



The Summit on RTI at Work

Austin, TX • February 16–18, 2026

Monday, February 16

6:30–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	6th Floor Foyer
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Mike Mattos <i>Common Sense, Common Practice, and Practical Solutions</i>	Austin Grand Ballroom
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:15 a.m.	Concurrent Keynotes	See page 2.
11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
12:45–2:15 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 2.
2:15–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–4:15 p.m.	Keynote —Eric Twadell <i>Aligning Our Grading Practices and RTI</i>	Austin Grand Ballroom

Tuesday, February 17

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	6th Floor Foyer
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Nicole Dimich <i>Assessment at the Center: Three Shifts to Propel Learning</i>	Austin Grand Ballroom
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:15 a.m.	Concurrent Keynotes	See page 3.
11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
12:45–2:15 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 3.
2:15–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–4:15 p.m.	Keynote —Tina H. Boogren <i>Refueling the Front Lines: How Educator Wellness Drives RTI Success</i>	Austin Grand Ballroom

Wednesday, February 18

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	6th Floor Foyer
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Brandon Jones <i>The Keystones of Exceptional Schools</i>	Austin Grand Ballroom
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:45 a.m.	Keynote —Luis F. Cruz <i>Bringing It All Together: Handling Resistance to RTI at Work Implementation</i>	Austin Grand Ballroom

Agenda is subject to change.

Sessions at a Glance—Day 1

Concurrent Keynotes—10:00–11:15 a.m.

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms
Paula Maeker	Gaining Ground: Accelerating Learning in Schools Seeking Significant Gains in Student Achievement	Austin Grand Ballroom
Julie A. Schmidt	From Promise to Practice: Does All Really Mean All?	Governor's Ballroom Salon C

Breakout Sessions—12:45–2:15 p.m.

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms
Luis F. Cruz	Tears in the Tiers: Addressing Neglected Essential Actions During RTI at Work Implementation	Governor's Ballroom Salon C
Paula Maeker	Multiplying the Impact of Essential Literacy: Ensuring Equitable Outcomes for All	Governor's Ballroom Salon E
Mike Mattos	Taking Action: Digging Deeper Into Systematic Interventions	Governor's Ballroom Salon B
Julie A. Schmidt	Leading for All: Guiding Teams Toward Inclusive Excellence	Austin Grand Ballroom
Eric Twadell	Integrating SEL Into an RTI Framework	Governor's Ballroom Salon D

Agenda is subject to change.

Sessions at a Glance—Day 2

Concurrent Keynotes (10:00–11:15 a.m.)

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms
Anisa Baker-Busby	Why Settle for Growth When Achievement Is the Goal?	Governor's Ballroom Salon C
Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan	Behavior Academies: Targeted Interventions That Work!	Austin Grand Ballroom

Breakout Sessions (12:45–2:15 p.m.)

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms
Anisa Baker-Busby	Effective Tier 1 and 2 Interventions That Ensure High Levels of Learning for All	Governor's Ballroom Salon D
Tina H. Boogren	Tier 1 That Works: Elevating Core Instruction Through <i>The New Art and Science of Teaching</i>	Governor's Ballroom Salon B
Luis F. Cruz	English Learners and the RTI at Work Process	Austin Grand Ballroom
Nicole Dimich	An Intentional Three-Step Assessment Design Process	Meeting Room 400
Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan	Four Cs of a Classroom: First Best Classroom Prevention	Governor's Ballroom Salon C
Mike Mattos	Beyond Study Halls and Office Hours: Tackling the Logistics of a Secondary Tier 2 Flex Period	Governor's Ballroom Salon E

Agenda is subject to change.

Session Descriptions—Day 1

KEYNOTE—8:00–9:30 a.m.

Mike Mattos

Common Sense, Common Practice, and Practical Solutions

Effectively intervening does not require complex thinking or complicated practices. What it does take is applying common sense and persistence. Unfortunately, what schools have traditionally done to intervene is not aligned to common sense, but is often the exact opposite of it. In this opening keynote, Mike Mattos discusses seven common-sense actions that are keys to more effective interventions, identifies common practices that are counter-productive to these outcomes, and offers practical solutions to align educators' efforts to what is proven to work.

CONCURRENT KEYNOTES—10:00–11:15 a.m.

Paula Maeker

Gaining Ground: Accelerating Learning in Schools Seeking Significant Gains in Student Achievement

How is it possible to ensure all students learn at high levels when they continue to advance from grade level to grade level with significant gaps in learning? We must rethink our approach to teaching and learning and design a systematic response that relentlessly focuses on accelerating what matters most. Teacher teams must become architects of intentional outcomes that focus on embedding critical prerequisite learning into grade-level text, task, and thought. In this session, Paula Maeker supports campuses that are striving to meet their student success goals in developing a method and model of prevention, intervention, and acceleration that leads to impactful gains in student achievement.

Julie A. Schmidt

From Promise to Practice: Does All Really Mean All?

Schools promise that *all* students will receive strong first instruction plus targeted and timely additional support when they need it. But if we're honest, too many students—especially those entitled to special education services—are still waiting: waiting for core plus more; waiting for access to grade-level content; waiting for a system that keeps its promise. In this keynote, Julie A. Schmidt challenges educators to examine whether our intervention systems are living up to what we pledge. Participants confront the uncomfortable truth: Despite elaborate schedules, pull-out programs, and resource periods, many of the practices we rely on unintentionally maintain or even widen the gaps for the students who need the most. Participants examine where our promises break down, practices that must be addressed, and the sense of urgency needed to make the difference.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS—12:45–2:15 p.m.

Luis F. Cruz

Tears in the Tiers: Addressing Neglected Essential Actions During RTI at Work Implementation

Through the RTI at Work process, staff members must commit to essential actions across the three tiers. Sometimes educators neglect key steps and weaken interventions that students need. Luis F. Cruz shares steps that teachers often ignore or bypass. He describes the ill effects and how to avoid them by adhering to all actions in the RTI at Work process.

Paula Maeker

Multiplying the Impact of Essential Literacy: Ensuring Equitable Outcomes for All

Literacy is at the center of learning. Without strong skills in reading, writing, and oral language, the learning gap widens exponentially. The RTI at Work process is centered around the essential standards, skills and dispositions in each course, content, and grade level. Identifying what matters most in literacy is particularly complicated due to the complexity and seemingly unending scope of literacy standards. In this session, Paula Maeker guides teams in learning how to identify, prioritize, and clarify a vertical progression of essential literacy outcomes to create a powerful, actionable response that ensures equitable literacy outcomes for all.

Mike Mattos

Taking Action: Digging Deeper Into Systematic Interventions

Building upon his keynote, Mike Mattos digs deeper into how to create a highly effective, multitiered system of supports to ensure student learning. Specific essential action steps are defined for three critical teams: the school leadership team, teacher teams, and a site intervention team. Participants gain clarity regarding lead responsibility for academic and behavior interventions. Recommendations and resources for scheduling are provided.

Julie A. Schmidt

Leading for All: Guiding Teams Toward Inclusive Excellence

Participants in this session focus on leading inclusive practices in their school or district. Regardless of their professional background, role, or experience, Julie A. Schmidt equips them with a balance of leadership theory, real-world strategies, and practical tools to ensure leaders can effectively guide their teams in this critical work.

Participants in this session:

- Enhance their ability to lead an *all means all* culture within their school or district regardless of their prior experience or role.
- Explore key leadership principles that support the successful implementation of practices that go beyond labels.

- Learn to guide reflective discussions that promote educator growth and commitment to inclusive education.

Eric Twadell

Integrating SEL Into an RTI Framework

In many schools, social and emotional learning (SEL) still lives on the margins—reduced to one-off lessons, slogans, or bulletin board displays. But for schools truly committed to equity and student success, SEL must be intentionally embedded into a schoolwide RTI system. SEL is not fluff; it's foundational. Just like academic skills, SEL competencies can be taught, assessed, and supported across all tiers of instruction. Participants in this session explore how SEL fits into a tiered system of supports and discover how to deliver, monitor, and respond to SEL instruction with the same clarity and intentionality we bring to academics.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the five CASEL SEL competencies through the lens of tiered support.
- Learn how to embed explicit SEL instruction within Tier 1 while identifying students in need of targeted (Tier 2) or intensive (Tier 3) supports.
- Examine strategies for the formative assessment of SEL competencies to identify student needs and monitor progress over time.
- Develop a framework for measuring the impact of SEL on student outcomes.

KEYNOTE—2:30–4:00 p.m.

Eric Twadell

Aligning Our Grading Practices and RTI

In far too many schools, the most powerful lever we have—grading—is misaligned with our focus on learning and our intervention efforts. We say we believe all kids can learn, but our grading practices often tell a different story. Zeros, averages, late penalties, and mysterious grading practices undermine everything we're trying to build through our RTI efforts. In this keynote, Eric Twadell calls for a radical shift: to bring grading practices into full alignment with our RTI framework. If we're going to respond to learning, we need evidence—not just kids chasing points. If we're going to intervene early and often, we need clarity—not compliance. Grading must be part of the solution, not a barrier to growth.

Participants in this session:

- Unpack the disconnect between traditional grading and effective intervention practices.
- Learn why outdated grading policies sabotage intervention efforts.
- Explore how evidence-based grading can sharpen their ability to monitor progress, provide feedback, and target support.

Session Descriptions—Day 2

KEYNOTE—8:00–9:45 a.m.

Nicole Dimich

Assessment at the Center: Three Shifts to Propel Learning

Assessment is central to understanding the impact of an RTI/MTSS system, and its role must shift from being primarily evaluative to becoming deeply informative. In this keynote, Nicole Dimich provides three critical shifts that position assessment as a driver of high levels of student learning:

1. Center assessment on information, not evaluation.
 - Assessment provides balanced, intentional uses of data that inform the effectiveness of first instruction, identify students who have not mastered essentials, and reveal errors that guide next steps for intervention or instruction.
2. Reframe time as capacity, not scarcity.
 - Assessment is a process, not a static event. By embedding analysis and response within the natural flow of a unit, schools can prioritize time to act on results in meaningful ways.
3. Use assessment to build relationships with and confidence in students.
 - When students actively use assessment, they build confidence, deepen learning, and strengthen their investment in growth.

Participants explore what these shifts look like in practice and gain strategies to make assessment a catalyst for high levels of achievement.

CONCURRENT KEYNOTES—10:00–11:15 a.m.

Anisa Baker-Busby

Why Settle for Growth When Achievement Is the Goal?

Anisa Baker-Busby challenges educators and leaders to reexamine the role of growth data in the pursuit of student success. While growth measures provide critical insight into how much progress students make over time, achievement remains the ultimate goal: ensuring all students master essential grade-level standards. Participants in this session explore the complexities and significance of growth data as an essential component in evaluating student performance and school quality. Unlike traditional one-time test scores, growth measures offer a richer and more dynamic understanding of student progress over time. Dr. Baker-Busby explores the various methods states use to measure student growth and their implications for student achievement. Participants gain a deeper understanding of how to use growth data as a tool—not a destination—for continuous improvement, equity, and achievement for every student.

Participants gain insights into:

- The key differences between status (achievement) and growth measures, and why both matter
- How states employ unique models of growth to evaluate school quality and drive decision making
- The importance of transparent communication of growth data to educators, parents, and policymakers
- The challenges and trade-offs associated with growth measures, including their impact on perceptions of school effectiveness, equity, and resource allocation
- Strategies for balancing growth and achievement data within PLCs and MTSS frameworks to ensure all students learn at high levels

Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan

Behavior Academies: Targeted Interventions That Work!

For an intervention to be effective, it needs to be targeted. Go beyond using only check-in/check-out (CICO) as the catchall intervention and begin using interventions that are targeted for the specific behaviors you wish to eliminate. Behavior academies replace problematic student behaviors with essential life skills for school and life. Participants in this session learn how to implement effective targeted interventions in 25 minutes or less using eight predefined behavior academies as well as create a process to begin implementing in their classrooms.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS—12:45–2:15 p.m.

Anisa Baker-Busby

Effective Tier 1 and 2 Practices and Interventions That Ensure High Levels of Learning for All

In this session grounded in the RTI at Work framework, Anisa Baker-Busby guides educators and leaders who are committed to ensuring that all students learn at high levels. Participants explore the instructional practices, systems, and structures that drive both growth and achievement. Participants are equipped with actionable strategies to optimize classroom time, empower student ownership of learning, and close gaps while maintaining rigorous expectations. Dr. Baker-Busby emphasizes that interventions cannot replace effective core instruction; instead, they must build upon a strong Tier 1 foundation to accelerate learning for every student.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the core principles of Tier 1 prevention and Tier 2 targeted support, understanding how each tier functions as part of a cohesive system.
- Learn neuroscience-informed strategies, such as retrieval practice, optimization of instructional time, and expansion of content exposure to increase retention, application, and transfer of learning across subjects and grade levels.

- Explore high-leverage instructional practices that strengthen Tier 1 instruction while providing targeted Tier 2 supports without removing students from essential grade-level content.
- Review evidence-based intervention resources and practical Tier 2 best practices that address academic and behavioral needs in timely, targeted, and systematic ways.
- Develop strategies for scheduling Tier 2 interventions, including flexible models (e.g., intervention/acceleration blocks, small-group structures, and creative scheduling solutions) that ensure students receive support without sacrificing access to core instruction.

Tina H. Boogren

Tier 1 That Works: Elevating Core Instruction Through *The New Art and Science of Teaching*

At the foundation of every effective RTI system is a strong Tier 1 where “first, best instruction” happens for all students. In this session, Tina H. Boogren positions Robert J. Marzano’s *The New Art and Science of Teaching* as a powerful framework for ensuring that Tier 1 instruction is not just compliant, but truly effective. Participants explore how research-based strategies can be used to design instruction that is engaging, rigorous, and responsive from the outset. Participants challenge the misconception that interventions are something you buy or a person you hire. Instead, Dr. Boogren redefines intervention as *what we do*—the deliberate use of teaching practices proven to make the greatest impact. This shift in mindset reframes Tier 1 not as a program to be followed with fidelity but as a commitment to instructional excellence. When educators consistently apply these strategies, fewer students require additional tiers of support, and everyone thrives.

Participants in this session:

- Understand how *The New Art and Science of Teaching* aligns with and strengthens Tier 1 instruction within an RTI framework.
- Reframe intervention as a set of effective, research-based teaching practices rather than external programs or personnel.
- Apply practical strategies that support rigorous, responsive instruction for all learners.

Luis F. Cruz

English Learners and the RTI at Work Process

While the English learner population continues to grow, fewer schools have demonstrated significant levels of learning for this critical cohort. Do educators lack the pedagogical skills to promote learning for these students? Do schools lack the resources?

Luis F. Cruz reviews the practical integration of collective leadership and shows how the RTI at Work process can accelerate learning for this growing and academically challenged group of students. As a current and former English learner, Luis has more than 30 years of public school experience working with students studying English as an additional language.

Participants in this session learn how to:

- Aid interventions through an English learner task force.
- Build common language, knowledge, and expectations via job-embedded professional development.
- Ensure academic success for English learners through teacher teams.

Nicole Dimich

An Intentional Three-Step Assessment Design Process

Well-designed assessments accurately reflect student learning. In this session, Nicole Dimich introduces a practical three-step process for creating both formative and end-of-unit assessments. Participants learn how to efficiently unpack standards into learning progressions (ladders), develop assessment plans that clearly capture levels of proficiency (scoring schemes), and select methods that yield accurate evidence of learning. With this process, teacher teams can analyze data more effectively, address the challenge of limited time, and strengthen their expertise. Teachers, coaches, and administrators gain tools to support collaboration and streamline high-quality assessment design.

Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan

Four Cs of a Classroom: First Best Classroom Prevention

Students thrive when their behavior and academic needs are supported in tandem with consistent and predictable classroom structures and routines—along with best practice strategies—to create a sense of safety, positivity, and belonging in every classroom. In this session, Jessica Djabrayan Hannigan shows educators how to create a first best classroom behavior prevention system designed to help them respond to the academic and social behavior needs of every learner. Specifically, educators learn how to integrate the best practice strategies for behavioral supports for each of the four Cs of a classroom: climate, culture, curriculum, and communication.

Mike Mattos

Beyond Study Halls and Office Hours: Tackling the Logistics of a Secondary Tier 2 Flex Period

To provide systematic supports, schools must incorporate dedicated intervention time into the master schedule. Scheduling time at Tier 2 is relatively easy at the secondary level; it is the process virtually every middle and high school uses to create an assembly schedule. The real obstacles begin when the staff considers the logistics of having potentially hundreds of students transitioning to specific interventions.

Critical questions that arise include:

- How do we determine what interventions to offer?
- How do we assign staff?
- How do we transition students to the correct help sessions?

- What if students need help in more than one course?
- How do we hold students accountable to attend?
- What do we do for students who don't need extra help?

Mike Mattos digs deeply into processes that work—and don't work—when creating and targeting a secondary Tier 2 flex period.

KEYNOTE—2:30–4:00 p.m.

Tina H. Boogren

Refueling the Front Lines: How Educator Wellness Drives RTI Success

A strong RTI system depends on strong educators. Drawing from her book *Educator Wellness*, co-authored with Timothy D. Kanold, Tina H. Boogren explores how the physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being of staff are not add-ons—they're the foundation. When the adults are well, their capacity to respond to student needs expands exponentially. Dr. Boogren invites participants to reconsider how wellness fits into their schoolwide systems. Instead of viewing it as an add-on, Dr. Boogren positions staff well-being as a critical driver of RTI success. Through a combination of research-based insights and actionable strategies, participants explore the ways adult wellness directly impacts student growth and school outcomes. Participants gain a renewed purpose and a clear understanding of how to support the educators who make RTI work.

Participants in this session:

- Understand why staff wellness is essential for RTI to function effectively.
- Explore actionable ways to support educator well-being within existing school systems.
- Leave feeling seen, recharged, and motivated to protect their energy and their impact.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

KEYNOTE—8:00–9:45 a.m.

Brandon Jones

The Keystones of Exceptional Schools

A keystone is a central principle of a larger system that holds everything else together. At a time when students need us most, educators are leaving the profession at an alarming rate—and for good reason. Constantly shifting expectations, expanding needs, mounting stress, and the sense that the work has become unsustainable have taken a toll. Yet, in spite of it all, you're still here. Something in you believes better outcomes are not only possible but within reach—for you and for the students you serve. So, the question becomes: What critical tenets will pull everything together and solidify the system of support you are creating?

In this session, Brandon Jones reveals the keystones your team must set in place to align the critical components of RTI at Work and build the school you've always envisioned.

KEYNOTE—10:00–11:45 a.m.

Luis F. Cruz

Bringing It All Together: Handling Resistance to RTI at Work Implementation

Schools and districts are often plagued by the *knowing-doing gap*, where individuals learn how to improve their organization but fail to implement the knowledge. Luis F. Cruz connects lessons from throughout the summit and strategies from his best-selling *Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders* (2019) to address resistance toward RTI at Work implementation. Dr. Cruz shows why failing to implement improvements leads to life-altering consequences for students.

Participants in this session:

- Acquire knowledge from different lenses to understand and introduce the RTI at Work process.
- Learn how to address rational and irrational forms of resistance.
- Understand how students suffer when educators fail to implement the RTI at Work process.