

## Wednesday, June 3

6:30–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:45 a.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Mike Mattos <i>All In! Digging Deeper Into Becoming a True Professional Learning Community</i>	
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	See pages 2–3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	See pages 2–3.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Maria Nielsen <i>Coming soon!</i>	

## Thursday, June 4

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:45 a.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Anthony Muhammad <i>Transforming School Culture 2.0: Why Culture Is Important Today, Tomorrow, and Forever</i>	
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	See pages 2–3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	See pages 2–3.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	<b>Team Time</b> —Presenters aid in your collaborative team discussions.	

## Friday, June 5

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:30 a.m.	<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	See pages 2–3.
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Break	
9:45–11:45 a.m.	<b>Keynote</b> —Eric Twadell <i>Beyond PLC Lite: Digging Deeper Into the Three Big Ideas of a PLC at Work</i>	

Agenda is subject to change.

# Breakout Sessions at a Glance

A red asterisk\* indicates session will be repeated.  
Rooms will be listed in blue beneath titles three weeks before the event.

Presenter	Wednesday, June 3		Thursday, June 4		Friday, June 5
	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.
<b>Tim Brown</b>	Becoming World Class: Steps, Processes, and Tools for Getting on the Same Page Room TBD	Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback* Room TBD	Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Motivation Through Reflection and Goal Setting* Room TBD	Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback Room TBD	Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Motivation Through Reflection and Goal Setting Room TBD
<b>Luis F. Cruz</b>	Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student* Room TBD	PLC Versus PLC Process: The Difference Between PLC as a Noun and a Verb Room TBD	Embracing English Language Development and Supporting Bilingual Students With the PLC Process Room TBD	Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student Room TBD	Knowledge Is Not Power Until It Is Applied: Turning Your PLC Institute Experience Into Action Room TBD
<b>Jason Hillman</b>	Does This PLC Stuff Really Work? It Does—Come and See the Results!* Room TBD	The Impact of School Culture: We Have to Get It Right! Room TBD	High-Level Results Come From High-Level Collaboration: Let's Talk About It! Room TBD	The Impact of Trauma on Students: A Personal Story Room TBD	Does This PLC Stuff Really Work? It Does—Come and See the Results! Room TBD
<b>David Jones</b>	Shared Leadership, Shared Success: Improving PLC Outcomes Across Schools Room TBD	What to Do When Students Struggle: Implementing MTSS/RTI Effectively Room TBD	Through the Eyes of a Child: Essential Actions to Develop a Student Learning Community* Room TBD	The Building Blocks of Effective PLCs: Essential Actions for Success Room TBD	Through the Eyes of a Child: Essential Actions to Develop a Student Learning Community Room TBD
<b>Mike Mattos</b>	Developing and Supporting High-Performing Teacher Teams Room TBD	The Four Pearls of Effective Interventions Room TBD	Beyond Study Halls and Special Education: Tackling the Logistics of Secondary Systematic Interventions Room TBD	Behavior Solutions: Leveraging the PLC at Work Process to Teach Essential Behaviors Room TBD	Guiding Principles for Principals: Tips and Tools for Leading the PLC at Work Process Room TBD
<b>Anthony Muhammad</b>	All Hands on Deck! Keys to Building a Collaborative Culture Room TBD	Improving Professional Practice to Advance Student Learning Room TBD	"So, How Do We Get Buy-In?" Leveraging the Guiding Coalition to Build Consensus Room TBD	Does All Still Mean All? Balancing Professional Obligation and Populism Room TBD	We Are Ready for PLC Greatness! How Do We Go Back and Convince Others to Join In? Room TBD

Presenter	Wednesday, June 3		Thursday, June 4		Friday, June 5
	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.
<b>Maria Nielsen</b>	<i>Coming soon!</i> Room TBD	<i>Coming soon!</i> Room TBD	<i>Coming soon!</i> Room TBD	<i>Coming soon!</i> Room TBD	<i>Coming soon!</i> Room TBD
<b>Regina Stephens Owens</b>	The <i>Why</i> Effect 2.0: Intentional Systems Produce Inspirational Cultures Room TBD	From Overload to Impact: A Data Discussion for Educators and Instructional Leaders Room TBD	Your Physical, Mental, and Relational Wellness: Thriving at Work <i>and</i> at Home! Room TBD	Different by Design: Small, Virtual, Innovative, and Singleton PLCs Room TBD	Educators Are Learners, Too! Stop Telling, Start Teaching Room TBD
<b>Julie A. Schmidt</b>	Next-Level Collaboration: Essential Standards as the Engine Room TBD	All Means All: Essential Actions for General and Special Educators to Ensure High Levels of Learning for <i>All</i> Room TBD	Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools Room TBD	Central Office Leadership: Articulate, Protect, and Promote Room TBD	Windows and Mirrors: Women Who Lead Room TBD
<b>Sarah Schuhl</b>	Together We Can Accelerate Student Learning to Grade Level and Beyond* Room TBD	Create Common Assessments to Use in a Culture of Learning Room TBD	From Scores to Learning: Effective Grading Practices Room TBD	Math Success for All: Tier 1 and Tier 2 Instruction That Works Room TBD	Together We Can Accelerate Student Learning to Grade Level and Beyond Room TBD
<b>Eric Twadell</b>	Social and Emotional Learning in a PLC at Work Room TBD	New to AI? Facilitating Better Teaching and Learning With AI Tools Room TBD	Leadership Matters: Exploring the Habits of Highly Effective District, School, and Team Leaders Room TBD	Grading for Learning: Evidence-Based Grading and Reporting in a PLC at Work Room TBD	It's All About Culture! Examining the Culture of Your School Room TBD

Agenda is subject to change.

# Session Descriptions—Day 1

## MORNING 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

#### **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:

- 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.

## Jason Hillman

### **Does This PLC Stuff Really Work? It Does—Come and See the Results!**

Jason Hillman has been an elementary school principal for more than twenty-two years. Over the past twelve years, his schools have functioned as high-level professional learning communities. The power of this story is how the PLC philosophy elevated two entirely different schools into being recognized as two of the best schools in the country. Some achievements include the National Blue Ribbon and the National Title 1 Distinguished School Award. In this session, Jason shares stories from both of his schools and provides some of the key strategies that ensure learning for all. Participants explore the importance of school-based mission and vision and explore authentic and practical PLC strategies that have produced amazing results.

Participants in this session:

- Gain practical strategies to establish a mission and vision in their schools.
- Establish an understanding of systematic professional development.

## David Jones

### **Shared Leadership, Shared Success: Improving PLC Outcomes Across Schools**

Building and sustaining effective professional learning communities requires intentional leadership and shared responsibility. In this session, school principals, district leaders, and instructional coaches examine how to guide, support, and grow PLCs in ways that strengthen collaboration and individual teacher practice as well as improve student learning. Participants examine key leadership actions and collaborative strategies that support progress monitoring, strengthen collective practice, and cultivate high-performing PLCs across schools.

Participants in this session:

- Identify essential actions site principals, district leaders, and instructional coaches take to develop, support, and lead the work of a PLC.

- Understand the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of a site- or district-based PLC leadership team (or guiding coalition), including the vital role instructional coaches play in supporting individual teachers and the team process.
- Learn a structured process for creating a PLC action plan, clarifying what must remain tight across schools and how leaders and coaches support, monitor, and refine implementation.
- Recognize the importance of clear, consistent direction, along with the support and accountability needed for sustained success.

## **Mike Mattos**

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

Teacher teams are the engines 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 monitor their progress.
- Develop team norms, address violations, and focus teams on the right work.
- Create a tight/loose calendar of team outcomes.

## **Anthony Muhammad**

### **All Hands on Deck! Keys to Building a Collaborative Culture**

In this session, Anthony Muhammad addresses the cornerstone of the PLC process: collaboration. Learn how teachers, support staff, school administration, and central office all work together to improve school learning. Dr. Muhammad discusses alignment and coherence at every level of the system, including two key areas: creating a culture of collaboration and how to create an environment where people embrace collective responsibility.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn how to construct and protect productive collaborative relationships.
- Understand how to create organizational coherence and ensure collaboration at every level of the school community.
- Grasp the importance of cooperation over power or authority.

## **Maria Nielsen**

*Coming soon!*

## Regina Stephens Owens

### **The *Why* Effect 2.0: Intentional Systems Produce Inspirational Cultures**

Organizational purpose and shared beliefs shape systems at every level. How do we ensure that all practices and procedures are intentional and personify organizational beliefs? It all begins with the *why*. In this session, Regina Stephens Owens offers strategies to design cultures that shift from compliance and coercion to strategies that are caring and compelling.

Participants in this session:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the guiding coalition.
- Move from individual to collective commitments.
- Operationalize their culture by translating values into consistent actions.

## 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

## Sarah Schuhl

### **Together We Can Accelerate Student Learning to Grade Level and Beyond**

Acceleration is not about moving faster. It is about ensuring all students engage in meaningful, grade-level content while receiving the support they need to be successful. Participants in this session examine the underlying meaning of acceleration for all and the mindsets that influence how schools respond to unfinished learning. They explore the differences between remediation and acceleration, identify common challenges that limit access to grade-level learning, and consider how instructional and leadership decisions can either reinforce or disrupt these gap-creating patterns.

Participants in this session:

- Identify which of the six acceleration mindsets most closely reflects current school practices and which must still be addressed.
- Determine specific actions teams can take to shift toward an acceleration model focusing on giving all students access to grade-level learning.

## 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

#### **Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback**

There is little doubt that how feedback is given and how feedback is received significantly impact learners. Since feedback is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal to enhance learning, it is important that educators understand the characteristics of effective feedback. In this session, Tim Brown explores those characteristics, and participants reflect on the degree to which those conditions are understood and used in their schools.

### 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.

## Jason Hillman

### **The Impact of School Culture: We Have to Get It Right!**

Culture is the driving force behind every aspect of our schools. As educators, we must have a strong understanding of culture and how it impacts student learning and relationships in our buildings. If we do not have a plan to develop the culture of our school, it will instead form on its own, and it may not align with the culture we desire. In this session, Jason Hillman shares a practical approach in developing and maintaining a positive school culture. Participants explore real-life examples, activities, and strategies Jason used to transform his school into a high-functioning professional learning community.

## David Jones

### **What to Do When Students Struggle: Implementing MTSS/RTI Effectively**

One of the most complex—and essential—questions faced by professional learning communities centers on how educators respond when students struggle to learn. Addressing this challenge is key to achieving equitable, high levels of success for every learner. Participants in this session explore the core components of an effective multitiered system of supports (MTSS) and gain practical strategies they can apply to strengthen implementation in their schools.

Participants in this session:

- Learn essential actions to implement at each tier of the MTSS/RTI pyramid, ensuring targeted support for every student.
- Explore practical tools, organizers, and resources to help teacher teams, leadership teams, and intervention teams develop and lead effective interventions.
- Discover data-driven methods for identifying struggling students and how schoolwide and collaborative teams can respond to ensure timely and effective support to accelerate learning.

## 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 requires that schools effectively answer the third

critical question of a PLC: How will we respond when students don't learn? In this session, Mike Mattos provides four guiding principles—four pearls—that can make your site interventions more effective. Participants explore how being a PLC creates the schoolwide processes needed to successfully implement these powerful ideas.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the four pearls to effective interventions.
- Explore examples and tools to implement each pearl.
- Connect the four pearls to the four critical questions of a PLC at Work.

## **Anthony Muhammad**

### **Improving Professional Practice to Advance Student Learning**

A PLC collaborates to improve student learning by stimulating professional learning. Many schools do not consider the learning for professionals as sacred as student learning. The PLC process operates under the assumption that adult learning is the catalyst for student learning. In this session, Anthony Muhammad introduces a process that will allow each school designing ongoing professional learning to support their professionals, which translates into greater performance for students.

Participants can expect to:

- Analyze a comprehensive set of data to identify areas for growth.
- Produce an effective and efficient professional learning system for educators.
- Generate a culture of intellectualism.

## **Maria Nielsen**

*Coming soon!*

## **Regina Stephens Owens**

### **From Overload to Impact: A Data Discussion for Educators and Instructional Leaders**

In a time of intense focus on data, it's essential to build a rich culture of learning through dialogue and data, shifting from deficit thinking to a data mindset. Participants in this session discover practical ways to foster this culture, leverage varied data types, and boost team capacity for high levels of learning for all. Regina Stephens Owens equips instructional leaders to turn data into a catalyst for continuous growth and impact.

Participants learn:

- How we think with data to uncover insights and possibilities
- How we organize and access data for seamless use
- How we act on data in real time through decisions, shifts, and interventions

## 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.

## Sarah Schuhl

### **Create Common Assessments to Use in a Culture of Learning**

How do teachers, teams, and students learn from common assessments? How must they be designed and used to maximize that learning? In this session, Sarah Schuhl focuses on the intentional creation and use of common assessments as evidence of learning throughout a unit of instruction. Together, teachers on collaborative teams use common assessments to monitor learning, reveal student thinking, and inform instructional decisions.

Participants in this session:

- Learn criteria for creating high-quality common assessments.
- Identify how teacher teams can use common assessment results to learn about instructional practices and design interventions and extensions.
- Explore how to use common assessments for student reflection and action.

## Eric Twadell

### **New to AI? Facilitating Better Teaching and Learning With AI Tools**

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

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**

**Maria Nielsen**

*Coming soon!*

# 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

#### **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

#### **Embracing English Language Development and Supporting Bilingual Students With the PLC Process**

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 acquiring English as an additional language. In addition, educators must collectively contribute to English language development by embracing both designated and integrated ELD instructional approaches. In this session, Luis F. Cruz shares his expertise in both

the PLC process and working with English learners to equip participants with strategies for ensuring these students thrive within the PLC framework.

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.
- Learn how to differentiate between designated and integrated instruction to continuously develop the English language for students learning English as an additional language.

## Jason Hillman

### **High-Level Results Come From High-Level Collaboration: Let's Talk About It!**

While creating a culture in which high-level collaboration exists is no easy task, it is crucial to ensure we achieve high levels of learning for all. As educators, we must understand what is important to collaborate on and what to avoid, why people resist collaboration, and how to do the right work when collaborating. In this session, Jason Hillman shares processes, materials, and strategies that support the big idea of collaboration in his school. Participants explore how to structure team meetings, how to group students for intervention and enrichment, and strategies Jason and his staff use to understand and help resisters move forward.

Participants in this session:

- Understand how to structure collaborative sessions.
- Explore why colleagues resist collaboration and change.
- Learn the importance of flexible grouping in establishing intervention and enrichment for students.

## David Jones

### **Through the Eyes of a Child: Essential Actions to Develop a Student Learning Community**

As teacher teams work to answer critical questions and improve student learning, one common challenge is finding meaningful strategies to connect students to the team process. In this session, David Jones argues that what teachers do to impact student achievement and what students do to improve their own success are both essential, but the actions students take to improve their learning can be especially critical to their overall success. Participants explore essential strategies to link student actions to both individual teaching efforts and the broader collaborative team process to motivate and engage students.

Participants in this session:

- Learn essential actions to connect students to the collaborative team process and their learning.
- Explore systems and strategies for creating a dynamic, supportive learning environment that motivates and engages students.

- Discover research-based lesson elements proven to enhance professional practice, student engagement, and achievement.
- Understand the role of student voice and feedback in improving classroom and school culture as well as boosting student achievement.

## Mike Mattos

### **Beyond Study Halls and Special Education: Tackling the Logistics of Secondary Systematic Interventions**

Providing systematic supports—where students can receive the collective expertise of the entire staff—requires dedicated intervention time within a school’s master schedule. At the secondary level, scheduling time at Tier 2 is relatively easy—it is the process virtually every middle/high school does 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 arise, such as:

- 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?

In this session, Mike Mattos explores specific processes that work—and don’t work—when creating and targeting secondary interventions.

## Anthony Muhammad

### **“So, How Do We Get Buy-In?” Leveraging the Guiding Coalition to Build Consensus**

In his 25 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, 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

*Coming soon!*

## Regina Stephens Owens

### **Your Physical, Mental, and Relational 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. Developing the relationship and wellness skills necessary to be part of an effective PLC at Work team takes its toll physically, mentally, and emotionally. The PLC life is one of “emotional and relational labor.” It is easy to experience fatigue from the daily noise and intense, often quick-changing expectations of the educator’s work life.

Participants in this session use the Wellness Solutions for Educators™ framework (co-authored by Dr. Timothy D. Kanold and Dr. Tina H. Boogren) to take a deep dive into the physical, mental, and relational wellness challenges that exist in the daily PLC life of an educator. Participants explore specific strategies for renewing the daily energy required to positively impact their students and colleagues. Participants are (re)invigorated, (re)inspired, and (re)connected to the benefits of a sustainable, joyful, and thriving home and PLC work life.

Participants can expect to:

- Discover brain research associated with their physical, mental, emotional, and social wellness.
- Consider concrete strategies for renewing their energy and incorporating wellness routines into daily life.
- Explore concrete strategies for reducing and avoiding the daily exhaustion of the educator’s life.
- Learn mindfulness routines that build collaborative relationships and joy routines that stick.
- Learn how to choose a daily well-balanced professional and personal life.

## Julie A. Schmidt

### **Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools**

Schools that function as professional learning communities 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* in action.
- Review and reflect on the essential elements of Tiers 1, 2, and 3 intervention.
- Examine the most common RTI mistakes.
- Identify essential structures for RTI success.
- Reflect on critical reminders regarding process and criteria.



## Sarah Schuhl

### **From Scores to Learning: Effective Grading Practices**

Teachers use grades to report student learning in grade books and on report cards. Essential questions about grading include: How do grades align with student learning and provide feedback? What is the purpose of each grade? Are grades consistent across a collaborative team? Who uses this information? As instructional and assessment practices shift to meet rigorous standards, grades too often are afterthoughts that muddy accurate reports of student learning. Clarity is needed within districts, schools, and collaborative teams so that students and other stakeholders know the meaning of each grade reported and the evidence of student learning used to generate the grade.

Participants in this session:

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

## Eric Twadell

### **Leadership Matters: Exploring the Habits of Highly Effective District, School, and Team Leaders**

District, school, and team leaders play an important role in developing PLCs. This session explores the essential characteristics and roles of leaders in creating and sustaining a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility in a PLC.

Participants in this session:

- Zero in on essential conversations to create a focus on learning.
- Discover how effective leaders facilitate a culture of shared responsibility.
- Examine strategies effective leaders must utilize to develop a learning-centered culture in districts, schools, and teams.

## **AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

## Tim Brown

### **Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback**

There is little doubt that how feedback is given and how feedback is received significantly impact learners. Since feedback is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal to enhance learning, it is important that educators understand the characteristics of effective feedback. In this session, Tim Brown explores those characteristics, and participants reflect on the degree to which those conditions are understood and used in their schools.

## 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.

## Jason Hillman

### **The Impact of Trauma on Students: A Personal Story**

Over more than thirty years in education, Jason Hillman has supported many students and staff through traumatic experiences. Trauma comes in many forms, and our students and staff are affected on a daily basis. Our understanding of students' behavior and needs is often limited to the classroom. In this session, Jason shares a very personal account on what students experience when cancer and chronic illness invade their home. Jason helps participants understand the effects chronic illness can have on students and the support educators can provide to help them through tough times. This impactful and emotional session reinforces the fact that what we do as educators matters!

Participants in this session:

- Develop understanding and empathy for students experiencing trauma in the classroom and at home.
- Understand the intensified importance of relationships for students experiencing trauma.

## David Jones

### **The Building Blocks of Effective PLCs: Essential Actions for Success**

What are the key characteristics and essential actions required, both schoolwide and within collaborative teacher teams, to build and sustain a successful PLC—especially in priority schools?

Too often, schools that claim to be operating as a PLC are missing essential components or lack a shared understanding of what a PLC is and how it functions. Participants in this session develop a foundational understanding of PLC culture and the core actions proven to improve student achievement in priority schools and beyond.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the schoolwide processes and essential team actions that drive effective collaboration and improve student learning.
- Learn individual and team processes for motivating and engaging students and providing interventions to struggling learners.
- Identify the essential PLC actions that have the greatest impact in high-priority schools.
- Receive practical tools, organizers, and strategies to apply directly in their schools.

## 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, some students will need support mastering the behaviors to succeed in school and beyond. Every school knows this universal truth, but many schools lack the systematic processes needed to achieve this outcome. In this session, Mike Mattos demonstrates how a school can leverage the four critical questions of the PLC at Work process to identify, teach, assess, and intervene when students lack essential academic and social behaviors.

Participants in this session:

- Create the right mindset for teaching behavior.
- Learn how the entire school—the entire PLC—must work together to teach essential behaviors.
- Consider systematic, tiered supports to target behavior interventions.

## Anthony Muhammad

### **Does All Still Mean All? Balancing Professional Obligation and Populism**

The first big idea of a PLC at Work is to ensure high levels of learning for all. As professionals, we are clear that 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.

- Learn how to shift from damaging mindsets (superiority and inferiority) to high levels of collective efficacy (liberation mindset).

## Maria Nielsen

*Coming soon!*

## Regina Stephens Owens

### **Different by Design: Small, Virtual, Innovative, and Singleton PLCs**

Small schools—charter, innovative, online—face big questions:

- How do we do it?
- How do we engage CTE, fine arts, PE?
- What about singletons?
- Where do we start?
- How do we sustain it?

In this session, Regina Stephens Owens demonstrates how participants can design and implement the PLC process in their school or district. Participants learn how to navigate nuances of being different, how to develop teams with meaningful work, and strategies for effective implementation.

## Julie A. Schmidt

### **Central Office Leadership: Articulate, Protect, and Promote**

Participants in this session focus on and clarify the critical role central office leadership plays in the implementation of PLC work that supports long-term sustainability. This session is designed for those who serve in any central office role and those who aspire to serve in such a role.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine the work of teams at each level of the organization.
- Explore the concept of loose-tight leadership as described by DuFour and Marzano.
- Consider some key leadership principles that support the successful implementation of PLC practices.
- Explore tools and reflect on what monitoring and support look like when you are an intentional learning leader.

## Sarah Schuhl

### **Math Success for All: Tier 1 and Tier 2 Instruction That Works**

Mathematics collaborative teams are made of teachers who work tirelessly to grow student learning. Yet, despite every effort, too many students in too many schools are struggling. What can be done? It starts with mathematics teams having an intentional and focused learning plan

for the year, every unit of instruction, and each daily lesson. Participants in this session explore how teams effectively plan for grade-level learning and mathematical reasoning in each unit and give students access to learning grade-level standards in lessons through targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. Participants examine research-affirmed teaching actions that maximize student learning during a mathematics lesson and learn how to incorporate mathematical rigor, balanced mathematical tasks, and student engagement.

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

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

## **Eric Twadell**

### **Grading for Learning: Evidence-Based Grading and Reporting in a PLC at Work**

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.

# 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

#### **Knowledge Is Not Power Until It Is Applied: Turning Your PLC Institute Experience Into Action**

After attending a PLC at Work institute, educators often return to their schools energized—only to encounter the challenge of fostering buy-in from colleagues who were not part of the experience. How can school leaders and teacher teams cultivate shared commitment, meaningful collaboration, and lasting implementation of the PLC process? In this closing session, Luis F. Cruz shares proven, practical strategies for helping colleagues think differently, feel differently, and ultimately do differently so that the PLC work moves beyond isolated practice and becomes embedded schoolwide.

Participants in this session:

- Gain insight into how to guide staff through necessary technical changes (the structural aspects) to ensure all students achieve at high levels.
- Learn how to promote a cultural shift (the human aspect) that supports and sustains those technical changes, creating lasting transformation in the school community.
- Gain actionable resources to facilitate both technical and cultural changes, empowering them to effectively implement the PLC process at their site.

### Jason Hillman

#### **Does This PLC Stuff Really Work? It Does—Come and See the Results!**

Jason Hillman has been an elementary school principal for more than twenty-two years. Over the past twelve years, his schools have functioned as high-level professional learning communities. The power of this story is how the PLC philosophy elevated two entirely different schools into being recognized as two of the best schools in the country. Some achievements include the National Blue Ribbon and the National Title 1 Distinguished School Award. In this session, Jason shares stories from both of his schools and provides some of the key strategies that ensure

learning for all. Participants explore the importance of school-based mission and vision and explore authentic and practical PLC strategies that have produced amazing results.

Participants in this session:

- Gain practical strategies to establish a mission and vision in their schools.
- Establish an understanding of systematic professional development.

## David Jones

### **Through the Eyes of a Child: Essential Actions to Develop a Student Learning Community**

As teacher teams work to answer critical questions and improve student learning, one common challenge is finding meaningful strategies to connect students to the team process. In this session, David Jones argues that what teachers do to impact student achievement and what students do to improve their own success are both essential, but the actions students take to improve their learning can be especially critical to their overall success. Participants explore essential strategies to link student actions to both individual teaching efforts and the broader collaborative team process to motivate and engage students.

Participants in this session:

- Learn essential actions to connect students to the collaborative team process and their learning.
- Explore systems and strategies for creating a dynamic, supportive learning environment that motivates and engages students.
- Discover research-based lesson elements proven to enhance professional practice, student engagement, and achievement.
- Understand the role of student voice and feedback in improving classroom and school culture as well as boosting student achievement.

## 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

*Coming soon!*

## Regina Stephens Owens

### **Educators Are Learners, Too! Stop Telling, Start Teaching**

Educators must embrace the mindset that they are learners, too. Participants in this session discover practical strategies to coach professionals toward true competence and promote efficacy and engagement in every learner. Regina Stephens Owens fosters collaboration and confidence as we learn and grow together by monitoring and measuring processes and performance.

Participants in this session:

- Identify systems in need of redesign and intentionally monitor and measure learning processes.
- Learn strategies to sustain professional growth and plan for continuous learning.

## Julie A. Schmidt

### **Windows and Mirrors: Women Who Lead**

Supported by current research on women in the workplace, this session invites participants to examine leadership through both a window into systemic realities and a mirror reflecting personal identity and lived experience. Participants explore historical and contemporary challenges women face in leadership roles and engage in intentional individual and collective



reflection. Through storytelling, dialogue, and guided inquiry, participants deepen self-awareness, strengthen self-efficacy, and gain clarity on their unique leadership identity—leaving better equipped to lead with purpose, confidence, and authenticity.

Participants can expect to:

- Consider research-based and historical challenges influencing women’s leadership pathways.
- Reflect on personal leadership experiences to increase self-awareness and clarify leadership identity.
- Recognize individual strengths and patterns that contribute to effective leadership.

## **Sarah Schuhl**

### **Together We Can Accelerate Student Learning to Grade Level and Beyond**

Acceleration is not about moving faster. It is about ensuring all students engage in meaningful, grade-level content while receiving the support they need to be successful. Participants in this session examine the underlying meaning of acceleration for all and the mindsets that influence how schools respond to unfinished learning. They explore the differences between remediation and acceleration, identify common challenges that limit access to grade-level learning, and consider how instructional and leadership decisions can either reinforce or disrupt these gap-creating patterns.

Participants in this session:

- Identify which of the six acceleration mindsets most closely reflects current school practices and which must still be addressed.
- Determine specific actions teams can take to shift toward an acceleration model focusing on giving all students access to grade-level learning.

## **Eric Twadell**

### **It’s All About Culture! 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.

## KEYNOTE

### Eric Twadell

#### **Beyond PLC Lite: Digging Deeper Into the Three Big Ideas of a Professional Learning Community at Work**

Moving beyond PLC lite is a never-ending journey of continuous improvement and growth and requires a deep commitment to the three big ideas of the PLC process: learning, collaboration, and results. In this keynote, Eric Twadell highlights the work that Adlai E. Stevenson High School (the “birthplace of the PLC at Work process”) has done to stay focused on the fundamental components of their PLC at Work culture and drive a steady increase in student learning and achievement.