



The Assessment Collaborative

Scottsdale, AZ • September 15–17, 2026

Tuesday, September 15

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Nicole Dimich <i>From Measurement to Momentum: Turning Assessment Into Learning</i>	
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 2.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 2.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	Topic-Alike Discussions —Presenters and participants engage in discussion on select topics, brainstorm solutions, and exchange effective strategies and tools.	
	<i>Instructional Agility and Feedback</i> —Nicole Dimich	
	<i>Homework and Practice</i> —Cassandra Erkens	
	<i>Assessment Architecture and Proficiency (Scales and Rubrics)</i> —Tom Schimmer	

Wednesday, September 16

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration and Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Cassandra Erkens <i>The Investment Gap: Using Assessment Systems to Re-Engage the Disengaged</i>	
9:45–10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00–11:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 2.
11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 2.
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break	
2:45–3:45 p.m.	Interactive Dialogue With Experts —Presenters and attendees discuss questions raised in the last two days of learning.	

Thursday, September 17

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Rooms TBD
8:00–9:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions	See page 2.
9:30–9:45 a.m.	Break	
9:45–11:30 a.m.	Keynote —Tom Schimmer <i>The Grading Trap! How Misguided Grading Practices Undermine Effective Teaching</i>	

Breakout Sessions at a Glance

Rooms will be listed in [blue](#) beneath titles three weeks before the event.

Presenter	Tuesday, September 15		Wednesday, September 16		Thursday, September 17
	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.
Nicole Dimich	Creating Success Criteria and Rubrics: Accuracy and Student Investment Room TBD	Crafting a Unit Assessment Plan Room TBD	Designing and Critiquing Assessment Items Room TBD	A Process for Analyzing Student Work to Grow Teacher Expertise and Improve Instruction Room TBD	When Students Don't Think They're Learning, Their Behavior Reflects It Room TBD
Cassandra Erkens	Curiosity by Design: Creating Questions That Drive Learning Room TBD	Talk That Teaches: Engineering Powerful Academic Discourse Room TBD	Don't Just Mark It, Move It Forward Room TBD	Teaching With AI: Designing Assessments That Reveal Real Learning Room TBD	Model It to Multiply It: Leading Assessment Literacy Across a School Room TBD
Tom Schimmer	Mapping Learning Progressions for Meaningful Assessment Planning Room TBD	Reassessment the Right Way Room TBD	Redefining Student Accountability Room TBD	Acceptable Alternatives in Sound Grading and Reporting Room TBD	Rubrics That Work: Designing Clear, Effective, and Meaningful Criteria Room TBD

Agenda is subject to change.

Session Descriptions—Day 1

MORNING KEYNOTE

Nicole Dimich

From Measurement to Momentum: Turning Assessment Into Learning

Assessment should create momentum for learning—not merely record results. When educators focus on the evidence that emerges from assessment, they gain powerful insight into students' strengths, next steps, and opportunities for growth.

In this keynote, Nicole Dimich explores how teachers and collaborative teams use assessment as information—through questioning, observation, feedback, and analysis of student work—to guide instruction and respond to learning in real time. These practices cultivate what we call instructional agility: the ability to use emerging evidence to strengthen teaching and move learning forward. When assessment is used in this way, it does more than measure learning; it turns assessment into a process that builds student confidence, efficacy, and hope.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Nicole Dimich

Creating Success Criteria and Rubrics: Accuracy and Student Investment

Clear success criteria and high-quality rubrics strengthen assessment accuracy, improve feedback, and elevate the quality of student work. When students understand what success looks like—and help co-create it—they become more invested in their learning.

In this session, Nicole Dimich explores how to design success criteria and descriptive rubrics that produce clearer evidence of learning while increasing student ownership and engagement.

Participants in this session:

- Design success criteria that support accurate assessment and targeted feedback.
- Critique and refine rubrics to improve scoring consistency and instructional clarity.
- Explore strategies for co-designing criteria with students to build investment in their learning.

Cassandra Erkens

Curiosity by Design: Creating Questions That Drive Learning

The quality of the formative data a teacher can generate during instruction is directly related to the quality of the questions the teacher asks, the depth of the questions students learn to ask, and the dynamic classroom conversations all those great questions generate. In this session, Cassandra Erkens explores how to design and employ quality instructional questions that function as high-quality formative assessments to guide instructional agility.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore frameworks for designing instructional questions.
- Practice designing different question types.
- Examine ways to improve the quality of student questioning.

Tom Schimmer

Mapping Learning Progressions for Meaningful Assessment Planning

Assessments should support rather than just measure learning. In this session, Tom Schimmer explores how to design assessments that align with well-structured learning progressions and ensure students move from foundational understanding to mastery with clarity and purpose. Participants unpack what makes a strong learning progression, analyze how assessment choices impact student growth, and develop practical strategies for creating assessments that provide meaningful insights. Whether participants aim to refine existing assessments or start fresh, Tom equips them with the tools to chart a clear path from where students are to where they need to be.

Participants in this session:

- Define and analyze learning progressions and identify key milestones that support student growth from foundational skills to mastery.
- Learn how to design or refine assessments that accurately measure where students are in their learning journey and provide actionable insights.
- Create a draft assessment plan that maps to a learning progression in their subject area to ensure assessments guide and support student learning effectively.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Nicole Dimich

Crafting a Unit Assessment Plan

Well-designed assessments provide meaningful evidence of student learning. A thoughtful assessment plan ensures that formative and summative assessments align with the intended learning and accurately communicate proficiency. Participants in this session learn how to design an assessment plan that clarifies learning expectations, guides collaborative team work, and provides students with a roadmap for progress.

Participants in this session:

- Explore key principles of assessment validity when planning assessments.
- Apply a practical protocol for creating a unit assessment plan.
- Use criteria to select assessment methods that accurately measure proficiency.

Cassandra Erkens

Talk That Teaches: Engineering Powerful Academic Discourse

Generating academic discourse—structured, purposeful conversation about ideas, evidence, and reasoning—is one of the most powerful ways teachers can deepen learning. Research across literacy, cognitive science, and formative assessment consistently shows that learning accelerates when students articulate their thinking and respond to others’ ideas. But it doesn’t happen without direct instruction, scaffolds, and systems of mutual responsibility. In this session, Cassandra Erkens explores the strategies and tools teachers can use to engineer engaging conversations.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the protocols necessary to create a culture of shared accountability.
- Identify sentence stems and scaffolds to support meaningful student interactions.
- Explore design criteria and systems for effective student collaborations.

Tom Schimmer

Reassessment the Right Way

Reassessment is often misunderstood as a simple redo, but in a sound grading system, it’s much more than that. True reassessment requires clear assessment data, targeted instruction that matches student needs, and a reverification of proficiency levels. In this session, Tom Schimmer explores how to design reassessment as a natural part of the learning process rather than something students must earn through unnecessary hoops or rigid policies. Participants gain practical strategies for structuring reassessment in a way that promotes growth, equity, and authentic learning.

Participants in this session:

- Understand how reassessment fits into a sound grading system and move beyond the “do-over” misconception.
- Learn how to use assessment data to plan reassessment opportunities that match the level of instructional support students need.
- Develop strategies to integrate reassessment seamlessly into their grading practices, ensuring it is equitable, meaningful, and focused on proficiency.

Session Descriptions—Day 2

KEYNOTE

Cassandra Erkens

The Investment Gap: Using Assessment Systems to Re-Engage the Disengaged

How do we re-engage the disengaged learner? If all learners were deeply invested in their learning, then student achievement and teacher job satisfaction would both skyrocket. But changes to current assessment practices and grading systems must be made for learners to be able to self-regulate as they engage in the work of deep learning. In this keynote, Cassandra Erkens explores the affective, behavioral, and cognitive mindsets and the practical strategies that educators must employ to improve student investment.

Participants can expect to:

- Identify barriers that block learners from truly investing in their own learning.
- Explore the educator mindsets required to support deep learning in the classroom.
- Identify strategies and tools teachers can use to support self-regulation in learners.

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Nicole Dimich

Designing and Critiquing Assessment Items

Assessment items and tasks give teachers and students powerful information to identify strengths and areas of growth. This information is critical for both teachers and students; the more accurate these items are, the more useful they are in ensuring learning. The cognitive demand of assessment items shapes the depth of student thinking and learning. Using Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK), teachers can intentionally design and evaluate assessment items that promote higher-level thinking. In this session, Nicole Dimich explores how to analyze and design assessment items at different cognitive levels to generate meaningful evidence of student learning.

Participants in this session:

- Identify and apply DOK levels to critique assessment items.
- Design assessment items across varying cognitive levels.
- Explore instructional implications of planning with cognitive demand in mind.

Cassandra Erkens

Don't Just Mark It, Move It Forward

Feedback is the primary instructional tool teachers use to reduce the discrepancy between where a learner is and where the learner needs to be. Unfortunately, not all feedback generates the

productive responses that empower learners to increase achievement and improve their grades. In this session, Cassandra Erkens explores the characteristics of quality feedback, engages educators in practicing giving quality feedback, and identifies strategies educators can readily use for generating fast but meaningful feedback.

Participants can expect to:

- Identify the characteristics of quality feedback to keep learners engaged in the learning process.
- Practice the use of productive feedback that feeds forward.
- Explore strategies for peer and self-review and evaluation techniques that can be used to support learning, increase motivation, and impact achievement.

Tom Schimmer

Redefining Student Accountability

The fear of losing accountability often keeps schools tied to punitive grading practices like zeros and late penalties. But true accountability isn't about punishment; it's about teaching responsibility. In this session, Tom Schimmer explores how schools can leverage sound grading practices and the PLC and RTI frameworks to build a culture where students take ownership of their learning. Participants learn practical systems, structures, and routines that support responsibility without compromising proficiency-based grading. Tom provides strategies that shift the focus from enforcement to empowerment and ensure high expectations and real student success.

Participants in this session:

- Understand how sound assessment practices create a proactive approach to redefining student accountability.
- Learn how to teach and reinforce responsibility, and other important habits of learning and student attributes.
- Create systems of accountability that ensure evidence of learning without distorting student achievement levels.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Nicole Dimich

A Process for Analyzing Student Work to Grow Teacher Expertise and Improve Instruction

Teachers have more data than ever, but without a clear process, it can feel overwhelming. The real power of assessment emerges when educators pause to examine student work and use the insights to guide instruction. In this session, Nicole Dimich introduces a practical process for analyzing student work that helps teachers reflect on instructional impact, calibrate scoring, and plan next steps that move learning forward.

Participants in this session:

- Examine student work to determine where students are in their learning progression.
- Identify instructional strategies based on patterns in student work.
- Plan targeted instruction to support mastery and deeper learning.

Cassandra Erkens

Teaching With AI: Designing Assessments That Reveal Real Learning

Artificial intelligence is here to stay, so how might we maximize its power without sacrificing academic integrity? And, how can we help students learn to harness the power ethically and responsibly? In this session, Cassandra Erkens explores ways teachers can use AI as an assessment co-designer to generate better tasks, deeper thinking, and powerful learning experiences for students.

Participants in this session:

- Examine prompts and strategies to use AI in the assessment design process.
- Explore meaningful ways to use AI for more expedient but still thoughtful feedback.
- Identify ways to use AI to support student metacognition and revision.

Tom Schimmer

Acceptable Alternatives in Sound Grading and Reporting

While sticking to traditional assessment practices is easy, leading change is anything but. True transformation requires more than just pushing for ideal grading practices; it demands practical, acceptable alternatives that help hesitant educators take meaningful steps forward. Participants in this discussion-based session explore realistic strategies that bridge the gap between the status quo and more effective assessment and grading practices. Participants discover ways to implement change while navigating non-negotiable school or district policies and learn how small, strategic shifts can lead to big impacts. Assessment reform isn't perfect, but progress is always possible; let's find the sweet spot together.

Participants in this session:

- Identify and evaluate practical alternatives to traditional grading practices that support assessment reform.
- Learn how to implement effective assessment practices even when faced with non-negotiable school or district policies.
- Gain strategies for leading gradual but impactful shifts in assessment and grading, helping teachers feel confident in transitioning away from outdated practices.

Session Descriptions—Day 3

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Nicole Dimich

When Students Don't Think They're Learning, Their Behavior Reflects It

Many classroom behavior challenges stem from confusion, frustration, or lack of confidence rather than defiance. When students clearly understand what they are learning, how they are progressing, and what success looks like, engagement and behavior improve. In this session, Nicole Dimich explores how clear assessment practices build both academic competence and social-emotional confidence, creating classrooms where students feel capable, invested, and successful.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the connection between assessment clarity, student confidence, and classroom behavior.
- Learn strategies to use assessment evidence and feedback to build student efficacy and investment.
- Design simple assessment practices that strengthen both academic learning and positive student behaviors.

Cassandra Erkens

Model It to Multiply It: Leading Assessment Literacy Across a School

Quality leadership is the work of quality assessment. In this session, Cassandra Erkens explores best assessment practices as quality leadership strategies. She also provides tools and resources for teacher leaders and administrators to begin modeling the process by using assessment practices to develop assessment literacy among staff. Systemic change happens when leaders model the way and then engage staff in exploring transparent practices over time.

Participants can expect to:

- Identify leadership practices that align with quality assessment practices.
- Explore options for engaging staff in the experience of quality assessment through modeling.

Tom Schimmer

Rubrics That Work: Designing Clear, Effective, and Meaningful Criteria

While well-designed rubrics clarify expectations, provide actionable feedback, and support student learning, not all rubrics are created equal. In this session, Tom Schimmer explores the differences between holistic, analytical, and single-point rubrics and guides participants in

choosing the right tool for their needs. Participants unpack the distinction between rubrics and proficiency scales to ensure each serves its intended purpose. Through practical strategies and hands-on examples, Tom demonstrates how to build effective rubrics that promote consistency, fairness, and meaningful assessment. Participants gain a framework for designing rubrics that truly enhance student learning and performance.

KEYNOTE

Tom Schimmer

The Grading Trap! How Misguided Grading Practices Undermine Effective Teaching

While grades are meant to reflect learning, our grading practices can act as barriers that undercut the very goals collaborative teams work so hard to achieve in their classrooms. In this keynote, Tom Schimmer explores the hidden grading trap: the unintended consequences of traditional grading policies that undermine student motivation, growth, and equity. Participants explore how traditional grading practices can inadvertently dismantle student engagement and distort achievement. When you transform your grading approach from a “gotcha” system to one that is learning focused and aligned with your teaching goals and values, accurate grades and confident learners will emerge.

Participants in this session:

- Learn to recognize specific grading practices that inadvertently create barriers for student success and contribute to inequities in the classroom.
- Explore principles of standards-based grading that prioritize mastery over compliance, allowing grades to reflect student learning more accurately and equitably.
- Gain actionable strategies to recalibrate grading policies, including methods for separating academic performance from behavior and creating more flexible opportunities for student growth.