Furlow
Charter School

Americus, Georgia

April 11 - 13, 2022

School Accreditation Engagement Review

314262

cognia™

Table of Contents

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 administrations 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 institution commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.									Improving
	EN:	3	**33**	3	**RE:**	4	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	2	
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the institution's purpose and desired outcomes for learning.									Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	2	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	3	
1.3	The institution engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.									Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	2	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	3	
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support institutional effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	3	**IM:**	4	**RE:**	4	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	
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:**	2	**EM:**	3	
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	4	**IM:**	4	**RE:**	2	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	2	
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	**IM:**	4	**RE:**	4	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	4	
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the institution's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	**IM:**	4	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	4	
1.9	The institution provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	4	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	2	**SU:**	1	**EM:**	4	
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:**	2	

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

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably, so the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The institution examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and increased student learning.

Resource Capacity Standards											Rating
3.1	The institution plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the institution's effectiveness.										Improving
	EN:	4	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	1	**SU:**	1	**EM:**	2	
3.2	The institution's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.										Initiating
	EN:	3	**IM:**	2	**RE:**	1	**SU:**	1	**EM:**	2	
3.3	The institution 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:	3	**IM:**	1	**RE:**	1	**SU:**	1	**EM:**	2	
3.4	The institution attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the institution's purpose and direction.										Impacting
	EN:	4	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	4	**EM:**	4	
3.5	The institution integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.										Impacting
	EN:	4	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	4	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	4	
3.6	The institution provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the institution.										Initiating
	EN:	2	**IM:**	2	**RE:**	2	**SU:**	1	**EM:**	2	
3.7	The institution demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the institution's purpose and direction.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	4	**RE:**	4	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	2	

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.8	The institution allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the institution's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Impacting

EN:	4	**IM:**	4	**RE:**	4	**SU:**	4	**EM:**	4

Assurances

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

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

Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality®

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

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

Institution IEQ	322.50	**CIN 5 Year IEQ Range**	**278.34 – 283.33**

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) identified four themes to provide a perspective regarding where the school is on its improvement journey and how it may move forward to serve the future needs of Furlow Charter School stakeholders. These themes were developed from information gained through stakeholder interviews and analysis of artifacts shared by the school.

Communication with stakeholders is engrained in the day-to-day operations, but addressing the diversity of all stakeholders is inconsistent. Stakeholder communication takes place through several methods at Furlow Charter School. Various ways to keep parents informed include DoJo, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, emails, Infinite Campus, and Google Classroom. The five governing board committees: Academics and Curriculum, Diversity and Inclusion, Finance, Resource Development, and Governance are each composed of a board member, parent, school leader, and faculty member to enhance communication. The team noted that a student representative was not included on the committees, but student voice has been heard through the Falcon Advisory Board (student council). Students reported they had concerns about hygiene, nutrition, and bullying, and all had been addressed by leadership. The Dean's List may be implemented as another tool to communicate with families. Teachers mentioned that communication is channeled through the leadership team, classroom polls, and Wednesday professional learning community (PLC) meetings during which they identify and address the specialized needs of learners.

Leaders conduct observations of teachers, have formal evaluations for all faculty, and report results in the state's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) database. The school has adjusted its master schedule; all students begin the day with an eight-minute session which includes morning announcements and attendance reporting. Three teachers/advisors are bilingual in Spanish and assist when parent conferences are held on campus or through zoom. Parents interviewed stated they are "not getting enough information from the school, but only through the community and Facebook." The team recommends that school bulletins, surveys, and newsletters be translated into several languages to address the diversity of the school's population.

A culture of collaboration is embedded within teaching and learning activities. Collaboration among all stakeholders is the successful foundation for the many achievements in this notably diverse school. The leadership team meets regularly to assess programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning. Each new teacher is paired with a teacher mentor for coaching and support. Teacher retention is good. Project-based learning (PBL) assignments are collaboratively developed, and each grade level is responsible for one part of the project. These projects take place twice annually. Parents described the school as "welcoming" and praised the school's PBL "hands-on

---

learning because it provides an innovative way to help students as the old teaching ways won't work for today's environment." Teachers reported that they never work in isolation but share plans for interdisciplinary curriculum connections as there is freedom from scripted learning and no curriculum mapping. Looping takes place and students have the same core teacher for two years in grades K-5. Middle school students are looped for three years in their core subjects of English, math, science, and social studies. High school students may have the same teacher in a subject area for four years. The students reported that they like this looping process because the teacher "knows your weaknesses," and the students are comfortable with the teacher's manner of instruction. Student success and achievement are valued and celebrated every nine weeks in an Honors Day Assembly to recognize award-winning students for academics, athletics, and the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. The team suggests that the new academic coach develops a curriculum map to document consistency, support collaboration, offer schoolwide professional learning sessions, and assists newly hired faculty to recognize grade-level learning goals.

Student academic and social success are effectively supported through inquiry-based learning. In addition to the PBL endeavors, students reported their teachers often check for understanding during a lesson and issue exit tickets at the end of class. They like the differentiation that takes place in a class, as well as the small learning groups. Spanish and French are taught in elementary grades; however, students stated they would like to have the opportunity to learn other languages such as "Chinese and Japanese." High schoolers must complete a required number of service-learning hours, and seniors must complete a capstone research project and present it before a panel. Careers and post-secondary plans may be formed through these two requirements and the Bridges curriculum during middle school. Students reported they are taking dual enrollment courses at the technical college but would like Advanced Placement (AP) courses as another way to earn college credits. A new high school business course has been created, but students would like more technology/computer courses for coding, digital art, or programming. One and a half counselor positions are not sufficient to address the social-emotional learning (SEL) needs of the whole school enrollment. The team suggests that the school considers adding an elementary career day, AP, and credit recovery online courses. The school may benefit from extending the daily eight-minute session as a homeroom period during which a social-emotional curriculum can be implemented.

The school collects data and evidence to demonstrate progress in meeting goals and to inform decision-making. The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) is given three times annually to students in grades 3-8. The state's Milestone assessment is also given. Both assessment results are the primary sources of data kept by the school and form the basis of its school improvement plan. Two graduating classes have taken place since the school opened. The graduation rate is another data source collected by school leaders and is also included in the school improvement plan. Longitudinal trends are examined for MAP, but not yet possible for graduation rate trends. The current school improvement plan consists of three goals: increase the four and five-year graduation rates; improve academic growth using MAP, Milestone, and other course assessment data; and increase stakeholder buy-in. Initiatives provide the numerous goals for the governance committees to address teaching and learning, stakeholder engagement, facilities, diversity, inclusion, and monitoring. The team recommends that long-range planning in terms of one-year and five-year goals be developed in the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goal format with an identified database and include technology and professional development topics.

In conclusion, the team thanks Furlow Charter School for its genuine engagement in the continuous improvement process and hopes the school's stakeholders use the insights from this review as they move forward in their continuous improvement journey.

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.

cognia™

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
Stacie Rissmann-Joyce, Lead Evaluator	An educational leader, Dr. Stacie Rissmann-Joyce has been a teacher, university supervisor of student teachers, assistant principal, middle and high school principal, director of curriculum, head of school, university professor, and school board consultant. She has worked in the United States in Utah, Iowa, California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and the countries of Greece, Bangladesh, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Czech Republic, and Egypt. Dr. Rissmann-Joyce holds a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in educational administration with a focus on law, curriculum and instruction, and industrial relations. She has been a member of several school international accreditation teams in the United States as well as, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia. She has published in several educational journals.
Kristina Brimer, Federal Programs Director	
Melissa Jill Simmons, PhD Student and College Instructor	

cognia™

References and Readings

AdvancED. (2015). Continuous Improvement and Accountability. Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from https://source.cognia.org/issue-article/continuous-improvement-and-accountability/.

Bernhardt, V., & Herbert, C. (2010). *Response to intervention and continuous school improvement: Using data, vision, and leadership to design, implement, and evaluate a schoolwide prevention program*. New York: Routledge.

Elgart, M. (2015). *What a continuously improving system looks like*. Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from https://source.cognia.org/issue-article/what-continuously-improving-system-looks/.

Elgart, M. (2017). *Meeting the promise of continuous improvement: Insights from the AdvancED continuous improvement system and observations of effective schools.* Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from https://source.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CISWhitePaper.pdf.

Evans, R. (2012). *The Savvy school change leader*. Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from https://source.cognia.org/issue-article/savvy-school-change-leader/.

Fullan, M. (2014). *Leading in a culture of change personal action guide and workbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hall, G., & Hord, S. (2001). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kim, W., & Mauborne, R. (2017). *Blue ocean shift: Beyond competing*. New York: Hachette Book Group.

Park, S, Hironaka, S; Carver, P, & Nordstrum, L. (2013). *Continuous improvement in education.* San Francisco: Carnegie Foundation. Retrieved from https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/carnegie-foundation_continuous-improvement_2013.05.pdf.

Sarason, S. (1996). *Revisiting the culture of the school and the problem of change*. New York: Teachers College.

Schein, E. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General systems theory*. New York: George Braziller, Inc.