

Session Descriptions—Day 1

KEYNOTE

Mike Mattos

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

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

Participants in this session:

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

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Jack Baldermann

Inspiring Your Team to PLC Excellence

Jack Baldermann shares the ideas, programs, strategies, and tools that Westmont High School (a Title 1 school in Illinois) implemented to become the most improved and one of the top-performing schools in the nation. In every student achievement category, Westmont has achieved exceptional and sustained results. Westmont's student-to-teacher trust score has been the highest in Illinois for the last five years, and our collaborative teacher score has also been the highest in the state. Jack shares specific ideas and programs that led to these powerful relationships.

Participants explore specific and practical action steps that led to these student learning performance gains. Participants gain a framework to successfully implement PLC and RTI concepts that will lead to real student success.

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.

Emily Feltner

We've Established the Essentials; What's Next?

Traditional school teams regularly plan by selecting resources, activities, and tasks, while collaborative teams within a professional learning community focus on collectively answering the question, "What do we want students to know and be able to do?" This requires that teams shift their thinking from planning what will be taught to planning what will be learned. Participants engage in planning for learning by starting with an essential standard, determining a learning progression for that standard, and discerning ways to commonly assess progress toward mastery.

Participants can expect to:

- Experience the shift from teaching to learning through the team planning process.
- Create a learning progression from learning targets based on an essential standard to scaffold instruction.

Jasmine K. Kullar

Training Teacher Leaders in a PLC

School leaders need to spend time building and developing their teacher leaders because their leadership is vital to the PLC process. Too often, we throw teacher leaders into their roles and expect them to lead, but many may not know how. In this session, Jasmine K. Kullar argues that their role is more than just communicating information to their departments on behalf of the principal. Participants explore everything from what teacher leaders are supposed to do in a PLC to how they receive training.

Participants in this session:

- Discuss the role of teacher leaders in a PLC.
- Explore leadership traits needed for effective teacher leadership.
- Generate ideas for professional development for teacher leaders.

Michael J. Maffoni

I Think They Are, Aren't They? The Role of Leadership in Monitoring the Development of PLCs

The most effective teams clearly understand their work and consistently engage in habits that drive goal achievement. Leaders at all levels of the school system play a critical role in setting clear expectations and establishing consistent processes to monitor and support the PLC process. Teams thrive when leaders strike a balance between applying top-down guidance and fostering bottom-up support. In this session, Michael J. Maffoni equips participants with a clear understanding of their role in supporting effective implementation of the PLC process. He also provides practical strategies for monitoring and supporting schools and teams within their system—without requiring leaders to be present at every team meeting.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the loose-tight philosophy essential for effective PLCs at Work.
- Understand the critical role district and school leaders play in monitoring PLC development.
- Discover three key characteristics of successful monitoring to support schools and teams effectively.

Mike Mattos

Are We a Group or a Team?

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 ... and when they are not, learning sputters and stalls. Because teachers have traditionally been required to 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 successfully navigate team disagreements.
- Leave with specific action steps to improve your teacher team.

Regina Stephens Owens

The *Why* Effect: Intentional Systems Drive Inspirational Cultures

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 move cultures

from an attitude of compliance, coercion, and fear to one that is respectful, responsive, and reflective.

Participants can expect to:

- Promote high standards of achievement for all.
- Create a collective, rather than individual, leadership focus.
- Design and sustain a values-driven culture that is evidenced by trust, transparency, reflection, and responsiveness.

Jeanne Spiller

Mapping the Path to Mastery: Designing Learning Progressions and Formative Assessments

Participants in this session explore the power of learning progressions and formative assessment to drive student growth and achievement. Participants learn how to break down essential standards into clear, actionable progressions that guide instruction and assessment. By connecting learning progressions to effective formative assessment practices, Jeanne Spiller equips educators to monitor student progress, provide targeted feedback, and adapt teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Participants can expect to:

- Develop clear and actionable learning progressions aligned to essential standards.
- Design and implement formative assessment strategies that support and inform instruction.
- Use student evidence to identify next steps in learning and provide meaningful feedback to improve student outcomes.

Mona Toncheff

Crafting a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum: Answering the First Critical Question in a PLC

What are characteristics of a guaranteed and viable curriculum and how does your team make sense of what is most essential? Participants in this session gain actionable insights on how to collectively and effectively answer the first critical question in a PLC, "What do we want all students to know and be able to do?"

Participants in this session:

- Learn how to interpret and prioritize standards effectively, ensuring clarity and alignment across their teams.
- Develop the tools to create a guaranteed and viable curriculum that promotes equity and excellence by focusing on learning for all students.
- Leave empowered with practical approaches to foster collaboration and enhance instructional impact.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Jack Baldermann

Outstanding Results in a High School PLC

Jack Baldermann, 2017 Illinois Principal of the Year and 2018 Finalist for National Principal of the Year, shares specific programs, ideas, plans, and tools used to transform schools. After four years of implementing PLC concepts, Westmont High School (a Title I school) became the most improved high school in Illinois with a graduation rate of 99 percent, a graduation rate of 100 percent for Latino and African American students, double-digit increases on every NCLB exam, a dramatic reduction in suspensions, achievement of adequate yearly progress for the first time in seven years, and one of the most improved advanced placement programs in the country. Riverside Brookfield High School achieved similar results using PLC concepts and employing strategic leadership.

Participants gain:

- Specific strategies to implement PLC concepts that are proven to result in significant student achievement
- Practical tools to help establish a high-functioning PLC school
- Useful information and inspiration to improve students' academic performance

Luis F. Cruz

Tweaking the PLC Process to Support Emergent Bilingual Students

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 learning English as an additional language. In this session, Luis F. Cruz shares his expertise in the PLC process and in working with English learners to equip participants with strategies for ensuring these students thrive within the framework of a PLC. 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.

Emily Feltner

They're All Over the Place! Strategies to Support Reading Comprehension at Grade Level and Beyond

Participants in this session focus on strategies to foster reading comprehension in grades three and above to ensure students who enter below grade level leave reading at grade level or above. Crafting effective Tier 1 instruction for students with varying proficiency levels poses unique challenges that require a delicate balance when addressing the difficulties faced by struggling readers. Educators must allow students to struggle productively when engaging in grade-level material without overtaking the reading process. Participants learn how to inspire and empower

students to not only meet academic reading standards but also cultivate a lifelong love for reading, creating readers for life!

Participants can expect to:

- Explore practical methods to scaffold instruction, providing support for students as they tackle increasingly complex reading materials.
- Discover strategies to cultivate critical thinking skills alongside reading, writing, thinking, and speaking.

Jasmine K. Kullar

Tough Conversations With Resisters, Fake Supporters, and the Eternally Crabby

Despite the excitement and buy-in educators may have in implementing PLCs and engaging in this work, they will undoubtedly run into staff who do not support the journey. These are team members who may seem to support a PLC but speak against it in the parking lot, openly resist, or are just averse to innovation. Working with people who do not want to change the way they have always done things can be challenging, but it can—and must—be done. Jasmine K. Kullar outlines how understanding the *why* helps shape the solutions to working through this very real problem and effective inroads into difficult conversations. Participants delve into proven tips and techniques for mastering these tough conversations.

Participants in this session:

- Identify reasons why having tough conversations is difficult.
- Recognize why we may not achieve the desired outcome after having tough conversations.
- Acquire various tips, techniques, and strategies to engage in effective tough conversations.

Michael J. Maffoni

Energize Your Teams: Coaching Collaborative Teams From Next Practice to Best Practice

It is clear, now more than ever, that effective implementation of PLCs at Work matters and is too important to be left to chance. Coaching collaborative teams provides the necessary bridge as they cross the knowing-doing gap. Michael J. Maffoni helps participants strengthen their PLCs through effective coaching practices. Participants examine why coached teams go further faster than uncoached teams and explore how a proven team-coaching cycle, tools, and professional development modules from *Energize Your Teams: Powerful Tools for Coaching Collaborative Teams in PLCs at Work* (Solution Tree, 2021) provide resources for schools to make the shift from PLC *lite* to PLC *right*.

Participants in this session:

- Learn a proven, effective coaching cycle that fortifies collaborative teams and school PLC practices.

- Engage in activities to apply the coaching tools, processes, and professional development to coach collaborative teams in a PLC.
- Explore professional development modules aligned to the five essential prerequisites of a PLC so teams receive just-in-time professional development based on their specific next steps.

Mike Mattos

MTSS and PLCs: Leveraging Collaboration to Effectively Intervene

The fundamental purpose of a professional learning community is to ensure high levels of learning for every student. Achieving this goal will undoubtedly require schools to effectively answer the critical question: How will we respond when students don't learn? Mike Mattos discusses specific steps that schools can take to create a highly effective, multitiered system of supports to target learning gaps, and demonstrates how the PLC at Work process fosters the schoolwide framework required to successfully intervene.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the guiding principles behind a multitiered system of interventions.
- Learn the essential actions of a school's guiding coalition, teacher teams, and intervention team.
- Prioritize resources to best meet student needs and make MTSS doable.

Regina Stephens Owens

Data Discussion for Instructional Leaders: From Data to Design to Demonstration of Learning

In a time of tremendous focus on data, it is imperative to grow a rich collaborative culture through dialogue and data protocols—moving from a deficit mindset to a growth mindset. Participants in this session discover ways to create this culture, use data as information, and increase team capacity and student learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Focus on results through the lens of data.
- Move from data to demonstration of learning.
- Ensure their beliefs and behaviors align as they utilize data.

Jeanne Spiller

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.

Mona Toncheff

Math Success for All: Team-Based Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions That Work!

Mathematics collaborative teams are made of teachers who work tirelessly to grow student learning. Yet, despite every effort, too many students in too many schools are struggling. Why? What can be done? It starts with mathematics teams having an intentional and focused learning plan for the year, for every unit of instruction, and for each daily lesson. Participants in this session explore how teams effectively plan for grade-level learning in each unit and give students access to learning grade-level standards in lessons through targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.

Participants use the Mathematics in a PLC at Work™ Tier 1 and Tier 2 Intervention Framework to:

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

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

Jeanne Spiller

Courage to Lead, Focus to Achieve

In this keynote, Jeanne Spiller dives into the pivotal role of courageous and focused leadership in professional learning communities. Participants explore actionable strategies for fostering collaboration, driving accountability, and maintaining a sharp focus on student success. Jeanne empowers leaders at every level to navigate challenges boldly, build cohesive teams, and achieve transformative outcomes for students.

Session Descriptions—Day 2

KEYNOTE

Jasmine K. Kullar

What Does Answering the Four PLC Questions Look and Sound Like?

You've learned about the foundation and building blocks of a PLC within the three big ideas. In this keynote, Jasmine K. Kullar goes deeper into the work of teacher teams in a PLC. What does it mean when we say that teams must collaborate? Collaboration is not about what's being taught on Monday or Tuesday; it is about the four fundamental questions. Dr. Kullar explores each of the questions in depth so participants gain a deeper understanding of what the work entails for collaborative teams.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the four fundamental questions of a PLC.
- Reflect on the current reality of the PLC work as it relates to the four questions.
- Develop next steps for each PLC question.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Jack Baldermann

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

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

Participants in this session:

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

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.

Emily Feltner

Collaboration Revolution: Transforming Team Tensions Into Total Commitment

The belief in a professional learning community requires that we commit to being members of a team. Working collaboratively with others can be challenging when individuals resist planning together and collectively responding to student learning. Recognizing common reasons for resistance and understanding the impact of unaddressed behaviors that hinder team success are crucial first steps in summoning the courage needed for critical conversations. Emily Feltner empowers participants with practical strategies to address resistance within a team and foster a culture of commitment.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine ways to proactively foster a culture of commitment within a team.
- Learn how to initiate critical conversations with peers about collaborative challenges.

Jasmine K. Kullar

Meetings, Meetings, and More Meetings

Grade-level meetings, department meetings, faculty meetings, and now collaborative meetings are needed, but how do you make them effective, efficient, and productive? Your perception of your team—whether you're in a high-performing team or not—could be related to how your meetings are run. In this session, Jasmine K. Kullar explores what makes meetings effective and how to get teams there. Participants review several strategies to improve their meetings and strengthen their collaborative teams.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore the relationships of meetings and collaborative teams.
- Examine characteristics of effective and ineffective meetings.
- Identify strategies to make effective collaborative meetings the norm in their school.

Michael J. Maffoni

From *Lite* to *Right*: Taking Strategic Action to Build Transformative PLCs

Moving from PLC *lite* to PLC *right* requires shifting from random acts of improvement to intentional coaching and strategic planning. This session is designed for any school striving to improve teaching and learning by strengthening PLC implementation. Participants enhance their understanding of implementation science and learn to align academic and PLC-specific SMART goals with their school's PLC process.

Michael J. Maffoni leads participants in creating 30-, 60-, and 90-day action plans that establish short- and long-term benchmarks that provide a clear path to achieving SMART goals and driving results. Participants leave with practical strategies and tools to assess their current PLC practices, plan targeted improvements, and lead their schools toward lasting, meaningful change.

Participants in this session:

- Gain actionable tools to assess current PLC practices and determine strategic next steps.
- Explore the guiding coalition's role in driving and managing change.
- Develop actionable plans that connect academic and PLC-specific SMART goals with their school's PLC process.

Mike Mattos

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

If the fundamental purpose of being a professional learning community is to ensure all students learn at high levels, then there must be time embedded during the school day to provide students extra time and support to succeed. This session provides real examples showing how to create time for supplemental and intensive interventions.

Participants learn specific 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.
- Do all this within teachers' contractual obligations.

Regina Stephens Owens

Cultivating Educator Wellness for Leading and Living the PLC Life!

In an educational landscape marked by increasing demands, it's crucial to recognize that the well-being of educators directly impacts student success and teacher retention. This session is an immersive experience designed to equip educators with the tools, strategies, and routines they need to prioritize their well-being, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and increased job satisfaction.

Utilizing the research-affirmed educator wellness framework built by Timothy D. Kanold and Tina H. Boogren, this session helps educators of all levels and backgrounds learn how to bring their very best selves to their students through the use of daily routines and strategies that can have a big impact on the achievement of educators and students alike. Participants leave this event feeling inspired, motivated, and rejuvenated!

Participants gain insight into:

- Foundational research, theory, and practice for daily educator wellness and well-being in order to enhance student achievement
- A research-affirmed educator wellness framework that can be utilized by individuals, teams, schools, or entire districts as part of their professional development plan
- Simple but powerful routines, strategies, and tools that can be implemented immediately to support the mental and emotional health of all educators

Jeanne Spiller

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

Schools that function as PLCs 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*.
- Review and reflect on the essential elements of Tiers 1, 2, and 3 intervention.
- Consider high-leverage usage of resources (human, material, structural) to meet the needs of all learners.
- Examine the most common RTI mistakes.
- Reflect on critical reminders regarding process and criteria.

Mona Toncheff

Assessments in Action

How can your assessments truly inspire and engage each and every learner? How can they play a vital role in the learning process? High-quality assessments provide valuable insights for both teachers and students regarding what has been learned and what has not yet been mastered. In this session, Mona Toncheff explores the four essential actions your team needs to establish a meaningful assessment process.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the work collaborative teacher teams do before, during, and after each unit to establish a meaningful common assessment process.
- Investigate common formative assessments and their relationship to the expectations outlined in the standards.
- Learn how to develop high-quality assessments that engage and motivate learners.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Jack Baldermann

Mindsets and Leadership Moves to Ensure PLC Success

Westmont High School became the most improved and one of the top-performing high schools in the nation by successfully implementing PLC concepts and practices. In 2020, Jack Baldermann and his team at Westmont won the DuFour Award as the best PLC in the country and in 2021 won the National Blue Ribbon Award as the most diverse regular high school to win the honor in Illinois in the last 25 years. These accomplishments were achieved because the team is passionately dedicated to creating a culture that is focused on compassion for all people, collaboratively building and developing an intense commitment to a championship vision, and making certain that joy and having fun are present on the path to exceptional results. Jack applied the mindsets and leadership moves to help his PreK–12 district to realize outstanding student achievement gains in all areas, including attendance rates, student discipline, and academic growth.

Participants learn:

- The powerful mindsets that create the most effective and high-performing culture, including ways to lead that will inspire their team
- How to build a compassionate culture and commitment to their championship vision or “educational promised land”
- How to build student and staff confidence, trust, and a growth mindset among their team
- Practical and impactful ideas to improve their PLC and RTI/MTSS implementation

Luis F. Cruz

Breaking Through the Initialisms: Connecting PLC and RTI to Ensure High-Quality Learning for Every Student

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- Participate in an interactive activity designed for immediate application, enabling them to support and share the learning with colleagues who were unable to attend.

Emily Feltner

From Vision to Practice: Leading a Culture of Learning

We can't lead what we don't know! Becoming a districtwide professional learning community is only possible when the school board, district leadership, and school leaders develop a strong PLC foundation and operate as a collaborative team at every level. This engaging session offers actionable strategies to align efforts, deepen shared understanding of the "why" behind the work, and foster collaboration at every level. Participants will gain the tools and insights to assess current practices and drive meaningful, system-wide implementation.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore proven approaches to break down silos and create cohesive, collaborative district teams.
- Discover practical strategies and resources for leading PLCs effectively at district and school levels.

Jasmine K. Kullar

Tough Conversations With Resisters, Fake Supporters, and the Eternally Crabby

Despite the excitement and buy-in educators may have in implementing PLCs and engaging in this work, they will undoubtedly run into staff who do not support the journey. These are team

members who may seem to support a PLC but speak against it in the parking lot, openly resist, or are just averse to innovation. Working with people who do not want to change the way they have always done things can be challenging, but it can—and must—be done. Jasmine K. Kullar outlines how understanding the *why* helps shape the solutions to working through this very real problem and effective inroads into difficult conversations. Participants delve into proven tips and techniques for mastering these tough conversations.

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Michael J. Maffoni

Energize Your Teams: Coaching Collaborative Teams From Next Practice to Best Practice

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Participants in this session:

- Learn a proven, effective coaching cycle that fortifies collaborative teams and school PLC practices.
- Engage in activities to apply the coaching tools, processes, and professional development to coach collaborative teams in a PLC.
- Explore professional development modules aligned to the five essential prerequisites of a PLC so teams receive just-in-time professional development based on their specific next steps.

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, we know that some students will need support mastering the behaviors needed to succeed in school and beyond. Every school knows this universal truth, but many schools lack the systematic processes to achieve this outcome. In this

breakout, Mike Mattos demonstrates how a school can leverage the PLC at Work process to identify, teach, assess, and intervene when students lack essential academic and social behaviors.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn how the entire school—the entire PLC—must work together to teach essential behaviors.
- Apply the four critical questions of the PLC at Work process to identify, teach, assess, and intervene around essential behaviors.
- Consider systematic, tiered supports to target behavior interventions.

Regina Stephens Owens

Small Schools and Singletons: Wired for Rigor and Relevance

Small schools—charter, innovative, or online—often ask: How do we engage in the PLC at Work process? How do we involve CTE, fine arts, PE? How do we handle singletons? Where do we begin? Join Regina Stephens Owens to learn how to effectively implement the PLC process in small schools or as singletons.

Outcomes from this session include:

- How to function as a PLC at Work in a small school or as a singleton
- How to develop your teams
- How to monitor and measure your success

Jeanne Spiller

High-Impact Strategies for Low-Performing Schools Through the PLC Process

Focusing on the PLC process, Jeanne Spiller addresses the unique challenges faced by low-performing schools and equips participants with practical tools and frameworks to drive meaningful change. Jeanne empowers educators and leaders with actionable strategies to address the challenges of low-performing schools. Participants explore targeted instructional practices, analyze root causes, and collaborate on creating a 30-day action plan using the PLC framework. Participants engage with hands-on activities, practical tools, and collaborative problem solving to drive measurable improvements in student outcomes.

Participants can expect to:

- Identify high-impact strategies to address challenges in low-performing schools.
- Utilize the PLC process to implement and monitor targeted interventions.
- Develop a focused action plan to achieve measurable improvements in student outcomes.

Mona Toncheff

Taking Action With Data: Making the Process Easy, Efficient, and Effective

Effective collaborative teams use data as a powerful tool to meet the diverse needs of students while enhancing the professional practices of educators. In this session, Mona Toncheff models the most impactful methods for analyzing student thinking and provides actionable strategies to leverage data for both interventions and extensions in response to student learning.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the purpose and value of common assessments, along with the different types of data that collaborative teams use to drive instruction and learning.
- Explore methods to enhance the reliability and accuracy of the data teams collect.
- Develop and apply strategies and protocols for effectively analyzing student data as a collaborative team.
- Engage in hands-on practice with a real-world scenario to build confidence in applying these processes with their teams.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Jack Baldermann

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

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

Participants in this session:

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

Luis F. Cruz

All Done—Now What? Turning Your PLC Institute Experience Into Action at Your Site

After gaining a wealth of skills and strategies from today's Institute, participants may face the challenge of bringing those ideas back to their schools and convincing colleagues to embrace the PLC process. How do we foster a culture of collaboration and commitment among staff, especially those who weren't able to attend? In this session, Luis F. Cruz shares proven strategies for getting colleagues to think differently, feel differently, and ultimately do differently, ensuring that the PLC process takes root schoolwide.

Participants in this session:

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

Emily Feltner

Collaboration Revolution: Transforming Team Tensions Into Total Commitment

The belief in a professional learning community requires that we commit to being members of a team. Working collaboratively with others can be challenging when individuals resist planning together and collectively responding to student learning. Recognizing common reasons for resistance and understanding the impact of unaddressed behaviors that hinder team success are crucial first steps in summoning the courage needed for critical conversations. Emily Feltner empowers participants with practical strategies to address resistance within a team and foster a culture of commitment.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine ways to proactively foster a culture of commitment within a team.
- Learn how to initiate critical conversations with peers about collaborative challenges.

Jasmine K. Kullar

Training Teacher Leaders in a PLC

School leaders need to spend time building and developing their teacher leaders because their leadership is vital to the PLC process. Too often, we throw teacher leaders into their roles and expect them to lead, but many may not know how. In this session, Jasmine K. Kullar argues that their role is more than just communicating information to their departments on behalf of the principal. Participants explore everything from what teacher leaders are supposed to do in a PLC to how they receive training.

Participants in this session:

- Discuss the role of teacher leaders in a PLC.
- Explore leadership traits needed for effective teacher leadership.
- Generate ideas for professional development for teacher leaders.

Michael J. Maffoni

The Five Keys to Effective Team Meetings: Keeping Focused on the Right Work

Team meetings should result in team members experiencing an energy gain—not an energy drain. Participants explore the five keys to effective team meetings and how focus, structures, roles, relationships, and processes each contribute to promoting positive and productive team meetings. When team meetings become unproductive or burdensome, the root of the problem is likely related to the lack of implementation of one of the five keys of highly effective teams. Like diamonds, each key is multifaceted and contributes to the team's productivity in different ways. When all five are present, teams are more effective and efficient.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the five keys to effective teams and how they enhance team collaboration, effectiveness, and student learning.
- Reflect on how their team behaviors align with widely accepted best practices.
- Examine specific tools that can help provide clarity on the most common learning team tasks.

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.

Regina Stephens Owens

The Learning Professional: Coaching Competence, Not Compliance

In a time of great change and instability, educators and administrators more than ever must become empowered learners. Let's move from telling to teaching and from unsupported expectations to unmatched experiences that ensure educators are prepared for continuous learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Design and develop culture for learning.
- Learn to coach competency, not just compliance.
- Build collective capacity through shared responsibility of learning.
- Invest in personal mastery that results in increased capacity, collective responsibility, and increased achievement.

Jeanne Spiller

High-Impact Strategies for Low-Performing Schools Through the PLC Process

Focusing on the PLC process, Jeanne Spiller addresses the unique challenges faced by low-performing schools and equips participants with practical tools and frameworks to drive meaningful change. Jeanne empowers educators and leaders with actionable strategies to address the challenges of low-performing schools. Participants explore targeted instructional

practices, analyze root causes, and collaborate on creating a 30-day action plan using the PLC framework. Participants engage with hands-on activities, practical tools, and collaborative problem solving to drive measurable improvements in student outcomes.

Participants can expect to:

- Identify high-impact strategies to address challenges in low-performing schools.
- Utilize the PLC process to implement and monitor targeted interventions.
- Develop a focused action plan to achieve measurable improvements in student outcomes.

Mona Toncheff

From Scores to Learning: Effective Grading Practices

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

Participants in this session:

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

KEYNOTE

Luis F. Cruz

Resistance to PLC Implementation: 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.