



# Edgefield County School District

Johnston, South Carolina

**February 22-25, 2022**

**System Accreditation Engagement Review**

215691

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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.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	3	RE:	2		SU:	2
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learning.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	4	RE:	3		SU:	3
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:	3	IM:	4	RE:	3		SU:	4
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.						Impacting		
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3		SU:	4
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.						Impacting		
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3		SU:	4
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.						Impacting		
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2		SU:	3
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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for their institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	3		SU:	3

## 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:	2		SU:	3
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	3	RE:	2		SU:	3
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	2
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:	3	IM:	2	RE:	3		SU:	2
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	3		SU:	4
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	3		SU:	2
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	2		SU:	2
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational futures and career planning.						Impacting		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2		SU:	2
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	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.						Impacting		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.						Impacting		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3

## 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.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2		SU:	2
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	2
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.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2		SU:	2
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	3	RE:	2		SU:	2
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.						Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	2		SU:	2
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.						Improving		
	EN:	2	IM:	3	RE:	3		SU:	3

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:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

## 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 its 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.

<b>Institution IEQ</b>	<b>313.87</b>	<b>CIN 5 Year IEQ Range</b>	<b>278.34 – 283.33</b>
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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 its plans to continuously strive for improvement.

Based on the evidence provided by the school system and stakeholder interviews conducted by the Cognia Engagement Review Team, several themes emerged under the Impact and Improve levels. The team adhered to the processes and protocols required for System Accreditation to evaluate the school system within the context of the Cognia Performance Standards. Within this context the following insights and themes were discovered.

**The Edgefield County School District has established a goal that all students will graduate college and career ready and that they will leave high school enrolled, enlisted or employed.**

(2.8) In interviews with administrators and staff, the team was informed that all learners are involved in programs and strategies to identify their interests, abilities and aptitudes. These range from the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP), student surveys, career clusters, personalized learning plan (PLP), choice boards, career day, partnership with Piedmont Technical College, Strom Thurmond Career and Technology Center, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and dual credit. While data indicate an 87% graduation rate, the college and career readiness metrics are less encouraging. The team was pleased to note that career academies are being implemented to address career exploration and preparation. For 2022-23, freshmen will be able to explore all fourteen career and technical education (CTE) offerings through The Wheel scheduling initiative. Students will be able to explore each CTE cluster, not only being involved in coursework but experiencing hands-on applications. It was noted that freshmen will also be assigned an upperclassmen "buddy" to assist them in exploration in their areas of high interest. Through leadership and community stakeholder interviews the team was apprised of the partnership with Piedmont Technical College which expands opportunities to support educational futures and careers. School staffs shared that businesses offer job shadowing experience, and all stakeholders indicated a desire for continued expansion of opportunities to get learners into the community. In its discussions with leadership and staff, the team learned that significant funds were devoted to CTE resources, especially in agricultural sciences, a reflection of the system's acknowledgment of the dominant role of the farm economy in the greater community. The team also noted the value of the leadership development opportunities for students through occupational youth organizations, such as Future Farmers of America (FFA). The system is to be commended on its maintenance of programs and services that provide learners with diverse opportunities to prepare for their next levels. System governance, leadership and staff are encouraged to continue to offer learning opportunities supported by demonstrated needs.

**Edgefield County School District staff members are involved in the institution's formalized cycle and timeline to evaluate all academic and organizational programs and services.** In its review of documentation and interviews with leadership and staff, the team was made aware that data are

consistently used to inform improvement planning, evaluation of programs and practices, and instructional practice. Formative and summative data are collected, analyzed and used to monitor learning progress and to implement common grading practices across all classrooms and programs. From comparisons of graduation rates to college and career readiness rates, the system has made changes to the grading policy, offers the freshman academy and has developed the career and technology center. The high school has also implemented Tallo to meet the need of ensuring students graduate futures ready. Leadership and staff informed the team that the system has used test data to implement new programs, such as Inquiry Innovators, i-Ready, Lexia, Read 180 and Lexiles. Staff members spoke of their use of data meetings and professional learning committees (PLCs) to help ensure students are achieving and that instruction aligns with standards. The system has been using pre-conference, observation, and post-conference (POP) cycles to gather information to drive instructional decisions. Data was referenced multiple times by administration, instructional coaches and teachers in citing metrics of how decisions are made. Additionally, the system has used non-instructional data, such as attendance and discipline, to initiate the social-emotional learning (SEL) program and Saturday school. Included in evidence and verified by staff members was the use of data in the system's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) plan and implementation. The team learned that the system collects, analyzes and uses data to support the programs and services that promote learner achievement and organizational support. Continued reliance on appropriately vetted data in the planning, implementation, review and adjustments to curriculum and instruction is advised.

**The Edgefield County School District system of continuous improvement targets specific actions aligned to the mission, that all students will graduate prepared for college and work.** The system has engaged in the continuous improvement process by collecting, analyzing and using data to make decisions to move forward. Through its review of documentation and in its extensive interviewing, the team has determined that the system has aligned its strategic plan, MTSS plan and academic recovery plan with the implementation of other initiatives to improve student outcomes. The superintendent and leadership discussed their development and implementation of systemic practices, including the grading policy, salary schedule, communication plan and rebranding strategies. Key stakeholders are engaged as plans are being considered using surveys and conversations. In addition to meetings with internal stakeholders, community members, parents and students are valued contributors with input to long-range planning and relevant ongoing decision-making. The superintendent has also established relationships and partnerships with community leaders to combine efforts for collective impact. The use of surveys, town hall meetings, teacher forums, school improvement councils and the “Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” vehicle demonstrate the commitment to continuous improvement through engagement with, and feedback from, stakeholders. The system is encouraged to continue to employ methods of keeping its finger on the pulse of all stakeholder groups as it maintains efforts to address its defined purpose and direction.

**The Edgefield County School District demonstrates evidence of effective governance and leadership through transparent oversight of system policy implementation, ethical operational and instructional practices, and attention to board and leader development and training.** The review of documents and interviews with governing board members and the superintendent indicated policy development, review and revisions are ongoing and managed with fidelity. All board members contributed to their focus groups, displaying knowledge of their roles, passion for students and transparency in sharing positives and challenges. Data were referenced multiple times by board members and leaders in citing metrics that inform decisions. The team was encouraged to learn how the system has developed and implemented shared leadership strategies. These included opportunities for students through student government, JROTC, activities and CTE youth organizations. All stakeholder groups corroborated the encouragement and opportunities for providing input at appropriate levels. Leadership and the governing authority demonstrate their support for and belief in the institution's

purpose and long-range plans by committing to positive stewardship of resources. Audit, budgets and state reports confirmed that the system is operating ethically and efficiently. Processes are designed and executed to ensure human, material and fiscal resources are aligned, allocated and used to meet identified needs and key priorities. The system is to be commended for its leadership at all levels and encouraged to continue with its collaborative efforts and transparency in serving its constituents with skill and passion.

**Edgefield County School District plans and delivers relevant and job-embedded professional learning; however, it is lacking processes that ensure the use of digital resources are integrated into the teaching, learning and operations, as well as in alignment with the curricular and instructional programs that support the needs of staff and students.**

According to interviews with school leadership, teachers, and the system's professional development plan, teachers participate in weekly, monthly or bi-monthly PLCs that are based on needs, established through the collection, analysis and use of data. However, professional development opportunities do not align from school to school; therefore, the effectiveness of professional learning activities to improve professional practice, content and pedagogical knowledge, and organizational effectiveness cannot be determined. Furthermore, processes to ensure the acquisition of resources and materials align to the curricular and instructional programs and support the needs of staff and students were not evident. Based on interviews with school leadership, teachers and instructional support staff, digital resources are integrated into teachers' lessons; however, there was no evidence that teachers are receiving professional development including best practices in the integration of digital resources, nor alignment to a curriculum. Furthermore, providing all staff opportunities to engage in professional learning opportunities to grow in their respective areas would help the system grow. In interviews with governing board members, the team learned that they do not regularly participate in professional development. Establishing a system-wide curriculum would allow more opportunities for aligned professional learning opportunities for all staff and would assist in the fidelitous and appropriate integration of digital resources to improve the learning environment, learner achievement and the system's effectiveness.

**The Edgefield County School District is currently writing a curriculum with a focus on priority standards and units; however, when asked, no one indicated their participation in this writing process.**

The professional development plan (PDP) supports the need to rebrand and refocus the curriculum. The system has implemented Inquiry Innovators. That data are collected and analyzed was evident through discussions and reviews of Measuring Academic Progress (MAP), iReady, weekly PLCs and/or data notebooks. The system has an on-campus career center. They also partner with Piedmont Technical College to offer dual enrollment credit to students. It also has a freshman academy and plans to implement additional career academies next year. Teachers and students participate in personalized learning opportunities using choice boards, flipped classrooms, flipping Friday and multicultural days. While the system has a social-emotional coordinator, it would be helpful to include a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum to support the needs of the students and faculty/staff. During the superintendent's interview, it was noted that there is room for growth in the gifted and talented program. Evidence indicated that there is a process for the students to be selected for the program, but there is no written curriculum. During team research and exploration of the system website, it was noted that there is a 3K-4K program, but they were not highlighted during the review. There are English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) guidelines, as well as an individual education plan (IEP)/504 coordinator. During the interviews, there was no emphasis on how programs and/or practices accommodate the needs of specialized learners. The team learned that Saturday School is offered to help students catch up on lost learning due to the pandemic; however, transportation is not offered. The system may wish to consider offering transportation or a virtual option for Saturday school. While the system is providing several incredibly important courses and programs for students, there are gaps. The team advises that the system conduct a comprehensive assessment of learning and instruction with a particular focus on

gaps in services for all learners.

Edgefield County School District is to be commended for many excellent programs and practices that are being provided for its learners, their families and staff. The team wishes the system the best as it continues its journey of continuous improvement. It is expected that these insights may provide some guidance as the system considers next steps in addressing its purpose of “Growing World Class Citizens by Engaging, Empowering and Enriching All Learners.”

## 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 (Lead Evaluator Only)
<b>John Sedey, Lead Evaluator</b>	John Sedey has been a teacher, school and district administrator, and educational consultant. Since retiring from public school administration, he has been in private practice, primarily consulting to an intermediate school district, a community college, three alternative schools, and four charter schools. He has been the Executive Director of an education non-profit corporation. John has provided leadership to career and technical education, guidance, and social services, assessment and testing, student data systems, alternative education, state and federal program administration, education-business partnerships, and environmental education. He has been a senior developer for one of eleven New American Schools Development projects. In his advocacy for college and career readiness, he has consulted with federal and state departments of education. John holds a bachelor's degree in history and business, a master's degree in education administration, and has done additional graduate work, including that as a Bush Public School Executive Fellow. He has led more than 150 Cognia reviews in 32 states in the past ten years.
<b>Kimberly Livingston, Team Member</b>	Transformation Coach, South Carolina Department of Education
<b>Melissa Peeples, Team Member</b>	Curriculum Specialist, Calhoun County Public Schools
<b>Meredith Rose, Team Member</b>	Executive Director of Academics, Cherokee County School District
<b>Anna Smith, Team Member</b>	Instructional Technology Facilitator, Orangeburg County School District

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