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Session Descriptions

KEYNOTES

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

Presenter: Tim Brown

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.

Participants in this session:

- Examine the three big ideas of the PLC at Work® process
- Understand what it means to commit to a focus on learning and to work collaboratively
- Learn to be accountable for a school's mission, vision, values, and goals



Solution Tree

Challenging Educational Mythology: Proven Practices and Brutal Facts in Creating Great Schools

Presenter: Mike Mattos

Becoming a professional learning community requires more than committing to the collaborative practices proven to best ensure learning. A PLC must also be willing to discontinue policies and procedures that are counterproductive to student success. Unfortunately, many schools stubbornly hold on to myths—widely held beliefs that are false—that justify teacher isolation and student failure. Mike Mattos discusses essential practices that are required to ensure high levels of learning for every student and challenges educational myths that are holding us back.

Participants in this session:

- Learn the five essential practices of the PLC at Work® process
- Identify school myths and inaccurate beliefs that are counterproductive to collaboration and student learning
- Begin a “stop doing” list for schools and embrace the belief that academic success of every student is possible

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

Presenter:
Anthony Muhammad

More than twenty 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-plus 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.

Participants in this session:

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



BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Teaming

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

Presenter: Anthony Muhammad

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

The Essential Work of Teacher Teams in a Professional Learning Community

Presenter: Mike Mattos

Teacher teams are the engines that drive the PLC at Work[®] process and student learning, but only if they focus on the right work. This session uses the book you've been given, *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* (Solution Tree Press, 2016), to break down exactly what highly effective teacher teams do with their precious collaboration time. Mike Mattos, one of the book's coauthors, shares valuable tools and practical examples.

Participants in this session:

- Explore how the four critical questions of the PLC at Work framework drive teacher team collaboration
- Experience how teams use common assessment data to improve instruction and target interventions
- Learn how to use specific tools designed to help teams assess their current reality, determine next steps, and continually focus on the right work



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

Presenter: Janel Keating

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

Participants in this session:

- Anticipate some common challenges that may be encountered on the journey to becoming a high-functioning PLC
- Determine the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders maneuvering over the bumps
- Acquire strategies and processes to ensure the bumps don't sideline the real work

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

Presenter: Luis F. Cruz

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

Participants in this session learn:

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



Culture

Getting Started: Building Consensus and Responding to Resisters

Presenter: Anthony Muhammad

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 these questions: How can a faculty build consensus to effect significant change? What are the most effective ways to respond to the concerns of those who resist, even when the staff have decided to move forward?

Participants in this session:

- Learn how to define consensus
- Acquire the most effective strategies for building consensus
- Discover seven research-based strategies for addressing resistance

PLC Culture and Community: Next Steps

Presenter:
Regina Stephens Owens

Every classroom, campus, and community derives inspiration from passion, personalization, and authentic connection. In improving schools, we must strive toward continuous progress and steady transformation, moving beyond bias to belief. This growth promotes authentic intelligence, interdependence, and innovation. We have learned many lessons from implementing the professional learning community process. It is time to transform from the inside out, moving from invitational to intentional and from beliefs to behaviors that open a new world of possibilities.

Participants learn how to:

- Design a culture that promotes passion-driven learning to ensure high levels of learning for students and teachers
- Evaluate current practices and procedures to ensure they promote learning
- Strengthen their learning community by personifying beliefs that result in a culture of continuous improvement



Assessment & Grading

Creating Common Assessments for Team and Student Learning

Presenter: Sarah Schuhl

Common assessments help students and teachers answer the second critical question of a PLC, “How do we know if students learned it?” What is the purpose of each assessment? How can they be used to help students identify what they have and have not yet learned? Participants explore considerations for writing quality common assessments and using them to involve students in their learning.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the elements of a balanced assessment system
- Consider item types to include on common assessments
- Learn how to use common assessments to help students self-reflect

Raising Questions and Finding Answers in Our Grading Practices

Presenter: Tim Brown

Talking about grading practices is often a touchy subject, full of emotions, opinions, and personal beliefs. However, when schools 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 is the rationale behind changes in grading practices?
- What grading practices and guidelines do successful teams and schools implement?



Let's Stop Talking About It and Start Doing It: The Five Stages of Evidence-Based Grading

Presenter: Eric Twadell

Standards-based grading has often been cited as the "third rail of school reform." And yet, this is an important destination on the journey to becoming a PLC that embraces assessment and grading practices and supports student learning. This session provides participants with a road map for differentiating professional development for teachers and teams interested in implementing standards-based grading.

Participants in this session:

- Gain an appreciation for using a learning map to differentiate professional development
- Explore challenges associated with traditional grading practices and reporting results
- Learn how to structure professional development and a learning map for teachers and teams specifically focused on standards-based grading and reporting

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

Presenter: Tim Brown

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. During this session, participants examine the essential characteristics for building student self-efficacy and a growth mindset through data notebooks. Tim Brown also 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?



Response to Intervention

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

Presenter: Mike Mattos

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 session provides real examples from a high-performing school, showing how it creates time for supplemental and intensive interventions.

Participants in this session learn how to:

- Determine what interventions to offer each week
- Require students to attend specific interventions and monitor attendance
- Address common obstacles, including how to allocate staff

Simplifying Response to Intervention: How to Create a Highly Effective, Multitiered System of Supports

Presenter: Mike Mattos

How does your school respond when students don't learn? Compelling evidence shows that response to intervention (RTI)—also known as a multitiered system of supports (MTSS)—can successfully engage a school's staff in a collective process to provide every student with the additional time and support needed 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 that are misaligned to the essential elements of RTI. This session shows how the PLC at Work® process creates the larger, schoolwide framework required to successfully create a multitiered system of supports.

During this session, participants:

- Learn the characteristics of the three tiers of the RTI process
- Connect the work of teacher teams in a PLC to effective supplemental interventions
- Define the roles of classroom teachers, administrators, and support staff in the RTI process



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

Presenter: Heather Frizellie

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

Participants learn to:

- Identify and reflect on the essential elements of effective Tier 1, 2, and 3 instruction
- Examine core beliefs and consider the most common RTI missteps
- 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

Instruction

Elementary Student Goal Setting in a PLC at Work®

Presenter: Jennifer Deinhart

Explore how teams answer the four critical questions of learning through the lens of student goal setting. Through this work, teams dig deeply into the most essential standards and see how goal setting leads to more targeted instruction. Participants also learn how to engage students in being reflective of their own work and next steps in learning.

During this session, participants:

- Explore how teams learn content and develop progressions for learning around essential standards
- Develop skills in creating quality assessments, common scoring practices, and student self-reflection
- Learn how to have more purposeful data discussions that result in targeted instruction for students



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

Presenter: Aaron Hansen

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.

Participants in this session learn to:

- Use PLC practices to empower students to own their learning
- Help students develop metacognition and self-efficacy for passing the state test and much more
- Recognize the “moral purpose” of giving hope to students

