



Spartanburg County School District #3

Glendale, South Carolina

April 17–20, 2022

System Accreditation Engagement Review

215719

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Cognia Continuous Improvement System

Cognia defines continuous improvement as “an embedded behavior rooted in an institution’s culture that constantly focuses on conditions, processes, and practices to improve teaching and learning.” The Cognia Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic, fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. Cognia expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions.

The findings of the Engagement Review Team are organized by the ratings from the Cognia Performance Standards Diagnostic and the Levels of Impact within the i3 Rubric: Initiate, Improve, and Impact.

Initiate

The first phase of the improvement journey is to **Initiate** actions to cause and achieve better results. The elements of the **Initiate** phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Engagement and Implementation. Engagement is the level of involvement and frequency of stakeholders in the desired practices, processes, or programs within the institution. Implementation is the process of monitoring and adjusting the administration of the desired practices, processes, or programs for quality and fidelity. Standards identified within Initiate should become the focus of the institution’s continuous improvement journey toward the collection, analysis, and use of data to measure the results of engagement and implementation. Enhancing the capacity of the institution in meeting these Standards has the greatest potential impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improve

The second phase of the improvement journey is to gather and evaluate the results of actions to **Improve**. The elements of the **Improve** phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Results and Sustainability. Results come from the collection, analysis, and use of data and evidence to demonstrate attaining the desired result(s). Sustainability is results achieved consistently to demonstrate growth and improvement over time (a minimum of three years). Standards identified within Improve are those in which the institution is using results to inform their continuous improvement processes and to demonstrate over time the achievement of goals. The institution should continue to analyze and use results to guide improvements in student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Impact

The third phase of achieving improvement is **Impact**, where desired practices are deeply entrenched. The elements of the **Impact** phase are defined within the Level of Impact of Embeddedness. Embeddedness is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the institution. Standards identified within Impact are those in which the institution has demonstrated ongoing growth and improvement over time and has embedded the practices within its culture. Institutions should continue to support and sustain these practices that yield results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Cognia Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal in leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research-based standards, the Cognia Accreditation Process examines the whole institution—the program, the cultural context, and the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of learners. Through the accreditation process, highly skilled and trained Engagement Review Teams gather first-hand evidence and information pertinent to evaluating an institution’s performance against the research based Cognia Performance Standards. Review teams use these Standards to assess the quality of learning environments to gain valuable insights and target improvements in teaching and learning. Cognia provides Standards that are tailored for all education providers so that the benefits of accreditation are universal across the education community.

Through a comprehensive review of evidence and information, our experts gain a broad understanding of institution quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to institutions, which helps to focus and guide each institution’s improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also are obtained through interviews, surveys, and additional activities.

Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results

The Cognia Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution's effectiveness based on the Cognia Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity**, and **Resource Capacity**. Results are reported within four ranges identified by color. The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Insufficient	Identifies areas with insufficient evidence or evidence that indicated little or no activity leading toward improvement
Yellow	Initiating	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Improving	Pinpoints quality practices that are improving and meet the Standards
Blue	Impacting	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that positively impact the institution

Under each Standard statement is a row indicating the scores related to the elements of Cognia’s i3 Rubric. The rubric is scored from one (1) to four (4). A score of four on any element indicates high performance, while a score of one or two indicates an element in need of improvement. The following table provides the key to the abbreviations of the elements of the i3 Rubric.

Element	Abbreviation
Engagement	EN
Implementation	IM
Results	RE
Sustainability	SU
Embeddedness	EM

Leadership Capacity Domain

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution’s progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution’s leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

Leadership Capacity Standards										Rating
1.1	The system commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system’s purpose and desired outcomes for learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system’s purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for their institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	3	EM:	

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement and success is the primary expectation of every institution. An effective learning culture is characterized by positive and productive teacher/learner relationships, high expectations and standards, a challenging and engaging curriculum, quality instruction and comprehensive support that enable all learners to be successful, and assessment practices (formative and summative) that monitor and measure learner progress and achievement. Moreover, a quality institution evaluates the impact of its learning culture, including all programs and support services, and adjusts accordingly.

Learning Capacity Standards											Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.										Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	4	
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational futures and career planning.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	4	
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	

Learning Capacity Standards											Rating
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	2	

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably, so the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The institution examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and increased student learning.

Resource Capacity Standards											Rating
3.1	The system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	3	EM:	4	
3.3	The system provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	2	EM:	4	
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.										Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	2	
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	4	
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.										Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	

Resource Capacity Standards											Rating
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	

Assurances

Assurances are statements that accredited institutions must confirm they are meeting. The Assurance statements are based on the type of institution, and the responses are confirmed by the Accreditation Engagement Review Team. Institutions are expected to meet all Assurances and are expected to correct any deficiencies in unmet Assurances.

Assurances Met		
YES	NO	If No, List Unmet Assurances by Number Below
X		

Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality®

Cognia will review the results of the Accreditation Engagement Review to make a final determination concerning accreditation status, including the appropriate next steps for your institution in response to these findings. Cognia provides the Index of Education Quality (IEQ) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. This formative tool for improvement identifies areas of success and areas in need of focus. The IEQ comprises the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: Leadership Capacity, Learning Capacity, and Resource Capacity. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provide information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria. Institutions should review the IEQ in relation to the findings from the review in the areas of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. An IEQ score below 250 indicates that the institution has several areas within the Initiate level and should focus their improvement efforts on those Standards within that level. An IEQ in the range of 225–300 indicates that the institution has several Standards within the Improve level and is using results to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate sustainability. An IEQ of 275 and above indicates the institution is beginning to reach the Impact level and is engaged in practices that are sustained over time and are becoming ingrained in the culture of the institution.

Below is the average (range) of all Cognia Improvement Network (CIN) institutions evaluated for accreditation in the last five years. The range of the annual CIN IEQ average is presented to enable you to benchmark your results with other institutions in the network.

Institution IEQ	343.87	CIN 5 Year IEQ Range	278.34 – 283.33
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Insights from the Review

The Engagement Review Team engaged in professional discussions and deliberations about the processes, programs, and practices within the institution to arrive at the findings of the team. These findings are organized around themes guided by the evidence, with examples of programs and practices, and suggestions for the institution's continuous improvement efforts. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide contextualized information from the team's deliberations and analysis of the practices, processes, and programs of the institution organized by the levels of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. The narrative also provides the next steps to guide the institution's improvement journey in its efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on its current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

The Engagement Review Team (team) identified themes from the review that support the continuous improvement process for Spartanburg County School District #3. These themes present strengths and opportunities to guide the improvement journey.

The system demonstrates practices that create a pervasive family atmosphere and collaborative culture. The artifacts and interviews reveal a strong adherence to a guiding principle, derived from the system's mission and vision and repeated at all levels starting with board members, central office administrators, building principals, teachers, students, and parents. That principle states, "All in, no matter what it takes." The team found that an attitude of "growth mindset" permeates the system at all levels despite whatever challenges exist. An attitude of continuous improvement was clearly articulated, and a high degree of pride was stated, as seen in data that noted positive change based on several strategies noted in the strategic plan. One notable growth indicator in the area of graduation rate was significant, indicating substantial growth in the rate resulting from the development of a mentor program for high school students. The growth in graduation rate was based on a benchmark, which is one example of program evaluation resulting from a substantial investment of time and resources. Interviews with stakeholders throughout the system provided insight into not only awareness of the guiding principle of "all in" but a driving force in the development of a culture of problem solving and intolerance for the status quo. The team suggests that collecting longitudinal data on the collaborative culture will allow the system to celebrate success and identify areas that may potentially need addressing.

Cohesive leadership, based on standards and expectations, has created a system that supports the schools and departments and intentionally allocates resources in line with the system's continuous improvement efforts. Central office creates a balanced leadership approach, setting standards and expectations for all buildings, promoting equity of resources, monitoring progress, and advising the operation of its sites. While themes and approaches differ among buildings, interviews with staff and parents acknowledged the same basic principles that focused on student growth. The system assessment program focuses on student growth at all levels, with staff monitoring and adjusting instruction to achieve growth for all learners. A review of both state and national data points demonstrates the focus on growth as the foundation of all continuous improvement strategies. Teachers in all seven buildings and sites described a collaborative culture in which learning communities were established at all levels. While the system defines professional learning goals through system-wide opportunities, building level teams provide the structure for what was defined as "job embedded" staff development. Teachers meet in a variety of configurations based on building level needs assessment and topics for professional learning. During interviews, teachers described how they were able to learn

from each other. The team suggests that data be collected to support the ongoing development of these professional learning practices.

Each building follows a precise protocol for collecting and analyzing student performance data.

A system of formative assessment is used prior to the use of summative assessments. The use of the Measures of Academic (MAP) assessment data tracks individual student growth over time and provides teachers with the ability to create individual learning plans for students. The data also allow teachers to obtain classroom data that provides program assessment data in several subject areas. This feature provides a tool for teachers as they approach instructional delivery and lesson planning. The team suggests that data analysis protocols mentioned earlier be expanded to other areas of system operations to aid in the continuous improvement process.

While the current program of data collection process is exemplary, it is focused mainly on student growth and achievement.

The impact of organizational effectiveness and standard operating procedures data have the potential to provide the system with a deeper level of continuous improvement. Determining efficiency and effectiveness using program evaluation protocols that include benchmarking and increasing embeddedness and sustainability of programs and initiatives will provide clarity to the strategic plan, building level plans, and support needed. Some planning components would benefit from putting in place more clearly defined metrics to determine their efficacy and the impact on professional practice, student learning, and organizational effectiveness. Candidates for program evaluation include, but are not limited to, the impact of the professional development program, marketing and promotion, fiscal policy, curriculum review, overall assessment practices, and transportation. An enhancement of the current system could provide a window into overall organizational effectiveness, create a deeper understanding of key result areas, and develop a more systemic view of the service area. A dashboard that provides a window into each key result with the ability to aggregate and disaggregate data could also lead to more targeted assistance while also identifying promising practices that can be shared across the system. Interviews with teachers, administrators, and staff provide great insight into the effectiveness of individual programs and their impact on students. However, much of the data produced were anecdotal, especially when measuring the effectiveness of professional development programs. The use of metrics for both qualitative and quantitative data would provide greater insight into both efficiency and effectiveness of programs. Determining the use of new learning in the current role of teacher, administrator, support staff, or board member could assist in a deeper understanding of program effectiveness in professional development.

There is a lack of measurable data obtained through evaluations and walkthroughs. Aligning professional development plans with teacher and leader evaluation data is an opportunity to focus more directly on improving student learning. The team observed that much of the data obtained in the observation of practice are anecdotal and is difficult to aggregate with metrics. The team suggests that a process of program evaluation be implemented by benchmarking the status of the program with the use of a rubric or rating system that provides a metric. Implementation of the initiative could then be measured to provide insight into both the quantitative and qualitative change that resulted from the strategy.

The facilities plan, known as Destination 3-1-1, has optimized operations and provided a fiscal stabilizing format of efficiency and effectiveness.

The decline in enrollment forced the system to close a building and adjust its approach to budgeting and spending. The process of involving stakeholders and adjusting capital improvement resulted in stabilizing budgetary and operational procedures. The process also developed a strategic resource allocation strategy that facilitated the alignment of the system's strategic plan and initiatives.

Cognia expects all institutions to be aware of the accreditation Standards and requirements, celebrate their work meeting Standards rated as Impacting, and address Standards that are rated at the Insufficient level.

Parents and community members during the interview process indicated a concern over growth and economic development that will have an impact on facilities and programs. The use of a process of environmental scanning could allow for a proactive plan to increase student enrollment over the next five to ten years. The strategic planning process has served the district well during a period of enrollment decline. While it is not possible to be exact about growth and systemic needs, collaborating with community agencies, who chart economic development, could serve the system well.

The team congratulates the system on its preparation and wishes it well on its continuous improvement journey.

Next Steps

Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report, the institution is encouraged to implement the following steps:

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the areas for improvement identified by the Engagement Review Team.
- Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the institution's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report.
- Continue the improvement journey.

Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams are comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds and expertise. To provide knowledge and understanding of the Cognia tools and processes, all Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members are required to complete Cognia training. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography/Title
Mike Bugenski, Lead Evaluator	Mike Bugenski is a Lead Evaluator with Cognia and is a former teacher, central office administrator, Educational Service Agency (ESA) administrator, adjunct university professor, and AdvancED State Director in Michigan. He has worked for four ESAs in Michigan as a strategic planning consultant and instructional coach to schools. He has also served as the associate director for the Michigan School Administrator Association and directed a state-wide professional development program training prospective superintendents and principals across Michigan. He is completing his 52 nd year as an educator with degrees from Michigan State University and Eastern Michigan University. He has led reviews for AdvancED in the Middle East, China, Europe, and 32 states in the U.S.
Patricia Beason	Assistant Superintendent
Shawn Clemons	Director of Accountability and Testing

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