

Agenda

Tacoma, WA • October 27–29, 2025

Monday, October 27

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration	Registration Lobby
	Continental Breakfast	Ballroom BC
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Janel Keating <i>Lining Up the Glass Balls: Essential Leadership Actions</i>	Ballroom A
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 3.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	High-Impact Talks by Principals —Short “TED Talk” sessions with tips and tricks to aid learning and school improvement (Each Session A HIT will be repeated in Session B.)	See page 3.
	Session A • 2:45–3:10 p.m.	
	Session B • 3:15–3:45 p.m.	

Tuesday, October 28

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration	Registration Lobby
	Continental Breakfast	Ballroom BC
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Brandon Jones <i>Burn the Ships: Leading With Reckless Abandon</i>	Ballroom A
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 3.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	Leadership Forums —Topic-driven discussions with participants and experts	
	<i>Strategies for Aspiring and New Leaders</i> —Brandon Jones	315
	<i>Moving From PLC Lite to Right</i> —Luis F. Cruz	316
	<i>Duties as Assigned: Assistant Principals, Instructional Coaches, District Coordinators, Etc.</i> —Janel Keating	Ballroom A

Wednesday, October 29

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Ballroom BC
8:00–9:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 3.
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Break	
9:45–11:45 a.m.	Keynote —Luis F. Cruz <i>The Habits of Highly Effective Leadership in a PLC</i>	Ballroom A

Agenda is subject to change.

Breakout Sessions at a Glance

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

Presenter	Monday, October 27			Tuesday, October 28		Wednesday, October 29
	10:00–11:30 a.m.	1:00–2:30 p.m.	High-Impact Talks 2:45–3:45 p.m.	10:00–11:30 a.m.	1:00–2:30 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
Luis F. Cruz	Creating Trust Between PLC Leaders and PLC Followers <i>316</i>	Guiding Coalitions, Task Forces, and PLC Facilitators: A Collective Approach to Leading PLCs <i>316</i>	Diversifying the <i>Why</i> in the Need to Embrace PLCs <i>316</i>	“There Is Already Too Much on Our Plates!” Addressing Staff Resistance as Leaders in a PLC* <i>316</i>	Accountability: A Powerful and Necessary Ingredient for Effective PLC Implementation <i>316</i>	“There Is Already Too Much on Our Plates!” Addressing Staff Resistance as Leaders in a PLC <i>316</i>
Brandon Jones	Think Tank: Assembling and Supporting a Championship Team <i>315</i>	The Friday Meeting: Leveraging Crucial Conversations* <i>315</i>	Light the Fireworks and Eat the Cake: Celebrations That Propel Progress <i>315</i>	From Inept to Adept: Critical Tier 2 Action Steps for RTI at Work <i>315</i>	The Little Engine That Could: Building an Unstoppable Guiding Coalition <i>315</i>	The Friday Meeting: Leveraging Crucial Conversations <i>315</i>
Janel Keating	Winning the League Championship in Learning: Your School Leadership Team Is the Key <i>Ballroom A</i>	Beyond WIN (What I Need) Time <i>Ballroom A</i>	Leading PLCs Districtwide <i>Ballroom A</i>	Women in Leadership: Leading With Compassion and Empathy* <i>Ballroom A</i>	Lessons Learned From an Ambassador School <i>Ballroom A</i>	Women in Leadership: Leading With Compassion and Empathy <i>Ballroom A</i>

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Session Descriptions—Day 1

KEYNOTE

Janel Keating

Lining Up the Glass Balls: Essential Leadership Actions

It's critical that a leader knows the difference between rubber balls and glass balls in their work. When rubber balls fall, they bounce back. When glass balls fall, they shatter. From a leadership perspective, the glass balls are the essential actions. In this session, Janel Keating highlights the essential leadership actions tied to improving learning. She shares specifics regarding how school leaders align their daily tasks to improve learning and make the compliance pieces more impactful.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Luis F. Cruz

Creating Trust Between PLC Leaders and PLC Followers

In this session, Luis F. Cruz emphasizes the importance of trust in successfully implementing professional learning communities. Dr. Cruz differentiates between staff members *trusting* versus *liking* leaders and explores strategies for building genuine trustworthiness among all participants. This trust is crucial for fostering commitment to change and ensuring the successful implementation of PLC practices.

Brandon Jones

Think Tank: Assembling and Supporting a Championship Team

In a time when students need us the most, educators are leaving the profession at an alarming rate—and for good reason. Expectations, stress, and a feeling the work is unsustainable are reportedly leading causes of this exodus. Sadly, teachers in grades K–12 are the most burnt-out profession in the United States (Gallup). The good news is that there is resounding hope for reversing this trend in your schools! Actions we take as leaders in how we support our staff have an enormous impact on their success and overall well-being. Participants in this session collaborate with associates and one another to determine the best practices for recruiting, hiring, orienting, and retaining outstanding educators.

Janel Keating

Winning the League Championship in Learning: Your School Leadership Team Is the Key

Is your school leadership team moving forward your instructional coaching staff—grade level by grade level and content area by content area? In this session, Janel Keating highlights the importance of establishing a position description for this key role and a process to select and train them. She showcases what this team does to improve learning for every student in the school and improve the instructional practice of all educators. Effective team leaders leverage the PLC work to ensure learning for *all* students.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Luis F. Cruz

Guiding Coalitions, Task Forces, and PLC Facilitators: A Collective Approach to Leading PLCs

In this session, Luis F. Cruz discusses how effective implementation of professional learning community practices requires a shift in leadership from a single administrator to a collective, teacher-led approach. Dr. Cruz outlines the roles and characteristics of different teams within this collective leadership model and provides strategies for aligning these teams around a unified focus on ensuring high levels of learning for all students.

Brandon Jones

The Friday Meeting: Leveraging Crucial Conversations

In this session, Brandon Jones shows participants what happens when efforts to establish accountability and peer-to-peer support have failed to produce behavior changes in their schools. While resistance to change must be addressed, some participants may find crucial conversations difficult, anxiety inducing, or ineffective. The art of the “Friday meeting” is a learned skill—one that takes purpose, planning, and practice. Participants in this session examine the three levels of accountability in a professional learning community and learn best practices for making crucial conversations successful and beneficial for all.

Janel Keating

Beyond WIN (What I Need) Time

In a highly effective school, interventions don’t just happen in a 30-minute period during the school day. They are layered throughout the school day. In this session, Janel Keating highlights multiple ways to think about and deliver impactful interventions for both elementary and secondary students.

HIGH-IMPACT TALKS

Session A • 2:45–3:10 p.m. | Session B • 3:15–3:45 p.m.

Luis F. Cruz

Diversifying the *Why* in the Need to Embrace PLCs

In this session, Luis F. Cruz explores the four critical *whys*—institutional, professional, societal, and personal—that are essential for driving effective organizational change. By aligning these reasons with data, participants learn how to help stakeholders in schools and other organizations understand the need for change, increasing their engagement and commitment to the process.

Brandon Jones

Light the Fireworks and Eat the Cake: Celebrations That Propel Progress

There are proven methods to encourage, motivate, and inspire others to continue to give their very best every day. And then there are other methods of recognition that, all too often, fall flat and miss the mark. Well-designed celebrations provide a much-needed spark at critical moments

for a colleague, staff, or school. When done well, they carry the unstoppable momentum needed to push improvement efforts forward.

Participants in this session:

- Learn the negative outcomes if celebrations are missing.
- Gain clarity on what should and should not be celebrated.
- Determine how to engage in meaningful recognition using the S.T.A.M.P. method.
- Examine how to distribute responsibility for celebrating.

Janel Keating

Leading PLCs Districtwide

A districtwide professional learning community is more than a sum of individual parts. A high-performing school district that functions as a PLC reflects thoughtful alignment and integration of work at the central office level, in individual schools, and in teacher teams. While highlighting the efforts of highly successful school districts, Janel Keating describes how districts organize and align at each level to implement PLC concepts and practices systemwide. Participants explore many practical examples and useful templates to assist any school or district in doing the work of a PLC.

Session Descriptions—Day 2

KEYNOTE

Brandon Jones

Burn the Ships: Leading With Reckless Abandon

The time is now; educator leaders can no longer wait for others to take the reins and be drawn to action. The future of our children and our communities depends on how well educator leaders prepare the next generation, and leading effectively requires that we stand in the gap even when doing so is uncomfortable, unfair, or unwarranted. In this session, Brandon Jones describes the “ships” that must be burned in order for participants to become the leaders they are meant to become for their students, their staff, and themselves.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Luis F. Cruz

“There Is Already Too Much on Our Plates!” Addressing Staff Resistance as Leaders in a PLC

In this session, Luis F. Cruz addresses a common challenge when introducing professional learning communities: Staff members’ perception that PLCs are just one more task on an already full plate. Dr. Cruz helps participants make meaningful connections between their prior teacher training, staff development, and the PLC process, showing how these elements align to create a unified focus on ensuring high levels of learning for all students.

Brandon Jones

From Inept to Adept: Critical Tier 2 Action Steps for RTI at Work

A professional learning community’s primary mission is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. With this goal in mind, do school support systems align with that mission? Despite our best lessons and efforts in class, we know some students will succeed only with additional time and support. As such, it is essential to create a system where all students are guaranteed to receive directed, specific, timely, and targeted intervention as well as extension. This session is based on the RTI research of Mike Mattos and Austin Buffum as well as action research from several model PLC schools.

Participants in this session:

- Receive a brief overview of the inverted pyramid of interventions.
- Learn the four essential outcomes of the RTI at Work framework.
- Examine the action steps that must be taken by teacher and schoolwide teams to ensure success at Tier 2.

Janel Keating

Women in Leadership: Leading With Compassion and Empathy

Because women face different roadblocks than men in professional development, it is important that aspiring women leaders are mentored and given the space to grow. In this session, Janel Keating highlights the gifts women bring to a leadership role and the challenges they face. Participants gain insight into those challenges and explore strategies for overcoming them.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Luis F. Cruz

Accountability: A Powerful and Necessary Ingredient for Effective PLC Implementation

In this session, Luis F. Cruz addresses the importance of healthy accountability in the effective implementation of PLC practices. Dr. Cruz challenges the negative perceptions often linked to accountability and introduces two essential forms: cultural accountability and direct accountability. Participants learn how to foster these forms of accountability to ensure successful PLC implementation without creating a punitive atmosphere.

Brandon Jones

The Little Engine That Could: Building an Unstoppable Guiding Coalition

No leader, regardless of their abilities or intentions, can meet the needs of all staff in their care. In this session, Brandon Jones shows participants how to surround themselves with a collaborative team of other leaders to help support the work of professional learning communities. All high-functioning PLCs have a powerful guiding coalition of colleagues who move the priorities of the school forward and help navigate difficult times of change.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the difference between a guiding coalition and a traditional leadership team.
- Learn how to choose members well.
- Examine practical ways to build leadership skills in members.
- Learn how to monitor and support the work of teams and one another.

Janel Keating

Lessons Learned From an Ambassador School

Mountain Meadow Elementary School has achieved the honor of being an Ambassador School and is one of the highest-performing schools in Pierce County, WA. Participants in this session learn the processes and practices that are fundamental for each grade-level team at Mountain Meadow to ensure all students learn at high levels. Janel Keating shows what the principal and teams do daily to impact student achievement.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Luis F. Cruz

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KEYNOTE

Luis F. Cruz

The Habits of Highly Effective Leadership in a PLC

In the closing keynote of the conference, Luis F. Cruz shares the key habits that leaders can cultivate to maintain a continuous focus on high levels of learning for all students. Drawing on the work of Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (2004), and James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits* (2018), Dr. Cruz blends insights from both scholars to guide participants in effectively leading and implementing professional learning community practices.