes differentiation before, during, and after instruction.
- Identify tools and strategies for differentiation.

Maria Nielsen

Elementary ELA High-Leverage Strategies for Reading and Writing on Grade Level

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.

Nathaniel Provencio

Building a Collaborative Culture: Moving From Havoc to Harmony

Moving a culture from teacher independence to team interdependence can be a challenge for teachers and schools. In a professional learning community, however, the work of effective collaborative teams is essential to ensure all students learn at high levels. It is even more essential that effective teams collaboratively focus on the right work and appreciate the differences, opinions, and styles each teacher brings to their collaborative team. After examining key components, structures, and resources of effective team collaboration, participants reflect on their schools' current practices and develop next steps that align with PLCs.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the current capacity of teachers and teams for collaboration and determine next steps.
- Acquire resources and frameworks to assist with building and sustaining effective collaborative teams.

Sarah Schuhl

Acceleration: It Takes a Team!

It can be frustrating when students do not advance to the next grade level or course having learned the standards required to be successful. What is your team to do? The answer is not remediation but acceleration. Accelerating student learning to grade level and beyond requires that teachers across a team determine how students will learn grade-level essential standards every day and simultaneously work to connect prior-knowledge standards through classwork, interventions, and extensions. In this session, Sarah Schuhl shares practical tools and strategies for planning and teaching in an acceleration model.

Participants in this session:

- Learn how to plan for acceleration.
- Explore instructional practices designed to accelerate student learning in core instruction.
- Consider how to accelerate learning through intentional and targeted interventions and extensions.

Jason Williams

Using Generative AI in Your Professional Learning Community

Please bring a charged device (tablet or laptop recommended).

Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Magic School, and Gemini are being used more frequently by teachers and students. If you haven't yet explored how AI tools can be used to enhance the work of a professional learning community, this session is for you! While AI can seem quite overwhelming to learn, there are a few simple ways to get started.

Participants in this session:

- Examine ways PLC practices can be supported with generative AI with an emphasis on answering the four critical questions.
- Play in the generative AI sandbox to become familiar with tools and determine what uses will best support your collaborative team.

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.