



Griffin Spalding County School System

Griffin, Georgia

February 14-16, 2022

System Accreditation Engagement Review

215083

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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:	3	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:	3	IM:	4	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:	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:	2	EM:	
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.									Impacting
	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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	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:	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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	2	
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.										Initiating
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	2	
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	
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	
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:	2	EM:	2	
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	2	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.										Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	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:	4	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.										Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	

Learning Capacity Standards										Rating
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	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:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	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:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	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.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	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:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and the use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	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:	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		

Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality®

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

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

Institution IEQ	334.19	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 adapting and adjusting its plans to continuously strive for improvement.

The Griffin-Spalding County Schools (GSCS) review occurred remotely due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The team followed all processes and protocols required for Accreditation, including quality information-gathering sessions, presentations by staff, interviews with 140 stakeholders, and a "deep dive" into the evidence provided to the team. The team offers the following insights that highlight themes and considerations for the next steps within this context. The themes are not presented in any order of priority for the system to address in its continuous improvement planning efforts; however, the collective staff of GSCS should consider engaging in discussions to disaggregate the findings and reflect on this section of the report. In doing so, the system's leadership team and its stakeholders can make informed decisions about the district's short and long-range plans to improve all organizational facets.

Visionary leadership within the system demonstrates the urgency of purpose, strategic resource management, and a commitment to its vision and mission. In the past year, a new superintendent has started leading the system resulting in much work occurring that focused on developing tiered processes and incorporating the intentional use of relevant data in conjunction with monitoring to make decisions. The system has contracted with the Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) to assure policy compliance and provide training relative to school board members' responsibilities, system legal obligations, and honoring "lanes" in the organization. During interviews, the superintendent discussed changes to the leadership paradigm based on an analysis of the organization when entering office. With the arrival of the new superintendent, much time and energy were spent establishing connections and building relationships both within the community and state. The superintendent has a strong command of the district's pulse and spoke knowledgeably and passionately of changes that have occurred and the course the district is pursuing. Surveys, in-person interviews, perception data, and community meetings have occurred, with more planned to intentionally cultivate more substantial community support. It was stated in an interview group, "The district knows where they are and knows where they need to go." The superintendent indicated that he intends to be highly visible in the community from January through June, speaking to the public about the new strategic plan that will go into effect in the fall.

The district's strategic planning process was comprehensive and collaborative. Based on an analysis of current conditions and historical data, formalized processes, and ongoing feedback from stakeholders, the district established the Roadmap to Success document identifying the organization's three pillars (Leadership, Teaching, and Learning), performance objectives, and goal areas. Improvement initiatives included implementing district-wide Professional Learning Communities (PLC), improved student achievement, and increased teacher support and retention. While the strategic planning process required months of work, extensive face-to-face meetings with stakeholders and personnel support with expertise in strategic planning, stakeholder feedback during the accreditation review indicated that this

work was critical. As part of the strategic planning process, the superintendent shared that some restructuring occurred, departments worked with professional support to formalize and streamline processes and identify areas of need. The system utilized resources to hire a consultant for the district PLC work.

The current leadership has worked diligently to require accountability for initiatives and has embraced the talents of available personnel while at the same time realizing a need for additional support to meet the system's goals. There is a collaboration between departments, and significant progress has been made toward streamlining the organizational processes to meet the system's needs. Leadership is doing exceptional work setting up the legacy of GSCS for new staff coming to the organization now and in the future. A distributed leadership paradigm in the organization has created a culture where staff are prepared to move into leadership roles and become part of a potential succession plan. Principals have autonomy within their buildings, providing that system non-negotiables (professionalism, accountability, communication, and effectiveness) are implemented with fidelity. Everyone understands their roles in advancing the district, even staff in new positions. Senior leadership was very much in sync with their responses during interviews, as were other district personnel. The entire organization clearly "speaks the same language," driven by the strategic plan. There is a strong leadership presence in the schools and community. A parent stated that leadership at the school level is so pervasive daily that if they do not see those people at the pick-up and drop-off line, they become concerned something is wrong. In addition to a pervasive shared leadership paradigm, personnel also embrace servant leadership and model this for their students. Board members strongly endorse the changes in the past year, admitting that the transformative work has been challenging but necessary. One board member stated, "It's important that we listen to the people in the trenches. That has changed a lot; we didn't do this in the past – this has changed."

As defined by the Standards ratings found in this report, the district was functioning primarily within the "improve" and "impact" levels, which means that the desired practices, processes, and programs are ingrained or deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the system. The continuous improvement focus for this institution will best be served by fine-tuning several areas that will continue to propel them forward. The team strongly encourages GSCS to consider the following as potential next steps for the organization: continue to model and support the curriculum and procedural implementation strategies in all schools; increase the capacity of leadership to lead with vision and implementation strength, including accountability expectations; utilize impact data to communicate organizational progress, school alignment with the corporate vision, and consistency across the organization to support the strength of the GSCS brand.

The district has created a dynamic family culture that promotes a shared purpose and core values, appreciation and respect for others, the cultivation of new leaders, and impacts the lives of not just children and families but generations. During the review, it was evident that a positive culture exists among multiple stakeholder groups. School pride is evident across the district. All stakeholders validated that the district is welcoming and working hard to address diversity and inclusivity. In support of the district's vision, "Distinctive Brand, Strong Leaders, Great Schools," various stakeholder groups have input into resources and activities that support students. The district website is comprehensive, and there is a strong social media presence, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. There is also a forum on the website called "Let's Talk" that allows all stakeholders the opportunity to ask questions and share concerns, suggestions, or compliments. Parents indicated that the schools and district maintain an open-door policy and are quick to make adjustments based on stakeholder input. One parent stated that he had met with leadership over a concern and quickly saw evidence of his voice being heard. He further shared, "The administration has an open-door policy and is transparent." Parents expressed the importance of forming relationships with school personnel. When

the parents felt the need for more input, they recounted numerous examples of speaking with school leadership and commented that leadership listens to their ideas and needs. Parents used words such as *family, phenomenal, happy, blessed, goal-driven, and transparent* to describe the district. Stakeholders are engaged and appear satisfied in receiving information. GSCS has made great gains in strategic communication in the past five years. Action research to explore additional avenues for including stakeholders in the GSCS story will indicate the district's continued commitment to communication and community engagement.

The interviewed students represented various grade levels, academic abilities, student governance, and social interests. Students expressed positive comments about how their teachers help them academically, morally, and socially. The students feel safe and cared for when they are at school. Students endorsed they are strongly supported in knowing the available college and career readiness options. Students discussed the many leadership opportunities available. All students are provided with time in their schedule for remediation or extension of learning based on individual needs. A student stated, "They send us a lot of surveys, and that makes us feel like they want to hear from students." The superintendent meets with students for feedback sessions through "Slices with the Superintendent," providing a forum for relationship development and authentic student voice organizationally. When asked for words that described their schools, students responded with *adventurous, progressive, unique, interesting, individualized, opportunities, and determined*, with one student adding, "We are driven. We push to be better, and we are constantly improving to make schools better."

Teachers specifically described the high level of formal and informal collaboration supporting the institution. New staff receives strong and intentional mentoring. The positive culture creates an environment where staff enjoys coming to work, and students enjoy learning. Many teachers in the district are products of the system, and their children are also matriculating through GSCS. The district supports Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). There is an expectation that everyone participates, and the district is working with a consultant to implement formalized, sound practices into the PLC process. Teachers value the walkthrough and coaching processes. When asked for words that would describe the district, staff responded with *home, family, collaboration, intentional, never alone, determined, and encouraging*. GSCS is encouraged to continue formalizing processes to maintain and improve the strong climate by gathering survey data, reviewing for themes, and formalizing the next steps with measurable targets to ensure that stakeholder satisfaction is expanded and maintained.

The system uses a transparent, data-driven, and collaborative process for assessing programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. A data-driven culture focusing on student success is pervasive throughout the system. All levels of the organization aggregate data from student achievement, behavior, attendance, and growth and make those data readily accessible to all leaders and instructional staff. Data are used to inform decisions regarding financial issues, facilities, resources, and staffing. Student demographics are maintained to enable district and school leaders to meet the needs of an ever-changing student population. The system recognizes the need for equity system-wide and is actively planning for such as the system strategizes for the future. Data are used as a rationale to support recommendations for change, and interviews indicated change occurs in response to those recommendations. There are multiple tiers of data discussions from the board room to the classroom.

There is heavy use of surveys that include disaggregation, findings, next steps, and a clear communication loop. In discussion with leadership, the process has evolved as staff and leadership have grown in their knowledge and understanding of data targets, specific metrics, and digging down to identify what they know and do not know based on the evidence. While students may not attain their appropriate level, they can demonstrate growth, and this forward motion is celebrated. The extensive data work occurring is creating an environment where there is a clear alignment between the vision,

mission, strategic plan, and reality for the 21st-century learner. The staff is growing skill-wise in determining quality evidence, the importance of benchmarking skills, and using the data to inform their professional practice. During staff and leadership interviews, participants shared that their data focus is on the impact on student learning, which appears to be the systemic guiding question. Ultimately, staff are doing deep dives on data to predict performance and target instruction to address learning gaps. Academic programs are evaluated through data analysis.

The district is utilizing multiple programs that provide a wealth of quality data, resulting in significant growth in data analysis. These programs allow for the management of formal meeting minutes, facilitate the continual communication loop between stakeholders, track student data, require less time collecting data, and allow more time for deep data analysis. The use of a dynamic data management system empowers staff to do their own data mining, inform their professional practice and enhance the work of the professional learning communities. A key component of this work includes techniques to facilitate a disciplined, collaborative approach, including rigorous professional dialogue that provides a deep inquiry into the data and leads to informed decisions. As the staff becomes more proficient at data mining, professional development should focus on doing deep data analysis with a clear connection to high yield instructional strategies to improve student learning.

Across the district, all stakeholder groups discussed the use of MAP™ (Measures of Academic Progress®) data. Educators using MAP are encouraged to meet individually with students to set learning goals for students to own their data and progress monitor their growth. Through interviews, the team noted that this high-yield instructional strategy is not an expectation and is not implemented systemically. The district is strongly encouraged to research the impact of student progress monitoring to determine if this may be a viable next step in the system's work to support improved student performance. Further, during stakeholder interviews, participants shared the extensive work that is taking place relative to behavioral data; however, this aspect did not appear to be as strongly developed.

GSCS is in the early stages of addressing systemic and educational equity and instruction. The system has instituted multiple systems and effective technology for gathering data to share ideas, best practices, and monitor organizational effectiveness. However, during the review of standards ratings, team deliberation, and information derived from interviews, it was evident that implementation has some inconsistencies. As the district continues its improvement journey, continued monitoring of the effectiveness of identified areas of need will ensure quality and satisfaction systemically. The system clearly understands the importance of measuring success. The only way to keep the system integrated, know the organization has an impact, diagnose problems, and create new solutions is to measure the different dimensions of the organization's work.

The district has done extensive curriculum work utilizing Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD). The assessed curriculum was an identified need through the system's strategic planning process; however, through a review of evidence and stakeholder interviews, the team noted inconsistencies in the delivered curriculum. Stakeholders indicated that the system would review and revise RCD this summer, using performance data to identify gaps. As this work occurs, GSCS is also encouraged to look at specific lessons through the lens of alignment to the standards, performance tasks, or learning targets. During student interviews, when asked about learning that provided opportunities to be creative and innovative, there was no reference to STEM, problem-based, or project-based activities.

The system should ensure that all students have access to resources that intentionally address their needs. Institutionally, struggling students and excelling students appear to be well supported; however, support in the middle is not as well articulated. As shared in the overview presentation, the district intentionally addresses equality and equity in student experiences. The team urges the system to consider the best way to monitor support for all students, so no one "slips through the cracks."

The district demonstrates a heavy reliance on high-quality, research-based programs to support gaps in learning. When teachers were asked about high yield instructional strategies implemented in their classrooms, they almost always deferred to the computer programs instead of their strategies to improve instruction. The district is encouraged to develop consistent educational vernacular, with stakeholder feedback, to ensure that everyone is speaking the same language relative to instruction.

GSCS has made impressive progress on grading practices within the district. This was an improvement priority from the last review. All stakeholders, including parents, could speak to how students were graded on their attainment of learning. However, through interviews, inconsistencies were present. Stakeholders shared in leadership interviews that the district does not use the letter grade “D” as it unfairly impacts older students, especially when applying for scholarships. But staff interviews indicated that some teachers do give Ds. The district is encouraged to continue to focus on accountability for students and staff (inspect what you expect).

GSCS does not have a formal mentoring process, so every student has an identified adult to support and oversee their educational experience. All students endorsed that they know who to talk to if they need help or have questions, but they also stated that having an identified support person would be appreciated. The system appears to have a spot in all schedules that would allow this to be implemented in conjunction with student goal setting. Presently, whether a student has a mentor or has someone to coach them in goal setting is contingent on the teacher or programming (this was implemented at one school with low achieving students). Goal setting and adult mentorships are high-yield instructional and relational strategies that benefit all students. The team suggests the district determine if this important work falls in the “encourage to” versus “expected to” categories. The system is already doing work with insisting on accountability. Should this work move into the “expected to” category, metrics to determine the initiative's success and clearly established adult and student responsibilities require articulation. A critical component to establishing a high functioning, deeply embedded implementation culture is determining metrics to measure implementation levels and identifying accountability measures for personnel in charge of the implementation processes.

The team's findings identified numerous reasons to celebrate. These celebrations exist because of the dedication and hard work of the staff of GSCS. Parents and students within Griffin-Spalding County Schools are privileged to be part of an educational family that supports the development and success of the whole child. Much success has been achieved, and greater success awaits as the organization continues its quest for improvement. Serious consideration of the information in this report, both data (element ratings and Standard ratings) and suggestions for further study, will support these efforts. The organization has access to a wide array of tools through Cognia. Using these tools, as well as the Cognia Performance Standards with Key Concepts and the i3 Rubric, will enable the institution to chart a path for continuous improvement and more fully realize the institution's vision and mission.

Next Steps

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

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

Team Roster

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

Team Member Name	Brief Biography (Lead Evaluator Only)
Phyllis Gilworth, Lead Evaluator	Phyllis Gilworth, Ph.D. is a seasoned educator, currently retired, with over 40 years of experience as a teacher, counselor, and administrator. She has teaching experience at all levels, pre-k-16 in rural, suburban, and urban settings. Her counseling experience includes elementary school students and at-risk students in the alternative school setting and adults in the community setting. Dr. Gilworth's administrative experience includes assistant principal in charge of all discipline and curricular issues at a high risk, urban middle school, assistant principal in charge of guidance, director of instructional programs and assessment, and assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at an affluent suburban district in Northwest Indiana. Dr. Gilworth has extensive experience facilitating school improvement and particularly enjoys curriculum, teaching, and learning issues. She has participated on numerous Cognia accreditation teams, serving in multiple national and international roles, including Department of Defense schools. Dr. Gilworth is a certified lead evaluator, report reviewer, editor, and lead evaluator mentor for Cognia.
Lindsay Blakey, Team Member	Coordinator for the Department of Exceptional Students
Jennifer Holland, Team Member	Assistant Principal
LaToyia Jackson, Team Member	Assistant Principal
Andrea Pritchett, Team Member	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Missy Roddenberry, Team Member	Information Systems Coordinator
Cassandra Washington, Team Member	Executive Director of CTAE/CEO
Sheila Wilson, Team Member	Assistant Superintendent/HR

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