



The Relationship Difference

Professional *Learning* Plan: 2023-2024

Board Approved: August 23, 2023

District Professional Learning Goals Process and Product

Plan Overview:

It is exceedingly important to start this overview with a statement about the title of this document. We no longer refer to the full spectrum of architecture, support, opportunities, and environments that enable professional growth and learning as “Professional Development.” Instead, we referred to it as “**Professional Learning.**”

Such a change in language mirrors the standards, "NJ Standards for Professional Learning." This is also consistent with the language suggested by Learning Forward, the authoring organization of those standards. The implication in "Professional Development" suggests that staff remain in a continual state of being 'under developed' and therefore needing 'development.' "Professional Learning" implies, and aligns with our philosophy, that everyone in the Howell Township Public Schools is a 'learner' and learning is a lifelong journey in which we all must engage, through which our practices adapt, and from which our profession evolves. Lastly, this language represents strong alignment with the Board and District goals.

As the Board of Education goals have evolved over the years, our environment of professional learning has paralleled that evolution. The Professional Learning Plan for the 2023-2024 school year continues to parallel the evolution of the Board and District. The plan also represents continuity from year to year by continuing with components of previous years yet to be achieved. You might infer that the plan seeks to expand our practices of personalized learning for all learners—and **we are all learners!** You are also correct. However, as students and staff continue to redefine learning in a post-pandemic classroom, revisiting practices once common and comfortable, still need revisiting, revising, and rethinking due to emerging contexts.

Typically, this plan illustrates an alignment between Howell’s financial commitment to our professional learning environment and the Education Committee, District, and Board goals. This year’s plan outlines the overall District professional learning goals and their intended outcomes. Professional Learning Plans must include our District Mentoring plan, which has been revised and included. The Mentoring Plan is outlined in detail in its own section of the supporting documentation. The Mentoring Plan outlines three year-long themes: The teacher in relation to what they need, the Teacher in relation to their students, and the teacher in relation to their colleagues. Future proofing our professional learning plans with a commitment to *‘falling forward’*, this plan links to specific areas of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan. Lastly, the plan must be based on, and inclusive of each building-based Professional Learning Plan. As all other areas of district plans evolve, and should they not align with these goals, the district professional learning will shift to support those needs as it has always done. Over the course of the last plan’s life cycle, we have a new appreciation and depth of understanding for the difference that healthy relationships play in any person’s learning journey. We refer to this as “The Relationship Difference.” We agree with Dr. James P. Comer’s declaration, “No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship.” Everything we do starts with the relationship between a teacher and a student. What we do must only add to the strength of that relationship because interrupting it is detrimental to learning.

To maintain a responsive professional learning environment, the development of the school/department plans and the district plan will continue to be monitored and merged, shifted, and amalgamated as necessary. The work will occur through a symbiotic process of drafting, refining, reflecting, and implementing together. Through the Learning Design Team, each of the twelve School Improvement Panels will use a design thinking process to reflect on the impact of their professional learning designs from the past, understand and define current needs, ideate next steps, develop experiences, and reflect again on new needs. The process is similar to the infographic included on the previous page.

It is important to note, the resulting school-based plans, and this district plan, are living documents. They will change based on needs assessments. This is critically important to ensuring a responsive and personalized professional learning environment. As such and based on research from Jim Knight's [*Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction*](#), the format of our school-based plan is a "simple but not simplistic" one-page template. The one page plans allow schools to better adjust to their needs, pivot when necessary, and engage in ownership of all involved. The simplicity in the plans also better aligns the professional learning plans to specific observation framework elements. Doing so attempts to bridge any possible impact gap between the high quality professional learning provided and its impact on student success. Specifically we are aligning our goals with the Desired Effects from Marzano's Classroom Observation Framework, which [you can review here](#).

Our lead team of *Professional Learning Engineers* has been diligently developing a plan that supports all staff in supporting each student through an unprecedented shift in teaching and learning. The character of professional learning as a whole is one that embraces change and leverages learning to the benefits within change. To that end, this team hopes that you can read our enthusiasm for this plan, the direction in which our professional learning environments are evolving, and the future possibilities it will create for all our learners! It is with that same galvanized enthusiasm, that we submit this Professional Learning Plan for your review. We look forward to answering any questions you may have.

With all professional sincerity,

Beth McCarthy- Vice Principal, Greenville; Supervisor of Professional Learning; & K-5 RTI
Bruce Preston - Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Personnel

Statement of Financial Priorities for Professional Learning

District / Board Goal Areas	District Professional Learning Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personalized Learning Environments ● Response to Intervention ● Student Empowerment & Wellness of All ● Sustaining a Positive Culture & Climate for Learning ● Transforming Educational Settings through Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using purposeful strategy grouping, progress monitoring, and explicit instruction to close student learning gaps. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Planning Alignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learner Success ■ Talent Teams ○ Desired Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data confirm students are making progress towards meeting achievement goals ■ Communicates high expectations for each learner ■ Closing achievement gaps ● Balance restorative practices and instructional practices to personalize learning environments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Planning Alignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learner Success ■ Talent Teams ■ Wellness ○ Desired Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The District is safe and inclusive of each student ■ High expectations are held for each student
Budgetary Support	
District FY23 CEU Budget \$5,000.00 District FY23 Professional Learning/In-service Budget \$15,000.00 District FY23 Professional Learning Workshop Budget \$2,000.00 Title IIA Funding FY22 allocated for Professional Learning Budget \$111,878.00 ESSER III ARP Accelerated Learning Coach & Educator Support Funding \$48,400.00	

1: Professional Learning Goals

No.	Goal / Strategic Plan Connections	Identified Group	Rationale/Sources of Evidence
1	<p>Goal: Using purposeful strategy grouping, progress monitoring, and explicit instruction to close student learning gaps.</p> <p>Desired Effect:Data confirm students are making progress towards meeting achievement goals, Teachers use the instructional model, Closing Achievement Gaps</p> <p>Strategic Planning Alignment</p> <p><u>Learning Success</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly connect learning to relationships, social interactions, and individuality. • Expand school-wide practices that support resilience for students and adults. • Extend curriculum & experience options to include content relevant to the ever-changing social / emotional wellness challenges. <p><u>Talent Teams</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to support social, emotional, and physical wellness of staff, to foster professional and personal balance. • Celebrate and embrace the diversity of culture, socio-economic 	<p>Learning Design Team; School Improvement Panels; Central office professional learning staff</p>	<p>Response to Intervention is a necessary and mandated structure of strategic student interventions. RTI as it is commonly known, provides a system of support and interventions, both academic and behavioral, designed to provide students with just-in-time and just-enough intervention support to change a trajectory of over challenge. Implementation requires a deep understanding of antecedent challenges, a goal for success, and a concrete plan for bridging the two. The plans require proper goal setting, identified data for progress monitoring, and a team of professionals who conduct progress updates at no more than six week intervals. This process of monitoring and adjusting the intervention plans is an area in which better data, better application of data, and structured progress update meetings will improve student performance and overall student experience.</p> <p>Evidence: Surveys, anecdotally reported evidence, SciP/RTI/Data team agendas, daily learning plan content, School-based professional learning agendas, outcomes for students in the RTI process.</p> <p>Proposed Revision:</p> <p>Response to Intervention is a necessary and mandated structure of strategic student interventions. RTI as it is commonly known, provides a system of support and interventions, both academic and behavioral, designed to provide students with just-in-time and just-enough intervention support to change a trajectory of over challenge. Implementation requires a deep understanding of antecedent challenges, a goal for success, and a concrete plan for bridging the two. The plans range from Tier I interventions implemented in the classroom environment to Tier II and Tier III interventions that are implemented with more intensity and incorporate collaboration with educators outside the classroom environment. All levels of intervention require proper goal setting, identified data for progress monitoring, and a team of professionals who conduct progress</p>

	<p>status, individual needs, and learning styles.</p>		<p>updates at no more than six week intervals. This process of monitoring and adjusting the intervention plans is an area in which better data, better application of data, and structured progress update meetings will improve student performance and overall student experience.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Goal: Balance restorative practices and instructional practices to personalize learning environments.</p> <p>Desired Effects: The District is safe and inclusive of each student, and High expectations are held for each student</p> <p>Strategic Planning Alignment</p> <p><u>Learner Success</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide supportive social/emotional/physical/instructional learning environments that are responsive to learners’ needs. ● Support staff in creating opportunities for learners to take increased responsibility for their own learning. ● Designated curricular resources regarding executive functioning skills (EFS) informed by developmentally appropriate practices. ● Expand authentic opportunities for learners to demonstrate enriched understanding within, across, and beyond the standards. 	<p>Learning Design Team; School Improvement Panels; Central office professional learning staff</p>	<p>In many respects, schools are where students first experience personal cause and effect at a community level. The actions one student, or parent, one teacher, or one administrator take can have implications and impact for the rest of the school community. Our intention in this goal area is to invigorate each school culture through each stakeholder by helping students to act responsibly toward their community and to be accountable when they act in a way that disrupts that school community. Responsibility for, and accountability to the school community are hallmarks of Restorative Practices. Restorative practices in schools should not be a siloed set of activities. Taking responsibility for and being accountable to a learning community is critical for students' personal, and personalized success in schools. Likewise, Restorative Practices builds in students the commitments to a learning community associated with being responsible along with the understanding that accountability for disrupting the learning community is part of thriving within it. In this, goals, goal setting, and guided self-monitoring progress toward those goals are essential parts of building responsible and accountable relationships in school.</p> <p>Evidence: Evidence of the desired effect will be seen in observations, walk throughs, aligned lesson plans, conference demonstrations of Restorative implementation. Reduction in recidivism for discipline referrals, stakeholder identified improvements in school culture climate.</p>

<p><u>Talent Teams</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Expand professional learning opportunities that include: methods and approaches, collaborative practices, and authentic learning activities that personalize learning practices.● Enhance & support communication structures between school & district planning teams, such as SciPs, Learning Design Teams. <p><u>Wellness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide supportive social/emotional/physical/instructional learning environments that are responsive to learners' needs.● Promote character development that models and encourages positive actions and resiliency.● Enhance & support communication structures between school & district planning teams, such as SciPs, Learning Design Teams		
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Mentoring Plan:

Mission: To provide all new staff, whether new to the profession or just new to HTPS, with a community of colleagues and a network of support.

Our New Staff Academy was designed from a belief that new teachers - whether new to the district or new to the profession - have unique needs that require a deliberate architecture of support. The responsibility for that support structure is owned by, and a part of, both the collective and individual culture of our schools. The New Staff Academy strives to create a learning community from, and around our new teachers. In doing so, that community takes on a collective responsibility to honestly and earnestly help those new teachers grow in their professional practice while contributing fresh perspectives to our evolving environments. The results of these efforts provide optimal learning experiences for all our students.

Program Overview:

The total length of this program is 3 years. Each year's members will move together as a cohort.

Year One: You in relation to what you need to be successful

Six themed workshops delivered with classroom-usable strategies (first workshop is held during the New Staff Orientation).

Topics* & Tentative Dates:

- Working with Parents – October (early)
- Positive Expectations – February
- Professionalism – April
- A Year in Review, The Year Ahead – May

*(*Topics will be adjusted based on timely needs, as appropriate.)*

Online surveys will be conducted after each workshop as a measure of the success and/or needed changes for those workshops. In between workshops, discussion boards will be used to create connections, continuity, reflections, and support. The year-one experience culminates with the participants developing their own, unique, Educator's oath for the cohort.

Year Two: Your professional journey in relation to what you do with students

Modeling the same high leverage learning designs expected to be used for our students, 2nd year staff will unpack their personal story, understand how their self-narration of that story influences who they are becoming as a teacher, and lastly, they will learn the importance of the other characters who change the course of their story as it is unfolding. The goal of year two is to develop a sense of self-reflection and enhance teacher mindfulness about the intersection of their story with that of their students. The year-two experience culminates with participants crafting their Tiny Teaching Memoir (their teaching journey in 100 words or less.) These memoirs are published and given back to the cohort members, administrative team, and the Board of Education.

Year Three: You in relation to your colleagues

Year-three participant explore what teacher leadership is, what it means, where those opportunities exist, and how to support others in professionally productive ways. It is important that year-one teachers and year-three teachers spend time discussing and reflecting together. The year-three teachers complete a network of support for their year-one peers while contributing to a community of colleagues who are all experience their 'new-teacher' journey together. The year-three teachers have had their successes and challenges over the past two years, yet those experiences are still fresh. That makes the year-three teachers some of the best mentors for the year-one cohort.

Year Four: Teacher Leadership Opportunities

The cohort program provides a strong structure of support and community for the first three years of a teacher's experience. The research, however, is clear that attrition rates are highest in the first three to five years. This only accounts for those teachers leaving the job, but what about those teachers that stay? Are they still supported, focused, and growing, or have they stagnated and lost direction? A system of reconnecting will be put in place for the 4th year cohort. The emphasis will be on contributing to the growth of others, sustaining and offering meaningful personalized support, and setting goals for the next phase of each individual's career.

Mentors:

- Each new teacher (first year in the profession) will be assigned a mentor.
- All mentors will attend a training workshop held during the New Staff Orientation.
- Mentors will have three more meetings after the initial workshop held throughout the school year

Module One: Fall sessions focus on observation & evaluation training, parents as partners in learning, and needs assessment for new staff.

- When: After the first month of school
- Purpose: To hear feedback about the start of the school year. Specific focus of that feedback will be regarding their transition into the school year as both teacher and mentor. The group will use a Reflective Practice Protocol (see appendix A) to discuss and resolve any issues or difficult situations they have encountered with their new teacher. This time will also be used to discuss the upcoming events around the building and how we can best support our new teachers prior to, and during those events.

Module Two: Winter sessions focus on positive expectations and self-care.

- When: Early December
- Purpose: Open discussion of successes – and how to sustain them – and challenges – and how to mitigate them. This time will also be used to discuss the upcoming events around the building and how we can best support our new teachers prior to, and during those events.

Module Three: Spring sessions focus on reflections from the past year, preparations for the next year.

- When: Mid May
- Purpose: This meeting will be designed for the mentors to provide feedback to their School Improvement Panels, and through them to our Learning Design Team, based on their experience over the past year. Their feedback will be used as one measure of the overall success of the cohort program.

Mentors will be invited to attend the workshops held throughout the year (see below).

All of the meetings and workshops are designed to support these individuals through a systemic approach so that they can best meet the needs of our newest teachers...so that those new teachers can best meet the needs of our students.

Appendices

Appendix A:
Program Timelines: New Staff Academy - Program at a Glance

August Orientation for all New Hires	Cohort 7 Topics	Cohort 6 Topics	Cohort 5 Topics
<p>Fall Module (Getting Started)</p> <p>Oct 3; Introductions, Conferences,</p> <p>Oct 9; (Observation/Evaluation: Held during the in-service day)</p> <p>Oct 17 (Professional Learning Carousel: Report Cards, RTI, Behaviors that Support Learning, Observations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Parents • Never Work Harder Than Your Students / Reflective Practices (Modeling with Observation) • Professional Learning Carousel (Choice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative Ethics: What is it and How it Shapes the Story of You • What is Narrative Ethics and How It Can Help • Professional Learning Carousel (Choice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Leadership / Reflective Practices (Modeling with Observations) • Introduction to Intervention cycles and Teacher Leadership • Professional Learning Carousel (Choice)
<p>Winter Module (Taking Care of You)</p> <p>Jan 16; (Pension Planning and HTEA Introduction)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Expectations: • Self-Care / Reflective Practice • Carousel (SEL/Wellness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative Ethics as Ethics of Care (Importance of Relationships) • Ethics of Self-Care / Reflective Practices (Year 3 Guided) • Carousel (SEL/Wellness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Leadership / Reflective Practices (Shaping Opportunities for Leadership) • Intervention and Assessment Cycle • Professional Learning Carousel

<p>January 23; (Hope Versus Optimism & How to Build Our Sense of Efficacy.)</p> <p>January 30 (Wednesday)</p> <p>Restorative Practices</p>	<p>Possible Intervention and Assessment Cycle Presentations</p>	<p>Possible Intervention and Assessment Cycle Presentations</p>	<p>(SEL/Wellness)</p> <p>Possible Intervention and Assessment Cycle Presentations</p>
<p>Spring Module</p> <p>April 30;</p> <p>May 7;</p> <p>May (Meeting will be held at one of the May Board Meetings. Approval of CEU Hours - Certificates Awarded - Possible Presentations to the BOE -</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism / Educator Oaths • Reflections and Connections (Fortune Cookie Advice for New Staff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism / Educator Oaths • Reflections and Connections (Fortune Cookie Advice for New Staff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism / Educator Oaths • Reflections and Connections (Fortune Cookie Advice for New Staff)

Appendix B:
Expectations and Roles for New Teachers:

New Teachers are considered to be any teacher that is new to this district, regardless if they are new to the profession or they are coming to our district from a previous teaching position. Only those teachers who are entering their first year as teachers will have a formal mentor. Every new teacher, however, will participate in the first year cohort workshops. Teachers new to the profession will continue through Years 2, 3, and 4, as a cohort. Each year is tailored to meet the professional needs of those teachers based on the

developmental phases of their career. Experienced teachers who are new to the district will be invited to participate in Years 2, 3, 4 for professional development hours but they will not be required to participate.

Expectations & Roles for New Teachers:

- Become knowledgeable about, and participate in, the cohort experience
- Welcome informal support from mentors on a daily basis
- Meet with the mentor at least once a week for a one hour session of formal feedback, in addition to informal meetings and informal feedback
- Keep a log of weekly meetings and maintain a reflective journal
- Participate in the professional learning community of your department, team, and/or other designation
- Maintain confidentiality of the mentor – new teacher relationship
- Be open, candid, and be willing to share as well as try new ideas
- Be willing to fail better
- Provide honest feedback about this program
- Admit when you are struggling, seek help, and implement changes

Appendix C:
Criteria and Expectations for Mentors

Criteria for Mentors:

- A Minimum of 4 years of teaching experience and have tenure status in this district
- Submit the Mentor Teacher Application Form with the required recommendations
- Skillful communicator and can adapt to different communication styles
- Current on and implements the best educational practices and are committed to constant learning about the art and science of teaching
- Committed to collegial practices and models professional experimentation to elevate the overall opportunities for student success
- Has a proven track record for successful classroom practice and for preserving and building confidence with resistant students
- Is able to commit the time required
- Demonstrates a broad repertoire of teaching skills and an understanding of the District's standards and expectations
- Flexible and organized

- Demonstrates a commitment to personal professional development and an openness to new ideas and methodology

Expectations for Mentors:

- Mentors will be available for a minimum of one hour per week to work with the new teacher
- Mentors will attend all mentor meetings - 4 in total – as well as all the cohort workshops (6 in total). They will also participate in the online discussion forums.
- Because the wisdom of the experienced teacher is essential to this process, all mentors are expected to take a proactive, participatory role in each meeting and in the discussion board topics.
- Mentors will be open to peer-observations by the new teacher. There will be a minimum of 1 toward the end of September with a conferencing follow up after the observation.
- Mentors will observe the new teacher as needed with a minimum of 2 times early in the school year. The focus of the first is classroom management; the focus of the second is planning and implementation. Conferencing follow-ups will be done after the observation.
- Maintain the confidentiality of the mentor – new teacher relationship
- Mentors will be given release time, with prior approval, to complete the expectations for observations. Conferences should be done during common planning or after school.
- Mentors and new teachers will maintain logs that document their time together for both accounting and accountability purposes. These logs will have single-phrase descriptions of the topics covered during these meetings.

Appendix D: **Reflective Practice Protocol**

(Based on work by Chase, Germundsen, Brownstein, and Distad. (2001) Making the Connection Between Increased Student Learning and Reflective Practice; Educational Horizons, & the work of Yourk-Barr, Sopmmers, Ghere, and Montie. (2006). Reflective Practice to Improve Schools: An Action Guide for Educators. Corwin Press)

- I. Presentation of Problem / Concern (10 minutes)
 - A. Each person presents a classroom problem or concern
 - B. No one should speak for more than two minutes
 - C. No one should mention any names of students or other teachers

- II. Group Choice (10 minutes)

- A. The group will choose one concern on which it would like to focus
- B. Those who presented the concern will elaborate and provide more details
- C. Information-seeking questions for those presenting can now be asked

III. Hypothesize (5 minutes)

- A. Participants will spend this time brainstorming variables which may have caused the problem
- B. Participants should also brainstorm solutions to the problem and consider reasoning

IV. Discussion and Solutions (15 minutes)

- A. Possible alternative causations are presented
 - 1. These are possible catalysts which may not have been realized by those involved.
 - 2. Reasons for belief must be supplied
- B. Possible solutions are presented
 - 1. All ideas hold value and so they are valued
 - 2. All solutions must provide reasoning for (ie. Pedagogy, data, article)

V. Summation of Discussion (5 minutes)

- A. Facilitator will summarize problem
 - 1. Causes
 - 2. Solutions
 - 3. Participant overall investment in problem

VI. Contextual Relevance to Latest Professional Learning Experience (10 minutes)

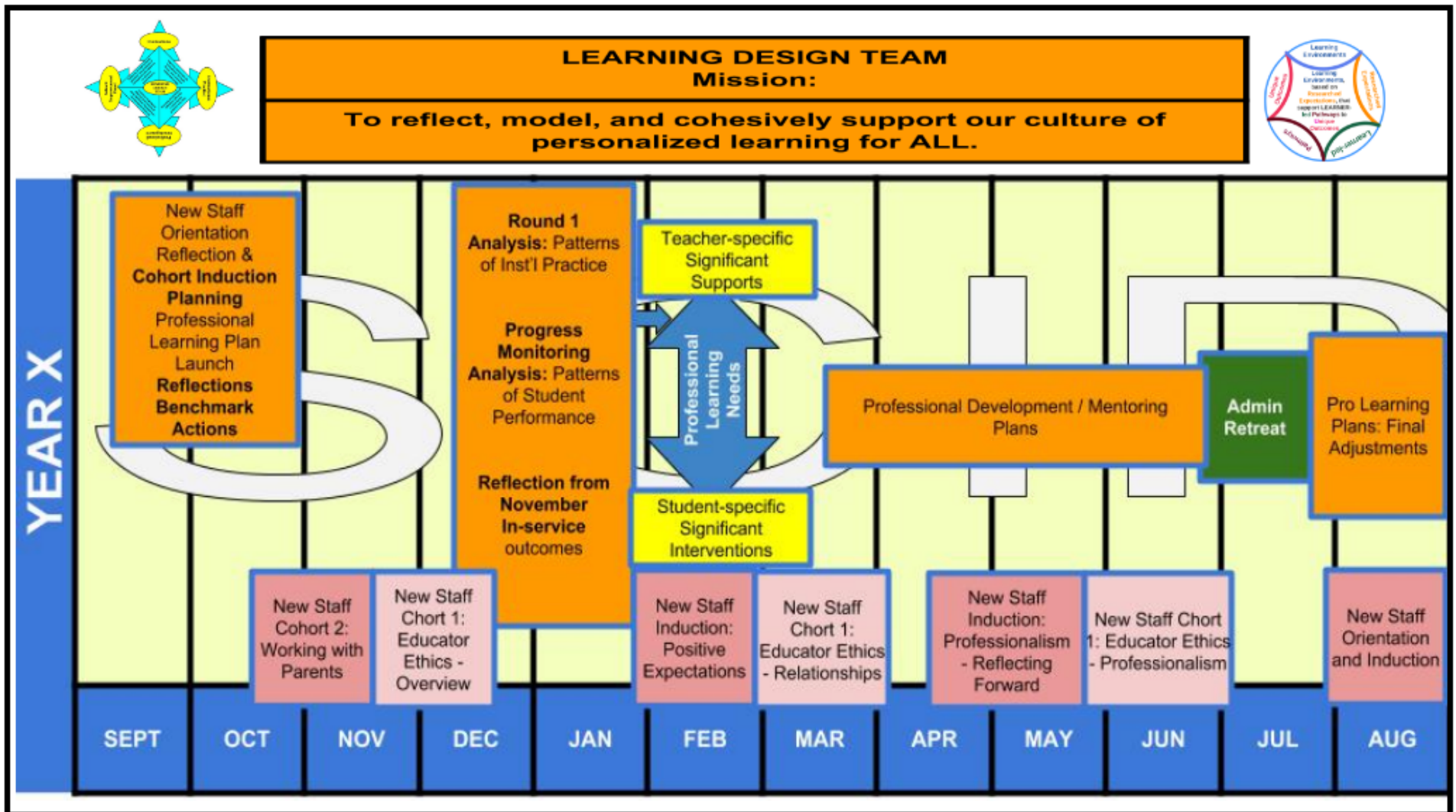
- A. Refresh on topic of latest professional learning
- B. Facilitator presents discussion in terms of professional learning experiences
- C. Open group discussion on the relationship between problem and professional learning

VII. Inquiry Forms / Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

- A. All participants must fill out an inquiry form
 - 1. Usefulness of discussion
 - 2. Relevance to personal experience

3. Questions for further exploration
- B. Closing remarks by facilitator

Appendix E: Learning Design Team Visual Map (Includes Timelines and New Staff Academy, Years 1 and 2)



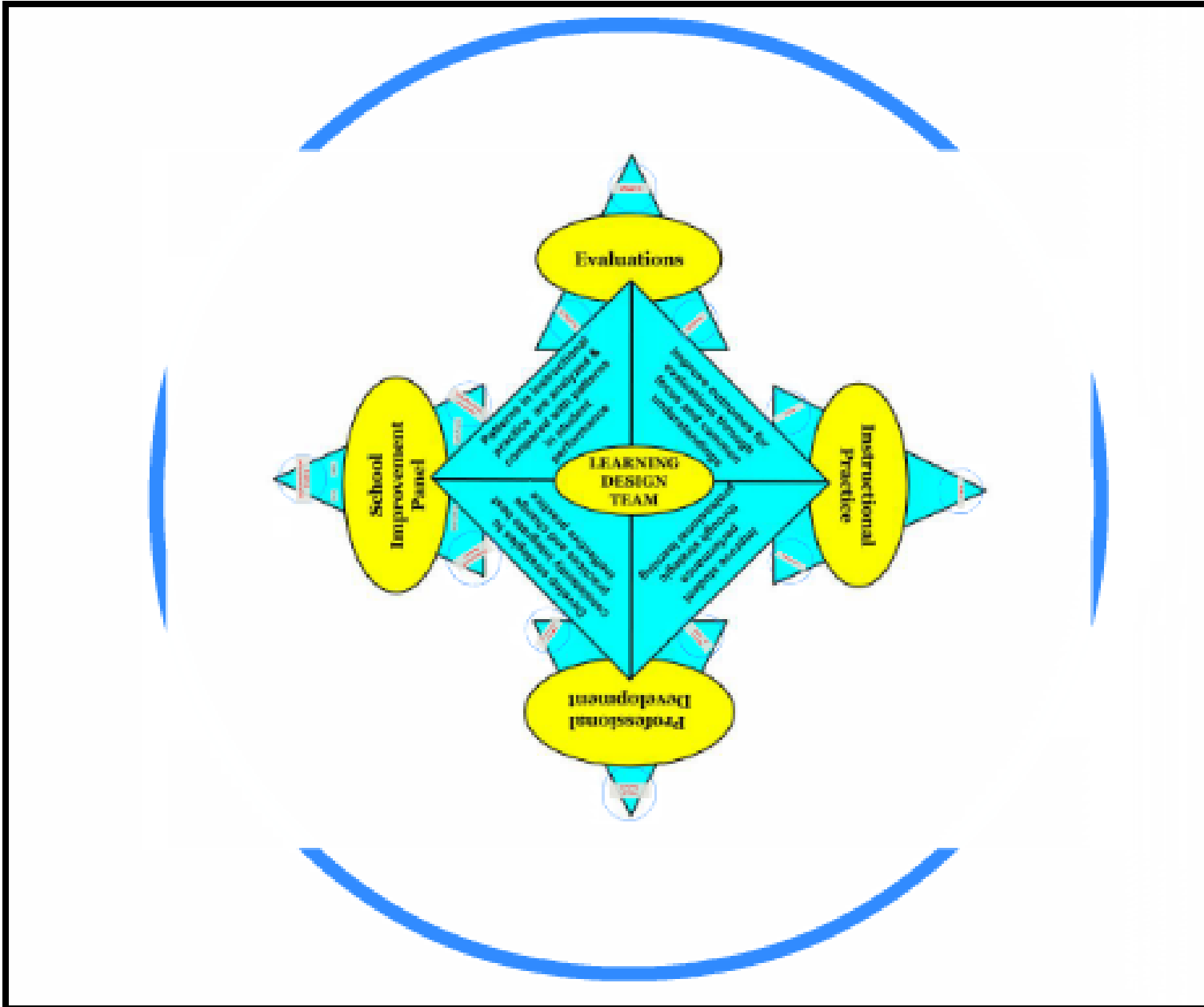
Appendix F: Personalized Learning Framework



Appendix G: Personalized Learning Resources Map

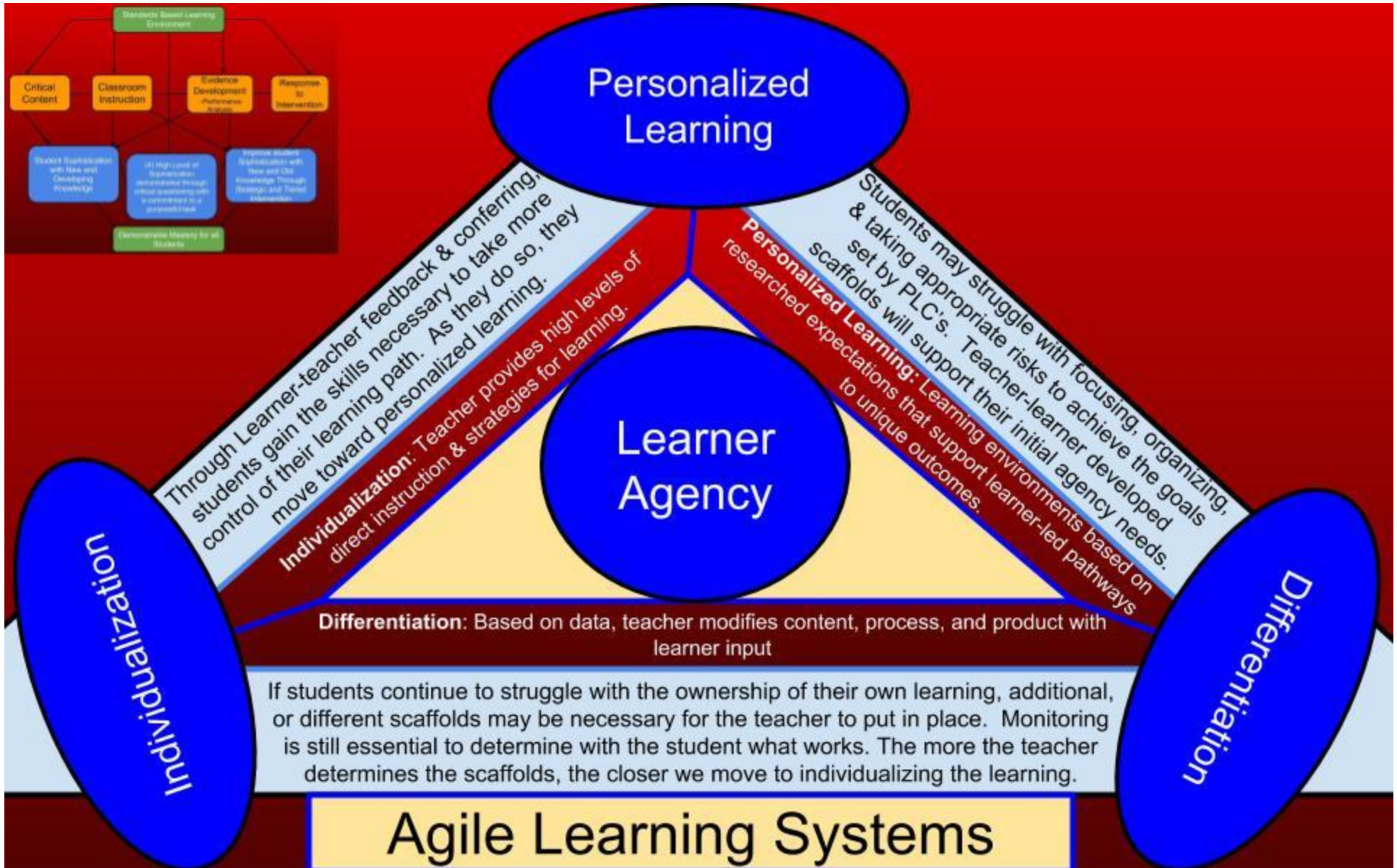


Appendix H:
Visual Map of Agile Professional Learning
Environments



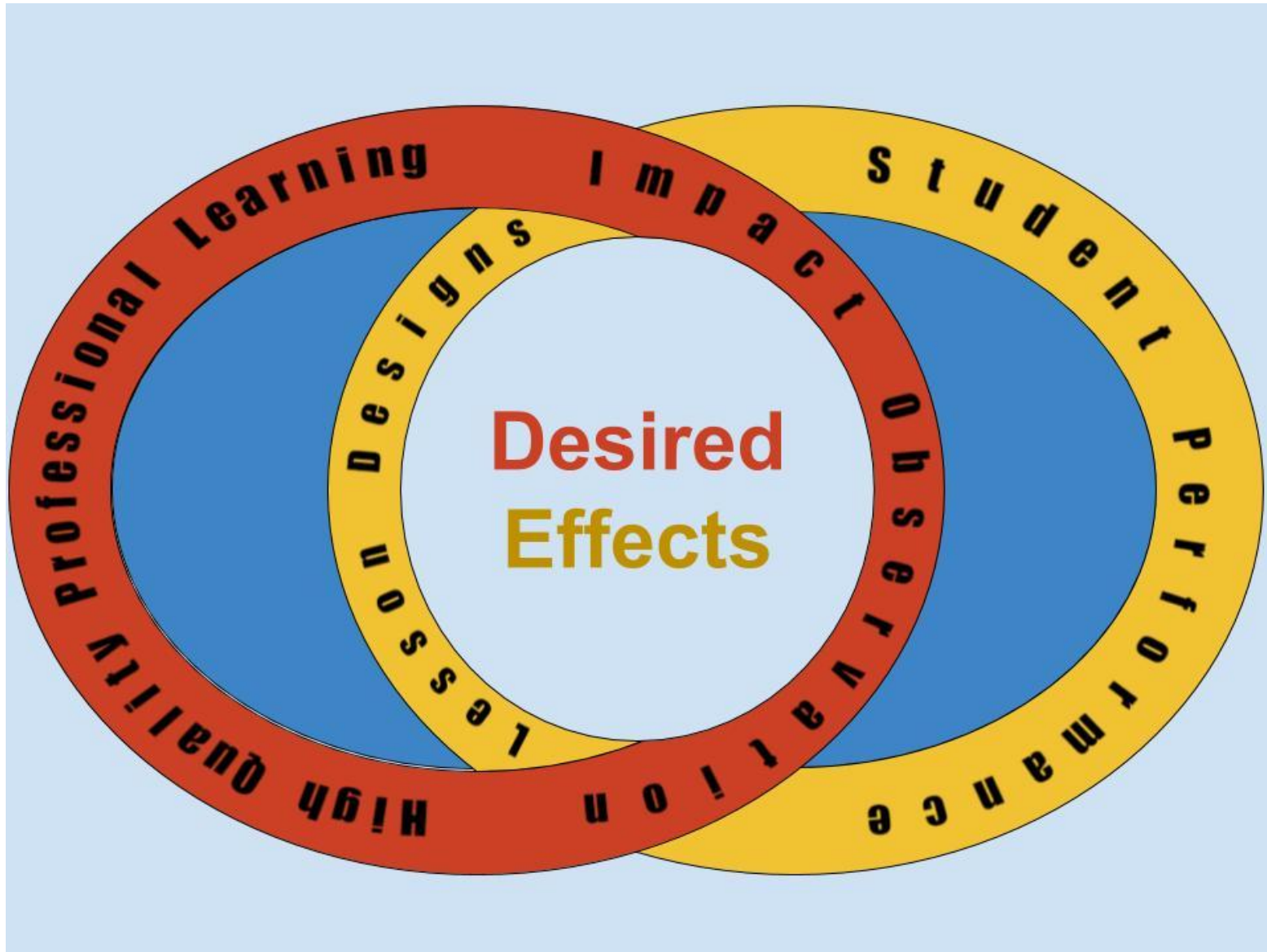
Agile Learning Systems
Personalized, Individualized, Differentiated
Infographic

Depicts the continuum of learning needs from learners with the most agency (personalized) to those learners with the least agency (individualized).



Impact Map

A concept map to think through the connections between 5 elements: high quality professional learning, clear desired effects, lesson designs, student performance, and observations. The map supports thinking and discussing the connections between those 5 impact elements.



Impact Bridge

The research on professional learning is clear: professional learning should result in a positive change for our students. Author Jim Knight exemplifies that belief by proposing “...Impact Schools, where every aspect of professional learning is designed to have an unmistakable, positive impact on teaching and student learning.” (*Unmistakable Impact: a Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction*. Corwin, 2011. Pg. 6).

The concept map to the right is designed to facilitate SCIP dialogues and shared understanding of precisely what impact professional learning is having, where within a continuum that impact is occurring, and how to move the impact closer to the desired effect of that impact. It is an attempt to bridge any impact gap between professional learning and student success.

