



Randolph County Schools

Cuthbert, Georgia

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System Accreditation Engagement Review

215049

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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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learning.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.									Improving
	EN:	2	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	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:	4	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:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	2	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:	3	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

Leadership Capacity Standards										Rating
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for their institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	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:	
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.									Initiating
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.									Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
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:	
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational futures and career planning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

Learning Capacity Standards											Rating
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.										Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	1	EM:	2	
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	2	
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	2	
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:	3	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.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	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.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.										Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	3	EM:	3	
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	4	SU:	2	EM:	3	

Resource Capacity Standards										Rating
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:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
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:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
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.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	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 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	322.10	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 Cognia Engagement Review Team (team) conducted a remote System Engagement Review for Randolph County Schools on April 18-22, 2021. After working with the district's assistant superintendent and superintendent for several months in preparation for the review, the team started the review process. The goal was to conduct the review with fidelity by triangulating data from the system's self-assessment, the evidence submitted through the workspace, and interviews with various stakeholders to provide feedback in the form of a written report. The information contained in the report should then be used to help guide the district's continuous improvement efforts. The team represented over 154 years of experience in teaching and leadership in the Pre K-12 public, private, and charter school environments, central office, as well as at the state and post-secondary levels. The team analyzed multiple documents and artifacts provided by the system and conducted interviews with the system's board, internal leadership, teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members totaling 67 representative stakeholders. Despite the shifts in the method of engagement caused by the pandemic, all required processes and protocols were followed, and the system was rated against the System Standards established by Cognia. It is within this context that the team offers the following insights that highlight themes across the organization and provide ideas for the next steps. These themes characterize strengths and opportunities to further the system's improvement journey.

The district's leadership demonstrates a clear commitment to the strategic management and allocation of human, material, and fiscal resources and effective long-range planning in support of the system's purpose and direction to ensure organizational effectiveness. The team noted clear evidence through both interviews and artifacts that the district's leadership and governing authority are committed to being good stewards of the school system's resources. During interviews with both internal and external stakeholders, it became clear that the system's leaders align their priorities with expenditures to ensure staff, students, and parents have the resources they need. The evidence provided by the district supported the assertion that leaders are committed to maximizing available resources to improve district outcomes. The district has implemented a strategic fiscal management plan and adheres to purposeful resource management strategies established in the plan, and there is a strategic process for the management of human, material, and fiscal resources that provides methods of

evaluation to determine the return on all investments. Beginning with the Randolph County School Board of Education and the superintendent, the system has policies and procedures in place to ensure organizational effectiveness. These policies are clearly established and outline expectations for the school-based governance teams, principals, and other internal stakeholders. Various stakeholder groups offered clear evidence of the system's policies and expectations, including one board member who stated, "data is used to put people and money in the areas of need." Roles and responsibilities for the governing authority, system and school leadership, staff, and stakeholders are clearly defined and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the system. The clear expectations assist the system in making progress toward its intended purpose.

The system has processes in place to ensure that the board is actively engaged in reviewing and understanding the data that is necessary to determine system needs. According to one board member, school leaders are "the expert and bring the data to us so we can make the best decisions for the entire school system." Board members agreed they rely on district leadership to share data and require "updates regularly" to keep them "on top of what is going on in the schools." The district's leadership and board seek ways, such as grants and other partnerships, to provide access to resources needed, and collect data to establish new goals and make well-informed decisions regarding the district's resources. In response to the pandemic, the district immediately purchased and provided to students Chromebooks and access points to ensure student learning could take place. One parent shared, "Those computers and hotspots saved our lives." Another indicated, "In a small rural area, we don't always have internet service but they thought about that and got us what we needed." Focused and aligned leadership exists and operates at a high level in Randolph County. The system is encouraged to continue its commitment to its strategic management of resources.

The system's governing authority has a well-developed code of ethics and specific policies that help to define roles, support the system, and ensure system effectiveness. During the examination of artifacts and interviews with board members, system leaders, and other stakeholders it was revealed that the district is committed to strong, ethical, purposeful leadership in support of continuous improvement. Board members indicated that roles, responsibilities, and a "chain of command" are well-established and adhered to in a way that supports both organizational effectiveness and fuels progress toward the stated purpose and desired direction of the district. The system has a strong, positive, professional relationship between the superintendent and the district and the state board of Education. System leaders have managed to garner support from the local and state boards for ideas and initiatives to improve student performance at every level. Multiple board members stated that system leaders are the "expert" and that they provide them with useful data to help make informed decisions. There is professional respect for the system's leadership, and board members appear to rely on leadership guidance in a way that suggests a high level of trust. One board member indicated "I stay in my lane" and another indicated he makes certain he is "not micromanaging the schools because that's [the superintendent's] job."

While the local board and district leadership all noted they have made substantial progress over the past few years, they also indicated they recognize the areas where they are not improving as rapidly as they would like. There is regular, candid communication between the system leaders and the board about all aspects of the district to include teaching and learning, operations, leadership, and external factors impacting the organization's effectiveness. The changes in the system, according to stakeholders, have offered opportunities for everyone to work hand-in-hand to promote system improvement efforts.

The system has intentional practices in place to ensure ongoing community engagement which empowers stakeholders to help make decisions and serve as ambassadors in the community.

The district has leveraged the power of engagement to build commitment to improvement efforts and form a network of allies to move the district forward. School governance teams (comprised mainly of

community stakeholders and parents) serve as partners, in advisory roles, at every school in the district. With the district's motto -- One Vision, One Team, One Community -- fueling its efforts to make the system great, the community has joined the school system to ensure better outcomes for all students. Interviews revealed governance teams are mutually beneficial to the schools and the advisory team members. This more integral connection to the educational process has served to better educate the parents and community of school needs and has empowered parents and community partners to serve as advocates throughout the district. The district has seen positive results from the inclusion of advisory councils according to school principals and parents. These processes appear to deepen the level of engagement and enhance external stakeholder commitment. One governance team member stated, "I have learned a lot since joining the governance team and I now encourage others to get involved." Another who has served for several years indicated, "This has helped me understand what teachers and leaders need and how to better help my children and this community."

Parents indicated they feel "empowered by the opportunities" to engage with the schools. One parent stated, "I can now talk to others in the neighborhood and community about what is going on." This level of engagement appears to have had a positive impact on organizational effectiveness by allowing both school and district leaders to gather high-quality and candid feedback from a variety of stakeholders. These committed partnerships were formed to facilitate progress toward achieving the system's intended purpose and direction. The partnerships with various businesses, community members, and local colleges, including technical schools, have allowed the system to expand program offerings available to students. Staff indicated there was a process, starting at the elementary level, designed to help students plan for their future. Students and staff provided evidence to suggest career awareness and planning begins with the elementary school and progresses purposefully as students matriculate through the system. The elementary and middle school career plans allow students to prepare for a range of opportunities available at the high school level. Students spoke of their career focus in both the elementary and middle school interviews and parents of younger students were able to share their commitment to "sticking to the advisory team until I can get all of my kids through the dual enrollment classes." Students and parents discussed certain career pathways and some were able to explain the benefit of taking advantage of dual enrollment opportunities.

There is a strong sense of pride among internal and external stakeholders. Parents, students, and staff support the superintendent's report of the renewed commitment to the district's improvement goals. Parents and staff alike heralded "red pride, deep inside" and "we bleed red and black" during interviews and other interactions. Community members exhibited the same level of enthusiasm.

With the advanced level of engagement, the system's leadership has had to work diligently to ensure they are addressing the inconsistencies noted in student achievement trends. Student performance data trends are consistent with the goals outlined in the district's improvement plan. Interviews with school and district leaders, as well as external stakeholders, revealed the quality of teaching and learning is of foremost concern for the district. There were comments related to the challenges associated with hiring and retaining quality staff because, "There is nothing to keep people here in this small rural community." District staff spoke of bonuses and other incentives offered to attract and retain qualified staff but realized there is a need to address teacher quality if they are to reach performance goals. Through interviews and the review of surveys, the team found the perception of stakeholders is that "progress is being made" in some areas. Parents and partners indicated they are inspired by what they are seeing in the district and value the opportunity to be an active partner in the education of their children. Establishing methods to ensure parents and community members are involved was a critical step in obtaining greater student outcomes. However, the quality of school-level staff must be also addressed as part of the district's improvement process.

The district does not consistently implement Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with

clearly-established protocols that support vertical alignment across school levels, ensure consistency in student expectations, advance teacher effectiveness in the use of best practices, and support readiness as students matriculate through the school system. Collaborative planning is occurring in most schools and teachers have formal opportunities to collectively review data and assessments and plan the next steps for students. Many teachers could explain the protocol for the effective use of collaborative planning time, however, the use of formal protocols outlined by the district was not evident at all levels. Through interviews with leaders, teachers, and other staff, it was made clear district leaders use a variety of tools to communicate expectations clearly and consistently relative to the district-wide use of formal PLCs. This protocol outlines a process for the review of data and student work, problem-solving, sharing of best practices, and collaborative planning to address student and teacher needs.

Schools have been assigned academic coaches and consultants who can significantly aid in making certain the implementation of best practices is consistent across the district. Additionally, the district utilizes the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) to build teacher effectiveness and ensure consistency, along with informal walkthroughs. Monitoring the effective implementation of protocols and best practices related to effective PLCs could help build teacher capacity, increase test scores, and provide peer support to help ensure alignment between assessment and work assigned. The PLC structure allows teachers to work together to address problems associated with standard mastery. The district should monitor and support the district-wide expectation of PLCs to ensure all students receive the benefit of the collaborative efforts of all teachers. The district noted this is a practice that needs to be executed consistently across the system and indicated they have begun planning to make sure teachers understand how to effectively utilize PLCs during summer training.

Common grading practices and policies have been outlined and are expected to be consistently implemented throughout the district. These expectations were found outlined in the faculty handbook. Some longitudinal data are collected around student grades, but not grading practices, a necessary step in ensuring students can master state assessments, and that grades are not inflated by unrelated and unreliable student work. Monitoring of PLCs, grading practices, and alignment of student work to the standards must become a part of the quality assurance process to guarantee consistency from school to school. System leaders will benefit from making certain teachers and leaders at all levels understand formative assessment and utilize mastery of the standards as the primary measures of student learning. PLCs and the data-based conversations that drive that work could provide an opportunity for the school district to address identified areas of growth and deficiency and address both teacher and student needs over time.

As schools across the system normalize their processes, schools must continue to share data trends with stakeholders consistently. Parents spoke of the ease of electronic dashboards used to report student progress and grades. Parents also indicated they were pleased with the level of communication they receive relative to their students as well as district or school activities. Stakeholders mentioned the use of PowerSchool, Class Tag, and social media platforms to guarantee they are informed and able to assist their children when needed. District leaders must ensure teachers consistently support and protect grading and assessment practices that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills across all classrooms and programs versus practices that are based solely on the completion of work assigned. By doing so, the system will be able to collect reliable, longitudinal data and evidence to demonstrate improvements in learning based on the implementation of clear criteria. The use of formative and summative data and the use of impactful communication processes will serve to make certain everyone can take responsibility for true data trends and work together to solve performance issues. When formative and summative data are collected, analyzed, and used to monitor learning progress and the implementation of the common grading practices across all classrooms and programs,

the district can draw reasonable and reliable conclusions and make better decisions. Consistent measures must be used in the strategic planning process if goals are to be accomplished. The implementation of formal PLCs across the district can impact teacher efficacy and ensure they are better equipped to identify and meet student needs.

The district does not have formal processes, with a monitoring component, to identify and address the specialized needs of all students and validate process effectiveness through the applied use of data from multiple sources to ensure standard-aligned grading practices are used to measure student progress. While the school system has some practices in place for collecting and analyzing data to identify individual learner needs, this practice is not followed pervasively and consistently across the district. The district provided the team with some evidence of Response to Intervention (RTI) learning plans, however, there was no supporting documentation to suggest a formal process is used throughout the district. Some school leaders and staff could explain what data sources are used, how they are analyzed, and how a determination is made as to which students receive behavioral and/or academic support while others were unclear or unable to articulate the process. The students throughout the school district would benefit from the consistent utilization of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that outlines the process for providing tiered support of all students.

The district has some formal practices surrounding the collection and analysis of data to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers and students spoke of bi-weekly assessments and benchmarks at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Some schools measure mastery of curriculum standards while others use grades that may or may not be aligned to curriculum standards. All educators throughout the school district must have a common understanding of standard mastery, the use of data, and the importance of meaningful grading practices to determine the next steps in the instructional process. There must be a clear alignment between student work, state performance standards, and the level of cognitive complexity used to measure standard attainment. There must also be practices in place, such as formative and summative assessments, for ongoing progress monitoring and to inform decisions about remediation, enrichment, and standard Tier I instruction.

The system must make certain common grading practices exist, grades are aligned to the level of expected performance, curriculum standard mastery is measured, and instruction is adjusted based on mastery to ensure the appropriate interventions are in place. The MTSS process and effective alignment of instruction will help guarantee the varying learning needs of students are consistently met. Staff should receive professional development on these practices where deficits are noted. This will help ensure student learning can continue as teachers and leaders gain an understanding of what is needed to make certain individual needs are planned for and met through quality instructional and assessment practices. While there is an expectation for consistency in the implementation of best practices, there are areas where inconsistencies in practice exist.

The district lacks a process to guarantee expectations are formalized, implemented, and monitored across the system to ensure consistency, increase student engagement, improve student learning, enhance professional practice, produce measurable results, and promote organizational effectiveness. System and school leaders have developed some improvement processes and have noticed an increase in student outcomes in most schools. Although increases have occurred, some processes are not consistently implemented. Formal continuous improvement plans are in place and those plans drive the improvement process. Leaders and teachers shared their involvement in the development of school improvement plans in some schools, however, there is an inconsistent perception among staff about how the improvement process is carried out and monitored. Parents, students, teachers, and board members shared positive responses to the direction that the school system is going, but the team found instances where inconsistencies exist that may impact outcomes.

The review of school performance data and other data trends showed there are pockets of low performance at some grade levels, and graduation rates, which had increased over the past few years, declined last year. This decline was reported to be related to the loss of students during the pandemic, and this trend was noted in several conversations and surrounding districts. The pandemic has had a tremendous impact on the school system as it has on the entire world. District leaders indicated they have activated several processes to reverse this trend such as the hiring of content specialists, social workers, and counselors to help reach students at risk of not graduating.

The system exerts enormous efforts to hire and retain qualified staff, though no evidence of formalized opportunities for ongoing modeling and coaching were provided. Data is not collected, analyzed, or used to monitor the effectiveness of related activities. Because of this, there is no longitudinal data to indicate improvement in growth through leadership opportunities and professional learning. While Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) is used to evaluate school leadership activities, there was little evidence to support the use of data gathered by LKES to ensure progress occurs where deficits were noted.

The system has an array of processes outlined in the strategic plan and standard operating procedures, but there are pockets where there exists a limited understanding of how those processes connect to learner achievement. The development of additional processes may not address the issues surrounding effective implementation and understanding of best practices related to meeting student needs. The district could benefit from actively monitoring the understanding and consistent application of plans throughout the system, addressing issues noted and adjusting practices based on the analysis of collected data. By establishing monitoring methods that produce measurable results, leaders can ensure consistency in effective implementation and that all staff will be equipped to make certain that students and staff are meeting expectations.

The district has developed and adopted a strategic plan that serves as a road map for achieving organizational effectiveness and guiding student achievement. Through the implementation of the system's strategic plan, longitudinal data can be collected, monitored, analyzed, and used to identify trends. This is being done at high levels in many areas throughout the district but remains an area where some adjustments can be made. Addressing these trends could help promote and support collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance, teacher performance, and ultimately organizational outcomes.

The district lacks a formal program to ensure an adult advocate is assigned to and engages with each student to develop positive relationships and a system of support to enhance educational experiences. The district has increased enthusiasm and engagement with parents, students, staff, and other stakeholders. Stakeholder groups used phrases like “red devils on the rise” and “one vision, one team, one community” to describe the commitment to the goals of the system and each school. Students described their schools as “the place to be,” “amazing,” “excellent,” and “helpful.” Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is evident in all schools with students frequently referencing reward and incentive systems. Stakeholders shared examples of the positive impact the PBIS system has had since being fully implemented in the learning environment.

School and district leaders referenced the rise in discipline data and the overwhelming concern for school safety as their reason for re-evaluating discipline structures and implementing PBIS. Students shared they “feel safe in school now” and “can learn without worrying about getting hurt.” Although the system is yielding documented results, students still desire to have a strong adult advocate at school. Some students were able to refer to a teacher or administrator they felt connected to, but some students could not identify an adult who they believed would advocate for them if they needed support. There was no clear evidence of a formal program or process that connects students with an adult advocate. Students would benefit from a formal structure that allows them to connect and interact with an advocate

who can serve as a mentor and an accountability partner. These interactions could serve to further the sense of security students experience and help them to develop interpersonal skills and strengthen their relationships with adults and peers. By implementing and monitoring the progress of a formal adult advocacy program, the system would be able to collect longitudinal data to measure the impact of those efforts and ensure positive relationships enhance each student's educational experience. Additionally, this could better help teachers and staff understand and support the academic and social needs of the students they serve daily. Strengthening such relationships will support the district's efforts to maintain momentum toward building a strong community.

The system's leadership has built a strong culture and inspired a renewed sense of pride that permeates throughout the entire community. It was impossible to speak with any stakeholder group and not hear evidence of the system's successful efforts to engage the entire community in the quest to become a high-performing school district. It is this kind of commitment, heard from parents, community leaders, students, staff, and leadership, that will propel Randolph County Schools into district-wide success.

There is an undeniable culture of commitment that has led to the entire community's focus on student success through engagement and effective teaching and learning. The intentional efforts of district leadership have uncovered and revitalized a traditional sense of pride once felt throughout the community. Students spoke of their commitment to "graduating with their class, on time" during interviews at all grade levels, which loudly echoed the leadership's words shared during conversations with team members. Statements heard from students highlighted how the improved, safer learning culture has positively impacted their attitudes and beliefs about school and their success.

Students were not the only group to speak on the "return of hope." A board member also shared that he is committed to school improvement because "school improvement is the way to improving our entire community." This board member further discussed his commitment to the school improvement process and vowed: "to hang in there until we get where we are going - which is to the top." Parents indicated they are proud of the opportunities to work with the school through advisory roles and other opportunities made available through the district. This, as one parent noted, "helps me to be an advocate for our schools in the community." The advisory structure not only allows stakeholders to advocate but has also provided a formal method of collecting ongoing feedback from multiple groups to inform district and school-based decisions.

Parents, students, and staff spoke of the focus on "defying the odds and overcoming the barriers that often hinder small rural districts." The return of a strong sense of pride to the community through school success has been an unexpected result of the efforts staff and leadership have made toward positively impacting the culture. Setting clear expectations around engagement, as well as teaching and learning, has made a difference. One local business owner and district alumnus indicated he has "red pride - deep inside" as he spoke of his renewed dedication to actively supporting school and district improvement efforts. It was not uncommon to hear all stakeholders enthusiastically tout the district's motto of "one vision, one team, one community." The sense of unity was pervasive and is directly connected to the unifying efforts of the system's leadership.

Students and parents indicated the reduction in the discipline has made them "feel safe and secure in school" where that had been a problem before the implementation of PBIS. Students at all levels spoke of how PBIS has improved the learning environment. The use of rewards and the clear alignment of expectations have positively impacted school and district culture. The review of discipline data and other artifacts indicates that the cultural shift in schools, throughout the district, has positively changed the learning environment for all students. Students feel safe to engage in collaborative processes and explore innovative and creative options for problem-solving and meeting learning expectations. The

intentional inclusion of engagement and safety practices has enhanced stakeholder experiences and improved organizational effectiveness.

In conclusion, despite the challenges Randolph County Schools has endured in the past, the team is excited about the possibilities ahead for the school system. The consistent implementation of best practices and continued efforts to support teachers as learners will help schools align their instructional practices to performance standards and data produced through rigorous assessments and teaching methods. The district is committed to improving student outcomes and leaders are dedicated to supporting improvement district-wide. The district has strong plans for success as well as established expectations and procedures designed to ensure success. The district's leadership has the capacity and the desire to improve outcomes for every student in the community, and the entire community has joined the team and is working along with school and system leaders to ensure all students have an opportunity to be successful in school and life.

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
<p>Catherine Barnes, Lead Evaluator</p>	<p>Dr. Catherine Barnes has served as a lead evaluator in school and system accreditation for over 10 years and serves as the director of accountability and assessment in Alachua County, Florida. Her professional career spans 28 years, including the fields of education, business, and social action. Her experience includes teacher, school and district level administrator, executive director of schools and early learning, charter school administrator, and post-secondary faculty member. She was the chief architect in the design of Duval County's first Single-Gender Educational Program and served on the national committee for formative assessment and school leadership development. Dr. Barnes has earned degrees from the University of Florida, Jacksonville University, Nova Southeastern University, and is an internationally published author, workshop facilitator, and keynote speaker.</p>
<p>Tyneal Haywood</p>	<p>For the past fifteen years, Tyneal A. Haywood, Sr., has been true to his calling as an educator. In Florida, he has had a positive effect on teachers, schools, and districts. He has worked as a middle and high school math teacher with an emphasis on the success of students. He has worked in struggling schools where he has been instrumental in revitalizing math scores for students. During his time as a teacher and assistant principal, Tyneal has served on numerous school level and district committees. He currently serves as an assistant principal in Leon County Schools.</p>

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
<p>Wayne Hickman</p>	<p>Wayne A. Hickman has been involved in education for over 27 years. He holds both a Bachelor of Science in education and Master of Education in secondary social sciences degree from Georgia Southern University. Additionally he holds an Education Specialist and Doctor of Education degree in educational leadership from Georgia Southern University and Liberty University respectively. Dr. Hickman has taught sixth through eighth grade social studies and has served as an assistant principal at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Additionally, he has served as a high school principal and as a district-level special education director. Currently, Dr. Hickman serves as the administrative coordinator for Burke County Public Schools in Waynesboro, Georgia, providing direction, coordination, and supervision in multiple areas of the school district's operation. Dr. Hickman has been involved with school and district accreditation efforts throughout his career. He has served on multiple school review teams and has led committees within his own district in their efforts to improve student outcomes and obtain both school and district accreditation.</p>
<p>Billy Pollard</p>	<p>Mr. Pollard joined Cognia in 2021 and has served as assistant principal of Jones Elementary School in Bremen, Georgia since 2019. As a member of his school's leadership team, he has responsibility for overseeing all aspects of his school's improvement process. Mr. Pollard's educational experience spans over 20 years and includes being a high school teacher, an elementary assistant principal, and an athletic director. He has a bachelor's degree in mathematics, a master's in mathematics and educational leadership and a specialist in school improvement.</p>
<p>Tammy McFadden</p>	<p>Ms. Tammy McFadden is a federal programs and assessment director for the Vidalia City School District. Her professional career in public education spans 27 years as a teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, principal, and currently a district administrator. Over the last 20 years, she has led the accreditation process at both the school and system levels where she gained a vast amount of experience in the continuous improvement process. Ms. McFadden has earned a bachelor's, master's, and education specialist degree from Georgia Southern University and an educational leadership degree from the University of Georgia.</p>
<p>Elaine Gunter</p>	<p>Elaine Gunter is completing her thirty-fourth year in education. She begin her career in education as a high school mathematics teacher and later moved into the area of special education where she has been a teacher, a school department chair, and district coach.</p>

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