

Agenda

Minneapolis, MN • June 24–26

Monday, June 24

6:30–8:00 a.m.	Registration
	Continental Breakfast
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Tim Brown <i>Setting the Stage: Understanding the Big Ideas and Foundational Blocks of the PLC at Work Process</i>
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Break
10:15–11:45 a.m.	Breakout Sessions
11:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.	Lunch (provided)
12:45–2:15 p.m.	Breakout Sessions
2:15–2:30 p.m.	Break
2:30–3:30 p.m.	Panel Discussion —Presenters provide practical answers to your most pressing questions.

Tuesday, June 25

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Registration
	Continental Breakfast
8:00–9:45 a.m.	Keynote —Timothy D. Kanold <i>Coherence and Culture: Embracing the Why and the How of the PLC Life!</i>
9:45–10:15 a.m.	Break
10:15–11:45 a.m.	Breakout Sessions
11:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.	Lunch (provided)
12:45–2:15 p.m.	Breakout Sessions
2:15–2:30 p.m.	Break
2:30–3:30 p.m.	Team Time —Presenters are available to aid in your collaborative team discussions.

Wednesday, June 26

7:00–8:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast
8:00–9:30 a.m.	Breakout Sessions
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Break
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Keynote —Anthony Muhammad <i>Moving Beyond "PLC Lite": Nurturing Full Commitment to the PLC Process</i>

Agenda is subject to change.

Breakouts at a Glance

Presenters & Titles	Monday, June 24		Tuesday, June 25		Wednesday, June 26
	10:15–11:45 a.m.	12:45–2:15 p.m.	10:15–11:45 a.m.	12:45–2:15 p.m.	8:00–9:30 a.m.
Jack Baldermann					
Successful Implementation Plans and Ideas for Fledgling PLCs	X				
PLCs, Strategic Leadership, and Outstanding Results		X		X	
Motivating Disengaged Students: Useful Methods and Ideas for Educators			X		X
Tim Brown					
Student Data Notebooks: Developing Ownership, Motivation, and a Growth Mindset	X			X	
Raising Questions and Finding Answers in Our Grading Practices		X			X
Getting on the Same Page: Establishing Collective Commitments About Learning and Collaboration			X		
Cassandra Erkens					
Creating and Sustaining Healthy and Productive Teams	X				
Collaborative Common Assessment Data		X		X	
Instructional Agility Through Collaboration			X		X
Heather Friziellie					
Yes We Can! An Unprecedented Opportunity to Improve Special Education Outcomes (Part 1)	X				
Yes We Can! An Unprecedented Opportunity to Improve Special Education Outcomes (Part 2)		X			
Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Elementary Schools			X		

Developing a Culture of Shared Learning Expectations: Bringing Critical Question One to Life on a Team				X	
Protocols for Results: Turning Data Into Information					X
Aaron Hansen					
Commitment, Persistence, and Re-Inspiration	X			X	
How to Develop PLCs for Singletons and Small Schools		X			X
Owning Their Learning: Students as Partners in Reaching Next-Generation Rigor			X		
Timothy D. Kanold					
Heartprint: Living a Fully Engaged, High-Energy, Well-Balanced Professional Life!	X				X
The PLC Life Adventure of Central Office and School-Site Leadership!		X			
Your K–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Great Instruction and Tasks!			X		
Your K–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Assessment, Homework, and Grading!				X	
Jasmine K. Kullar					
Critical Conversations With Resisters, Fake Supporters, and the Eternally Crabby	X			X	
An Inside Look at Meetings		X			X
Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap: Whatever It Takes in Secondary Schools			X		
Michelle Marrillia					
Do Your Common Formative Assessments Really Change Your Practice? Turning Data into Successful Secondary Classroom Instruction	X				
The Case for Coaches in Professional Learning Communities		X		X	
Urban Turnaround: From Priority to Proficiency			X		X

Anthony Muhammad					
Bringing the Four PLC Questions to Life: Systems That Ensure All Students Learn	X				
Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change		X			
Building Culture, Creating Purpose, and Overcoming Frustration on Your PLC Journey			X		
Collaboration Is a Lifestyle, Not a Meeting!				X	
Getting Started: Building Consensus and Responding to Resisters					X
Rebecca Nicolas					
Activity or Productivity? What Product Monitoring Reveals About Teacher Teams	X				
Team Dysfunction? A Leadership Rx		X		X	
Intentionality in Recovery and Extensions: The Answer for “But I Have to Move On!”			X		X
Maria Nielsen					
The 15-Day Challenge: Win Quick, Win Often!	X				X
Show Me What Ya Got: Student Engagement Strategies to Keep the Pulse on Learning		X			
Help Our Team! Working Together to Solve Common Team Challenges			X		
Common Assessments: The Key to Uncommon Results for Student and Teacher Learning				X	
Amanda Wood					
Leading Collaborative Teams	X				
Adding Power to PLCs		X		X	
How Can Collaboration Improve Student Learning?			X		X

Agenda is subject to change.

Day 1 Session Descriptions

KEYNOTE

Tim Brown

Setting the Stage: Understanding the Big Ideas and Foundational Blocks of the PLC at Work Process

This keynote is a call to action to energize individual and collective efforts to create schools of high expectations through the PLC process. In 1997, University of Tennessee researchers S. Paul Wright, Sandra P. Horn, and William L. Sanders reported, “As a result of analyzing the achievement scores of more than 100,000 students across hundreds of schools, the conclusion is that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher.” More recent studies by Dr. John Hattie have concluded that not only are teachers the key contributors to student learning, but their impact is most profound when they work together to evaluate their effect on student learning. To attain high achievement in every classroom, unsurpassed collaboration must become a school’s priority.

Tim Brown sets the stage for the next two and a half days of learning by discussing the three big ideas of the PLC at Work process, their connection to beliefs and practices, and what it means to commit to a focus on learning, to work collaboratively, and to be accountable to a school’s mission, vision, values, and goals.

MORNING BREAKOUTS

Jack Baldermann

Successful Implementation Plans and Ideas for Fledgling PLCs

Jack Baldermann provides innovative ideas and a step-by-step process for successful PLC implementation for educators whose schools are starting the PLC process or need a reboot. As a principal, Jack worked with his team to successfully develop PLCs in three schools, and he has consulted and supported effective PLC implementation at schools throughout the country. Participants can expect to receive practical information to launch or relaunch the PLC process and start designing a strategic plan to integrate PLC concepts.

Tim Brown

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

Educators in schools with a focus on learning promote a strong sense of self-efficacy in their students. Several recent studies show this is one of the greatest factors of student motivation and engagement. Participants examine the essential characteristics for building student self-efficacy and a growth mindset through data notebooks. Tim Brown shares products teams have developed to engage and 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 create to improve student learning and ensure self-efficacy in the PLC process?
- How can teachers effectively use these products to help students own their learning?

Cassandra Erkens

Creating and Sustaining Healthy and Productive Teams

While the concept of teaming implies working *smarter*, the truth of collaboration sometimes feels like working *harder*. The work of collaboration requires that teams not only be productive, but also *healthy*. Effective leaders must monitor their teams for both. They must also be willing to provide team leaders with the necessary supports to manage emotion and become self-sufficient.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the characteristics of healthy, productive teams.
- Identify tools and protocols to successfully monitor collaboration.
- Explore strategies, skills, and guidelines to safely and directly address conflict.

Heather Friziellie

Yes We Can! An Unprecedented Opportunity to Improve Special Education Outcomes (Part 1)

Warning: This work is not for the faint of heart! When teams commit to 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!” Once team members collectively make that commitment and understand how we got here, they must then define what improvement looks like and how to get there. Heather Friziellie challenges participants to examine their professional beliefs before delving into collaborative structures, the importance of scaffolding, what tailored instruction does and does not look like, and ideas and examples that have resulted in improved outcomes for all students.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding past realities regarding special education
- Learning strategies to build a school and district culture with a belief that *all* students can learn at high levels
- Examining collaborative structures to support high levels of learning for all
- Considering collaborative team meeting structures, content, and focus when collaborating for all
- Discussing ways to align IEP goals specific to student areas of deficit driven by the goal of attaining grade-level expectations, including alignment for the most complex learners
- Investigating the concept of tailoring instruction to meet complex student needs while maintaining high expectations.

Aaron Hansen

Commitment, Persistence, and Re-Inspiration

Author and educator Mike Schmoker calls it *the press*—the daily avalanche of reports, lesson plans, grading, parent inquiries, emails, and meetings that add to the enormous pressure teachers and leaders face. It is no wonder that educators often feel frustrated and are distracted from what is important. Aaron Hansen motivates participants through structured activities and stories that reiterate what is crucial: all students learning at high levels. Participants are re-inspired as they develop ways to keep staff members committed, persistent, and motivated.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn how to connect each staff member’s personal purpose to the organization’s vision.
- Help staff members establish and sustain commitment and persistence to achieve high levels of learning for all students.
- Become re-inspired to make a difference at their sites and in their districts.

Timothy D. Kanold

Heartprint: Living a Fully Engaged, High-Energy, Well-Balanced Professional Life!

Within the culture of a PLC school, the relational expectations, give and take, and sometimes chaotic noise of daily interactions can be overwhelming and exhausting. By understanding one’s daily heartprint, educators are better able to inspire, engage with, and influence students and colleagues season after season.

Timothy D. Kanold draws from the wisdom of his book *HEART! Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader* (2018 IPPY Gold Medal winner) to provide research, insights, and tools from thought leaders inside and outside education. He examines ways for all educators to lead high-energy, happy, and well-balanced PLC professional lives each and every day.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine the H and the E elements of their HEARTs: their relational Happiness and how to become fully Engaged in their work.
- Discover ways to improve their relational intelligence and impact (heartprint) on others.
- Learn ways to reflect upon, pursue, and sustain a well-balanced, high-energy personal and professional life that can positively affect students and colleagues.

Jasmine K. Kullar

Critical 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 Kullar outlines effective inroads into difficult conversations. Understanding the “why” helps shape the solutions to working through this

very real problem. Participants delve into proven tips and techniques for mastering these critical conversations.

Learning outcomes include:

- Identifying reasons why it is difficult to have critical conversations
- Recognizing why we may not achieve desired outcome after having critical conversations
- Acquiring various tips, techniques, and strategies to engage in effective critical conversations

Michelle Marrillia

Do Your Common Formative Assessments Really Change Your Practice? Turning Data Into Successful Secondary Classroom Instruction

School systems are increasingly data-rich, but educators often struggle to use this data to differentiate instruction and provide timely feedback to meet the needs of every student. This session details practical approaches for effective and easy-to-implement reteaching strategies in multiple content areas in secondary classrooms. Michelle Marrillia provides specific examples of creating a system of regrouping and differentiated instruction based on assessment data.

Participants in this session discover:

- How a collaborative team can use data to implement reteaching strategies for students who do not learn the first time
- How to incorporate embedded academic advising for timely feedback
- A spotlight regrouping method for differentiated instruction

Anthony Muhammad

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

This session focuses on systemic implementation of the four critical questions of a PLC. Participants gain a powerful understanding of what it takes to move from theory to practical, systemic implementation. The strategies Anthony Muhammad presents can be immediately applied when participants return to their schools.

Participants in this session:

- Practice developing essential standards and student outcomes.
- Learn the process for creating useful and valid common assessments.
- Discover how to methodically create an effective academic intervention system that meets each student's needs.

Rebecca Nicolas

Activity or Productivity? What Product Monitoring Reveals About Teacher Teams

Monitoring agendas can help leadership teams understand the activity of their teams, but monitoring productivity allows school leadership to better understand the teacher work associated with each of the four critical questions. Participants examine each of the four critical questions and the products associated with them. Administrators and teachers in this session learn about a simple data collection

tool that helps leaders and teacher teams audit their productivity and ensures that teams are progressing appropriately through each of the four critical questions.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding the difference between activity- and productivity-focused teams
- Exploring the products that reflect a team’s focus on each of the four critical questions
- Acquiring a data collection tool to monitor team productivity over time

Maria Nielsen

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

This interactive session establishes, reboots, or re-energizes the work of collaborative teams. Schools across the country 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.

Amanda Wood

Leading Collaborative Teams

How many times have you wondered, “What’s the point of this meeting?” We know that “sit and get” is not a conducive approach to student learning, so why do we use it so often in our meetings? Cultivating a collaborative culture does not happen by accident; it takes purposeful planning by the team leader. In this session, team leaders learn the key factors to consider when building a collaborative culture and explore processes and protocols for leading learning-focused meetings.

Participants identify and explore:

- Key factors that cultivate collaboration
- Processes and protocols for improving collaboration
- The roles and responsibilities of team members

AFTERNOON BREAKOUTS

Jack Baldermann

PLCs, Strategic Leadership, and Outstanding Results

Jack Baldermann 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 from 2013 to 2018 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 student academic performance

Tim Brown

Raising Questions and Finding Answers in Our Grading Practices

Talking about grading practices is often a touchy subject, full of emotions, opinions, and personal beliefs. However, when schools make the 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 the principles of learning. Tim Brown shows how a staff can engage educators in a collaborative process committed to grading practices that are aligned with learning outcomes.

Participants discuss these essential questions:

- What do 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?

Cassandra Erkens

Collaborative Common Assessment Data

When collaborative common assessments are implemented well, amazing things happen for students and teachers. When teachers engage in the process, they can collectively offer laser-like instruction, inform assessment literacy, and create differentiated and instructionally sensitive responses to support all learners. This session offers an overview of the process, protocols, and tools to help with the delivery and data that result from using collaborative common assessments.

Participants in this session:

- Identify key factors when delivering collaborative common assessments.
- Learn strategies and tools to support data analysis.
- Explore criteria for quality re-engagement and enrichment.

Heather Friziellie

Yes We Can! An Unprecedented Opportunity to Improve Special Education Outcomes (Part 2)

Warning: This work is not for the faint of heart! When teams commit to 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!” Once team members collectively make that commitment and understand how we got here, they must then define what improvement looks like and how to get there. Heather Friziellie challenges participants to examine their professional beliefs before delving into collaborative

structures, the importance of scaffolding, what tailored instruction does and does not look like, and ideas and examples that have resulted in improved outcomes for all students.

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- Investigating the concept of tailoring instruction to meet complex student needs while maintaining high expectations.

Aaron Hansen

How to Develop PLCs for Singletons and Small Schools

PLC concepts resonate with most educators, but making collaborative learning work in small schools or for singleton teachers can be challenging. Participants explore five models for creating meaningful professional learning teams: 1) changing schedules to allow teachers to teach the same subjects, 2) vertical teaming, 3) cross-curricular teaming, 4) supporting roles, and 5) using electronic tools to pair teachers with peers in the same subject area.

Participants discuss common structural barriers that prevent singletons from joining collaborative teams and develop an action plan to incorporate singletons into the PLC process.

Timothy D. Kanold

The PLC Life Adventure of Central Office and School-Site Leadership!

School-site or central office PLC leaders face the challenge of leading others into the great adventure of the PLC life. Yet, they also must weave through and around obstacles that prevent full, ongoing implementation of the PLC life in their programs, schools, or districts.

Timothy D. Kanold bases this session on chapter 29, “The Great Adventure,” from his best-selling, award-winning book *HEART! Fully forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader* (2018). He reveals the practical nature of school leadership and how administrators can become heroes within their own PLC adventures.

Dr. Kanold invites participants to identify primary barriers that prevent full implementation of the PLC life. He then facilitates dialogue to help them find meaningful solutions.

Dr. Kanold indicates, “As we become fully formed professionals, we tie our workplace heartprint to the vision and results of our effort in order to promote coherence—and celebrate the difficult daily work of others.”

Participants learn how to:

- Lead, create, and inspire the great adventure of the PLC life.
- Help others eliminate barriers and then measure the impact of their daily actions on the PLC life.
- Avoid chaos, disorganization, and randomness that can prevent the coherence needed for full implementation of the PLC culture.

Jasmine K. Kullar

An Inside Look at Meetings

In a PLC, what should teachers talk about when they meet? Once the components, practices, and methods of implementation have been made clear, how do teachers put it all together to ensure productive discussions with colleagues in meetings? How do those meetings then result in everyday action so that it becomes the school's culture? The structure of collaborative meetings and their resulting discussions are crucial for developing a successful PLC.

Participants in this session:

- Examine characteristics of effective and efficient collaborative meetings.
- Explore issues that relate to the four critical questions of a PLC.
- Identify strategies to make team discussions the norm in their schools and districts.

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 for this session include:

- Defining the role of coaches in professional learning communities
- 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

Anthony Muhammad

Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change

This session explores the connection among personal and institutional mindsets and academic achievement gaps. The issue of inequality in student learning outcomes has been studied and debated for years and commonly holds that the primary culprit in the fight to overcome the achievement gap is our individual and collective thinking.

As a result of this session, participants understand:

- The true meaning and value of school culture
- The power of mindsets and their influence on educator effectiveness
- How to shift from damaging mindsets (superiority and inferiority) to high levels of efficacy (liberation mindset)

Rebecca Nicolas

Team Dysfunction? A Leadership Rx

While there is no panacea when things go wrong in a professional learning community, and plenty of ways to go wrong in attempting to “fix” a struggling team, data delivers the mandate for teachers to begin the process in earnest. When meaningful data drives teacher work, a truly collaborative team can realize its greatest potential. Participants in this session learn about the tempting “solutions” that many teams sample before arriving at the lynchpin of the PLC: common formative assessments.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Diagnosing the myriad ways in which teams engage in “PLC lite”
- Exploring the temptations of the “easy fix” for dysfunctional teams
- Understanding the critical ways in which common data can move teams forward

Maria Nielsen

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

Maria Nielsen helps teachers move past “sit and get” in the classroom to a place where all students actively participate in learning. She shares engagement strategies to assess student understanding throughout a lesson or unit of study.

Participants can expect to:

- Explore the *nifty nine* best teaching strategies.
- Learn how to assess student learning by implementing engagement strategies.
- Identify the differences among assessment questions, open questions, and engagement questions.

Amanda Wood

Adding Power to PLCs

Most curricular frameworks provide an overwhelming number of standards to teach at each grade level. While it is not possible to teach every standard to mastery level at each grade, it is imperative that every grade-level team agrees which standards are the most important, and commit to every student mastering them. Identifying power standards takes time and a commitment to collaboration. This session introduces protocols to help teams answer the first critical question of a PLC, What do we want our students to learn?

Participants in this session:

- Identify the relationship between power standards and student mastery.
- Examine common power standards criteria.
- Use protocols to collaboratively unpack power standards.

Day 2 Session Descriptions

KEYNOTE

Timothy D. Kanold

Coherence and Culture: Embracing the Why and the How of the PLC Life!

Timothy D. Kanold applies an explicit focus to the four critical questions of a PLC at Work and illustrates how answers to these questions can drive workplace coherence and transparency. He also examines the daily responsibility to contribute to the defined autonomy of the collaborative PLC culture.

This keynote is based on these assertions:

- All K–12 professionals work extremely hard to improve student learning. (Evidence supports this.)
- The general lack of coherence to and equity in our professional work has dire consequences for student learning.
- K–12 professional educators can create the PLC cultural conditions necessary to significantly influence adult and student learning. These cultural conditions are not yet the norm in American schools.

MORNING BREAKOUTS

Jack Baldermann

Motivating Disengaged Students: Useful Methods and Ideas for Educators

Jack Baldermann shares the findings of leading researchers and educational practitioners, 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.

Tim Brown

Getting on the Same Page: Establishing Collective Commitments About Learning and Collaboration

Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, argues that explicitly stated values are one of the most powerful steps teams can take toward becoming exemplary. Developing a common vision of instruction, assessment, and interventions at the classroom, team, and schoolwide levels are critical steps in the PLC process. Tim Brown shares strategies and provides helpful examples for developing collective commitments and common vision.

Outcomes of this session include:

- Understanding the importance of developing explicit commitments with members of a team
- Participating in strategies for developing collective commitments as a team
- Exploring processes and protocols that make values more than a one-time event

Cassandra Erkens

Instructional Agility Through Collaboration

The best way for teachers to get to instructional agility in their individual classrooms is to stand on the shoulders of their team's collaborative efforts. When teams collaborate to prioritize and unpack standards, clarify criteria for quality, identify learning progressions and learning targets, determine appropriate levels of rigor, and collectively analyze error, individual team members become powerful and efficacious. This session explores the team tools and processes required to help individual teachers be precise, yet flexible, in their instructional efforts.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Defining *instructional agility*
- Exploring team tools and processes required for individual precision
- Identifying strategies to support individual flexibility when functioning in a collaborative team

Heather Frizziellie

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

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

Participants examine strategies and structures to collaboratively:

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

Aaron Hansen

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

Let's aspire to more than merely leading students to pass the state test. Students who own their learning and know that it is meaningful will exceed expectations on high-stakes tests and be empowered to do more. Participants are challenged to get serious about what they really want students to learn to be successful in school and life instead of just on tests. They will learn how to supercharge their PLC practices—the most powerful model for changing schools—to blow through the low levels of thinking

on most tests while enabling students to gain attributes, skills, and hope for an even more important 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 the state test and much more
- Being reminded of the “moral purpose” of giving hope to students

Timothy D. Kanold

Your K–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-level- and higher-level-cognitive-demand tasks and classroom discourse combined with meaningful formative feedback during instruction. This session is based on his book *Mathematics Instruction and Tasks in a PLC at Work* from Solution Tree’s *Every Student Can Learn Mathematics* series (2018).

Dr. Kanold shares six research-affirmed lesson-design criteria essential to student perseverance 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:

- Define the difference between relevant and meaningful mathematics.
- Consider the effective use of prior knowledge and academic vocabulary activities.
- Examine the balanced use of lower-level- and higher-level-cognitive-demand tasks during class.
- Consider the balanced use of in-class student discourse as part of formative assessment feedback when students get stuck during the lesson.

Jasmine K. Kullar

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

Identifying which students need help is not the biggest obstacle most secondary schools face in providing interventions; it is how to schedule the time needed to provide that help during the school day. This breakout provides real examples from a high-performing school on how it creates 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.

Michelle Marrillia

Urban Turnaround: From Priority to Proficiency

Urban schools face unique daily challenges. Learn how one urban school moved from the 10th percentile to the 87th percentile in four years and has continued to sustain its success by adhering to the tenets of a PLC. Participants examine the difference 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

Anthony Muhammad

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

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

Rebecca Nicolas

Intentionality in Recovery and Extensions: The Answer for “But I Have to Move On!”

Some teams stall out when it comes to addressing critical questions 3 and 4 of the PLC process, becoming content with collaborative conversations about only the first two questions: What do we want students to know? and How we will know if they know it? However, great teams consistently tackle the question: What will we do next? Opportunities for students to recover standards or extend their understanding after basic mastery must be systemically embedded into the collaborative rhythms of a team. Teams that purposefully schedule conversations about critical questions 3 and 4 within their collaborative pacing address what all teachers know: Formative assessment is just the beginning.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Exploring the problematic impulse of teams to focus on content coverage over subject mastery
- Focusing on intentionality in pacing and planning for recovery and extension
- Understanding the power of teams to design innovative responses to student performance

Maria Nielsen

Help Our Team! Working Together to Solve Common Team Challenges

What should happen when a team starts to struggle? As teachers move toward becoming interdependent teams, challenges inevitably arise. Ensuring high levels of learning for every student

requires a change in thinking and practice. Participants briefly review the work of highly effective teams, consider scenarios showing common team challenges, and work collaboratively to identify strategies for moving a team forward. This session is based on a forthcoming book by the same title (Solution Tree Press, 2019) coauthored by eight educators with a wide range of backgrounds and experience in all levels of education.

Participants in this session:

- Identify common challenges that limit a team's efficacy.
- Collaboratively resolve specific challenges and share strategies to help teams progress.
- Practice specific coaching strategies designed to assist teams in their critical work.

Amanda Wood

How Can Collaboration Improve Student Learning?

Collaborative teams are all in. These learning-focused teams combine the expertise of individuals for the benefit of all students. This session addresses the connection between identifying and assessing learning targets (questions 1 and 2) and intervening and extending student learning (questions 3 and 4). Participants reflect on their teams' strengths and next steps while examining the key skills, behaviors, and dispositions of effective teams.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding the characteristics of highly effective collaborative teams
- Identifying critical issues for teams to address
- Identifying and exploring team reflection tools

AFTERNOON BREAKOUTS

Jack Baldermann

PLCs, Strategic Leadership, and Outstanding Results

Jack Baldermann 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 from 2013 to 2018 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 student academic performance

Tim Brown

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

Educators in schools with a focus on learning promote a strong sense of self-efficacy in their students. Several recent studies show this is one of the greatest factors of student motivation and engagement. Participants examine the essential characteristics for building student self-efficacy and a growth mindset through data notebooks. Tim Brown shares products teams have developed to engage and 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 create to improve student learning and ensure self-efficacy in the PLC process?
- How can teachers effectively use these products to help students own their learning?

Cassandra Erkens

Collaborative Common Assessment Data

When collaborative common assessments are implemented well, amazing things happen for students and teachers. When teachers engage in the process, they can collectively offer laser-like instruction, inform assessment literacy, and create differentiated and instructionally sensitive responses to support all learners. This session offers an overview of the process, protocols, and tools to help with the delivery and data that result from using collaborative common assessments.

Participants in this session:

- Identify key factors when delivering collaborative common assessments.
- Learn strategies and tools to support data analysis.
- Explore criteria for quality re-engagement and enrichment.

Heather Friziellie

Developing a Culture of Shared Learning Expectations: Bringing Critical Question One to Life on a Team

This session begins by laying the groundwork for committing to the "why" of a guaranteed and viable curriculum, before delving into a process of prioritizing and unpacking. Then, participants engage in the process—starting at the standards level—of using a team protocol to deeply understand, prioritize, and pace the learning standards into a meaningful progression that leads to student mastery. Participants then apply this learning to a data set to see how teams answer all four critical questions, keeping student mastery of the essential standards as the focus.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Exploring essential elements of a guaranteed and viable curriculum for *all*
- Applying a protocol for unpacking and prioritizing units at the team level, including scaffolding instructions to ensure success for all
- Connecting the four critical questions through the use of a data protocol to experience and deeply understand the work of collaborative teams

Aaron Hansen

Commitment, Persistence, and Re-Inspiration

Author and educator Mike Schmoker calls it *the press*—the daily avalanche of reports, lesson plans, grading, parent inquiries, emails, and meetings that add to the enormous pressure teachers and leaders face. It is no wonder that educators often feel frustrated and are distracted from what is important. Aaron Hansen motivates participants through structured activities and stories that reiterate what is crucial: all students learning at high levels. Participants are re-inspired as they develop ways to keep staff members committed, persistent, and motivated.

Participants can expect to:

- Learn how to connect each staff member’s personal purpose to the organization’s vision.
- Help staff members establish and sustain commitment and persistence to achieve high levels of learning for all students.
- Become re-inspired to make a difference at their sites and in their districts.

Timothy D. Kanold

Your K–12 PLC Mathematics Focus: Assessment, Homework, and Grading!

Timothy D. Kanold explores how mathematics assessment and grading can either inspire or destroy student learning. This session is based on *Mathematics Assessment and Intervention in a PLC at Work* and *Mathematics Homework and Grading in a PLC at Work* (2018). Both are from Solution Tree’s *Every Student Can Learn Mathematics* series.

Dr. Kanold reveals eight research-affirmed criteria for creating high-quality unit assessments (quizzes and tests) and the accurate scoring of those assessments. Participants also reflect on and answer the formative question “Now what?” when an assessment is returned to students. The session ends with a brief discussion about research-affirmed criteria for high-quality mathematics homework routines and practices.

Participants in this session:

- Use high-quality mathematics assessment-design criteria for evaluating the quality of current quizzes and tests.
- Develop a protocol for the accurate scoring of all quizzes and tests.
- Develop formative strategies for student response, intervention, and ownership of learning during and at the end of a unit of study.
- Explore research and discussion tools to design highly effective mathematics homework routines and practices.

Jasmine K. Kullar

Critical 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 Kullar outlines effective inroads into difficult conversations. Understanding the “why” helps shape the solutions to working through this very real problem. Participants delve into proven tips and techniques for mastering these critical conversations.

Learning outcomes include:

- Identifying reasons why it is difficult to have critical conversations
- Recognizing why we may not achieve desired outcome after having critical conversations
- Acquiring various tips, techniques, and strategies to engage in effective critical conversations

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 for this session include:

- Defining the role of coaches in professional learning communities
- 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

Anthony Muhammad

Collaboration Is a Lifestyle, Not a Meeting!

How is a culture of collaboration created? How can an environment be implemented in which people embrace collective responsibility? This session addresses the collaborative characteristics of a high-performing PLC. Participants learn how teachers, support staff, school administrators, and central office work together to improve school performance. Anthony 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.

Rebecca Nicolas

Team Dysfunction? A Leadership Rx

While there is no panacea when things go wrong in a professional learning community, and plenty of ways to go wrong in attempting to “fix” a struggling team, data delivers the mandate for teachers to begin the process in earnest. When meaningful data drives teacher work, a truly collaborative team

can realize its greatest potential. Participants in this session learn about the tempting “solutions” that many teams sample before arriving at the lynchpin of the PLC: common formative assessments.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Diagnosing the myriad ways in which teams engage in “PLC lite”
- Exploring the temptations of the “easy fix” for dysfunctional teams
- Understanding the critical ways in which common data can move teams forward

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 effectively 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.

Amanda Wood

Adding Power to PLCs

Most curricular frameworks provide an overwhelming number of standards to teach at each grade level. While it is not possible to teach every standard to mastery level at each grade, it is imperative that every grade-level team agrees which standards are the most important, and commit to every student mastering them. Identifying power standards takes time and a commitment to collaboration. This session introduces protocols to help teams answer the first critical question of a PLC, What do we want our students to learn?

Participants in this session:

- Identify the relationship between power standards and student mastery.
- Examine common power standards criteria.
- Use protocols to collaboratively unpack power standards.

Day 3 Session Descriptions

BREAKOUTS

Jack Baldermann

Motivating Disengaged Students: Useful Methods and Ideas for Educators

Jack Baldermann shares the findings of leading researchers and educational practitioners, 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.

Tim Brown

Raising Questions and Finding Answers in Our Grading Practices

Talking about grading practices is often a touchy subject, full of emotions, opinions, and personal beliefs. However, when schools make the 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 the principles of learning. Tim Brown shows how a staff can engage educators in a collaborative process committed to grading practices that are aligned with learning outcomes.

Participants discuss these essential questions:

- What do 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?

Cassandra Erkens

Instructional Agility Through Collaboration

The best way for teachers to get to instructional agility in their individual classrooms is to stand on the shoulders of their team's collaborative efforts. When teams collaborate to prioritize and unpack standards, clarify criteria for quality, identify learning progressions and learning targets, determine appropriate levels of rigor, and collectively analyze error, individual team members become powerful and efficacious. This session explores the team tools and processes required to help individual teachers be precise, yet flexible, in their instructional efforts.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Defining *instructional agility*
- Exploring team tools and processes required for individual precision
- Identifying strategies to support individual flexibility when functioning in a collaborative team

Heather Friziellie

Protocols for Results: Turning Data Into Information

Is your system overwhelmed with data? Using protocols to transform data into information is an efficient and effective way to achieve improved results. Participants examine tools that empower teams to use data to drive instruction and impact student learning and also identify specific processes to meet district needs.

Participants in this session:

- Briefly review research related to data-driven decision making.
- Explore multiple protocols for data analysis.
- Reflect on their school or district's current reality, while identifying tools that can be used or modified to meet specified needs.

Aaron Hansen

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

Let's aspire to more than merely leading students to pass the state test. Students who own their learning and know that it is meaningful will exceed expectations on high-stakes tests and be empowered to do more. Participants are challenged to get serious about what they really want students to learn to be successful in school and life instead of just on tests. They will learn how to supercharge their PLC practices—the most powerful model for changing schools—to blow through the low levels of thinking on most tests while enabling students to gain attributes, skills, and hope for an even more important 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 the state test and much more
- Being reminded of the “moral purpose” of giving hope to students

Timothy D. Kanold

Heartprint: Living a Fully Engaged, High-Energy, Well-Balanced Professional Life!

Within the culture of a PLC school, the relational expectations, give and take, and sometimes chaotic noise of daily interactions can be overwhelming and exhausting. By understanding one's daily heartprint, educators are better able to inspire, engage with, and influence students and colleagues season after season.

Timothy D. Kanold draws from the wisdom of his book *HEART! Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader* (2018 IPPY Gold Medal winner) to provide research, insights, and tools from

thought leaders inside and outside education. He examines ways for all educators to lead high-energy, happy, and well-balanced PLC professional lives each and every day.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine the H and the E elements of their HEARTs: their relational Happiness and how to become fully Engaged in their work.
- Discover ways to improve their relational intelligence and impact (heartprint) on others.
- Learn ways to reflect upon, pursue, and sustain a well-balanced, high-energy personal and professional life that can positively affect students and colleagues.

Jasmine K. Kullar

An Inside Look at Meetings

In a PLC, what should teachers talk about when they meet? Once the components, practices, and methods of implementation have been made clear, how do teachers put it all together to ensure productive discussions with colleagues in meetings? How do those meetings then result in everyday action so that it becomes the school's culture? The structure of collaborative meetings and their resulting discussions are crucial for developing a successful PLC.

Participants in this session:

- Examine characteristics of effective and efficient collaborative meetings.
- Explore issues that relate to the four critical questions of a PLC.
- Identify strategies to make team discussions the norm in their schools and districts.

Michelle Marrillia

Urban Turnaround: From Priority to Proficiency

Urban schools face unique daily challenges. Learn how one urban school moved from the 10th percentile to the 87th percentile in four years and has continued to sustain its success by adhering to the tenets of a PLC. Participants examine the difference 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

Anthony Muhammad

Getting Started: Building Consensus and Responding to Resisters

Privatizing practice, isolation, and individual autonomy that have traditionally characterized teaching are the most significant barriers to building a school culture focused on continuous improvement. Anthony Muhammad addresses the questions: How can a faculty build consensus to effect significant change? and What are the most effective ways to respond to the concerns of those who resist 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

Rebecca Nicolas

Intentionality in Recovery and Extensions: The Answer for “But I Have to Move On!”

Some teams stall out when it comes to addressing critical questions 3 and 4 of the PLC process, becoming content with collaborative conversations about only the first two questions: What do we want students to know? and How we will know if they know it? However, great teams consistently tackle the question: What will we do next? Opportunities for students to recover standards or extend their understanding after basic mastery must be systemically embedded into the collaborative rhythms of a team. Teams that purposefully schedule conversations about critical questions 3 and 4 within their collaborative pacing address what all teachers know: Formative assessment is just the beginning.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Exploring the problematic impulse of teams to focus on content coverage over subject mastery
- Focusing on intentionality in pacing and planning for recovery and extension
- Understanding the power of teams to design innovative responses to student performance

Maria Nielsen

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

This interactive session establishes, reboots, or re-energizes the work of collaborative teams. Schools across the country 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.

Amanda Wood

How Can Collaboration Improve Student Learning?

Collaborative teams are all in. These learning-focused teams combine the expertise of individuals for the benefit of all students. This session addresses the connection between identifying and assessing learning targets (questions 1 and 2) and intervening and extending student learning (questions 3 and 4). Participants reflect on their teams’ strengths and next steps while examining the key skills, behaviors, and dispositions of effective teams.

Outcomes from this session include:

- Understanding the characteristics of highly effective collaborative teams
- Identifying critical issues for teams to address
- Identifying and exploring team reflection tools

KEYNOTE

Anthony Muhammad

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

Thirty years ago, the first book on PLC at Work was published by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker. The PLC at Work model 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 20 years later? Without exception, schools that use this model 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 20 years of PLC practice
- Learning the difference between leadership behaviors that undermine and those that promote the purpose of a PLC
- Exploring practical strategies that improve participants’ ability to lead others through the change process and build consensus