

Professional Learning Communities at Work

Portable Event Package

Course Overview

The Portable Event Package course is structured for your optimal learning experience. Keynote sessions drive home the main ideas and themes. Concurrent keynotes and breakout sessions support the keynotes.

Solution Tree recommends viewing the keynotes in the order presented. Please select from the breakout sessions on the following page.

PEP participants have access to sessions for 60 days from the date they click “I agree” on the acknowledgement within the virtual platform. Sessions may feature downloadable handouts or PowerPoint slides. Handouts and slides will be available on the virtual platform on the “Additional Resources” tab.

 Clicking on the page numbers below will take you to those pages.

Block 1

Keynote —Mike Mattos <i>Proven, Practical, and Doable: Making the Case for PLCs at Work</i> Description, p. 5 
Breakout Sessions List, p. 2  Descriptions, pp. 5–9 
Panel Discussion — <i>In this recorded session, presenters field questions during a PLC at Work Institute.</i>

Block 2

Keynote —Anthony Muhammad <i>Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change</i> Description, p. 10 
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Keynote —Luis F. Cruz <i>Transformational Leadership: Aligning Adult Behaviors to Fuel Our PLC Journey</i> Description, p. 13 
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BLOCK

Breakout Sessions at a Glance

Tim Brown <i>You Can Learn: Building Student Ownership, Motivation, and Efficacy With the PLC at Work Process</i>
Timothy D. Kanold <i>Heart & Soul: Living a Fully Engaged, High-Energy, Well-Balanced Professional Life!</i>
Michelle Marrillia <i>The Case for Coaches in Professional Learning Communities</i>
Michelle Marrillia <i>How to Do Great Work in an Imperfect School</i>
Mike Mattos <i>Are We a Group or a Team?</i>
Mike Mattos <i>Taking Action: How the PLC at Work Framework Drives an Effective Multitiered System of Supports</i>
Anthony Muhammad <i>Building Culture, Creating Purpose, and Overcoming Frustration on Your PLC Journey</i>
Anthony Muhammad <i>Collaboration Is a Lifestyle, Not a Meeting!</i>
Maria Nielsen <i>The 15-Day Challenge: Win Quick, Win Often!</i>
Maria Nielsen <i>Common Assessments: The Key to Uncommon Results for Student and Teacher Learning</i>
Jeanne Spiller <i>Reading and Writing Instruction in a PLC at Work</i>



Breakout Sessions at a Glance

Tim Brown <i>Doubling the Speed of Learning: Activating the Keys of Formative Assessment to Create a Culture of Learning!</i>
Luis F. Cruz <i>Taping Before Painting: Taking the Critical Steps to Respond Collectively When Students Don't Learn</i>
Timothy D. Kanold <i>Educator Wellness: Routines and Strategies for Living Your Best Life!</i>
Timothy D. Kanold <i>Your PreK–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Great Instruction and Tasks!</i>
Maria Nielsen <i>Elementary ELA Strategies to Keep Your Students on Track</i>
Jeanne Spiller <i>Yes We Can! Collaboration for All Learners</i>



Breakout Sessions at a Glance

Luis F. Cruz

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

Mike Mattos

Guiding Principles for Principals: Tips and Tools for Leading the PLC at Work Process

Anthony Muhammad

Beyond Test Scores! The PLC at Work Process and Serving the Whole Child



Session Descriptions

KEYNOTE

Mike Mattos

Proven, Practical, and Doable: Making the Case for PLCs at Work

As a profession, we are facing unprecedented times. Never in our history has success in K–12 education been more vital to every child’s success, and never have educators faced such daunting challenges amplified by a global pandemic and social strife. How we, as educators, respond to these realities will have a profound impact for generations. In this keynote, Mike Mattos makes the case that our best hope to overcome these obstacles and ensure all our students succeed is to become a true professional learning community. Participants learn the guiding principles and essential actions of the PLC at Work process, assess their progress, and consider next steps in their PLC journey.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

You Can Learn! Building Student Ownership, Motivation, and Efficacy With the PLC at Work Process

Educators promote a strong sense of student efficacy within schools that focus on learning. Studies show promoting self-efficacy is one of the most significant factors in student motivation and engagement. In this session, participants examine essential characteristics for building student self-efficacy and explore team-developed products and strategies for using them.

Participants can expect to:

- Understand the term *dispositions* in the question, “What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do we want our students learning?”
- Learn how collaborative team questions influence student efficacy judgment.
- Explore products and processes that collaborative teams create to help students own their learning.



Session Descriptions

1 BLOCK B

Timothy D. Kanold

Heart & Soul: Living a Fully Engaged, High-Energy, Well-Balanced Professional Life!

Ours is a profession of “emotional labor,” and it is easy to experience mental and emotional exhaustion from the daily actions of our work life. Living the PLC life can be an experience of joy, and it can also sometimes leave teachers and leaders feeling overwhelmed. Relationships are hard work!

Timothy D. Kanold notes, “I have been exhausted at times and lost contact with the joy of my work life. So it is for you. Sooner or later, the world of your professional life stretches you beyond your limits. Yet, there are daily routines to help you regain your balance, renew your energy, and experience a state of heightened positive emotion at work, once again.”

By understanding their *heartprint* and *soul story* impact, attendees learn routines to overcome prolonged stress and avoid potential burnout. Dr. Kanold draws from his award-winning *HEART! Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader* (2018) and the companion *SOUL! Fulfilling the Promise of Your Professional Life* (2021) to provide research, insights, and reflective tools for every season of professional life.

Participants can expect to:

- Consider daily routines for developing a positive emotional response to students and colleagues every day.
- Understand how compassion and self-compassion can prevent emotional exhaustion and burnout.
- Consider how to develop your relational intelligence at work and home.
- Discover how to *live your best life* daily, well-balanced Quadrant II quietude.



Michelle Marrillia

The Case for Coaches in Professional Learning Communities

Successful instructional coaches understand the balancing act of working with teams to help ensure the fidelity of the three big ideas of a PLC while also providing the time and support to individual teachers who need it. Learn how a tiered instructional coaching model can help drive the collaborative culture in your school. Participants will leave with sample coaching plans for training team leaders, specific support systems for struggling teams, and instructional leadership team protocols.

Learning outcomes from this session include:

- Defining the role of coaches in PLCs
- Applying practical coaching strategies to develop and support team leaders in a PLC
- Determining next steps in building and sustaining an effective coaching model to support collaborative teams

Session Descriptions



Michelle Marrillia

How to Do Great Work in an Imperfect School

Every school faces unique challenges, from ever-changing student populations to teacher shortages and high-stakes accountability systems. Michelle Marrillia discusses ways to quiet the distractions and focus on the right work by adhering to the tenets of a PLC.

Participants in this session examine the differences between “PLC lite” and a true professional learning community and discuss methods to bring meaningful change to any school.

Participants gain insights into:

- How schools move away from adult-centered behavior to student-centered learning
- The conditions necessary for a collaborative culture to exist
- The ongoing support teachers need to maintain a thriving PLC

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.

Taking Action: How the PLC at Work Framework Drives an Effective Multitiered System of Supports

How does your school respond when students don't learn? Compelling evidence shows that response to intervention (RTI) successfully engages school staff in a collective process to provide every child with the additional time and support they need to learn at high levels. Yet, at many schools, this potential lies dormant, buried under layers of state regulations, district protocols, misguided priorities, and traditional school practices misaligned to the essential elements of RTI. This session shows how the PLC at Work process creates the larger schoolwide framework required to implement a highly effective, multitiered system of supports.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding the guiding principles behind a multitiered system of interventions
- Learning essential actions that collaborative teams must complete at Tier 1 to respond when students don't learn effectively
- Prioritizing resources to address academic and behavior interventions
- Beginning the process of creating a pyramid of interventions



Session Descriptions

1 BLOCK

Anthony Muhammad

Building Culture, Creating Purpose, and Overcoming Frustration on Your PLC Journey

Anthony Muhammad addresses two vital stages in creating a PLC culture: 1) establishing philosophical agreement and building shared purpose, and 2) addressing staff frustration and reluctance to change. He leads an exploration of theories linking school culture and student learning, and participants leave with practical strategies to transform the culture at their schools and districts.

Learning targets include:

- Addressing counterproductive belief systems and forming a cohesive team of student advocates
- Analyzing and managing staff frustration
- Understanding the balance between support and accountability

Collaboration Is a Lifestyle, Not a Meeting!

How is a culture of collaboration created? How can an environment be established where people embrace collective responsibility? Anthony Muhammad addresses the collaborative characteristics of a high-performing PLC. Participants learn how teachers, support staff, school administrators, and central offices work together to improve school performance. Dr. Muhammad also discusses staff resistance to change and the leader's role in building consensus.

Participants in this session:

- Construct and protect productive collaborative relationships.
- Create organizational coherence and ensure collaboration at all levels of the school community.
- Understand the balance between support and accountability.

Maria Nielsen

The 15-Day Challenge: Win Quick, Win Often!

This interactive session establishes, reboots, or re-energizes the work of collaborative teams. Schools nationwide are using this simple learning-assessing process to connect the dots of a PLC. Maria Nielsen helps teams see the big picture of a PLC and put it all together in a recurring cycle of collective inquiry. The 15-day challenge is a practical way to bring the PLC process to life.

Participants in this session:

- Clarify the work of collaborative teams.
- Establish steps for a guaranteed and viable curriculum.
- Explore the learning-assessing cycle in a unit of study.



Session Descriptions



Maria Nielsen

Common Assessments: The Key to Uncommon Results for Student and Teacher Learning

The secret is out: Common formative assessments are the key to improving student learning! Formative assessments are powerful when teams of teachers create assessments in common, then share and discuss the results. This collaborative process leads to a dramatic increase in student learning and improved teaching practices. Maria Nielsen provides proven tools to use common assessments across grade levels and departments and illustrates practical strategies for implementing and using assessments to substantially improve student and adult learning.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the benefits of using common assessment as a grade level or department.
- Understand the balance between formative and summative assessments.
- Gain formative assessment tools to increase student and adult learning.
- Discover quick and easy ways to look at data and drill down to individual students.

Jeanne Spiller

Reading and Writing Instruction in a PLC at Work

A literacy level that guarantees students will fully function and engage in society must be the reality for every student because, undeniably, illiteracy is not an option for any student. This session is constructed to assist collaborative teams in designing standards-aligned instruction, assessment, and intervention that support the literacy development of all students.

Learning outcomes include:

1. Understanding the role the three big ideas and four critical questions of a PLC play in collaborating around reading and writing instruction
2. Learning how to develop meaningful learning progressions and team calendars to plan literacy-focused instruction and assessment
3. Examining research-backed teaching strategies to differentiate and improve classroom instruction



Session Descriptions

BLOCK

KEYNOTE

Anthony Muhammad

Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change

More than 20 years ago, the first book on PLC at Work was published by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker. The PLC at Work process has been celebrated and validated as the most promising way to improve student learning, yet so many schools remain stalled at the beginning stages of implementation. Why does this reality of “PLC lite” still plague our profession today? Without exception, schools that use this system to transform their practice have one thing in common: effective leadership. This session explores the keys to effectively transitioning a school or district into a model PLC.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding leadership challenges and lessons learned from more than 20 years of PLC at Work practice
- Learning the difference between leadership behaviors that undermine and those that promote the purpose of a PLC
- Exploring practical strategies that improve the ability to lead others through the change process and build consensus

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Tim Brown

Doubling the Speed of Learning: Activating the Keys of Formative Assessment to Create a Culture of Learning

Formative assessment enhances learning for all students, especially those who struggle. Assessment expert Dylan Wiliam notes that formative assessment can double the speed of learning when it is effectively applied. The Assessment Reform Group in the United Kingdom identified five keys for improving assessment. Tim Brown explores each key and shares examples of teachers activating and using the five keys in their classrooms, teams, and schoolwide.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore relationships between formative assessment and student achievement.
- Examine ways in which teams align their assessment practices to increase student achievement.
- Evaluate considerations in the assessment process.



Session Descriptions



Luis F. Cruz

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

The third critical question of effective collaboration, What do we do when students don't learn?, often stumps teachers and administrators. Luis F. Cruz showcases methods that schools use to guarantee collaboration (taping the room) and to ensure a 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 effective teacher teams collaborate and respond when students do not learn
- How to incorporate the five nonnegotiable vessels of the PLC Process
- How the use of common assessments is the lynch pin between PLC and RTI at work processes

Timothy D. Kanold

Educator Wellness: Routines and Strategies for Living Your Best Life!

Timothy D. Kanold and his colleague Tina H. Boogren define educator wellness as a “continuous, active process toward achieving a positive state of good health and enhanced physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.” They have created a research-affirmed educator wellness framework for rating, reflecting, and acting to improve the daily well-being and wellness story of everyone working within the educational enterprise.

Dr. Kanold shares how all teachers, leaders, and staff can be immersed in and not exhausted by their work life. He reveals five routines for improving weekly wellness and well-being to help participants bring their best selves to work each day.

Participants can expect to:

- Use the mental wellness routine of *efficacy* to build confidence and competence at work.
- Embrace the emotional wellness routine of *mindfulness* to build atomic habits that stick.
- Give the physical wellness routine of *movement* clout in everyday life.
- Understand how to use the social wellness routines of *trust* and *relationships* to develop friendships and effectively collaborate with others.



Session Descriptions

Timothy D. Kanold

Your PreK–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Great Instruction and Tasks!

Timothy D. Kanold explores how collaborative teams can improve student achievement in mathematics through the balanced use of lower- and higher-level-cognitive-demand tasks and classroom discourse combined with meaningful formative feedback during instruction.

Dr. Kanold shares research-affirmed lesson design criteria essential to student perseverance, development of self-efficacy, and sustained effort in mathematics class every day. He shares sample mathematics tasks and online resources for teacher support.

Participants use the PLC mathematics lesson design model to:

- Examine research-affirmed teaching actions that maximize student learning during a mathematics lesson.
- Consider how to use prior knowledge activities effectively.
- Examine the balanced use of lower- and higher-level-cognitive-demand tasks during class.
- Embrace the balanced use of small-group student discourse as part of a formative feedback process that encourages student perseverance, engagement, effort, efficacy, and participation during the lesson.

Maria Nielsen

Elementary ELA Strategies to Keep Your Students on Track

Maria Nielsen takes educators on an interactive journey to gain new and exciting ELA and writing strategies as a team. In this fast-paced session, elementary teachers gain clarity about ELA standards and explore how reading and writing go hand-in-hand for increased student learning. Participants also learn how to focus on year-long essential standards while using a district-prescribed curriculum.

In this session, participants:

- Gather tools and graphic organizers to connect reading and writing.
- Understand learning progressions on literacy-focused instruction and assessment.
- Overlay essential standards with district-prescribed curricula.
- Examine research-based teaching strategies to improve classroom instruction.

Jeanne Spiller

Yes We Can! Collaboration for All Learners

When teams commit to collaborating in the PLC process and decide to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, the first critical step is to examine their personal and systemic beliefs about students, themselves, and learning. Only then can they exclaim with confidence that “All really does mean all!” This session provides participants with strategies and protocols to examine mindsets and collaborative processes to drive action planning that ensures higher levels of learning for all students. This session is designed for both general and special educators.

This session helps general and special educators:

- Understand the past and current realities regarding special education.
- Learn strategies to build a school and district culture with a belief that all students can learn at high levels.
- Reflect on local current practices and policies that do and do not align with the belief that all students can learn at high levels.



Session Descriptions

KEYNOTE

Luis F. Cruz

Transformational Leadership: Aligning Adult Behaviors to Fuel Our PLC Journey

As a result of the pandemic, inequities revealed nationwide beg the question, Are we really all in this together? Since schools do not exist in a vacuum and have inherited social inequities, educators must embrace bold leadership approaches to ensure high levels of learning for all.

As we reimagine school leadership in a new and challenging context, we must accept that our PLC journey ultimately is fueled by changing adult behaviors. But what happens when well-intentioned adults in our schools refuse to commit to the necessary behaviors? Luis F. Cruz, a former elementary, middle, and high school principal, reveals insights from his best-selling book, *Time for Change: Four Essential Skills for Transformational School and District Leaders* (2019), to guide participants in the work of creating robust PLCs. In addition, Dr. Cruz reminds us of the moral imperative we all share that must act as the driving force for PLC implementation back home.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Luis F. Cruz

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

As educators initiate the PLC process, they need practical tools to begin and enhance the journey. However, educators might discover that their staff needs convincing when it comes to embracing and implementing PLC at Work. Luis F. Cruz shares resources, movie clips, and a powerful activity to convince administrative and teacher leaders why implementation of the PLC process must become and continue to be a priority.

Participants in this session learn:

- Practical actions to accelerate PLC at Work.
- The four schools activity
- Why resistance to the PLC process is to be expected

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.



Session Descriptions

Anthony Muhammad

Beyond Test Scores! The PLC at Work Process and Serving the Whole Child

The PLC at Work process is committed to a focus on *learning*. Learning does not have to be narrowly defined by academic standards and state test scores. Anything that we want students to learn—including social and emotional health, resilience, citizenship, entrepreneurship, and civility—can all be facilitated through the four PLC questions. If the COVID-19 pandemic taught anything, it is that human beings are complex and our holistic well-being is important.

Participants can expect to learn:

- How to strategically plan to define, assess, and address nonacademic student traits
- Strategies to engage counselors, social workers, and other nonacademic staff members in the PLC at Work process
- How to prioritize and promote student needs beyond test scores and student labels

