

Monday, July 27

6:30–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —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.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Lunch (provided)	
12:30–2:00 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
2:00–2:15 p.m.	Break	
2:15–3:15 p.m.	Keynote —Heather Friziellie <i>Believe: Living, Learning, and Leading From the Inside Out</i>	

Tuesday, July 28

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —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.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Lunch (provided)	
12:30–2:00 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
2:00–2:15 p.m.	Break	
2:15–3:15 p.m.	Team Time —Presenters aid in your collaborative team discussions.	

Wednesday, July 29

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–4.
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Break	
9:45–11:45 a.m.	Keynote —Luis F. Cruz <i>Resistance Is a Natural Byproduct of Implementing PLCs: How to Confront It and Win</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	Monday, July 27		Tuesday, July 28		Wednesday, July 29
	10:00–11:30 a.m.	12:30–2:00 p.m.	10:00–11:30 a.m.	12:30–2:00 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
Jack Baldermann	Building a Championship High School PLC Room TBD	Motivating Disengaged Students: Supporting Champions of Hope and Learning for All* Room TBD	The Mindsets and Leadership Moves to Ensure Districtwide PLC Success Room TBD	Strategic Leadership and Outstanding Results in a PLC at Work Room TBD	Motivating Disengaged Students: Supporting Champions of Hope and Learning for All Room TBD
Tim Brown	Becoming World Class Together: Aligning Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention Through Collective Commitments Room TBD	Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback* Room TBD	Helping Students Believe They Can: Building Self-Efficacy Through Reflection and Goal Setting* Room TBD	Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback Room TBD	Helping Students Believe They Can: Building Self-Efficacy Through Reflection and Goal Setting Room TBD
Luis F. Cruz	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
Matt Devan	Break Free From Crisis Mode: Three Steps to Make Visible Progress Fast!* Room TBD	Building a PLC Fortress: Unlocking the Power of Unit Plans* Room TBD	It's Hard to Win When You Only Play With Half Your Team! Integrating Your PLC to Achieve Your Shared Goals Room TBD	Building a PLC Fortress: Unlocking the Power of Unit Plans Room TBD	Break Free From Crisis Mode: Three Steps to Make Visible Progress Fast! Room TBD
Heather Friziellie	Your Physical, Mental, and Relational Wellness: Thriving at Work <i>and</i> at Home! Room TBD	All Means All: Mindsets and Moves That Elevate Every Learner Room TBD	Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools Room TBD	Braving Difficult Conversations Room TBD	Instructional Effectiveness for All! Room TBD

Presenter	Monday, July 27		Tuesday, July 28		Wednesday, July 29
	10:00–11:30 a.m.	12:30–2:00 p.m.	10:00–11:30 a.m.	12:30–2:00 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
Pamela Liebenberg	Custom-Tailoring Student Success Through Differentiation* Room TBD	Building a Strong Foundation: Effective Strategies for Hiring, Orienting, and Retaining Staff in a PLC at Work School Room TBD	Designing Effective Parent Conferences: Professional Practices That Build Trust and Clarity Room TBD	Strategies for Effective Collaborative Meetings Room TBD	Custom-Tailoring Student Success Through Differentiation Room TBD
Mike Mattos	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
Anthony Muhammad	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
Maria Nielsen	<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
Regina Stephens Owens	The Why Effect 2.0: Intentional Systems Produce Inspirational Cultures Room TBD	Educators Are Learners, Too! Stop Telling, Start Teaching Room TBD	From Overload to Impact: A Data Discussion for Educators and Instructional Leaders Room TBD	Different by Design: Small, Virtual, Innovative, and Singleton PLCs Room TBD	Inspiring a Culture of Courage and Care Room TBD
Sarah Schuhl	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
Eric Twadell	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	Its 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

Jack Baldermann

Building a Championship High School PLC

Westmont High School won the DuFour Award (2020) and the Blue Ribbon Award (2021), and it currently ranks in the top 1% of all Illinois High Schools for growth in math and literacy, chronic absenteeism, and collaborative teacher rating. Westmont has been rated as exemplary every year and has one of the most improved and top-performing advanced placement programs in the nation. In this session, Jack Baldermann explores the specific and practical action steps that led to these student learning performance gains along with useful examples. Participants gain a framework to successfully implement PLC and RTI concepts that will lead to real student success.

Participants learn:

- How to build a culture that inspires staff and students to achieve exceptional growth
- The mindsets that lead to championship performance
- Specific action steps that leaders and teams can adapt for highly successful PLC implementation and learning gains

Tim Brown

Becoming World Class Together: Aligning Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention Through Collective Commitments

World-class teams don't assume alignment; they design it. When expectations for instruction, assessment, and intervention are clear and shared, students experience greater clarity and support. In this session, Tim Brown provides practical tools and structured processes for developing collective commitments that get teams on the same page and strengthen learning for all students.

Participants in this session:

- Analyze examples of effective collective commitments.
- Identify gaps or inconsistencies in current team practices.
- Draft or refine one to three collective commitments aligned to instruction.

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.

Matt Devan

Break Free From Crisis Mode: Three Steps to Make Visible Progress Fast!

Feeling overwhelmed by urgent student needs, underprepared staff, and pressure to boost test scores? It's time to shift gears. Join Matt Devan in this transformative session to learn three practical, high-impact steps that will help your school move from survival to success. Using proven strategies from *Learning by Doing*, 4th ed. (Solution Tree, 2024) and *School Improvement for*

All (Solution Tree, 2017), Matt equips participants with clear, actionable next steps to enhance student achievement and staff satisfaction. Discover how to create clarity, foster buy-in, and accelerate visible progress—starting immediately. Let’s make your school’s success a reality!

Heather Friziellie

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.

Pamela Liebenberg

Custom-Tailoring Student Success Through Differentiation

If you have ever wondered how to use differentiation in your classroom to reach the needs of all learners, this session is for you! Participants focus on differentiation through the lens of critical questions three and four of a PLC (What do we do when students don’t understand? and What do we do when students already know it?) Pamela Liebenberg provides participants with the background knowledge and skill sets needed to differentiate instruction for both high- and low-performing students. Through surveys, discussions, and hands-on activities, participants leave with a toolbox of strategies for differentiated instruction.

Participants in this session:

- Develop an understanding of the meaning of differentiation.
- Learn how to differentiate instruction for students who do not understand.
- Explore differentiation for instruction through enrichment and extension activities for high-performing students.

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.

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

Jack Baldermann

Motivating Disengaged Students: Supporting Champions of Hope and Learning for All

Jack Baldermann shares the findings of leading researchers and practitioners in education, including new research based on more than 300 interviews with students identified as underperforming. He shows the results of specific programs that are making a substantial difference in student achievement and facilitates a discussion about how to reach and engage unmotivated students.

Participants in this session:

- Learn about and discuss current research and best practices in education that positively impact the lives of all students.
- Examine research on why students disengage from the learning process and what educators can do to help them become more successful.
- Explore ideas and solutions that work in harmony with PLCs.
- Gain information and strategies to implement at their schools or districts.

Tim Brown

Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback

Although feedback is one of the most powerful influences on student learning, not all feedback has the same impact. The way we respond to student work can either build clarity and confidence or unintentionally create confusion and discouragement. Participants in this session explore research-based characteristics of effective feedback and examine how grading practices strengthen student learning.

Participants in this session:

- Apply the six keys of effective feedback to real classroom examples.
- Explore Thomas Guskey's four conditions for making grades meaningful.
- Analyze how their own feedback or grading examples align with these principles.

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.

Matt Devan

Building a PLC Fortress: Unlocking the Power of Unit Plans

What if your PLC practices could thrive for years, even amid team and leadership changes? The key to sustainability lies in one of the most effective—yet often overlooked—practices: unit plans. By organizing and sharing the work your teams are already doing, unit plans can transform collaboration, boost clarity, enhance professional satisfaction, and significantly improve student outcomes. Join Matt Devan to uncover the untapped potential of unit plans. Drawing from *Learning by Doing*, 4th ed. (Solution Tree, 2024), *School Improvement for All* (Solution Tree, 2017), and *The 15-Day Challenge* (Solution Tree, 2024), Matt provides three actionable steps to implement schoolwide unit plans that create lasting impact. Build your PLC fortress today!

Heather Frizellie

All Means All: Mindsets and Moves That Elevate Every Learner

This session is intentionally designed for both general and special educators who are working to ensure every student, without exception, experiences high levels of learning.

Together, participants explore the key ideas from *Yes We Can: General and Special Educators Collaborating in a Professional Learning Community* (Solution Tree, 2016) and its companion text, *All Means All: Essential Actions for Leveraging Yes We Can!* (Solution Tree, 2025). Participants examine the personal and systemic beliefs that shape our work, assess how aligned systems strengthen collaboration between general and special educators, and identify inclusive practices that make all *truly* mean *all*.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the six core principles from *Yes We Can!* and *All Means All* and their role in maximizing learning for every student.
- Examine personal and systemic beliefs that influence our work with students.
- Reflect on current practices to identify alignment gaps and needed shifts.
- Develop clear next steps to strengthen shared ownership and collective commitment in the PLC process to elevate learning for *all*.

Pamela Liebenberg

Building a Strong Foundation: Effective Strategies for Hiring, Orienting, and Retaining Staff in a PLC at Work School

Are you ready to transform your school by attracting, hiring, and retaining exceptional educators who work well together and thrive in a PLC? Pamela Liebenberg provides participants strategies based on the PLC at Work process for attracting applicants to their school, interviewing applicants, introducing new team members to the PLC process, and retaining veteran staff members. This session is inspired by *Learning by Doing* (Solution Tree, 2016) by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, and Mattos and *Powerful Guiding Coalitions* (Solution Tree, 2021) by Bill Hall.

Participants in this session:

- Learn techniques for attracting the right candidates for their school.
- Develop interviewing practices for candidates based on the big ideas of a PLC.
- Create a plan for introducing, supporting, and nurturing new staff members.
- Cultivate a school environment conducive to retaining veteran staff members.

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

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.

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

Heather Friziellie

Believe: Living, Learning, and Leading From the Inside Out

Beliefs shape outcomes. In this session, Heather Friziellie explores how what educators believe directly influences their actions and outcomes. Through powerful stories, interactive reflections, and practical strategies, participants uncover how shifting beliefs can spark resilience, unleash potential, and strengthen collective efficacy. Participants are inspired and equipped to ask (and answer) the critical question: What do *you* believe?

Participants in this session:

- Explore a framework for identifying, examining, and shaping beliefs and aligned actions to lead to more positive outcomes.
- Commit to one intentional belief shift that creates a positive ripple effect.

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

Jack Baldermann

The Mindsets and Leadership Moves to Ensure Districtwide PLC Success

Community Unit School District 201 (Westmont, Illinois) is one of the most improved and top-performing school districts in Illinois and the nation. Miller Elementary went from the 51st percentile to the 93rd percentile. Manning Elementary went from the 63rd percentile to the 98th percentile. Westmont Junior High School went from the 50th percentile to the 99th percentile. Westmont High School won the DuFour Award and remains in the 96th percentile.

Jack Baldermann and his team created a culture and specific team actions to gain these results, and in this session he shares the leadership plans and moves that led to this growth. Participants explore the powerful mindsets that lead to the most effective, compassionate school culture and outstanding student results.

Participants learn:

- How to collaboratively build and gain a passionate commitment for their championship vision

- How to build student and staff confidence and trust using a growth mindset
- Practical and impactful ideas to improve their PLC and RTI implementation to produce real growth in their school community

Tim Brown

Helping Students Believe They Can: Building Self-Efficacy Through Reflection and Goal Setting

Students are more motivated and engaged when they believe their effort leads to growth. Research consistently shows that self-efficacy—a student’s belief in their ability to succeed—is one of the strongest predictors of persistence and achievement. Participants in this session examine the essential conditions that strengthen student self-efficacy through purposeful goal setting and structured reflection. They explore practical routines, tools, and team-developed strategies that help students set meaningful goals, monitor their progress, and reflect on their growth.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the connection between self-efficacy, motivation, and student achievement.
- Identify key characteristics of effective goal setting and reflection practices.
- Analyze examples of student goal-setting tools and reflection protocols.

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.

Matt Devan

It's Hard to Win When You Only Play With Half Your Team! Integrating Your PLC to Achieve Your Shared Goals

No championship team has ever won by playing with just half its roster. Yet, many schools inadvertently sideline key staff—specialists, elective teachers, and those teaching art, music, physical education, and media—when implementing PLC work. These educators are often left wondering if they're excluded by design or simply overlooked. In this session, Matt Devan demonstrates how to bring everyone into the game. Using insights from *Learning by Doing*, 4th ed. (Solution Tree, 2024) and *Singletons in a PLC at Work* (Solution Tree, 2022), participants gain three actionable steps to align all staff with their school's goals. Unlock the full potential of your entire staff, ensure every educator contributes, and maximize your collective impact. Don't leave anyone on the sidelines!

Heather Friziellie

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.

Pamela Liebenberg

Designing Effective Parent Conferences: Professional Practices That Build Trust and Clarity

Effective parent conferences are the result of intentional design rather than improvisation. This session focuses on professional practices and systems that support clear, respectful, and student-centered conferences with families. Participants explore how open house planning, conference scheduling, classroom environment, and preparation routines establish a foundation for productive communication. The session emphasizes evidence of learning, purposeful listening, professional boundaries, and followup practices that promote trust while maintaining clarity. Educators will also examine when to involve additional support, how to document conferences objectively, and how to establish shared goals and check-in timelines with families.

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

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

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

Jack Baldermann

Strategic Leadership and Outstanding Results in a PLC at Work

Jack Baldermann has been leading PLC work for more than 30 years. He has supported 27 schools in attaining Model PLC status, and he and his school have won several awards. As principal and superintendent, Dr. Baldermann has led some of the most improved and top-performing schools in the state and nation. In this session, he shares the practices and action steps that have supported many schools to sustain exceptional growth and student achievement.

Participants gain:

- Specific strategies to implement PLC concepts that are proven to result in significant student achievement
- Practical tools to help establish a high-functioning PLC school

Tim Brown

Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback

Although feedback is one of the most powerful influences on student learning, not all feedback has the same impact. The way we respond to student work can either build clarity and confidence or unintentionally create confusion and discouragement. Participants in this session explore research-based characteristics of effective feedback and examine how grading practices strengthen student learning.

Participants in this session:

- Apply the six keys of effective feedback to real classroom examples.
- Explore Thomas Guskey's four conditions for making grades meaningful.
- Analyze how their own feedback or grading examples align with these principles.

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.

Matt Devan

Building a PLC Fortress: Unlocking the Power of Unit Plans

What if your PLC practices could thrive for years, even amid team and leadership changes? The key to sustainability lies in one of the most effective—yet often overlooked—practices: unit plans. By organizing and sharing the work your teams are already doing, unit plans can transform collaboration, boost clarity, enhance professional satisfaction, and significantly improve student outcomes. Join Matt Devan to uncover the untapped potential of unit plans. Drawing from *Learning by Doing*, 4th ed. (Solution Tree, 2024), *School Improvement for All* (Solution Tree, 2017), and *The 15-Day Challenge* (Solution Tree, 2024), Matt provides three actionable steps to implement schoolwide unit plans that create lasting impact. Build your PLC fortress today!

Heather Friziellie

Braving Difficult Conversations

All leaders face situations in which difficult conversations must occur to ensure necessary progress and improvement. Participants in this session define crucial conversations and practice engaging in both sides of the dialogue to build toolboxes and increase comfort levels with this task moving forward.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the *what* and *why* of a brave conversation.
- Learn about essential steps for having brave conversations.
- Practice these steps during a structured activity, taking time to reflect and plan for action moving forward.

Pamela Liebenberg

Strategies for Effective Collaborative Meetings

Are your collaborative meetings masterpieces or missed opportunities? Participants in this session learn strategies for planning, conducting, and concluding effective collaborative

meetings. Join Pamela Liebenberg for an insightful session that promises to transform your approach to collaborative meetings, turning them into powerful catalysts for team success from the district, to the school, and to classrooms. Supported by the book *Leading PLCs at Work Districtwide: From the Boardroom to the Classroom* (Solution Tree, 2021), Dr. Liebenberg shares how to collaborate effectively for continuous improvement and high levels of learning for all students.

Participants in this session:

- Clarify the components of a successful meeting framework.
- Implement strategies to encourage active participation and open communication among team members.
- Apply techniques for managing time effectively and addressing challenges during meetings.
- Enhance accountability and follow-through by mastering key facilitation techniques.

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.

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

Jack Baldermann

Motivating Disengaged Students: Supporting Champions of Hope and Learning for All

Jack Baldermann shares the findings of leading researchers and practitioners in education, including new research based on more than 300 interviews with students identified as underperforming. He shows the results of specific programs that are making a substantial difference in student achievement and facilitates a discussion about how to reach and engage unmotivated students.

Participants in this session:

- Learn about and discuss current research and best practices in education that positively impact the lives of all students.
- Examine research on why students disengage from the learning process and what educators can do to help them become more successful.
- Explore ideas and solutions that work in harmony with PLCs.
- Gain information and strategies to implement at their schools or districts.

Tim Brown

Helping Students Believe They Can: Building Self-Efficacy Through Reflection and Goal Setting

Students are more motivated and engaged when they believe their effort leads to growth. Research consistently shows that self-efficacy—a student’s belief in their ability to succeed—is one of the strongest predictors of persistence and achievement. Participants in this session examine the essential conditions that strengthen student self-efficacy through purposeful goal setting and structured reflection. They explore practical routines, tools, and team-developed strategies that help students set meaningful goals, monitor their progress, and reflect on their growth.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the connection between self-efficacy, motivation, and student achievement.
- Identify key characteristics of effective goal setting and reflection practices.
- Analyze examples of student goal-setting tools and reflection protocols.

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.

Matt Devan

Break Free From Crisis Mode: Three Steps to Make Visible Progress Fast!

Feeling overwhelmed by urgent student needs, underprepared staff, and pressure to boost test scores? It's time to shift gears. Join Matt Devan in this transformative session to learn three practical, high-impact steps that will help your school move from survival to success. Using proven strategies from *Learning by Doing*, 4th ed. (Solution Tree, 2024) and *School Improvement for All* (Solution Tree, 2017), Matt equips participants with clear, actionable next steps to enhance student achievement and staff satisfaction. Discover how to create clarity, foster buy-in, and accelerate visible progress—starting immediately. Let's make your school's success a reality!

Heather Friziellie

Instructional Effectiveness for All!

When we dig into the research, it's pretty easy to identify two things: We can't keep doing what we've always done and expect to get better results, and there are some clear high-leverage strategies we can employ to lead to higher levels of learning for *all* students. In this session, Heather Friziellie focuses on the following through the lens of learning standards and increasing student proficiency:

- Building an understanding of key research findings
- Exploring five essential instructional strategies that—regardless of grade level or content area—*will* help more learners learn at higher levels than ever before
- Beginning to develop an action plan based on the learning

Pamela Liebenberg

Custom-Tailoring Student Success Through Differentiation

If you have ever wondered how to use differentiation in your classroom to reach the needs of all learners, this session is for you! Participants focus on differentiation through the lens of critical questions three and four of a PLC (What do we do when students don't understand? and What do we do when students already know it?) Pamela Liebenberg provides participants with the background knowledge and skill sets needed to differentiate instruction for both high- and low-performing students. Through surveys, discussions, and hands-on activities, participants leave with a toolbox of strategies for differentiated instruction.

Participants in this session:

- Develop an understanding of the meaning of differentiation.
- Learn how to differentiate instruction for students who do not understand.
- Explore differentiation for instruction through enrichment and extension activities for high-performing students.

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

Inspiring a Culture of Courage and Care

In this session, Regina Stephens Owens ignites hearts and hands to intentionally inspire a culture where courage and care grow through clear commitments and coaching. This process cultivates connection by celebrating progress in performance and constructively challenging behaviors that hold us back. Together, participants create a vibrant culture where every action aligns with shared values for continuous improvement.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the role and responsibilities of the guiding coalition.
- Develop clarity and ownership of personal and team commitments for a culture of courage and care.
- Gain practical coaching strategies to coach and clarify, celebrate wins, and address challenges with intention and respect.

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

Luis F. Cruz

Resistance Is a Natural Byproduct of Implementing PLCs: How to Confront It and Win

Implementing the PLC process inevitably generates resistance from staff. Instead of questioning why resistance occurs, the real challenge is learning how to identify and address both rational and irrational forms of resistance. In this keynote, Luis F. Cruz draws on insights from his bestselling book coauthored with Anthony Muhammad, *Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders* (Solution Tree, 2019), to equip participants with the knowledge and strategies needed to confront resistance effectively. Participants gain practical tools for guiding their colleagues through the challenges of PLC implementation and ensuring deep, lasting commitment to the process.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the difference between rational and irrational forms of resistance to change and how to respond to each.
- Learn who holds the primary responsibility for addressing resistance to change during PLC implementation and how to empower those leaders.
- Leave inspired and well-equipped to implement the “real” PLC process—versus a watered-down, “PLC Lite” version—ensuring meaningful change in their school or district.