

Tuesday, December 8

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 2–3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–3.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	Keynote —Michelle Marrillia <i>Beyond Titles: How Shared Leadership Empowers Every Educator to Lead</i>	

Wednesday, December 9

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 2–3.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–3.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	Team Time —Presenters aid in your collaborative team discussions.	

Thursday, December 10

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See pages 2–3.
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	Tuesday, December 8		Wednesday, December 9		Thursday, December 10
	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.
Tim Brown	Becoming World Class Together: Aligning Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention Through Collective Commitments Room TBD	Creating Confident Learners Through Effective Feedback* Room TBD	When Evidence Changes Teaching: Leveraging Short-Cycle CFAs for Real-Time Impact 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
William M. Ferriter	Examining the Right Work of Highly Effective Teacher Teams Room TBD	Understanding the Role of the Guiding Coalition in a PLC Room TBD	AI as a Thought Partner for Differentiation* Room TBD	From Isolation to Collaboration: Building Effective Teams for Singleton Teachers Room TBD	AI as a Thought Partner for Differentiation Room TBD
Michelle Marrillia	Clarity Changes Everything: How Essential Standards Drive Instruction, Feedback, and Learning Room TBD	Leading Teams Through the Messy Middle: Sustaining Momentum When Collaboration Gets Hard* Room TBD	From Helpful to High Impact: Coaching Moves That Build Ownership and Capacity Room TBD	Leading Teams Through the Messy Middle: Sustaining Momentum When Collaboration Gets Hard Room TBD	Together We Lead: How Principals and Instructional Coaches Team Up for Lasting Impact 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

Presenter	Tuesday, December 8		Wednesday, December 9		Thursday, December 10
	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.
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 <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
Maria Nielsen	Show Me What Ya Got: Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Student Learning Room TBD	The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work* Room TBD	Help Your Team: From Hot Mess to On Fire Room TBD	High-Impact ELA Strategies for Elementary Classrooms Room TBD	The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work Room TBD
Regina Stephens Owens	The <i>Why</i> Effect 2.0: Intentional Systems Produce Inspirational Cultures Room TBD	From Overload to Impact: A Data Discussion for Educators and Instructional Leaders Room TBD	Your Physical, Mental, and Relational Wellness: Thriving at Work <i>and</i> at Home!* Room TBD	Educators Are Learners, Too! Stop Telling, Start Teaching Room TBD	Your Physical, Mental, and Relational Wellness: Thriving at Work <i>and</i> at Home! Room TBD
Jeanne Spiller	The Path to Better Results: Quality Instruction, Focused Teams, and Targeted Supports Room TBD	From Standards to Learning Progressions Room TBD	Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools Room TBD	Leading From the Central Office: Anchor, Amplify, and Accelerate PLC Work Room TBD	All Means All: Mindsets and Moves That Elevate Every Learner Room TBD

Agenda is subject to change.

Session Descriptions—Day 1

MORNING KEYNOTE

Mike Mattos

All In! Digging Deeper Into Becoming a True Professional Learning Community

The PLC at Work framework is the most research-based, practitioner-confirmed process to improve student and adult learning. Yet many schools and districts are failing to reap the benefits of their collaborative efforts because they fail to dig deeply and stay committed to the right work. Mike Mattos identifies the essential thinking and actions of a true professional learning community and discusses how each collectively creates an ongoing process of continuous improvement.

Participants in this session:

- Learn the three big ideas and four critical questions of the PLC at Work process.
- Understand how each critical question is not a singular act but instead requires never-ending cycles of focus to dig deeper into the right work.
- Assess their current reality and consider next best steps to improve learning for all.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

Becoming World Class 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.

William M. Ferriter

Examining the Right Work of Highly Effective Teacher Teams

In this session, William M. Ferriter examines why many collaborative teams struggle to see value in their work and how a lack of clarity around purpose often leads to frustration, inefficiency, and skepticism. Bill explores a practical framework that defines the right work of collaborative teams as studying instruction together through recurring cycles of inquiry focused on essential standards. He emphasizes concrete tools and templates that help teams build shared clarity, analyze evidence of learning, and take action for students. Examples will demonstrate how AI tools can support teams in doing this work more consistently and with less effort.

Participants in this session:

- Explore a graphic organizer that clearly defines the right work of effective collaborative teams.
- Learn practical processes for engaging in cycles of inquiry, including unpacking essential standards, writing proficiency scales, developing assessments, and analyzing evidence of learning.
- Examine how AI tools can serve as thought partners that help teams complete the technical work of collaboration more consistently and intentionally.

Michelle Marrillia

Clarity Changes Everything: How Essential Standards Drive Instruction, Feedback, and Learning

Standards do not improve learning. How teams use them does. In this session, Michelle Marillia explores why many collaborative teams work hard yet struggle to see consistent gains in student learning. The challenge is often not effort, but a lack of shared clarity about what students must

learn and what proficiency looks like. Michelle focuses on turning essential standards into clear, student-friendly learning targets with aligned success criteria. Participants examine how clarity shapes instructional decisions, strengthens feedback, and increases the impact of high-impact instructional strategies. Through concrete examples, guided reflection, and practical planning tools, attendees gain a focused action step to strengthen instruction, feedback, and team practices, moving beyond activity toward meaningful learning.

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

Show Me What Ya Got: Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Student Learning

Ready to turn up the energy in your classroom? In this session, Maria Nielsen helps teachers move beyond “sit and get” and into lessons where every student is thinking, responding, and showing what they know. Participants explore engaging, easy-to-implement strategies that keep the pulse on student learning from beginning to end.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore the *nifty-nine* high-impact teaching practices.
- Practice engagement strategies that check for understanding in real time.
- Learn the difference between single-response questions, open-ended questions, and engagement prompts.
- Gain ready-to-use ideas that boost participation, spark thinking, and make learning visible

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.

Jeanne Spiller

The Path to Better Results: Quality Instruction, Focused Teams, and Targeted Supports

School improvement accelerates when teams strengthen what matters most: high-quality Tier 1 instruction, a disciplined PLC process, and intentional, targeted intervention systems. In this session, Jeanne Spiller equips educators with practical tools to tighten instructional practice, collaborate with greater focus, and respond strategically to student learning needs. Participants learn clear actions they can take in the next thirty days to drive measurable, schoolwide improvement.

Participants in this session:

- Strengthen Tier 1 instruction by identifying and implementing high-leverage practices that improve student learning immediately.
- Use the PLC process to analyze evidence, make timely instructional adjustments, and drive team action.
- Build or refine an intentional intervention system that targets essential needs and accelerates student progress.

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.

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.

William M. Ferriter

Understanding the Role of the Guiding Coalition in a PLC

Guiding coalitions are the backbone of any thriving professional learning community, ensuring that collaborative teams stay focused on the right work. Participants in this session explore the critical role of guiding coalitions, learn strategies for supporting teams at every stage of their development, and examine practical tools and resources to nurture collaboration.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the role of the guiding coalition in a PLC at Work.
- Learn about supporting collaborative teams at different stages of development.
- Discover specific tools and processes that guiding coalitions can use to support the development of collaborative teams.

Michelle Marrillia

Leading Teams Through the Messy Middle: Sustaining Momentum When Collaboration Gets Hard

Even strong teams hit a messy middle, a phase where competing priorities, resistance to change, and slow progress can turn collaboration from purposeful to procedural. In this session, Michelle Marrillia equips team leaders, coaches, and administrators with practical strategies to help teams stay focused, resilient, and committed to continuous improvement when momentum fades. Participants examine how high-impact teams respond to challenges, monitor progress meaningfully, and intentionally celebrate growth. Through real scenarios, reflection tools, and practical planning structures, attendees gain concrete strategies they can immediately apply to strengthen team practices and improve student learning outcomes.

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

The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work

In this session, Maria Nielsen helps participants establish, reboot, or reignite their collaborative teacher teams. In just 15 days, participants can simplify the work, clarify priorities, and create momentum that leads to real results for students. Schools across the nation and around the world are using this powerful seven-step process to turn collaboration into meaningful action and good intentions into guaranteed results.

Participants in this session:

- Explore real-life scenarios, implement ready-to-use strategies, and clarify the true work of collaborative teams.
- Learn a simple, actionable seven-step process for creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum.
- Gain a clear roadmap, renewed energy, alignment, and next steps to begin the 15-Day Challenge immediately.

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

Jeanne Spiller

From Standards to Learning Progressions

In this session, Jeanne Spiller guides educators through a practical process for converting standards into clear, sequenced learning progressions. Participants examine the essential knowledge and skills within a standard and map the steps students take toward proficiency.

Jeanne highlights how transparent learning pathways strengthen planning, instruction, and shared expectations.

Participants in this session:

- Analyze a standard to determine the key knowledge and skills students must develop.
- Create a concise learning progression outlining the pathway to proficiency.
- Identify aligned evidence that informs instructional decisions at each step.

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

Michelle Marrillia

Beyond Titles: How Shared Leadership Empowers Every Educator to Lead

In this session, Michelle Marrillia explores shared leadership as a belief system rather than a role or initiative. Participants reflect on how leadership shows up across their school, how systems and structures either invite or limit leadership, and how everyday actions contribute to a culture of collective responsibility. Through stories, reflection, and practical examples, Michelle highlights how schools can create conditions where more people lead and the work is carried together. Whether teachers, team leaders, coaches, or administrators, participants are invited to examine their influence and consider how their actions shape culture. Attendees gain clearer language, practical perspectives, and concrete ideas for strengthening collaboration, building shared ownership, and supporting sustainable improvement.

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

When Evidence Changes Teaching: Leveraging Short-Cycle CFAs for Real-Time Impact

Assessment does not improve learning; instructional response does. Drawing from the foundational research in Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam's *Inside the Black Box* (1998), Tim Brown explores the five keys that make formative assessment effective and examines the critical role of short-cycle CFAs in driving real-time instructional change. Through guided data conversations and practical protocols, participants experience how timely evidence and structured dialogue can move teams from reporting results to refining practice, thereby ensuring that assessment truly promotes learning.

Participants in this session:

- Explain the five key principles of effective formative assessment identified by Black and Wiliam.
- Analyze short-cycle CFA data using a structured protocol.
- Strengthen team conversations around practice rather than performance.

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.

William M. Ferriter

AI as a Thought Partner for Differentiation

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

Differentiation is widely recognized as an essential classroom practice, yet many teachers struggle to implement it consistently because of the time, energy, and planning demands it requires. This session explores how artificial intelligence tools can help remove those barriers by supporting the thoughtful study of standards, instructional tasks, and student demonstrations of learning. Rather than replacing professional judgment, AI is positioned as a thinking partner that helps teachers design differentiated pathways that maintain grade-level rigor while responding to learner needs. William M. Ferriter explores practical examples of how AI tools can support both targeted reteaching and meaningful extensions by making differentiation more manageable and sustainable in real classrooms.

Participants in this session:

- Develop a clear understanding of what differentiation is and why it often feels difficult to implement consistently.
- Explore practical ways to use AI tools as thought partners when planning differentiated instruction tied to essential standards.
- Identify strategies for using AI to support both reteaching and extension through alternative demonstrations of mastery without lowering expectations.

Michelle Marrillia

From Helpful to High Impact: Coaching Moves That Build Ownership and Capacity

Instructional coaches are often valued for their helpfulness, responsiveness, and support. Yet when coaches step in too quickly with answers, those well-intended moves can unintentionally limit team ownership, deepen dependence, or create compliance without commitment. In this highly interactive session, Michelle Marrillia explores the critical shift from helping to high-impact coaching. Using real-world scenarios, coaching stances, and a practical decision-making framework, coaches learn how to intentionally choose when to support, facilitate, or elevate thinking based on what individuals and teams need most. Participants examine common coaching traps, practice navigating resistance and power struggles, and apply coaching moves that strengthen ownership, accountability, and instructional coherence within the PLC, going beyond theory and into practice. Coaches gain concrete language, reflective questions, and coaching tools they can immediately apply to build capacity, guide team thinking, and support meaningful, sustainable improvement.

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

Help Your Team: From Hot Mess to On Fire

Every team hits a rough patch. The question is — what happens next?

As teachers move toward becoming truly interdependent teams, challenges are inevitable. This engaging session helps educators recognize common team struggles and shift their thinking and practices to ensure high levels of learning for every student. Participants examine the habits of highly effective teams, analyze real-world scenarios, and identify clear strategies to move their team forward with purpose and momentum.

Participants in this session:

- Identify common challenges that limit a team's effectiveness.
- Develop strategies to address obstacles through norms, breach of norms, and collective commitments.
- Leave with practical tools and renewed confidence to move your team from stuck to strong — and from hot mess to on fire.

Regina Stephens Owens

Your Physical, Mental, and Relational Wellness: Thriving at Work *and* at Home!

In this decade, teaching and leading in pursuit of improved student achievement is hard to do well day in and day out. Developing the relationship and wellness skills necessary to be part of an effective PLC at Work team takes its toll physically, mentally, and emotionally. The PLC life is one of "emotional and relational labor." It is easy to experience fatigue from the daily noise and intense, often quick-changing expectations of the educator's work life.

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

Participants can expect to:

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

Jeanne Spiller

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.

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.

William M. Ferriter

From Isolation to Collaboration: Building Effective Teams for Singleton Teachers

Collaboration is a cornerstone of effective teaching, but for singleton teachers and educators in small schools who don't share a curriculum, traditional PLC structures often make meaningful collaboration feel out of reach. William M. Ferriter challenges the idea that collaboration must be built around a shared curriculum and instead makes the case that singleton teachers can do powerful collaborative work by studying the skills and dispositions students need to be successful, regardless of subject area. Bill explores three practical teaming structures—vertical, interdisciplinary, and electronic—and shows how using these structures to focus collaborative inquiry on skills, dispositions, and instructional practices can create authentic opportunities for shared learning for every teacher.

Participants in this session:

- Identify the structural and practical challenges that limit collaboration for singleton teachers.
- Explore collaborative team structures that allow teachers to study, teach, and assess essential skills and dispositions together.
- Begin developing an actionable plan for integrating singleton teachers into meaningful PLC work.

Michelle Marrillia

Leading Teams Through the Messy Middle: Sustaining Momentum When Collaboration Gets Hard

Even strong teams hit a messy middle, a phase where competing priorities, resistance to change, and slow progress can turn collaboration from purposeful to procedural. In this session, Michelle Marrillia equips team leaders, coaches, and administrators with practical strategies to help teams stay focused, resilient, and committed to continuous improvement when momentum fades. Participants examine how high-impact teams respond to challenges, monitor progress meaningfully, and intentionally celebrate growth. Through real scenarios, reflection tools, and practical planning structures, attendees gain concrete strategies they can immediately apply to strengthen team practices and improve student learning outcomes.

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

High-Impact ELA Strategies for Elementary Classrooms

In this session, Maria Nielsen guides elementary educators through time-tested ELA strategies that make standards clear and instruction intentional. Teachers explore how reading and writing work hand in hand to deepen comprehension and ensure on-grade-level reading.

Participants in this session:

- Practice five proven reading strategies that boost reading fluency and comprehension.
- Understand how reading and writing connect to accelerate learning.
- Leave with practical tools and graphic organizers to support student writing.

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.

Jeanne Spiller

Leading From the Central Office: Anchor, Amplify, and Accelerate PLC Work

Districts thrive when central office leaders create the clarity, coherence, and confidence schools need to ensure high levels of learning for all students. Grounded in the core ideas from *Leading With Intention* (Solution Tree, 2018) and *Leading Beyond Intention* (Solution Tree, 2022), this session examines how system leaders anchor teams in purpose, amplify what matters most, and accelerate the work of professional learning communities across all schools. Participants uncover the leadership moves that shift a system from good intentions to aligned, collective impact.

Participants in this session:

- Understand how central office leadership shapes culture, coherence, and capacity building across schools engaged in PLC work.
- Apply the anchor–amplify–accelerate framework to strengthen districtwide support for principals and PLC teams.
- Identify specific, high-leverage system commitments that shift practice from intention to measurable improvement for students.

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.

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.

William M. Ferriter

AI as a Thought Partner for Differentiation

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

Differentiation is widely recognized as an essential classroom practice, yet many teachers struggle to implement it consistently because of the time, energy, and planning demands it requires. This session explores how artificial intelligence tools can help remove those barriers by supporting the thoughtful study of standards, instructional tasks, and student demonstrations of learning. Rather than replacing professional judgment, AI is positioned as a thinking partner that helps teachers design differentiated pathways that maintain grade-level rigor while responding to learner needs. William M. Ferriter explores practical examples of how AI tools can support both targeted reteaching and meaningful extensions by making differentiation more manageable and sustainable in real classrooms.

Participants in this session:

- Develop a clear understanding of what differentiation is and why it often feels difficult to implement consistently.
- Explore practical ways to use AI tools as thought partners when planning differentiated instruction tied to essential standards.
- Identify strategies for using AI to support both reteaching and extension through alternative demonstrations of mastery without lowering expectations.

Michelle Marrillia

Together We Lead: How Principals and Instructional Coaches Team Up for Lasting Impact

High-functioning PLCs are built through intentional, aligned leadership. When principals and instructional coaches lead together, schools build clarity, trust, and systems that keep the focus on learning. In this session, Michelle Marrillia explores the foundational moves that make the principal-coach partnership effective, with a focus on establishing trust, clarifying roles, and aligning instructional priorities so PLC work is purposeful rather than procedural. These early moves set the conditions for collaboration and real instructional improvement.

Grounded in real scenarios and practical tools, participants examine trust-building behaviors, identify the right work of the partnership, and reflect on how aligned leadership grows and adapts over time. Whether new to the role or strengthening an existing partnership, attendees will gain a clear starting point and a shared understanding of how to move the work forward together.

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

The 15-Day Challenge: Simplify and Energize Your PLC at Work

In this session, Maria Nielsen helps participants establish, reboot, or reignite their collaborative teacher teams. In just 15 days, participants can simplify the work, clarify priorities, and create momentum that leads to real results for students. Schools across the nation and around the world are using this powerful seven-step process to turn collaboration into meaningful action and good intentions into guaranteed results.

Participants in this session:

- Explore real-life scenarios, implement ready-to-use strategies, and clarify the true work of collaborative teams.
- Learn a simple, actionable seven-step process for creating a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

- Gain a clear roadmap, renewed energy, alignment, and next steps to begin the 15-Day Challenge immediately.

Regina Stephens Owens

Your Physical, Mental, and Relational Wellness: Thriving at Work *and* at Home!

In this decade, teaching and leading in pursuit of improved student achievement is hard to do well day in and day out. Developing the relationship and wellness skills necessary to be part of an effective PLC at Work team takes its toll physically, mentally, and emotionally. The PLC life is one of “emotional and relational labor.” It is easy to experience fatigue from the daily noise and intense, often quick-changing expectations of the educator’s work life.

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

Participants can expect to:

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

Jeanne Spiller

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*.

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.