

PLC AT WORK®



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Session Descriptions

KEYNOTES

**Ready, Set,
Go! Using the
Foundations and
Big Ideas of a PLC
at Work to Grow
Student Learning**

Presenter: Sarah Schuhl

A professional learning community focuses on ensuring learning for all students. But what does this *really* mean across a school or district? How do collaborative teams in a PLC at Work accomplish high levels of student learning?

Strong foundations and an emphasis on the three big ideas to guide the work are needed to become an effective PLC. Within such a framework, collaborative teams build a shared understanding of standards to intentionally link instruction, assessment, and student re-engagement as needed. What does all of this look and sound like? The work can seem daunting without a roadmap or vision for creating materials and responding to data. Sarah Schuhl clarifies this work using practical tools, protocols, and examples.



Solution Tree

The Litmus Test of a PLC: Making Decisions Through the Lens of Learning

Presenter: Mike Mattos

The fundamental purpose of a professional learning community is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. To best achieve this mission, educators within the organization commit to making decisions based on a critical question: Will doing this lead to higher learning levels? Practices and policies that improve learning are embraced and those that fall short are abandoned. In this keynote, Mike Mattos examines how professionals would apply this “learning litmus test” and identifies the actions proven to serve our students best.

Moving Beyond “PLC Lite”: Nurturing Full Commitment to the PLC Process

Presenter:
Anthony Muhammad

More than 20 years ago, Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker wrote the first book on PLC at Work. The PLC process is the most promising way to improve student learning, yet many schools remain stalled at the beginning stages of implementation. Why does this reality of “PLC lite” still plague our profession? Without exception, schools that use this model to transform their practice have one thing in common: effective leadership. Anthony Muhammad explores keys to transition a school or district into a model PLC.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding leadership challenges and lessons learned from decades of PLC practice
- Learning the difference between leadership behaviors that undermine and those that promote the purpose of a PLC
- Exploring strategies that improve participants’ ability to lead others through the change process and build consensus



BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Raising Questions and Finding Answers in Our Grading Practices

Presenter: Tim Brown

Talking about grading practices is often a touchy subject, full of emotions, opinions, and personal beliefs. However, when schools shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, they must be willing to examine policies, practices, and guidelines to see if they support learning principles. Tim Brown shows how staff can engage educators in a collaborative process committed to grading practices aligned with learning outcomes.

Participants discuss these essential questions:

- What do the principles of learning, student motivation, and grading have in common?
- What are the reasons and rationale behind changes in grading practices?
- What grading practices and guidelines do successful teams and schools implement?

Student Data Notebooks: Developing Ownership, Motivation, and a Growth Mindset

Presenter: Tim Brown

Educators promote a strong sense of student efficacy within schools that focus on learning. Several studies show self-efficacy is one of the greatest factors of student motivation and engagement. In this session, participants examine ways to build a growth mindset through data notebooks. Tim Brown shares products teams have developed to empower students in self-reporting and reflection.

This session addresses these questions:

- What are the key components of a highly motivated and engaged classroom?
- What products do teams build to improve learning and ensure self-efficacy in the PLC at Work process?
- How can teachers effectively use products to help students own their learning?



I Am Sold on PLCs: Practical Tools and Directions to Be Successful

Presenter: Luis F. Cruz

As educators initiate an effective PLC process, they need practical tools to begin and enhance their journey. After leaving this institute, educators may discover that staff back at their site need convinced that the PLC process is the most practical path to take in the collective quest to accelerate learning for all students. Luis F. Cruz shares articles, templates, activities, and videos to provide administrative and teacher leaders the necessary tools to amplify improvement at their site.

Participants in this session will learn:

- The difference between rational and irrational forms of adult resistance and how to address each
- The art and science of effective leadership and how to maneuver in both directions
- Practical actions to accelerate the PLC process

Taping Before Painting: Taking the Critical Steps to Respond Collectively When Students Don't Learn

Presenter: Luis F. Cruz

The third critical question of a PLC, What do we do when students don't learn?, often stumps teachers and administrators. Luis F. Cruz showcases methods that schools across the country use to guarantee effective collaboration (taping the room) to ensure an effective collective response when students do not learn (painting the room). Participants learn how the PLC and RTI processes complement each other in increasing academic achievement for all students.

Participants in this session learn:

- How teacher teams effectively collaborate and respond when students do not learn
- Ways to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- The critical role of common assessments



Integrating Opportunities for Student Self-Assessment in Your Classroom

Presenter: William M. Ferriter

School assessment experts Richard J. Stiggins and Jan Chappuis argued it is essential for students—particularly those who struggle—to collect evidence showing their progression towards mastery.

“Are we skilled enough,” they wrote, “to use classroom assessment to either keep all learners from losing hope to begin with or to rebuild that hope once it has been destroyed?” Their point is exact: In grade-driven spaces, many students never have the opportunity to feel successful in school.

William M. Ferriter shows how to integrate student self-assessment into a classroom, ensuring that all students have the chance to see themselves as capable, competent learners.

Participants in this session:

- Discuss the role self-assessment plays in learning.
- Learn about challenges in integrating student self-assessment into the classroom.
- Explore simple self-assessment behaviors to include in any classroom.

Schools that function as PLCs must ultimately do two things: 1) build a collaborative culture to promote continuous adult learning, and 2) create structures and systems that provide students with additional time and support. After examining critical ingredients for systematic intervention and enrichment, participants receive criteria to assess their own schools’ responses and an action-planning template for the next steps in raising the bar and closing the gap.

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

Presenter: Heather Friziellie

Educators review strategies and structures collaboratively to:

- Examine core beliefs.
- Use resources (human, material, and temporal) to meet all learners’ needs, including developing a schedule to ensure intervention is timely, systematic, and directive.
- Use data to drive intervention, with a focus on progress monitoring to focus actions.
- Examine the most common RTI mistakes.
- Review a tool to assess the district, school, or team’s progress and opportunities when considering interventions.



Owning Their Learning: Students as Partners in Reaching Next Generation Rigor

Presenter: Aaron Hansen

It's time to help students do more than merely pass the state test. Students often exceed expectations on high-stakes tests when they own their learning. They also are empowered to do more.

In this session, participants consider what they want students to learn to succeed in all areas of their lives. Educators learn how to supercharge their PLC practices—the most powerful model for changing schools—to help students gain attributes, skills, and hope for the most crucial test—the test of life.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Using PLC practices to empower kids to own their learning
- Helping kids develop metacognition and self-efficacy for passing a state test
- Being reminded of the moral purpose of giving hope to students

Bumps in the Road: Getting More Kids to Learn More at Higher Levels

Presenter: Janel Keating

The road to becoming a PLC is never smooth. There are bumps along the way. The issue is not how to avoid the inevitable bumps, but rather how to deal with them. Janel Keating shares challenges to implementing PLCs and provides participants with a process for overcoming these challenges.



Are We a Group or a Team?

Presenter: Mike Mattos

Collaborative teacher teams are the engine that drives a professional learning community. When these teams are highly engaged in the right work, student learning accelerates. When they are not engaged, learning sputters and stalls. Because teachers traditionally must attend grade-level or departmental team meetings, schools often mistakenly assume that merely renaming these gatherings “PLC time” represents teacher collaboration. The act of meeting together does not make a team, but instead, merely a group.

Participants in this session:

- Assess if they are currently part of a group or a team.
- Review the essential work of teacher teams in a PLC.
- Learn how to navigate team disagreements successfully.
- Leave with specific action steps to improve your teacher team.

Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Secondary Schools

Presenter: Mike Mattos

Identifying students who need help is the lesser obstacle most secondary schools face; instead, the more significant issue is time. How do teacher teams schedule interventions during the school day? Mike Mattos offers examples from a high-performing school on how to create time for supplemental and intensive interventions.

Participants learn steps to implement a flexible secondary intervention period, including how to:

- Determine what interventions to offer each week.
- Require students to attend specific interventions.
- Monitor student attendance.
- Allocate staff.
- Extend student learning.
- Address potential obstacles.



Bringing the Four PLC Questions to Life: Systems That Ensure All Students Learn

Presenter: Anthony Muhammad

Anthony Muhammad focuses on the systemic implementation of a PLC at Work's four critical questions. Participants learn what it takes to move from theory to application. Dr. Muhammad's strategies are immediately usable when participants return to their schools.

Educators in this session:

- Practice developing essential standards and student outcomes.
- Learn to create useful and valid common assessments.
- Discover how to create an intervention system that meets all students' needs.

Getting Started: Building Consensus and Responding to Resisters

Presenter: Anthony Muhammad

Privatizing practice, isolation, and individual autonomy—topics that have traditionally characterized teaching—are the most significant barriers to building a school culture focused on continuous improvement. Anthony Muhammad addresses these questions: How can a faculty build consensus to effect substantial change? What are the most effective ways to respond to the concerns resisters even when the staff has decided to move forward?

Outcomes from this session include:

- Defining consensus
- Applying the most effective strategies for building consensus
- Learning seven research-based strategies for addressing resistance



The *Why* Effect: Intentional Systems Drive Inspirational Cultures

Presenter:
Regina Stephens Owens

Organizational purpose, collective beliefs, and commitments affect building systems at all levels. How can we ensure that all practices and procedures are intentional and personify organizational beliefs? It all begins with the why. Regina Stephens Owens shares strategies to design cultures that move from compliance, coercion, and fear to cultures that are respectful, responsive, and reflective.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding how to promote high standards of achievement for all
- Discovering how to create a collective, rather than individual, leadership focus
- Designing and developing cultures that are respectful, responsive, and reflective

Creating Common Assessments for Team and Student Learning

Presenter: Sarah Schuhl

Common assessments help students and teachers answer the second critical question of a PLC, How do we know if students learned it?

Sarah Schuhl helps address the purpose of assessments and how to identify what students have and have not yet learned. Participants explore considerations for writing quality common assessments and using them to involve students in their learning.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding a balanced assessment system
- Exploring considerations for item types to include on common assessments
- Learning how to use common assessments to help students self-reflect



Social and Emotional Learning in a PLC at Work: Best Practices for Teaching and Learning

Presenter: Eric Twadell

How do we respond when students don't learn? The typical answer is "through expanded curricular support." But many students who struggle are missing key social and emotional skills they need to learn and grow, or they have them but require ongoing reinforcement to reach their full potential.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the core SEL competencies of CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning): self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship skills.
- Learn strategies to instruct these competencies explicitly.
- Understand how these competencies impact student learning.

