



Richland County School District One

Columbia, South Carolina

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System Accreditation Engagement Review

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Cognia Continuous Improvement System

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

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

Initiate

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

Improve

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

Impact

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

Cognia Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

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

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

Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results

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

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

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

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

Leadership Capacity Domain

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

Leadership Capacity Standards										Rating
1.1	The system commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.									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.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	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.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for their institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	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.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.										Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	2	
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
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:	3	
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.										Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	

Learning Capacity Standards										Rating
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	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.									Initiating
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2	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.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	4	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:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	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.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	2	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:	2	EM:	
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:	2	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	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.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	

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:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	

Assurances

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

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

Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality®

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

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

Institution IEQ	338.06	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) identified five themes as a result of proceedings, evidence, and deliberations to support the continuous improvement processes of Richland County School District One. These themes reflect the system's many outstanding strengths, including its enacted promise to focus on learners through the development of options and support systems for all to achieve success, and its careful, well-planned, conscientious stewardship of resources that include clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the establishment of partnerships and programs, and accountability in response to needs and developments. A third theme recognizes that the system has engaged in strategic and aligned improvement planning that may be enhanced by systematic, representative inclusion of all key constituent voices in planning, followed by systemic solicitation of site-based stakeholder feedback regarding perceived progress toward goals. Themes also include appreciation and acknowledgment of valuable data that have been systematically collected, along with encouragement to systemically employ accessible data strategically to inform specific decisions involving instruction, processes, and practices. The fifth theme identifies a possible opportunity for continued study, encouraging the system to establish a formal evaluation cycle for all programs. The team offers the themes in this narrative to provide input and offer guidance as Richland County School District One plans its next steps on its improvement journey.

Richland County School District One enacts its mission, “We are Richland One, a leader in transforming lives through education, empowering all students to achieve their potential and dreams,” through conscientious creation of myriad pathways and multiple levels of support to ensure that options and opportunities are realities for all learners. Review of documents provided, the district's website, student performance results, and interviews with all constituent groups revealed to the team the united focus and intentional, unified actions of the district's leaders, governance, staff, and supporters to determine needs and to capitalize on the scale and rich diversity of the system to offer unique possibilities for learners to explore their interests, develop their gifts, rely on strategic support, discover, and plan for their futures. The system's vision, “Richland School District One, in collaboration with an engaged community, is committed to ensuring that each learner achieves his/her potential in a safe, caring, academically challenging, and diverse learning environment that will develop productive citizens for a changing world,” establishes expectations of the system and of the community to ensure that each learner is academically challenged, safe, and will be prepared to be a productive citizen in a rapidly changing world. The district's clear intent to achieve this vision is evident in its conscientious planning to “engage, educate and empower” at all levels of the system. The district's leaders are engaged in reviewing, analyzing, evaluating, and decision-making informed by multiple forms of increasingly reliable and valid data, systematically collected to provide information that can add

experience and assist in bringing excellence to scale and limitations to light. Through its systematic improvement processes, the district has demonstrated its commitment to empowering all students to achieve their dreams.

In his convocations address at the beginning of the school year, the superintendent called upon the district to remember and remain F.I.T., to act with Fidelity and Intentionality Together. The acronym provides a framework to characterize the principled, belief-driven actions of the system as it has carefully studied, listened to, and responded to the needs of its learners, sought opportunities for partnerships and possibilities, and brought programs and initiatives to the district with intent and through collaboration. The team reviewed reports and interviewed parents, students, staff, and leaders who were engaged with district programs that included multiple magnet schools, The Leader in Me, Problem-Based Learning, a wide variety of choice programs including middle college, Paideia, evening high school, summer advanced and skills-focused enrichment and reinforcement, language immersions, early child preparatory outreach programs (THRIVE) and dual enrollment. International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, remote learning and virtual school, multi-tiered support systems (MTSS), Project Boost, and the Challenger Learner Center also provided examples of the wide variety of opportunities created and available to learners and families. Review of Board of School Commissioners' minutes, State of the District Presentations, as well as stakeholder interviews, provided evidence of access for learners to preparation across all sixteen identified career clusters through partnerships, career and technical education, and collaboration with higher education throughout the district.

Interviews with parents and community partners, review of the district's website, and lists of active partnerships identified remarkable, valuable relationships that have resulted in contributions for learners that include internships, scholarships, mentorships, advising, and multiple forms of support and creative consultation ultimately benefiting students and the entire community. Partners interviewed and identified by the system included representatives from non-profit organizations; several institutions of higher education; civic, state, and federal agencies and organizations; military agencies representing local installations as well as national level relationships; corporate and corporation partners; health-related agencies and organizations; faith-based institutions; and philanthropic organizations and individuals.

The partnerships and support of the Richland County One community have been earned, nurtured, and maintained by the district's Governing Board, leadership, and staff through years of fiscal and fiduciary transparency, sound policy, and active, strategic involvement in planning and responding to the needs of the learners and families. Review of evidence, including reporting, board minutes and agendas, policies, board training, and policy review cycles, and interviews with partners, commissioners, parents, and system leaders, identified mutual trust, respect, and unified purpose focused on the success of the learners enrolled.

The epithet of the system, as stated on the website and in literature, is "Engage, Educate, Empower." This motto is alive and apparent throughout the system and is grounded at the district's leadership level through the system's collaboratively created Strategic Plan for 2019-2024 that provides the roadmap for system-wide planning and goal setting. The Board and leadership had reviewed benchmark student performance, supervision, graduation rates, fiscal and perception data and determined that, for the current academic year, student achievement, teacher quality, and climate would be the foci for improvement. The previous district goal of attaining an 85% graduation rate had been met and celebrated. Although the system continues to aim to increase its graduation rate through systemic review of benchmark data and consistent monitoring, the board and system leadership explained to the team that due to the disruptions of the pandemic, focus on achievement, instruction, and climate were appropriate as schools came back together. The Board and system level's involvement in the review of data, establishment of focus, and monitoring of the strategic plan was evidence of the system's

informed, involved leadership and the remarkable facile, responsive, and responsible relationships that define the work of the system.

The 2019-2024 Strategic Plan, which included the established core values and priorities, actively served as the system's roadmap. The system's priorities identified goal areas, and the district's School Leaders' Guide established the process by which the improvement work of each school can align annually with the district. To monitor progress and to determine measurable goals, system leaders engaged in a process entitled "Deep Data Dives," which brought leaders and data sets together to begin to form questions regarding programs, curriculum, and instruction. The data review sessions include MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports) and behavior reports, enrollment, completion, attendance, state and curriculum-embedded assessment results, supervision results, and survey results in addition to other appropriate information. The district has created common metrics, curriculum, and pacing guides across subject areas and established professional learning communities (PLCs) for all instructional staff across all schools that employ data-driven dialog protocols aiming to establish root causes. The professional learning communities' work has been supported with protected time, strategists, item banks, and digital capacity for instructors to individualize uniquely for learners. Each school's PLCs are monitored and reviewed. Under-performing populations have been identified per school, per cluster, and across the district. Benchmark and PLC information is closely monitored as interventions are implemented. Based on data from each school and each group of schools (clusters), the district employs a Differentiated Support Model that provides tailored support based on sites' needs.

Analysis of needs informs system-level decisions regarding the provision and use of interventions, programs, and forms of support. This needs-based, differentiated model has resulted in support that has been constructed to serve learners and schools individually. The district clearly exhibits an understanding of the uniqueness of each classroom, instructor, learner, family, school climate, and the combination of the many factors that support or serve as barriers to learning. Provision of support and opportunities have been strategic throughout Richland County School District One, demonstrating the validity of the trust placed in the system by its constituents.

The system's many opportunities for learners have provided rich options from which students can choose. Assessment and evaluation of options, as technology and the world of work rapidly continue to change, will provide vital information and assist the district in making decisions and choosing directions to achieve its goals.

The district has conscientiously established clear direction and systems of accountability and support that have provided schools with both structure and flexibility to serve the needs of learners, for staff to grow, and for programs to develop as indicated. The Board of School Commissioners of the district engages in a formal review of all policies following a three-to-five-year cycle. The most recent policy review cycle was completed in the year prior to the Engagement Review. Interviews with members of the Board and a review of the district's website provided evidence of transparency and availability of policies and revisions for all seeking information. Review of board minutes and agendas, as well as interviews with officers and legal counsel, provided specific examples of actions taken to ensure continuous compliance with all state and federal expectations. Board members pledge to uphold South Carolina's Ethical Principles. Each member completes training provided by the state association and is active in the association. Active board involvement is expected by constituents, district leadership, as well as by fellow members of the Board. Involvement includes a conscientious review of policies per prescribed cycle and an active review of the district's and district leadership's performance. Board members interviewed demonstrated clarity regarding responsibilities and commitment, the district's priorities, and core values. Interviews and evidence also referred to the Employee Code of Excellence, which illustrates one of the district's core values, "Excellence – We provide excellent educational experiences that ensure expanded opportunities for learners and

prosperity for our community.” Excellence in educational experiences utilizing a framework of differentiated support across the wide geographic area enclosed in the district’s boundaries, throughout a system serving diverse populations, has been the enacted mission of the system and the Board. This loose/tight framework has been actualized by establishing strong yet flexible checks, balances, definitions, policies, and layered accountability coupled with strong support, professional development, and incentives.

Supervision of district leaders, administration, certified and classified staff has required the Board and leaders to create specific yet fluid job descriptions that allow for growth and program changes. The district has capitalized on its innovation and development of unique opportunities for learners to create opportunities for staff to learn from one another through supervisory and professional development “learning walks,” observations, partnerships with consultants, the establishment of study groups, and myriad professional development offerings, PLC work, and vertical and horizontal articulations. Supervision data is utilized to inform professional development and mentorships across all employment areas and inform decisions at program and district levels.

The system’s supervision and accountability policies are well balanced, with opportunities for employees to grow and gain satisfaction from careers. When asked to describe their experience working in the district using short phrases or a word, groups of employees repeatedly chose the following descriptors: growing, transformational, all about the children, supportive, team, excellence, inclusive, and successful. Internal programs to develop leaders and provide opportunities for staff to gain experience and change positions are offered and supported for certified and classified staff. The district monitors employee satisfaction through surveys and gathered exit information. A review of the district’s Employee Satisfaction Report noted that 80% of respondents reported having the resources needed to be successful and that 71% would recommend working in the district to others. Staff interviewed indicated to the team that they felt supported in their work, professional development, and in pursuing professional goals.

In addition, data from supervision and student performance, as well as perception data, have been utilized to inform the development of programs, innovations, and interventions at the district and site levels. Data have also been utilized to define and inform the district’s progress toward increased engagement and collaborations. Collaboration has been identified as one of the district’s Core Values and is described as, “We believe everyone has a role to play in promoting student success, so we will embrace the diversity of our stakeholders by building an inclusive community to accomplish our goals.” Increased engagement and collaboration have resulted in planned partnerships that have provided health and academic support for learners, boosters for extra and co-curricular programs, productive connections with law enforcement, and increased communications with the community. A review of district publications, social media, and interviews pointed to the importance of the district’s multiple layers of advisory boards at the school and system levels. The district has active membership in a national engagement organization, The National Network of Partnership Schools, and has identified Parent Engagement Specialists for each cluster. Resources for parents are easily accessed on the district website, and parents interviewed expressed appreciation for outreach and communication from the specialists and from the schools. Each school offers membership on its School Improvement Team and Parent Teacher Organization, as well as opportunities for involvement through booster clubs, events, volunteering, and communications. The district reported that each school conducts annual surveys and that results of the surveys are available. The Cognia Engagement Review Team’s deliberations included interpretation of the district’s matrix of meetings that illustrated the complex, inter-related, vital, and essential roles each member of the district staff and its partners play in ensuring learners are provided with safe, supportive opportunities. Definitions of partnerships and clear agreements have served the district well in establishing and maintaining successful collaborations.

Flexible yet clearly defined roles and systems of accountability and support have contributed to stakeholders' growth and satisfaction.

Opportunities for learners to explore opportunities are also accompanied by well-defined systems of support, as learners' academic and social-emotional needs are identified, documented, monitored, and analyzed. Programs across the district to support learners with identified needs include state and federally mandated initiatives plus MTSS, behavior supports, and guidance in addition to multiple initiatives and interventions. The district identified social-emotional learning as a priority and instituted expectations addressing climate across the system at the time of the review. The aim, as one leader stated, is to ensure that there are "no learners left without options." Students interviewed spoke highly of support systems in place in their schools. One student told the team, "Whenever I get knocked down, someone reaches out and helps me back up again." The district's initiative, as explained to team members, was to proactively embed social-emotional learning into the curriculum at all schools in order to provide learners with tools to navigate difficulties effectively. The district's response to pandemic conditions had included major and multiple interventions to ensure the least interruptions to learning as possible over the past two academic years. As the students and staff were learning how to come together to work with one another in post-urgency conditions, the tight/loose coupling of the district's framework has provided the flexibility needed to address emergent needs and construct unified responses to support its learners and families.

As the district continues to move toward achieving the goals of its strategic plan and current priorities, identification of clear target indicators for the priority area of school climate, including articulated systemic expectations for social-emotional learning results, could provide valuable benchmark data to inform program decisions.

Strategic and improvement planning across the district is aligned, data-informed, and systematic. A review of documents and school web pages provided evidence of some of the district's schools' creations of improvement goals aligned with the district's priorities. The district has required that each school maintains a School Improvement Committee (SIC) charged with creating an improvement plan to guide the school for up to five years and that the SIC renews annually. Interviews and evidence informed the team of systematic expectations for school improvement committees, composed of representative stakeholders, to determine site goals and review benchmarks.

The team conducted interviews with staff from district schools, members of district and site leadership, and parents and found clear alignment with the district's intents and priorities. In addition, the team reviewed the myriad offerings of the district's professional development, its strategic and effective utilization of interventionists, specialists, and coaching, and its conscientious, continuous review of data collected. The team noted that leaders at all levels were very informed as to the progress of their constituencies toward the district's goals and priorities. Site and district leaders met regularly to review benchmark data as collected and analyzed. Professional development was offered to support district initiatives. The district's professional development was research-based, utilized current best practices, and employed follow-up surveys to inform effectiveness. Staff participated in multiple options for micro-credentialing, site-based, and virtual on-demand learning, as well as district and peer-led sessions. Implementation of new and additional uses of technologies followed a comprehensive process for review prior to purchase and scale. Analysis of use continued after implementation.

Aligning a large district toward common goals is a formidable challenge. The district has structured a strong framework to support the work of improvement from the central office to the sites. However, interviews with members of schools' staff and the review of survey responses indicated inconsistencies in the knowledge of the site's goals and relationships with the district's planning. A review of site web pages also indicated inconsistencies in means to access renewal reports, plans, and site-level

benchmarking. Staff input to goals, attainment of improvement, effectiveness of initiatives, efficacy of professional development, and measurement of the instructional effect of technological innovations appeared inconsistent. Although the system collects initial perception data, conducts impressive pilot projects, and follows through to check use and fidelity in implementation, capitalizing on the possibilities inherent in site-level improvement processes for systematic two-way communications may increase the system's capacities to tailor interventions and improve programs. The system's continuous improvement processes have a strong, effective framework that may be utilized with added efficacy by systematically seeking input and encouraging greater stakeholder engagement and investment at the site levels.

Richland County School District One collects, analyzes, disseminates, and utilizes informative and impressive sets of available trend and comparative data responsibly and systematically.

Review of the district's handbooks, operational monitoring processes, sets of student performance results that include embedded and large-scale metrics, employee performance evaluations, special education reporting, technology processes, attendance, graduation rates, and fiscal transparency, as examples, provide evidence of the system's expectations for quality assurance that utilize data to benchmark progress. The district's matrix of meetings includes multiple Deep Data Dive opportunities, initiative reviews, and goal-setting sessions demonstrating the system's dedication to analyzing information as decisions are determined. The system has a responsive, advanced, and valued Department of Accountability, Assessment, Research and Evaluation (AARE) that provides leaders and others with supportive, quality information that portrays what it was established to illustrate. The AARE staff works together with leaders, teachers, and stakeholders to review results and interpret analysis. Interviews with leaders identified the data discussions as valuable to their practice. Certified teachers interviewed appreciated the data available and utilized results to inform instruction. Student performance results are available to staff via a common platform, and the AARE staff work to display data in ways that are helpful to constituents. Although interviews and the district's self-analysis indicated that metrics for common beliefs, levels of creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and other 21st-century skills are less concrete and that data use is an ongoing and increasingly sophisticated learning target, the team noted the district's commitment to the use of data to inform decisions and its ingrained practice in the culture. The system appears poised to harness the powerful tools and capacity of its data to access and ask specific questions of efficacy and equality of programs and initiatives, identifying success and limitations of interventions strategically, and disaggregating information to provide in-time, individualized information on request.

Continued streamlined and strategic access and use of data to inform effectiveness and equity of initiatives and interventions will position instructional leaders and decision-makers to utilize data as vital information specific to the work they do to help learners succeed.

Although curricular areas and policies were formally reviewed per published cycles, formal evaluation of all of the district's programs, initiatives, and practices appeared inconsistent. The district has provided its institutions with the freedom to initiate programming and has engaged in multiple promising, research-based initiatives. The system has established some district-wide non-negotiables for instructional practices in curricular areas and set some common expectations for programs while supporting diverse program options on campuses, providing multiple, rich opportunities for learners to succeed. Determination of the effectiveness of programs supported by the district is complicated by the richness of offerings and the diversity of its many schools. Some district programs, such as its Advanced Placement and choice options, its summer enrichment, and several mandated and grant-funded initiatives, have embedded metrics and reporting. Evidence provided also highlighted action research undertaken by district personnel to evaluate the effectiveness of selected initiatives. Interviews and evidence, along with the district's internal reflection, identified a lack of a formal inclusive program review

cycle that held the capacity to identify programs' strengths and limitations, as well as programmatic gaps in services and redundancies.

Capitalizing on the data-rich, data-informed culture of the system, institution of a formal evaluation cycle for all of the district's programs, practices, and services could result in valuable sharing of information and bringing strong practices to scale while identifying areas of overlap and inefficiency.

The Engagement Review Team has submitted the findings included in this report after deliberations based on the review of documents, analysis, and virtual interviews conducted across the system's constituencies with the purpose that these findings may prove helpful as the system continues its progress forward. The team was impressed by Richland County School District One's dedication, sincerity, heart, flexibility, and the brilliance of those who were met. The team was inspired by the system's commitments, beliefs, courage, creativity, and ready adaptability to the needs of its learners. As the system continues to move forward, ensuring constituent voices are included in improvement planning and monitoring and utilizing data to inform strategic system-level decisions may prove helpful. In addition, the institution of a formal evaluation cycle for all programs may be useful as this remarkable school system continues to keep its promise to serve its community well and prepare learners to thrive as "R1 Strong" well into their futures.

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 Evaluators Only)
Julia Williams, Lead Evaluator	Julia Williams, Ph.D., is a professor emeritus of education at the University of Minnesota Duluth. She holds a doctorate in educational leadership, a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction, and a B.S. in secondary English education. Her areas of specialty include assessment, continuous improvement processes and planning, and program evaluation. She is a licensed secondary principal and district superintendent. Dr. Williams’ research and publications include studies of schools and the integration of leadership, staff development, student achievement, and supervision. She has served as primary investigator and as an evaluator on grants awarded by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Over the past 25 years, Dr. Williams has served as Lead Evaluator for well over 100 reviews for schools, systems, digital schools, corporations, corporation systems, and other protocols across the Cognia organization. She had been a member of the Minnesota State Council for many years and received the Excellence in Education Award for the state in 2013. She has served as a member of the Commission on Schools and serves as a Cognia Lead Evaluator Mentor for systems, schools, and corporations.
Dr. Max Deaton, Principal, Clifdale Middle School, Spartanburg County School District Three, Glendale, SC	
Dr. Millicent Whitener Dickey, Chief Academic Officer, Clover School District, Clover, SC	
Dr. Daris Gore, Principal, Marion High School, Marion School District, Marion, SC	
Mary Lisa Knox, Performing Arts Instructional Specialist, Lancaster School District, Lancaster, SC	
Dr. Ernestine Young, Director of Federal Programs, Williamsburg County School District, Kingstree, SC	

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