



South Dearborn Community School Corporation

Aurora, Indiana

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System Accreditation Engagement Review

65191

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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.									Impacting
	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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	2	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
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	EM:	
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	EM:	
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	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.									Initiating
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	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:	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:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	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.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
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:	
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	4	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:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
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:	

Learning Capacity Standards										Rating
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
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:	
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.									Improving
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	

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:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
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:	3	EM:	
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.									Initiating
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
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	EM:	
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:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

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.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
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:	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		N/A

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	317.26	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) for the South Dearborn Community School Corporation (SDCSC) was conducted entirely as a remote review. The team attempted the gain greater insight into classroom learning environments by asking thoughtful and reflective questions posed to teachers, parents, and students. Quality information was gathered through interview sessions with stakeholders, including an overview presentation by the superintendent. These sessions and a comprehensive review of evidence provided essential insight to the team.

Through this process, the team identified themes that support the continuous improvement process for the SDCSC. These themes present strengths and opportunities to guide the improvement journey the system is actively pursuing. Several themes emerged from the team's comprehensive review of evidence and interviews with a variety of stakeholder groups. Moreover, these themes provided insight into the strengths and opportunities of the system.

South Dearborn Community School Corporation has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with adults and peers. During the review, the team learned from various stakeholder groups that all students feel supported by school staff and teachers. According to these stakeholders, SDCSC staff has made a positive impact on school culture. All students mentioned developing bonds with their teachers. Students stated the teachers were always there to help them. Students also shared they have many opportunities to talk one-on-one with teachers on an ongoing basis. Students expressed that teachers take time to learn about them and make sure their learning needs are met.

Specifically, the team found evidence that an advisory period is included in every student's schedule and is used to implement relationship-building activities. Moreover, the system has invested in the Leader in Me (LIM) program to provide a framework for staff and students to develop leadership skills and school ownership. Also, the Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework includes support for students in the areas of academics, behavior, and social-emotional learning. Such supports include Zones of Regulation, counseling services, targeted academic interventions, behavior plans, and restorative justice

practices. In addition, the team learned that the elementary staff uses Classroom Dojo to support positive and negative behaviors, as well as a device to communicate with parents.

Furthermore, the team gathered information from student and stakeholder interviews that indicated the instructional staff is caring and assists students as needed. This advisory structure ensures that students' social, emotional, and academic needs are being met. Effective implementation of student advisory will undergird and support the school's mission of success for all students. The team suggests that SDCSC continue to maintain the level of consistency in fostering positive student relationships through advocacy and support. It is worth noting that support of this nature serves as a foundation for improving student learning and increasing student achievement.

The system implements a curriculum and processes where learning is assessed, data are analyzed, and standards-based instruction is monitored and adjusted. The team found that curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the SDCSC are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice. Through a review of artifacts and stakeholder interviews, the team found that system leadership demonstrates a purposeful and deliberate approach to monitoring and adjusting curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Specifically, SDCSC has developed a vertically aligned K-12 curriculum with instructional processes tailored to improve learning for all students, including a data-driven professional development plan aligned to the curriculum and instruction.

Relative to curriculum, the team found from a review of evidence that SDCSC employs a formal process that focuses on priority standards and a review of data occurs that identifies whether students have reached proficiency on standards. In addition, ample evidence was provided revealing how the system uses proficiency scales and Dream Box reports to identify skill gaps relative to Indiana standards. Specifically, an artifact review and stakeholder interview data served as evidence that the system has a structure in place where the curriculum is aligned to state standards.

SDCSC ensures that training is provided to teachers on the development of formative assessments to use as a monitoring tool. The team also found evidence of formal processes used to ensure instruction is being adjusted to meet the needs of all learners. Stakeholder interviews and a review of evidence revealed that the system has transitioned to standards-based grading and reporting in grades K-6.

It is important to note the team found evidence that the system has created a focused professional development plan and curriculum mapping has occurred in grades K-12. The system has developed curriculum units and expanded the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and computer science curricula. Moreover, the system has hired a director of curriculum and instruction with the responsibility of leading the work of formalizing systemic processes that support monitoring and adjusting curriculum through the lens of standards-based instruction.

As a result of stakeholder interviews and a comprehensive review of artifacts, the team found that the system has created a collaborative team structure to enhance and improve instruction at all schools. The team found it evident that the system is fully committed to professional learning community (PLC) work to improve instructional capacity. PLC work focuses on teaching standards, the use of system pacing guides, and the use of instructional maps, common planning, common lesson plans, and identifying learning targets. According to evidence obtained by the team, PLC weekly meetings are held to monitor and adjust curriculum and instruction to meet the individual needs of students. PLC weekly and monthly meetings also focus on analyzing common assessment data.

Interviews with system leaders, principals, and teachers also revealed that a process exists where teams analyze formative and summative assessment data. Moreover, teachers use student data to determine if progress and growth have taken place and the next steps are identified. In data meetings,

teachers are expected to use data to drive instruction and determine intervention. Collaboration among professional staff ensures that student learning and achievement are the primary focus of the educational setting. The system is encouraged to continue the momentum of assessing curriculum and monitoring and adjusting standards-based instruction. School systems that implement a tailored curriculum that provides students access to challenging and individualized learning opportunities foster an environment where students are engaged in learning and ultimately prepared for success at the next level.

Formal processes to engage stakeholders in decision-making that support student learning and outcomes are in development at SDCSC. The team learned through stakeholder interviews that engaging stakeholders in decision-making was identified as an area of improvement. The team found evidence that a process is needed to engage various stakeholder groups in decision-making across the system. Various stakeholder groups interviewed expressed some level of involvement in decision-making that occurs in pockets across the system. Specifically, district-level leaders expressed during the superintendent's overview that involving more stakeholders in decision-making processes is needed.

It is important to note the team found evidence that a collection of survey data has been administered to gauge stakeholder perceptions; however, district administrators shared that there is a need for a formalized process for engaging stakeholders in decision-making across the system. Moreover, system leaders have identified that a concerted effort is needed to engage stakeholders in decision-making.

Moreover, the team found it evident that a need exists for a structure to actively engage multiple stakeholder groups in the decision-making process that supports the system's purpose and direction. School districts with systemic processes in place in which system leaders demonstrate a clearly defined process for engaging stakeholders increase meaningful engagement opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in decision-making. Parents can build capacity across the system and can support the district's efforts to provide quality instruction for all students.

SDCSC's process to design and implement a comprehensive employee mentoring and induction program that will orient personnel to expectations, system culture, and best practices is improving. Through interviews with system and school-based stakeholders, the team found that SDCSC has identified a need for the system to develop a more formalized process to provide induction, mentoring, and coaching to all staff members. In addition, the team learned that formalized processes are needed, aligned with measurable goals and outcomes.

The team found there were some agendas to indicate new teacher orientation and mentor/mentee gatherings; however, a systemic protocol would benefit all new teachers to the district. Through interviews and observations, it was apparent there were some structures in place to support the performance and growth of new employees.

During interviews and a review of the evidence, it was noted that there is a need for a formalized, sustainable induction program from the beginning to the end of a new employee's first year in the system. The team recommends that the system implement a district-wide employee induction program that will provide new personnel with the support needed to integrate into a new district. The team appreciates SDCSC for identifying this as an area of growth and for the district team's making necessary plans to formally address this area.

The team observed and learned that the SDCSC has created positive learning environments for students. Indeed, it was evident that the system placed the needs and interests of students in high regard. The team observed mutual respect among the total community of stakeholders, with "care" and "family" being used frequently when describing the system. In addition, when asked to provide one-word descriptors of the system, stakeholders responded with such terms as committed, student-centered,

pride, growth, teamwork, family, supportive, innovative, student-oriented, collaborative, achievement, engaging, focused, community, open-minded, creative, strong, and positive. Moreover, these descriptors corroborated the team's findings, indicating a high level of support for pursuing the South Dearborn Community School Corporation's vision of being a leading school system with a shared commitment to a continuous improvement process that engages and challenges all stakeholders.

In conclusion, as South Dearborn Community School Corporation continues its improvement journey, the team is encouraged that the system's leadership, governing board, and all stakeholder groups will continue to collaboratively work to develop strong partnerships to move the instructional dial relative to school improvement. As a result, such collaboration is sure to enhance the system's organizational effectiveness and, ultimately, student achievement.

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
Dr. Michael Henry, Lead Evaluator	Dr. Michael Henry is the executive director for human resources for the Allentown School District in Pennsylvania. Henry has served as a teacher, assistant principal, vice principal, principal, and region superintendent for middle schools. In addition, he served as director of instructional personnel services for the School District of Clay County, Florida, and chief of human resources for the Springfield Public School District in Oregon. Dr. Henry is a national and international Cognia Lead Evaluator and has served in several states and countries. Dr. Henry earned his teacher certification from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a Master of Arts in educational leadership from Jacksonville University. He received his Ph.D. in educational leadership from Florida A&M University.
Richard Lam, Team Member	Vice Principal, Maple Leaf Educational System, Shanghai, China
Anthony Williams, Team Member	Dean, Duval County Public School District, Jacksonville, Florida
Alpha Smith, Team Member	Dean (Retired), Duval County Public School District, Jacksonville, Florida

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