Haralson County School System

Tallapoosa, Georgia

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System Accreditation Engagement Review

215100

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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.

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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:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.									Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	
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:**	E4	
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:**	4	
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:**	3	
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:**	3	
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.									Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	3	
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	3	
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.									Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	

Leadership Capacity Standards											Rating
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for their institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	

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:**	3	
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	2	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	2	
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.										Impacting
	EN:	4	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	
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:	3	**IM:**	4	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**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:**	3	**EM:**	3	
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational futures and career planning.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	

Learning Capacity Standards											Rating
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	2	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	2	
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	2	**RE:**	2	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	2	
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	3	
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	3	

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	
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.										Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	3	
3.3	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:**	2	**SU:**	2	**EM:**	3	
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.										Impacting
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:**	4	
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	

Resource Capacity Standards										Rating
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.									Improving
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:** 3	
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	3	**IM:**	3	**RE:**	3	**SU:**	3	**EM:** 4	
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	**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 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.

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 Accreditation Engagement Review for Haralson County School System was conducted remotely during the coronavirus pandemic. The Engagement Review Team (team) reviewed the evidence and engaged all stakeholder groups in the virtual process in its work to rate the Cognia Performance Standards. Typical classroom instructional environments were evaluated by the school system using their personalized observation tools prior to the visit, and the team reviewed the data from the school system's observations, supervision, and evaluation results. The team found the following themes across the system and provides suggestions for next steps.

Internal and external stakeholder groups are committed to continuous improvement. Leadership, staff and parents highlighted Haralson County's status as a charter system and how this allows for more flexibility in serving students and increased community and parent involvement in decision-making. Documents substantiated the strategic planning process with 35 stakeholders serving on the planning committee and additional stakeholders serving on the five action teams. Artifacts disclosed the four goal areas of student achievement, student support, student, staff, parent, and community engagement, and operational support. Administration shared how the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) process is completed each year with the strategic plan updated annually based on review points throughout the year. "The system has one vision, one mission and one set of core beliefs for the system and all seven schools. The vision, mission, and beliefs serve as the basis of all planning and programming efforts at the system and school levels," stated a leader. Stakeholders repeatedly spoke of commitment to the mission of producing high-achieving graduates and how this is defined in terms of student performance on such measures as Milestones, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) growth, Lexile scores, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Reading Inventories, Corrective Reading, and benchmarks. Every internal and external group that was interviewed proudly reported the system's graduation rate of 98.1% as evidence of the system's goal to produce high-achieving students.

Policy manuals, handbooks, and interviews revealed a governing board that develops, reviews, and revises policies designed to support system effectiveness. Board members and administrators were proud to report the board's recognition as an Exemplary Board by the Georgia School Board Association from 2017 through 2020 based on their high level of commitment to meeting governance standards and creating a culture of success for students and the community. "This is a huge change for our system. Not too many years ago, we had a board that had difficulty deciding what their job was and what the superintendent's job was," stated a stakeholder. In addition to an effective governing board, teachers,

parents, and community members spoke about the strength of the system and school administration and how focused they are on effective implementation of processes, practices, and procedures. Stakeholders noted commitment to a results-oriented education that requires close collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and the community. Restructuring of job positions and hiring qualified personnel were mentioned frequently as examples of commitment to improvement, including the hiring of a highly-qualified maintenance director with the use of a new work order ticket system that is making a positive difference across the system. Many of the stakeholders interviewed by the team were parents, staff, and community members who serve on the School Governance Teams (SGTs). Interviews validated the involvement of the SGT in decisions that impact student achievement, school operations, curriculum, and instruction. Parents and community members readily shared their personal involvement in improvement efforts in such ways as the organization and coordination of an alumni association, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program participation, sponsorship of summer "Cop Camp" by the police department, participation in mock trials with fifth graders, Veteran's Association involvement with Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program, an active 4-H program, a graduate who played football at the University of Georgia returning to sponsor football camps for students each summer, and participation with work-based learning and multiple business partnerships to support the Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) program. "In the past three to five years the school system has truly engaged all groups in supporting our children. We have consistency in leadership and have a superintendent who is very approachable, as well as being active in the community. We are now proud of being a part of the *Rebel Way*," stated an external stakeholder.

Another example of the system's commitment to improvement is demonstrated with effective implementation of staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness. Administrators are trained on the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and the Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES). Results from the evaluations are used in the development of system and school improvement plans for professional development. Artifacts and interviews validated an integral component of supervision is the coaching and feedback model used by academic coaches, as well as the focus walks by district leaders and curriculum specialists to assess implementation progress in various aspects of the literacy plan. Even though the system does not have a formalized, system-wide process for the cultivation and improvement of leadership effectiveness, interviews revealed leadership support as a component of the supervision and evaluation process. Monthly meetings of County Office Leadership Team (COLT) for assistant principals and operational department chairs and District Implementation Team (DIT) for principals and district instructional leaders were discussed as training opportunities for leaders. Document reviews revealed leadership training for experienced teachers and administrators through participation with Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA), Georgia School Superintendent's Association (GSSA), and Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL). "Although our process for cultivating leaders does not include a formalized plan, system personnel take advantage of such training opportunities as RESA, GSSA and GAEL. Our current academic coaches were successful teachers, all assistant principals were successful teachers, and the principals have served as successful assistant principals. Also, the high school principal has developed his own leadership training for prospective leaders and meets monthly with candidates," shared an administrator. The team commends all stakeholder groups on the tremendous improvement made in Haralson County School System in the past five years and urges the system to engage in a data-driven and collaborative process as the new strategic plan is developed for the upcoming five years.

A supportive learning culture based on strong positive relationships exists in the school system. In almost every interview, stakeholders used such words as united, caring, invested, supportive, pride, family-oriented, student-focused, sense of community, and positive relationships to describe the school system. Staff shared how they are willing to go over and beyond what is required to meet the needs of

their students. Leaders and teachers shared how they are system graduates and have returned to give back to the community they call home. When students were asked what they thought of their schools, many quickly responded with some of the descriptors listed above in addition to noting how progressive and forward-thinking their schools are. One high school student used the word "opportunity" to describe the system and talked about the many opportunities students have, how easy it is to make friends, how everyone "fits in," and how teachers help students in so many ways. Almost every stakeholder group began their conversations with, "We do it the *Rebel Way as we are Respectful, Reliable, and Responsible*." Community members, parents, and staff shared how this motto has been a unifying theme that has connected the schools and community to ensure all are focused on making Haralson County the best in all areas and a place people want to live and grow.

Many of the interview sessions revolved around meeting the social and emotional needs of students. Staff members spoke about the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) being implemented in all schools to create safer and more effective schools. Survey results indicate that a vast majority of students at all levels feel they fit in, get along with other students, are treated with respect by adults in the building, and feel safe. Personnel discussed their advocacy plans and the kinds of support adults provide for students. "Although our advocacy program might not be super-formalized across the system, most teachers and staff members work hard to have a bond with students," stated a teacher. In addition to PBIS, teachers provide students with activities to promote positive relationships through the house system in the elementary through middle grades with students and teachers sorted into groups for the purpose of team-building and developing cross-grade-level relationships. Interviews revealed schools employ mentorship programs that partner at-risk students with faculty members for encouragement and support. Secondary level personnel reported on advisement for grades nine through twelve with one counselor having ninth and tenth grade students and a second counselor having students in grades eleven and twelve. Several internal stakeholders highlighted the HC (Haralson County) Watch initiative in which the system collaborates with local law enforcement and receives an alert when a student has a traumatic event in his/her home. The system contact that receives the alert communicates it to the appropriate school personnel so the child's teacher and counselor can provide the necessary social and emotional support. Documents revealed partnerships with outside agencies that also provide additional counselors and therapists for student support.

The system's mission is to produce high-achieving students who will graduate and become productive and responsible citizens. Document reviews and interviews revealed focused efforts on developing students' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success. "We are preparing every student to be prepared for military, college, or a career upon graduation," stated an internal stakeholder. Evidence noted the construction of a new college and career academy. Many staff members shared how all students are provided guidance into a career pathway with the YouScience assessment administered in eighth grade to provide a portfolio of data about student interests and possible jobs for them in the future. The superintendent also proudly reported the reduction in office referrals from 900+ to 437 in a four-year period as well as major improvements in student attendance. As one stakeholder stated, "We take care of our students. We have students graduating and heading to Harvard sitting with students judging chickens in an agricultural competition."

The importance of building relationships and developing soft skills was evident in every interview and in multiple documents. Staff shared how PBIS has been implemented at every school for at least five years and this program and other related practices and initiatives are being used to promote self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Stakeholders described students as learners who demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful. Haralson County Schools are to be commended on the emphasis on relationship-building and are encouraged to continue and strengthen the emphasis on social and

emotional learning programs and support systems to enhance student's self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success.

An aligned, standards-based, results-driven curriculum complemented by an effective instructional model meets students' needs and the system's learning expectations. Interviews and artifacts provided evidence the system uses the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Through collaborative planning and with the leadership of the academic coaches, pacing guides and unit plans have been developed and are updated annually to reflect changes in pacing, order of units, and the school calendar. The guides are shared with teachers through Google Drive, Google Sites and/or Google Calendar. Interviews revealed the system is in year two of implementation of the district literacy plan and uses the Bookworms curriculum with the instructional format of three blocks: shared reading, interactive read-aloud or writing, and small-group, differentiated skills instruction. Lesson plan documents verified a structured planning process with the standard(s), vocabulary, essential questions, higher-order thinking (HOT) questions, warm-up activities with an opening, work sessions, closing, differentiation plans, and assessment strategies. Leaders and teachers spoke of their commitment to teaching the curriculum with fidelity, monitoring all students' progress, and ensuring the use of the common instructional framework. Academic coaches and the district literacy team shared their engagement with instructional planning, curriculum alignment, and pacing, as well as their work with collaborative groups to answer the four basic questions: What do our students need to learn? How do we know if they learned it? What do we do if they don't? What do we do if they already know it?

Educators across the system demonstrated their commitment to the consistent use of data to verify learner progress and modify instructional practices to improve student learning. Documents and interviews validated the use of such formative assessments as Reading Inventory, MAP, Acadience, and locally developed benchmarks. Teachers reported on their data notebooks with individual student data, data rooms with data walls at the elementary level, and data buckets at the secondary level. Staff members discussed the collaborative planning sessions and the data talks held during collaborative planning times. Lesson plans, assessment data, and professional learning experiences provide evidence that students have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve learning priorities established by the system. Interviews validated how staff members identify student needs, select interventions, plan implementation, and continuously examine progress. "All schools have intervention blocks and elementary students are moved every four to five weeks while middle school students are moved every nine weeks for remediation or acceleration as determined by formative assessment results," shared an administrator. With a standards-based, results-driven curriculum complemented by an effective instructional framework that results in graduation rates above the state average, the system is encouraged to continue the data analysis and usage to monitor and adjust services and to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services in meeting the specialized needs of all learners.

The school system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes wise use of resources in support of the system's vision and mission. Financial records indicate adherence to the established budgets. Continuous monitoring is evident through interviews and artifact reviews. The finance director reported a sound fund balance. Administration reported on budgeting concerns in 2020 connected with a state budget reduction as well as issues related to COVID-19 quarantine and isolation guidelines. Yet, reports revealed a finance department that implemented strategies that bridged the gaps and contributed to the effective stewardship of the system's resources without having a reduction in force.

The five-year strategic plan included operational support as one of the priority goals with improvement plans in the areas of transportation, maintenance, safety, and financial efficiency. Bus arrivals and departures, timeliness of requests and quality of maintenance services, meeting health and sanitation standards, and maintaining financial efficiency were concerns addressed in the strategic plan. Without

exception, interviews validated a major improvement in these areas with the hiring of new transportation and maintenance directors who are highly qualified and responsive to system needs. "Our buildings are old but we are beginning to develop pride in the upkeep of our schools. We now have pride and curb appeal," stated an internal stakeholder. The nutrition department was proud to report on being financially self-sufficient as well as earning ServSafe certification. Transportation reported on the acquisition of 21 new buses and purchases of four cameras per bus. Students and staff voiced their convictions that they have access to informational resources and materials to support their needs, interests, and the teaching and learning programs. Artifacts and interviews substantiated community partnerships to support the system's educational efforts and commitment to be engaged in the strategic resource management process.

A critical component of strategic resource management is the effective implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Evidence included a well-defined budget timeline with involvement of principals and department heads. A review of artifacts included handbooks with SOPs and practices related to policy and general organizational operational processes. Procedures and expectations for routine tasks such as finance, purchasing, hiring, and attendance are delineated in the handbooks. A formalized protocol for monitoring attendance was noted in interviews and given as the reason for improved student attendance. Administrators shared information as to the level of technology equipment at each school and support for its usage. "The system is pleased to be at the 1:1 ratio for Chromebooks in grades two through twelve with kindergarten and first graders having access to iPads and classroom sets of Chromebooks," reported a system leader. Artifacts disclosed that teachers use Infinite Campus as the student information system and Google Classroom and a complete suite of Google products as the learning management system.

Formal processes for recruitment and retention of staff were verified in interviews and document reviews. The Human Resources (HR) department collaborates with school leadership, sharing allotment information based on FTE and student enrollment. School leadership reported on having autonomy to interview and select the most qualified candidates. With all schools being Title I schools, artifacts revealed the use of Title I comparability data to monitor retention of teachers. System leaders were proud to report a current teacher retention rate of 91%.

The executive summary document and interviews underscored numerous challenges impacting the system. Haralson County is a rural community with 21.7% of county residents not having high school diplomas, median household incomes far below state average, and 70.9% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch services. These challenges were mentioned in interviews as possible barriers to the system's pursuit to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness. The system is to be commended on its resource allocations that are aligned to the goals and strategies of the strategic plan. System personnel are reminded to ensure processes are executed with quality and fidelity to ensure human, material, and fiscal resources are aligned, allocated, and used based on identified needs and key priorities.

The system has limited data usage focused on improving program effectiveness and student learning for all student groups. The restructuring of academic coaching positions and implementation of the literacy grant were noted as success stories in improving program effectiveness and student learning. When asked about processes to improve student learning for individual and collective groups of students, the instructional staff mentioned the formalized Response to Intervention (RTI) process with an academic coach dedicated to the coordination of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Academic coaches discussed the concentration on improving tier one instruction across the system with a focus on fidelity of implementation. "We are working the core while morphing the PLC (Professional Learning Community) process," stated an academic coach. When reviewing data on students with disabilities, system personnel reported a reduction in the numbers of students labeled as special needs

from 24% to 17.5% in recent years, a number which continues to exceed state and national averages. In addition, Rebel Academy has six of 25 students with special needs, resulting in 24% of the alternative school population with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Interviews revealed self-contained classes and inclusion services at every level, but limited details were provided regarding such statistics as how many special needs students are completing IEP goals, how social and emotional needs of IEP students are being met, or how data were being used to evaluate the services and programs for students with specialized needs. Concerns were discussed regarding the need to analyze data and improve CTAE programming as approximately 49% of CTAE students are not passing the end-of-pathways assessments. All data provided to the team regarding Milestones results were reported in terms of percentage of students classified as "Developing and Above" on the state tests. Test score analysis did not report or target the need to increase numbers of students scoring at the "Proficient and Distinguished" levels. Milestones results ("Developing and Above") in math revealed growth in grades 4, 6, and 8 while results in English language arts showed growth only in grade 4. Trend data for End of Course (EOC) results in American literature, physical science, US history, and economics showed drops over a three-year period. When interviewing staff and external stakeholders, the need to re-envision media centers and have them as the hub of school-wide learning was heard numerous times. Also expressed was the need to revamp media center directors/librarians' job descriptions to support the literacy initiative with a focus on inspiring students to become tech savvy and independent life-long readers and learners. The system is to be commended on the progress made in using data to improve professional practices and student learning in the past three years. Leaders and staff are urged to enhance the data analysis process to meet the specialized needs of individual and collective groups of students and to determine effectiveness of organizational programs and services.

The system does not have formalized processes to utilize longitudinal results that lead to sustained growth and improvement over time. Numerous internal stakeholders spoke of their attending schools in Haralson County and returning to work in the system because of their love for and commitment to the community. Interviews substantiated the information held in many employees' personal recollections and experiences that provided an understanding of the history and culture of the system, especially the stories that explain the reasons behind certain decisions or procedures. When asked about common grading practices, stakeholders reported standards-based report cards for kindergarten through grade two but there were inconsistencies in grading practices at the other levels. Secondary staff reported leaving grading decisions to departments. No documents were provided regarding common grading practices across classrooms and programs. When asked about the expected protocol for PLCs, staff mentioned collaborative planning meetings connected with the literacy initiative but noted the PLC process was changing. Some stakeholders mentioned monthly PLCs while others noted weekly meetings. Academic coaches discussed how they are the PLC crew and are revamping the process so that it becomes more systematic, categorizing the need to make PLCs more "hometown/cross-town." Another example of not having formalized processes and protocols is with the induction and mentoring of new staff. Artifacts and interviews substantiated a pre-service orientation with new staff by system leaders. When asked about mentors, the team was told that principals can assign mentors but there are no guidelines for selection of mentors or any training for mentors. When asked how often mentors meet with new staff, the team was told on a monthly or as needed basis. With the promotion of creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving, documents revealed 1:1 Chromebook initiative, STEM classes, STEM-infused activities and CTAE classes as examples of such activities. Although there was evidence of such programs and activities, the self-assessment document substantiated a need for reliable and valid methods of measuring the effectiveness of the system's innovation and problem-solving activities. Documents revealed evaluations of programs and services were mostly compliance reports from external evaluators on such federally funded programs as Titles I, IIA, III, IV, Special Education (IDEA), and Homeless. "There is not a formalized cycle and timeline to

evaluate academic and organizational programs, services, and materials. Mostly, program and services evaluations are now being conducted by academic coaches," reported an internal stakeholder. The system is encouraged to formalize processes so that desired practices and programs are implemented and monitored with quality and fidelity, resulting in sustained growth and improvement over time.

In sum, the Engagement Review Team members listened carefully to the stakeholders of the system and appreciate their willingness to share information about strengths and challenges. All stakeholder groups are committed to continuous improvement, a supportive learning environment based on development of positive relationships, an aligned, standards-based, results-driven curriculum complemented by an effective instructional model, and strategic resource management. The team suggests enhanced data usage to improve program effectiveness and student learning for all student groups, as well as formalizing processes to utilize longitudinal results that lead to sustained growth and improvement and, ultimately ingrained practices in the system.

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:

Cheryl Allread, Lead Evaluator	Dr. Cheryl Allread's career spans over 48 years. She retired from Marion County Schools in South Carolina after seven years as a math and science teacher, 11 years as a principal, 11 years as a superintendent for instruction, and seven years as a district superintendent. After retirement from 36 years in Marion County, she began working as a consultant with the South Carolina State Department of Education, serving as a liaison for low-performing schools. She also conducted academic audits, served as a principal mentor, and served as a leadership coach in instructional supervision. Dr. Allread currently works as Lead Evaluator for Cognia in schools and systems across the United States and internationally, as well as continuing to work as a consultant with schools and systems in instructional supervision.
Lisa Logan	Dr. Lisa Logan serves as high school instructional specialist in Ringgold, Georgia. Her responsibilities include overseeing the system's gifted program and high school curriculum as well as serving as assistant test coordinator. Her 23 years in education include 16 years teaching secondary science from the resource classroom to the gifted classroom and six years as a high school assistant principal. During this time Lisa earned her education specialist degree from the University of Alabama and her doctorate degree from Liberty University. At the school level, as a teacher leader and administrator, Dr. Logan served and led teams in the PLC process, analyzing and presenting data for teacher planning, master scheduling, and RTI. She worked with individual teachers to research and implement practices to improve student learning and student behavior and collaborated with teacher and parent teams to develop plans to meet student needs. Although this is Dr. Logan's first Cognia team member experience, she provided leadership with accreditation at the school level as her school recently completed the five-year accreditation renewal process.

Elizabeth Merrell Garner	Elizabeth Merrell Garner currently serves as the director of Title I and school improvement for the Columbia County School District in Georgia. Ms. Garner's 23 years in public education include middle school science teacher, alternative school teacher, assistant principal, and director of middle school and gifted education programs. All college coursework was completed at Augusta University with bachelor's degrees in public relations, advertising, and middle grades education and a master's degree and education specialist degrees in educational leadership and administration.
Tiffany Penland Boyle	Dr. Tiffany Boyle is in her third year as principal of Mason Creek Middle School in the Douglas County School System. Previously, Tiffany taught business education courses for six years before becoming an assistant principal for curriculum, instruction, professional learning, and CTAE for five years. Dr. Boyle has a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia in business education, a master's in business education from the University of West Georgia, a specialist's degree from Georgia College and University in educational leadership, and a doctorate in educational leadership for learning from Kennesaw State University. Dr. Boyle was the first female to graduate from Kennesaw State University with this doctorate that focused on such teacher motivational factors as student achievement and its effect on teachers and recognition initiatives. Dr. Boyle's current roles and responsibilities include teacher evaluation, professional development, school branding and marketing, student achievement, athletic success, and teacher morale. She is an experienced accreditation team member.

Sara Fretz	Sara Fretz joined Duval County Public Schools in 2003 and currently serves as the K-5 teacher of the gifted at Waterleaf Elementary. In this role, she provides support with STEAM, computer science, and social-emotional learning among other content areas. Sara started her career specializing in autism and then transitioned to an inclusion classroom setting and has taught multiple grade levels as a model teacher and mentor. Ms. Fretz also worked as an instructional coach. Over the past 17 years, some of her responsibilities included serving as the liaison between the district and school, providing professional development opportunities to teachers, analyzing data, serving as test coordinator, writing curriculum, making curriculum adjustments, and supporting teachers and students. She has been a curriculum evaluator for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and is a certified Microsoft Innovative Educator providing support in technology innovation. Ms. Fretz earned a master's degree and a bachelor's degree in education from the University of North Florida, and holds a teaching certificate in K-5 general education and K-12 special education with endorsements in gifted learning and ESOL. Ms. Fretz recently passed the reading endorsement assessment to add to her professional certificate.
Allison Davis	Allison Davis currently serves as the executive director of student services for the Warren County School System in Warrenton, Georgia. In this role, she serves as the special education, 504, gifted, Pre-K, hospital/homebound, and curriculum director. Mrs. Davis attended Augusta State University where she earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education, master's degree in educational leadership, and specialist's degree in educational leadership. Her professional experience includes teacher, intervention specialist, and administrator. Allison has served as a team member with Cognia for two years.

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