

## Monday, November 16

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> —Julie A. Schmidt <i>Positioned to Lead: Leading From Every Role, Every Day</i>	

## Tuesday, November 17

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.	

## Wednesday, November 18

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> —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, November 16		Tuesday, November 17		Wednesday, November 18
	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 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
<b>Shawn Creswell</b>	Accelerate Learning and Achieve Results! Room TBD	One Crew, One Course: Building a Thriving School Together Room TBD	Building Trust, Connection, and Authentic Collaboration on Teams in a PLC at Work Room TBD	Unlocking Learning Through Meaningful Assessment Room TBD	Hip, Hip, Hooray! Celebrate to Motivate! 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>Paula Maeker</b>	Gaining Ground: Four Key Factors to Increase Student Achievement in Schools With Significant Need* Room TBD	Deconstruct to Reconstruct: Building Collective Instructional Expertise, Clarity, and Agility Around Essential Learning Room TBD	Gaining Ground: Four Key Factors to Increase Student Achievement in Schools With Significant Need Room TBD	Literacy in a PLC at Work: Ensuring Essential Literacy Outcomes in Grades K–6 Room TBD	We Really Do Mean A!!! Collectively Meeting the Diverse Needs of All Learners 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

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<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 <i>All</i> ? 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
<b>Regina Stephens Owens</b>	The <i>Why</i> 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	Educators Are Learners, Too! Stop Telling, Start Teaching Room TBD
<b>Joshua Ray</b>	Being Great Without Burning Out Room TBD	Stop Meeting Just to Meet: The Small Habits That Make Teams Great Room TBD	Your Physical, Mental, and Relational Wellness: Thriving at Work <i>and</i> at Home! Room TBD	When Good People Resist Room TBD	One Bite at a Time: Doing the Work Without Overwhelming People 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

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# 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 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.

### Shawn Creswell

#### **Accelerate Learning and Achieve Results!**

In this session, Shawn Creswell guides participants in identifying the essential standards for any grade level, content area, or course and then dividing those standards into clear learning targets. By determining essential standards, participants discover how meaningful assessments,

interventions, and extensions naturally fall into place. Shawn shares practical tools and techniques, making it easy to apply these processes with collaborative teams or as singletons. If your goal is to ensure students learn, this session is for you!

Participants can expect to:

- Learn how to determine which standards are truly essential.
- Discover how to use learning targets to drive intervention and extension efforts.
- Acquire practical tools to seamlessly implement these strategies.

## **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.

## **Paula Maeker**

### **Gaining Ground: Four Key Factors to Increase Student Achievement in Schools With Significant Need**

Higher levels of academic success are not only possible, they are probable if we rethink our approach to school improvement and reinvest in systemwide practices that lead to swift and significant gains in student achievement. In this session, participants explore four key factors that consistently drive student achievement in high-need contexts. Grounded in research and real school experiences, this session highlights systemwide practices that strengthen instruction, build collective efficacy, and close learning gaps while maintaining grade-level expectations. Participants gain a clear understanding of what actually moves learning forward, why these factors work, and how to begin applying them immediately to gain and sustain higher levels of student 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.

## 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.

## Joshua Ray

### **Being Great Without Burning Out**

Educators care deeply about doing their work well, but the emotional and mental demands of the job can quietly accumulate over time. In this session, teachers and leaders reflect on what it takes to be great in their roles without relying on unsustainable habits or personal sacrifice.

Participants explore practical ways to protect energy, set compassionate limits, and rethink how teams and schools share responsibility for well-being so excellence can be sustained—not just achieved.

Participants gain:

- A clearer understanding of how the emotional demands of their work build over time and why willpower alone is not a sustainable strategy
- Practical ways to protect energy and set boundaries that support both effectiveness and longevity in their work
- A reframed view of wellness as a shared responsibility shaped by team norms, leadership decisions, and daily practices

## 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

## **AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

### **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.

## Shawn Creswell

### **One Crew, One Course: Building a Thriving School Together**

A thriving school doesn't happen by chance; it's built intentionally—together. In this session, educators and school leaders explore how to create a shared vision for a school where people want to work. Participants examine the conditions that support strong school culture, collective efficacy, and instructional excellence and identify the actions and behaviors required of every member of the crew—teachers, leaders, and support staff—to move the school forward. Through reflection and collaborative discussion, participants focus on aligning beliefs, daily practices, and decision making so the entire school community is pulling in the same direction. Shawn Creswell emphasizes shared responsibility, trust, and alignment—because when everyone is on the same crew and following the same course, schools become places where educators flourish and students succeed.

Participants explore:

- What a thriving school looks and feels like for educators and students
- How to develop and sustain a shared vision that drives commitment and staff retention
- The collective actions and behaviors necessary to achieve schoolwide goals

## 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.

## **Paula Maeker**

### **Deconstruct to Reconstruct: Building Collective Instructional Expertise, Clarity, and Agility Around Essential Learning**

To bring essential standards to life, teams must build shared clarity, collective expertise, and the instructional agility needed to respond to learning in real time. In this hands-on session, Paula Maeker moves beyond simply naming essential standards and into the instructional decisions that make them actionable. Using a practical framework, Paula unpacks complex standards into clear learning progressions that guide instruction, assessment, and response. Participants actively apply the process, examine examples from classroom practice, and leave with a repeatable, team-friendly approach that transforms collaborative planning from a compliance task into a powerful driver of student 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.

## 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.

## Joshua Ray

### **Stop Meeting Just to Meet: The Small Habits That Make Teams Great**

Most school teams meet with good intentions yet still find themselves spinning their wheels meeting after meeting. Over time, the work becomes another box to check rather than meaningful collaboration. In this session, educators and leaders examine why teams get stuck in cycles of meeting just to meet and explore the small, often overlooked behaviors that help effective teams stay focused and productive. Participants reflect on their own team routines and learn how clarity, follow-through, and shared responsibility can turn meetings into moments that actually move their work forward.

Participants gain:

- Greater clarity on the small behaviors effective teams use to create focus, follow-through, and momentum
- Practical ways teams can adjust how they meet so time together leads to meaningful change, not just good intentions

## 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.

## AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

### Julie A. Schmidt

#### **Positioned to Lead: Leading From Every Role, Every Day**

Leadership in schools isn't about a title; it's about action, influence, and a shared commitment to student success. No matter your current role, you have the power to lead from where you stand. In this keynote, Julie A. Schmidt inspires participants to embrace leadership in their current roles by focusing on collaboration, continuous learning, and taking meaningful action to drive positive change. Through interacting with one another, considering practical strategies, and reflecting, participants are empowered to be catalysts for improvement, no matter their position.

# 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

#### **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.

## Shawn Creswell

### **Building Trust, Connection, and Authentic Collaboration on Teams in a PLC at Work**

Educators in this session explore what makes teams successful and how trust and connection serve as the foundation for authentic collaboration. Participants learn strategies to help every team member feel seen, heard, and valued while building the skills needed to navigate productive—even difficult—conversations along the way. Together, teams create a shared vision for where they are headed and learn how to use the “team trail map” to guide their work, stay aligned, and navigate obstacles on their journey to becoming a highly effective team.

## 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.

## Paula Maeker

### **Gaining Ground: Four Key Factors to Increase Student Achievement in Schools With Significant Need**

Higher levels of academic success are not only possible, they are probable if we rethink our approach to school improvement and reinvest in systemwide practices that lead to swift and significant gains in student achievement. In this session, participants explore four key factors that consistently drive student achievement in high-need contexts. Grounded in research and real school experiences, this session highlights systemwide practices that strengthen instruction, build collective efficacy, and close learning gaps while maintaining grade-level expectations. Participants gain a clear understanding of what actually moves learning forward, why these factors work, and how to begin applying them immediately to gain and sustain higher levels of student success.

## 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.

## 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

## Joshua Ray

### **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.

## AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### 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.

### Shawn Creswell

#### **Unlocking Learning Through Meaningful Assessment**

How can we ensure students are truly learning, and how can we empower them to take ownership of their progress? Too often, assessments are underutilized, missing their potential to drive impactful learning experiences. Participants in this session explore how to design and implement common formative assessments that are so powerful they become indispensable. Discover why assessments are the key to unlocking student success and leave equipped with practical strategies to elevate your teaching practice.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn how to seamlessly embed common formative assessments into unit plans to ensure they align with learning goals and instructional practices.
- Discover strategies to empower students to use assessments as tools for self-reflection, goal setting, and ownership of their learning journey.
- Explore practical tips, tools, and examples to design assessments that are engaging and meaningful and drive impactful learning experiences.

## 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.

## Paula Maeker

### **Literacy in a PLC at Work: Ensuring Essential Literacy Outcomes in Grades K-6**

In this session, Paula Maeker engages K-6 educators in collaborative team processes that help determine what literacy outcomes are truly essential and deserve the greatest instructional time, focus, and support. Through examples, vertical standards study, and guided application, teams learn how to move from “trying to guarantee it all” to making intentional, shared decisions that prioritize essential literacy learning. Literacy teams gain a clearer starting point, a common language for collaborative conversations, and a practical approach to collectively ensuring high levels of literacy learning for all.

## 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).

## 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.

## Joshua Ray

### **When Good People Resist**

Resistance on a school campus rarely comes from a lack of care. More often, it shows up when committed people feel uncertain, unheard, or overwhelmed by change. In this session, educators and leaders examine why good people resist and how team responses can either deepen tension or build trust. Participants reflect on real situations from their own campuses and explore how

shared commitments, empathy, and clarity can help teams move forward together without blame, pressure, or burnout.

Participants gain:

- A clearer lens for understanding why capable, committed people resist change and what that resistance is often signaling
- Greater clarity around which team behaviors build trust during change and which ones create defensiveness
- Practical ways teams can support one another through change using shared commitments rather than pressure or compliance

## **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.

# Session Descriptions—Day 3

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### 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.

### Shawn Creswell

#### **Hip, Hip, Hooray! Celebrate to Motivate!**

Get ready to spark joy and discover how intentional celebrations can transform the culture of your district, school, and classroom! Shawn Creswell highlights the powerful impact of celebrations on motivating educators, students, and even the broader community. Too often, celebrations are overlooked, but they have the potential to drive engagement, inspire achievement, and create a positive environment where everyone thrives. Shawn provides district leaders, school administrators, guiding coalitions, and classroom teachers with practical strategies to make celebrations a meaningful and regular part of their culture. Whether grand or small, every celebration matters. Come learn how to harness their motivating magic and leave full of resources and new ideas!

Participants can expect to:

- Understand how and why celebrations drive motivation and build community.
- Explore practical ways to celebrate achievements at every level—district, school, and classroom.
- Walk away with actionable tools and ideas to make celebrating a cornerstone of your culture.

## 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.

## Paula Maeker

### **We Really Do Mean *All*! Collectively Meeting the Diverse Needs of All Learners**

The word *all*, by definition, does not exclude, so how do we meet the varied and unique needs of learners who are eligible for additional services? If we embrace the belief that *every student is our student*, then we must build systems and structures that deepen collaboration and shared responsibility for student success. The focus and purpose of our work remains clear: high expectations with equally high support, shared ownership, and instructional practices that ensure higher levels of learning for *all* students.

Designed for both general and special educators, this session examines the past and current realities of special education, reflects on practices that either support or hinder a culture of learning for all, and explores strategies for purposeful collaboration that address learner variability.

## 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.

## **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.

## **Joshua Ray**

### **One Bite at a Time: Doing the Work Without Overwhelming People**

Schools often leave conferences inspired but unsure how to turn new learning into action on their campuses. In this session, educators and leaders explore a practical, step-by-step approach to becoming a professional learning community without trying to do everything at once.

Participants walk through five essential steps that emphasize pacing, focus, and shared leadership so meaningful change can take hold without overwhelming the people doing the work.

Participants gain:

- A clear, sequenced roadmap for implementing PLC practices on their campus one step at a time
- Greater clarity on how culture, structure, and team focus work together to support student learning
- Practical guidance for supporting collaborative teams and ensuring essential learning and targeted intervention become a reality

## 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.

## 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.