

Wednesday, November 12

6:30–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Exhibit Hall C
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Mike Mattos <i>All In! Digging Deeper Into Becoming a True Professional Learning Community</i>	Civic Auditorium
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 —Julie A. Schmidt <i>Positioned to Lead: Leading From Every Role, Every Day</i>	Civic Auditorium

Thursday, November 13

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Exhibit Hall C
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Anthony Muhammad <i>Transforming School Culture 2.0: Why Culture Is Important Today, Tomorrow, and Forever</i>	Civic Auditorium
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.	Exhibit Hall C

Friday, November 14

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Exhibit Hall C
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>	Civic Auditorium

Agenda is subject to change.

Breakout Sessions at a Glance

Rooms are listed beneath titles in *blue italics*.

A red asterisk* indicates the session will be repeated.

Presenter	Wednesday, November 12		Thursday, November 13		Friday, November 14
	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.
Tim Brown	Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Motivation Through Reflection and Goal Setting* <i>Ballroom G</i>	Becoming World Class: Steps, Processes, and Tools for Getting on the Same Page* <i>Ballroom G</i>	Using CFAs to Promote and Ensure Learning <i>Ballroom G</i>	Becoming World Class: Steps, Processes, and Tools for Getting on the Same Page <i>Ballroom G</i>	Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Motivation Through Reflection and Goal Setting <i>Ballroom G</i>
Luis F. Cruz	Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student* <i>Ballroom F</i>	Tweaking the PLC Process to Support Emergent Bilingual Students <i>Ballroom F</i>	PLC Versus PLC Process: The Difference Between PLC as a Noun and a Verb <i>Ballroom F</i>	Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student <i>Ballroom F</i>	All Done—Now What? Turning Your PLC Institute Experience Into Action at Your Site <i>Civic Auditorium</i>
Timothy D. Kanold	Your Physical and Mental Wellness: Thriving at Work and at Home! <i>Ballroom E</i>	On Becoming a PLC Leader: Training to Lead the PLC Life! <i>Ballroom E</i>	Your PreK–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Instruction, Intervention, and Tasks! <i>Ballroom E</i>	JOY: Growing Strong Through Your Seasons of Life as a Teacher and Leader! <i>Ballroom E</i>	Heart & Soul: Living a Fully Engaged, High-Energy, Well-Balanced Professional Life! <i>Ballroom E</i>
Mike Mattos	Are We a Group or a Team? <i>Civic Auditorium</i>	MTSS and PLCs: Leveraging Collaboration to Effectively Intervene <i>Ballroom B</i>	Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Secondary Schools <i>Ballroom B</i>	Behavior Solutions: Using the PLC at Work Process to Teach Essential Behaviors <i>Civic Auditorium</i>	Guiding Principles for Principals: Tips and Tools for Leading the PLC at Work Process <i>Ballroom F</i>
Anthony Muhammad	Collaboration Is a Lifestyle, Not a Meeting! <i>Ballroom C</i>	Moving From PLC Lite to PLC Right! <i>Ballroom C</i>	"So, How Do We Get Buy-In?" Leveraging the Guiding Coalition to Build Consensus <i>Ballroom C</i>	Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change <i>Ballroom C</i>	We Are Ready for PLC Greatness! How Do We Go Back and Convince Others to Join In? <i>Ballroom C</i>
Maria Nielsen	Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Student Learning* <i>Ballroom D</i>	The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work* <i>Ballroom D</i>	Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Student Learning <i>Ballroom D</i>	Elementary ELA High-Leverage Strategies for Reading and Writing on Grade Level <i>Ballroom D</i>	The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work <i>Ballroom D</i>

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Regina Stephens Owens	The <i>Why</i> Effect: Intentional Systems Drive Inspirational Cultures <i>Ballroom A</i>	Data Discussion for Instructional Leaders: From Data to Design to Demonstration of Learning <i>Ballroom A</i>	Not <i>Going</i> To, But <i>Belonging</i> To: Leading in a PLC <i>Ballroom A</i>	Small Schools and Singletons: Wired by Rigor, Relevance, and Results <i>Ballroom A</i>	The Learning Professional: Coaching Competence, Not Compliance <i>Ballroom A</i>
Julie A. Schmidt	Next-Level Collaboration: Essential Standards as the Engine <i>Ballroom B</i>	All Means All: Essential Actions for General and Special Educators to Ensure High Levels of Learning for <i>All</i> * <i>Civic Auditorium</i>	Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools <i>Civic Auditorium</i>	All Means All: Essential Actions for General and Special Educators to Ensure High Levels of Learning for <i>All</i> <i>Ballroom B</i>	Windows and Mirrors: Women Who Lead <i>Ballroom B</i>
Eric Twadell	Social and Emotional Learning in a PLC at Work <i>Civic Auditorium – Gold Room</i>	Using AI Tools to Facilitate Better Teaching and Learning <i>Civic Auditorium – Gold Room</i>	Evidence-Based Grading: Five Stages to Transform Grading Practices* <i>Civic Auditorium – Gold RoomH</i>	Through New Eyes: Examining the Culture of Your School <i>Civic Auditorium – Gold Room</i>	Evidence-Based Grading: Five Stages to Transform Grading Practices <i>Civic Auditorium – Gold Room</i>

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Session Descriptions—Day 1

KEYNOTE

Mike Mattos

All In! Digging Deeper Into Becoming a True Professional Learning Community

The PLC at Work framework is the most research-based, practitioner-confirmed process to improve student and adult learning. Yet many schools and districts are failing to reap the benefits of their collaborative efforts because they fail to dig deeply and stay committed to the right work. Mike Mattos identifies the essential thinking and actions of a true professional learning community and discusses how each collectively creates an ongoing process of continuous improvement.

Participants in this session:

- Learn the three big ideas and four critical questions of the PLC at Work process.
- Understand how each critical question is not a singular act but instead requires never-ending cycles of focus to dig deeper into the right work.
- Assess their current reality and consider next best steps to improve learning for all.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Motivation Through Reflection and Goal Setting

Educators in a school with a focus on learning promote a strong sense of self-efficacy in their students. Studies show this may be one of the greatest factors for student motivation and engagement. Participants in this session examine essential characteristics for building student self-efficacy and explore team-developed products and strategies for how to use them.

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.

Timothy D. Kanold

Your Physical and Mental Wellness: Thriving at Work and at Home!

In this decade, teaching and leading in pursuit of improved student achievement is hard to do well day in and day out. The work at hand takes its toll physically and mentally. During this highly interactive, sometimes funny, sometimes serious, and always engaging session, Timothy D. Kanold uses the Wellness Solutions for Educators™ framework to take a deep dive into the physical and mental wellness challenges that exist in the daily life of an educator. Improved sleep and rest, food and hydration, and movement are interwoven together as a result of daily decision making and intentional planning. Participants find themselves (re)invigorated, (re)inspired, and (re)connected to the benefits of a sustainable and thriving home and work life.

Participants can expect to:

- Discover brain research associated with sleep, rest, hydration, movement, and decision fatigue.
- Consider specific strategies for incorporating improved sleep, rest, hydration, movement, and decision-making routines into daily life.
- Explore a concrete plan for reducing, automating, and regulating decisions to avoid decision fatigue and mental exhaustion as part of educator renewal.

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.

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.

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

Next-Level Collaboration: Essential Standards as the Engine

Anchor your collaborative work in what matters most: your essential standards. In this session, Julie A. Schmidt focuses on three high-leverage collaborative processes all anchored in essential standards to ensure alignment, clarity, and rigor. By keeping essential standards as the driver of collaboration, teams can increase coherence, improve instructional rigor, and ensure that all students achieve meaningful learning outcomes. Participants gain ready-to-use tools and protocols to implement these collaborative processes immediately.

Participants explore:

- A pre-unit planning process driven by essential standards to ensure collaborative teams can be proactive in their instructional planning
- A process for collaboratively scoring student work to enhance team clarity and ensure consistent feedback for students
- A team rigor audit to assess whether instruction meets the depth and complexity required by essential standards

Eric Twadell

Social and Emotional Learning in a PLC at Work

In most schools, social and emotional learning (SEL) is little more than canned programs that highlight cliché-driven posters and flyers. Schools that take SEL seriously learn quickly that we can teach and assess SEL just like any other subject and content area. In this session, Eric Twadell explores the CASEL social-emotional learning competencies and develops strategies and best practices for teaching and learning.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the CASEL social-emotional learning competencies—self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.
- Learn strategies for the explicit assessment of these competencies.
- Understand how these competencies can impact student learning.
- Learn how to assess the impact of social and emotional learning instruction.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

Becoming World Class: Steps, Processes, and Tools for Getting on the Same Page

Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* (2005), argues that explicitly stated values are one of the most powerful steps we can take to help a team become exemplary. Developing a common vision of instruction, assessment, and interventions at the classroom, team, and schoolwide levels are critical steps in the PLC process. Tim Brown shares strategies and provides examples that educators have found helpful for developing their collective commitments and common vision for a learning-centered classroom.

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.

Timothy D. Kanold

On Becoming a PLC Leader: Training to Lead the PLC Life!

School-site administrators and leaders, guiding coalition members, instructional coaches, school district or central office administrators cannot lead by merely *trying* harder. Yet, they can become more leadership “fit” as their discernment and wisdom improve over time. They can *train* to run and lead the PLC race!

In this session, Timothy D. Kanold reveals how to become a dynamic and inspiring decision maker others will want to follow. Dr. Kanold answers PLC leadership questions such as: Where do I focus my energy and effort as a PLC leader? How do I make the time to get it all done? How do I lead our PLC vision into realized action? How do I make good decisions, discernments, and judgments? How can I improve my PLC leadership skills?

Only you can write the story of your PLC leadership life and the legacy you will leave behind. Come find out how to become a great PLC Leader!

PLC leader participants can expect to:

- Identify the *dual* PLC leadership mission of all school site and central office leaders.
- Learn how to use the PLC leadership discipline of *vision and values*.

- Learn how to become great at the PLC leadership discipline of *accountability and celebration* using the shared vision and values.
- Learn how to engage in the PLC leadership discipline of *service and sharing* to prevent burnout for those they lead.

Mike Mattos

MTSS and PLCs: Leveraging Collaboration to Effectively Intervene

The fundamental purpose of a professional learning community is to ensure high levels of learning for every student. Achieving this goal will undoubtedly require schools to effectively answer the critical question: How will we respond when students don't learn? Mike Mattos discusses specific steps that schools can take to create a highly effective, multitiered system of supports to target learning gaps, and demonstrates how the PLC at Work process fosters the schoolwide framework required to successfully intervene.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the guiding principles behind a multitiered system of interventions.
- Learn the essential actions of a school's guiding coalition, teacher teams, and intervention team.
- Prioritize resources to best meet student needs and make MTSS doable.

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.

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

All Means All: Essential Actions for General and Special Educators to Ensure High Levels of Learning for All

Participants explore the concepts from *Yes We Can: General and Special Educators Collaborating in a Professional Learning Community* (Solution Tree, 2016) and its new companion book *All Means All: Essential Actions for Leveraging Yes We Can!* (Solution Tree, 2025). These concepts focus on fostering collaboration between general and special educators to achieve high levels of learning for *all* students by addressing personal and systemic beliefs, aligning systems, and adopting inclusive practices.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the six core principles from *Yes We Can* and their relevance to inclusive practices.
- Examine personal and systemic beliefs about students, learning, and educators' roles.
- Reflect on current practices to identify gaps and align actions with the belief that all students can learn at high levels through specific strategies.
- Develop actionable next steps to strengthen collective commitment and shared ownership in the PLC process.

Eric Twadell

Using AI Tools to Facilitate Better Teaching and Learning

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

In this session, AI beginners learn how various AI chatbots can help facilitate better teaching and learning. For most teachers, unpacking standards, planning lessons, creating assessments, and developing interventions rarely start from scratch. Instead, we often begin with existing materials—something teachers have used in the past, something already in the district curriculum materials, something purchased from an online source like Teachers Pay Teachers, or something from online lesson libraries maintained by content-specific websites like PBS or NCTM. While those materials have potential and certainly save time by providing a first draft of instructional strategies to consider, AI chatbots can help teachers analyze and improve these materials.

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

Julie A. Schmidt

Positioned to Lead: Leading From Every Role, Every Day

Leadership in schools isn't about a title; it's about action, influence, and a shared commitment to student success. No matter your current role, you have the power to lead from where you stand. In this keynote, Julie A. Schmidt inspires participants to embrace leadership in their current roles by focusing on collaboration, continuous learning, and taking meaningful action to drive positive change. Through interacting with one another, considering practical strategies, and reflecting, participants are empowered to be catalysts for improvement, no matter their position.

Session Descriptions—Day 2

KEYNOTE

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.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

Using CFAs to Promote and Ensure Learning

Common formative assessments have been described as the lynchpin of the PLC process. When done well, they can transform the learning experience of students and teachers alike. In this session, Tim Brown leads participants in exploring important keys to enhance the development and effective use of CFAs by collaborative teams. Various tools, resources, and protocols are provided to help teams derive all the benefits found in the CFA process.

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.

Timothy D. Kanold

Your PreK–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Instruction and Tasks!

Timothy D. Kanold explores how collaborative teams can improve student achievement in mathematics through the balanced use of lower- and higher-level-cognitive-demand tasks and classroom discourse combined with meaningful formative feedback during instruction.

Dr. Kanold shares research-affirmed lesson design criteria essential to student perseverance, development of self-efficacy, and sustained effort in mathematics class every day. He shares sample mathematics tasks and online resources for teacher support.

Participants use the Mathematics at Work™ lesson design framework to:

- Examine research-affirmed teaching actions that maximize student learning during a mathematics lesson.
- Consider how to use prior-knowledge activities effectively.
- Examine the balanced use of lower- 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.

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. 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.

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

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.

Regina Stephens Owens

Not Going To, But Belonging To: Leading in a PLC

In a time of great change and instability, educators and administrators more than ever must become empowered learners. How do we lead learning in our community in a way that results in thriving, wholeness, and belonging? Join Regina Stephens Owens and learn how to lead in a

professional learning community. Participants in this session invest in capacity building, collective responsibility, and increased achievement.

Leaders in this session:

- Accept the challenge of being a lead learner.
- Design and develop a culture of learning.
- Build collective capacity through shared responsibility for learning.

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) 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.

Eric Twadell

Evidence-Based Grading: Five Stages to Transform Grading Practices

Moving beyond PLC Lite requires that schools examine traditional grading practices. While tackling this challenge has often been cited as the “third rail of school reform,” it is an essential destination on the journey to becoming a PLC that embraces assessment and grading practices and supports student learning. In this session, Eric Twadell provides participants with a roadmap for differentiating professional development for teachers and teams interested in implementing standards-based grading.

Participants in this session:

- Gain appreciation for using a learning map to differentiate professional development.
- Explore challenges associated with traditional grading practices and reporting results.
- Learn how to structure professional development and a learning map for teachers and teams specifically focused on standards-based grading and reporting.
- Explore the five stages of evidence-based grading and reporting.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

Becoming World Class: Steps, Processes, and Tools for Getting on the Same Page

Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* (2005), argues that explicitly stated values are one of the most powerful steps we can take to help a team become exemplary. Developing a common vision of instruction, assessment, and interventions at the classroom, team, and schoolwide levels are critical steps in the PLC process. Tim Brown shares strategies and provides examples that educators have found helpful for developing their collective commitments and common vision for a learning-centered classroom.

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:

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- 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.

Timothy D. Kanold

JOY: Growing Strong Through Your Seasons of Life as a Teacher and Leader!

Educators choose a lifetime of work designed in yearly cycles, one school year after another. And each school year has a season of new beginnings (fall), a middle season of heavy lifting (winter), an ending season of finishing well (spring), followed by an opportunity for a physical, mental, and emotional wellness reset: a season of rest (summer). Once that yearly cycle is complete, their journey repeats. Their teaching and leading story adds another chapter.

Will that chapter represent a school year of joy, or not? Is it possible to live a life of sustained and persistent joy through each of the school seasons? What *is* joy, exactly, and how is joy different from happiness? Is it possible to cultivate daily joy into workplace and home life experiences? Is it possible to find joy in the small and ordinary aspects of life despite the messiness, the beauty, the exhaustion and sometimes grief that comes with life as educators?

Based on his recently released book *JOY!* (Solution Tree, 2025), Timothy D. Kanold reveals brain-research affirmed strategies for pursuing joy, decreasing daily stress, persevering through each season of the school year, and developing the relationship skills necessary to be part of an effective PLC at Work team. Come be inspired!

Participants can expect to:

- Understand the difference between happiness and joy.
- Learn specific *mindfulness* routines that build joy habits that stick.
- Understand how to persevere and persist using friendships at work and at home.
- Discover strategies such as JOMO for improving disposition toward daily joy at work and at home.
- Consider how daily work life feeds into Ubuntu—the greater purpose of all educators.

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.

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

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.

Regina Stephens Owens

Small Schools and Singletons: Wired by Rigor, Relevance, and Results

Small schools—charter, innovative, or online—often ask: How do we engage in the PLC at Work process? How do we involve CTE, fine arts, PE? How do we handle singletons? Where do we begin? Join Regina Stephens Owens to learn how to effectively implement the PLC process so that you are wired for rigor and relevance..

Outcomes from this session include:

- Learning how to function as a PLC at Work
- Developing your teams to include meaningful work for all
- Monitoring and measuring your success

Julie A. Schmidt

All Means All: Essential Actions for General and Special Educators to Ensure High Levels of Learning for All

Participants explore the concepts from *Yes We Can: General and Special Educators Collaborating in a Professional Learning Community* (Solution Tree, 2016) and its new companion book *All Means All*:

Essential Actions for Leveraging Yes We Can! (Solution Tree, 2025). These concepts focus on fostering collaboration between general and special educators to achieve high levels of learning for *all* students by addressing personal and systemic beliefs, aligning systems, and adopting inclusive practices.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the six core principles from *Yes We Can* and their relevance to inclusive practices.
- Examine personal and systemic beliefs about students, learning, and educators' roles.
- Reflect on current practices to identify gaps and align actions with the belief that all students can learn at high levels through specific strategies.
- Develop actionable next steps to strengthen collective commitment and shared ownership in the PLC process.

Eric Twadell

Through New Eyes: Examining the Culture of Your School

The PLC at Work process is all about culture—not structure. A school culture is founded upon the assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations, and habits that drive its day-to-day work and share how its people think, feel, and act. This session provides participants with the opportunity to examine the culture of two very different schools and explores common practices and conventional wisdom with a critical eye.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the culture of two different schools and the experiences of a student.
- Assess the practices and procedures of a traditional school versus a school that works as a professional learning community.
- Develop an understanding of the important difference between culture and structure in initiative, and sustain the PLC at Work process.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Motivation Through Reflection and Goal Setting

Educators in a school with a focus on learning promote a strong sense of self-efficacy in their students. Studies show this may be one of the greatest factors for student motivation and engagement. Participants in this session examine essential characteristics for building student self-efficacy and explore team-developed products and strategies for how to use them.

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.

Timothy D. Kanold

Heart & Soul: Living a Fully Engaged, High-Energy, Well-Balanced Professional Life!

Education is a profession of "emotional labor," and it is easy to experience fatigue from the daily noise and intense, often quick-changing expectations of the educator's work life. Giving "heart and soul" to the professional life is fulfilling. Yet, it can also take its toll at work and at home.

Timothy D. Kanold notes, "Off and on, I have lost contact with the joy of my work life. So, it is for you. Sooner or later, the world of your professional life stretches you beyond your limits. But there are ways to sustain and regain your happiness at work." The secret lies in understanding how to live a well-balanced daily life.

Participants examine how to maintain high positive daily energy as they ruthlessly eliminate the hurry from their life based on the energy quadrants from Dr. Kanold's award-winning book, *HEART! Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader* (Solution Tree, 2017). Participants leave feeling the power and impact of their professional journey.

Participants can expect to:

- Understand and embrace happiness as a high positive energy state.
- Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from their life.
- Avoid emotional exhaustion through the demonstration of self-compassion.
- Avoid the natural drift to a high negative energy state of being.
- Choose a daily, well-balanced professional and personal life.

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.

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.

Regina Stephens Owens

The Learning Professional: Coaching Competence, Not Compliance

In a time of great change and instability, educators and administrators more than ever must 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

Julie A. Schmidt 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 historical and research-based challenges women face when making the decision to pursue a leadership position.
- Celebrate the wins—large and small.

- Reflect on their own personal journeys.
- Walk away with connections and a higher level of self-efficacy and awareness around their own uniqueness.

Eric Twadell

Evidence-Based Grading: Five Stages to Transform Grading Practices

Moving beyond PLC Lite requires that schools examine traditional grading practices. While tackling this challenge has often been cited as the “third rail of school reform,” it is an essential destination on the journey to becoming a PLC that embraces assessment and grading practices and supports student learning. In this session, Eric Twadell provides participants with a roadmap for differentiating professional development for teachers and teams interested in implementing standards-based grading.

Participants in this session:

- Gain appreciation for using a learning map to differentiate professional development.
- Explore challenges associated with traditional grading practices and reporting results.
- Learn how to structure professional development and a learning map for teachers and teams specifically focused on standards-based grading and reporting.
- Explore the five stages of evidence-based grading and reporting.

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.