



# The Summit on PLC at Work

## Phoenix, AZ • February 24–26, 2026

### Tuesday, February 24

6:30–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:30 a.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Mike Mattos All In! Digging Deeper Into Being a True Professional Learning Community	
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:15 a.m.	<b>Concurrent Keynotes</b>	See page 2.
11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
12:45–2:15 p.m.	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	See page 2.
2:15–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–4:00 p.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —LeAnn Nickelsen Making Learning Stick: High-Impact Moves to Transform Tier 1 Instruction	

### Wednesday, February 25

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:30 a.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Anthony Muhammad Transforming School Culture 2.0: Why Culture Is Important Today, Tomorrow, and Forever	
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:15 a.m.	<b>Concurrent Keynotes</b>	See page 3.
11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
12:45–2:15 p.m.	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	See page 3.
2:15–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–4:00 p.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Timothy D. Kanold The Heart, Soul, Joy, and Hope of the PLC Life!	

### Thursday, February 26

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:30 a.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Heather Friziellie <i>Coming soon!</i>	
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Break	
9:45–11:30 a.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Luis F. Cruz Transformational Leadership: Aligning Adult Behaviors to Fuel Our PLC Journey	

Agenda is subject to change.

# Sessions at a Glance—Day 1

## Concurrent Keynotes—10:00–11:15 a.m.

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms TBD
<b>Stacie Chana</b>	Experimenting With AI: Ethical Leadership in a Time of Transformation	
<b>William M. Ferriter</b>	Doing the Right Work: Tools and Templates for Effective Team Collaboration	
<b>Pati Montgomery</b>	<i>Coming soon!</i>	

## Breakout Sessions—12:45–2:15 p.m.

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms TBD
<b>Stacie Chana</b>	Disrupted: AI, Identity, and Human Connection	
<b>Luis F. Cruz</b>	Embracing the Five Vessels: Learning the Non-Negotiables to Becoming a High-Functioning PLC	
<b>William M. Ferriter</b>	Classroom Instruction That Works: Understanding the Research Behind High-Impact Teaching Practices	
<b>Mike Mattos</b>	Developing and Supporting High-Performing Teacher Teams	
<b>Anthony Muhammad</b>	"So, How Do We Get Buy-In?" Leveraging the Guiding Coalition to Build Consensus	
<b>Pati Montgomery</b>	<i>Coming soon!</i>	
<b>LeAnn Nickelsen</b>	Prepping the Brain for High-Impact Learning: Strategic Approaches to Building Background Knowledge	
<b>Regina Stephens Owens</b>	<i>Coming soon!</i>	

Agenda is subject to change.

# Sessions at a Glance—Day 2

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

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms TBD
<b>James A. Nottingham</b>	Boosting Student Engagement	
<b>Regina Stephens Owens</b>	<i>Coming soon!</i>	
<b>Katie White</b>	Assessment That Does What You Want— and Nothing More	

## Breakout Sessions (12:45–2:15 p.m.)

Presenter	Session Title	Rooms TBD
<b>Luis F. Cruz</b>	Teams: Embracing <i>We</i> Over <i>I</i> on the Journey to Becoming a PLC	
<b>Heather Friziellie</b>	<i>Coming soon!</i>	
<b>Timothy D. Kanold</b>	Your PreK–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Instruction, Intervention, and Tasks!	
<b>Mike Mattos</b>	The Four Pearls of Effective Interventions	
<b>Anthony Muhammad</b>	Does All Still Mean <i>All</i> ? Balancing Professional Obligations and Politics	
<b>James A. Nottingham</b>	Guiding Students Through the Learning Pit	
<b>Regina Stephens Owens</b>	<i>Coming soon!</i>	
<b>Katie White</b>	How to Develop Students as Partners in Assessment and Response	

Agenda is subject to change.

# Session Descriptions—Day 1

## KEYNOTE—8:00–9:30 a.m.

### Mike Mattos

#### **All In! Digging Deeper Into Being 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. In this keynote, 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.

## CONCURRENT KEYNOTES—10:00–11:15 a.m.

### Stacie Chana

#### **Experimenting With AI: Ethical Leadership in a Time of Transformation**

*Description coming soon!*

### William M. Ferriter

#### **Doing the Right Work: Tools and Templates for Effective Team Collaboration**

Professional learning communities are among the most effective strategies for improving instruction and raising student achievement (Hattie, 2024). However, many educators remain skeptical of collaboration's value—often because they've never experienced the power of purposeful, structured teamwork (Prothero & Solis, 2023). Participants in this session explore practical actions teacher teams can take to stay focused, collaborate effectively, and transform their efforts into real results for students.

Participants in this session:

- Identify key technical routines and decision-making practices that highly effective teams use to drive better outcomes for students.
- Learn how to equip collaborative teams with the right tools and focus to ensure every student can master every essential standard.

- Explore both AI-powered and analog tools used by highly effective teams and reflect on how their current team practices compare and where they might grow.

## Pati Montgomery

*Coming soon!*

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS—12:45–2:15 p.m.

### Stacie Chana

#### **Disrupted: AI, Identity, and Human Connection**

*Description coming soon!*

### Luis F. Cruz

#### **Embracing the Five Vessels: Learning the Non-Negotiables to Becoming a High-Functioning PLC**

When a school or district commits to becoming a professional learning community, it simultaneously commits to restructuring an educational school system never designed for high levels of learning for all students. As a result, the way adults behave when interacting with students and one another must change. In this session, Luis F. Cruz reveals all the adult behaviors educators must embrace to achieve the goal of ensuring high levels of learning for all students. Participants can expect to be reintroduced to “non-negotiables” in the form of the five vessels that make the process of becoming a PLC effective and efficient.

### William M. Ferriter

#### **Classroom Instruction That Works: Understanding the Research Behind High-Impact Teaching Practices**

In *Taking Action: A Handbook for RTI at Work*, the architects of the RTI at Work process emphasize that every educator is bound to work hard, with the goal being to “work hard and succeed.” For classroom teachers, success starts with Tier 1 instruction that’s intentional, research driven, and responsive to student needs. In this session, William M. Ferriter explores practical Tier 1 practices that strengthen instruction, reduce the need for interventions, and ensure that more students succeed the first time they encounter essential content.

Participants in this session:

- Explore high-impact instructional strategies grounded in the *Classroom Instruction That Works* research and learn how AI tools can support the practical implementation of those strategies.
- Learn how to intentionally choose and consistently apply strategies that have a greater impact on student learning to accelerate student achievement and streamline their instructional efforts.

- Investigate the research behind effective instruction, review teacher-tested strategies, explore AI-supported implementation tools, and choose a few strategies to try in their own classrooms.

## Mike Mattos

### **Developing and Supporting High-Performing Teacher Teams**

Teacher teams are the engine of a professional learning community. They are responsible for identifying, teaching, assessing, and intervening on the most essential curriculum that students must learn each year. When teacher teams do the right work really well, student learning thrives. In this session, Mike Mattos provides a step-by-step process for forming, developing, and supporting high-performing teacher teams.

Participants learn how to:

- Form teacher teams and focus those teams on the right work.
- Develop team norms, address violations, and monitor team progress.
- Create a tight/loose calendar of team outcomes.

## 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 learn on the change management framework presented in *Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders* (Solution Tree, 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.

## Pati Montgomery

*Coming soon!*

## LeAnn Nickelsen

### **Prepping the Brain for High-Impact Learning: Strategic Approaches to Building Background Knowledge**

One of the most effective ways to accelerate student learning is by preparing the brain before instruction begins. When educators intentionally build background knowledge and “prime” students’ minds, they boost retention, deepen connections, and increase relevance. In this session, LeAnn Nickelsen shares research-backed strategies and ready-to-use tools that build background knowledge and activate thinking before new content is introduced. These high-impact techniques help students connect to upcoming material, making learning more meaningful, more motivating, and more memorable.

Through interactive discussion, guided reflection, and practical classroom examples, participants explore easy-to-implement priming and pre-exposure techniques that can be integrated into daily instruction.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the science behind priming and pre-exposure.
- Acquire tools to prepare students for upcoming learning targets and standards.
- Experience how to apply these strategies to boost motivation and memory in daily practice.

## Regina Stephens Owens

*Coming soon!*

**KEYNOTE—2:45–4:00 p.m.**

## LeAnn Nickelsen

### **Making Learning Stick: High-Impact Moves to Transform Tier 1 Instruction**

How you design and deliver daily instruction makes a powerful difference; it can either accelerate student learning or leave some behind. When educators commit to planning Tier 1 excellence within collaborative PLCs, they create lessons that drive engagement and memory, deepen understanding, and raise achievement. So, what does it take to craft lessons that stick—lessons that are engaging, differentiated, and deliver lasting impact? In this session, LeAnn Nickelsen walks participants through her clear, four-step framework: Chunk, Chew, Check, and Change. This practical process is designed to elevate instruction and empower students.

Participants in this session:

- Discover practical strategies for launching, guiding, and closing high-impact lessons.
- Examine lesson plan templates and success criteria for Tier 1 excellence.
- Reflect on their current planning process to identify strengths and areas for growth.
- Gain tools they can apply immediately—and a fresh vision for making every lesson count.

# Session Descriptions—Day 2

## KEYNOTE—8:00–9:30 a.m.

### 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.

## CONCURRENT KEYNOTES—10:00–11:15 a.m.

### James A. Nottingham

#### **Boosting Student Engagement**

Engaging students is one of the most challenging tasks of being a teacher. There are so many influences competing for students' attention; involvement in leisure and peer-group activities, preoccupations with social media, and commitments outside school are the distractions most frequently mentioned in the research. Add in processing challenges for neurodiverse students, and it's a minor miracle that anyone engages for long!

In this concurrent keynote, James Nottingham explores these barriers to engagement, including:

- What engagement is and how to boost it for all students
- Modeling—and therefore increasing—engagement by moving from evaluative to exploratory questioning
- Knowing when and how to include the “wow” moment of the lesson for sustained engagement



## Regina Stephens Owens

*Coming soon!*

## Katie White

### **Assessment That Does What You Want—and Nothing More**

At its core, assessment powers decision making. Using assessment to both empower teams and positively engage students can be challenging. Often, despite best intentions and dedicated work, assessment processes feel like too much effort for too little gain. When assessment systems are healthy, the design, analysis, and response to assessment evidence enables both teacher teams and students to advance learning in the best ways possible. In this keynote, Katie White identifies the actions that professional learning communities must take to ensure assessment remains hopeful, useful, and manageable.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore healthy and unhealthy approaches to assessment within a PLC.
- Explore the assessment actions of a collaborative community that values learning and results.
- Reflect on personal contexts and ways to refine assessment practices to advance a healthy assessment system.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

## Luis F. Cruz

### **Teams: Embracing *We* Over *I* on the Journey to Becoming a PLC**

A collective commitment to teamwork is required when a school or district chooses to become a professional learning community. The most powerful pronoun in a true PLC is *we*, not *I*. In this session, Luis F. Cruz explores three of the most essential teams that drive the PLC process: teacher collaborative teams, the guiding coalition, and task forces. Participants discover the unique roles and responsibilities of each team and explore how they work in unison to foster a culture of shared responsibility and ensure high levels of learning for all students.

## Heather Friziellie

*Coming soon!*

## Timothy D. Kanold

### **Your PreK–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Instruction, Intervention, 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 PLC 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 every lesson.

## Mike Mattos

### **The Four Pearls of Effective Interventions**

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 third critical question: How will we respond when students don't learn? In this session, Mike Mattos provides four guiding principles—or pearls—that will make your site interventions more effective. Additionally, Mike demonstrates how being a PLC creates the schoolwide processes needed to successfully implement these powerful ideas. Participants review examples and tools to effectively implement and connect each principle to the PLC at Work critical questions.

## Anthony Muhammad

### **Does All Still Mean All? Balancing Professional Obligations and Politics**

The first big idea of a PLC at Work is to ensure high levels of learning for all. As professionals, we understand all students can learn, but we are also aware that students learn differently and at different paces. How will your professionals respond when outside forces and agendas clash with research and best practice? In this session, Anthony Muhammad addresses the challenge of navigating populism and the implementation of best practice.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the professional and moral obligation of committing to learning for *all*.
- Find ways to navigate around populist barriers to best practice.
- Understand how to shift from damaging mindsets (superiority and inferiority) to high levels of collective efficacy (liberation).

## James A. Nottingham

### **Guiding Students Through the Learning Pit**

The most recognized concept in James Nottingham's extensive body of work is undoubtedly the Learning Pit. This model is now used by tens of thousands of teachers to foster supportive learning environments, cultivate a growth mindset, and normalize struggle as an essential part of the learning journey.

In this session, James Nottingham provides participants with insight into:

- Some of the reasons why students all too often avoid challenging tasks and how to reverse this trend
- How the Learning Pit encourages students to willingly step out of their comfort zone
- The best strategies for enhancing efficacy and engagement through the Learning Pit

## Regina Stephens Owens

*Coming soon!*

## Katie White

### **How to Develop Students as Partners in Assessment and Response**

Educators often shoulder responsibility for student learning yet fail to bring students into the process. How can students articulate what they learn, describe their strengths, and plot their next steps? Strong self-assessment in classrooms leads to co-constructed learning experiences that leverage student strengths and precisely address student needs. Through assessment, we can increase partnership with students as they move through our system. Participants in this session explore the power of an assessment culture that includes students. By inviting students to document learning, analyze evidence, and make decisions, educators can support the development of learners who are confident, capable, and invested in their own growth and achievement within a PLC.

Participants can expect to:

- Discover the qualities of effective assessment partnership.
- Explore strategies for engaging students in collecting and analyzing evidence, setting goals, and celebrating growth.
- Reflect on how to engage students in personal contexts.

## **KEYNOTE—2:45–4:00 p.m.**

## Timothy D. Kanold

### **The Heart, Soul, Joy, and Hope of the PLC Life!**

Every educator is writing the story of their PLC life—one step, one decision, one relationship, one school season at a time. That story holds moments of deep satisfaction and accomplishment. Yet,

the best stories reveal resilience too. The noise and rapid-fire demands of school life can drain your energy. Fatigue creeps in. The very heart and soul you pour into your work life can stretch you thin—sometimes to the point of disconnecting you from the joy of your journey.

In this inspiring keynote, Timothy D. Kanold invites you to reflect on the chapters and seasons of your life story as you consider this essential question: Will your personal and professional story be filled with heart, soul, joy, and hope ... or not?

Through personal stories and brain research-backed strategies, Dr. Kanold helps you reclaim your energy, decrease daily stress, persevere through the year's toughest stretches, and strengthen the relationships that define extraordinary PLC teams. You'll gain practical routines and a renewed sense of purpose—ready to embrace Ubuntu, climb your "second mountain," and live the hope-filled life that inspires lasting change in others.

Participants learn how to:

- Avoid the natural drift toward high-negative energy at work and home.
- Discover the essential secret of highly effective PLC teams.
- Choose daily routines that support a balanced professional and personal life.
- Connect to their "second mountain" climb—and deeper life purpose.
- Embrace Ubuntu—the true calling of an educator's journey.
- Experience the promise of Resfeber—the hope that fuels their shared future.

# Session Descriptions—Day 3

**KEYNOTE—8:00–9:30 a.m.**

**Heather Friziellie**

*Coming soon!*

**KEYNOTE—9:45–11:30 a.m.**

**Luis F. Cruz**

**Transformational Leadership: Aligning Adult Behaviors to Fuel Our PLC Journey**

Schools do not operate in a vacuum; they are shaped by the social inequities they inherit. Educators must adopt bold and visionary leadership approaches to ensure high levels of learning for all students.

One truth becomes clear when we reimagine school leadership in today's complex educational landscape: The success of our PLC journey depends on shifting adult behaviors. But what happens when well-intentioned educators resist committing to the collaborative practices necessary for meaningful change? Drawing from his best-selling book, *Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders* (2019), Luis F. Cruz offers practical strategies for building strong professional learning communities. Participants gain insight into fostering collective responsibility, aligning adult actions with shared goals, and effectively dealing with resistance to change. Dr. Cruz reminds participants of the moral imperative we all share that must act as the driving force for PLC implementation back at our sites.