Cognia Diagnostic Review Report

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Introduction

The Cognia Diagnostic Review is conducted by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the research aligned to Cognia Performance Standards. The Diagnostic Review process is designed to energize and equip the leadership and stakeholders of an institution to achieve higher levels of performance and address areas that may be hindering efforts to reach those desired performance levels. The Diagnostic Review is a rigorous process that includes an in-depth examination of evidence and relevant performance data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

Standards help delineate what matters. They provide a common language through which an education community can engage in conversations about educational improvement, institution effectiveness, and achievement. They serve as a foundation for planning and implementing improvement strategies and activities and for measuring success. Cognia Performance Standards were developed by a committee composed of educators from the fields of practice, research, and policy. These talented leaders applied professional wisdom, deep knowledge of effective practice, and the best available research to craft a set of robust standards that define institutional quality and guide continuous improvement.

When this institution was evaluated, the Diagnostic Review Team used an identified subset of the Cognia Performance Standards and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards, but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality. Using the evidence they gathered, the Diagnostic Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report.

As a part of the Diagnostic Review, stakeholders were interviewed by members of the Diagnostic Review Team about their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's learning environment and organizational effectiveness. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidence and data to support the findings of the Diagnostic Review. The following table lists the numbers of interviewed representatives of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Groups	Number
District-Level Administrators	1
Building-Level Administrators	1
Professional Support Staff (e.g., Counselor, Media Specialist, Technology Coordinator)	0
Certified Staff	10
Noncertified Staff	5
Students	22
Parents	8
Total	47

Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results

The Cognia Standards Diagnostic was used by the Diagnostic Review Team to evaluate the institution's effectiveness based on the Cognia's Performance Standards identified as essential for realizing growth and sustainable improvement in underperforming schools. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity**, and **Resource Capacity**. Point values are established within the diagnostic, and a percentage of the points earned by the institution for each Essential Standard is calculated. Results are reported within four categories: Impacting, Improving, Initiating, and Insufficient. The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

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 Essential Standards		Rating
1.1	The institution commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.	Insufficient
1.3	The institution engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.	Insufficient
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	Insufficient
1.7	Leaders implement operational process and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.	Initiating
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the institution's purpose and direction.	Initiating
1.9	The institution provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	Initiating
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.	Insufficient

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 Essential Standards		**Rating**
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the institution.	Insufficient
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Insufficient
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	Initiating
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the institution's learning expectations.	Insufficient
2.9	The institution implements, evaluates, and monitors processes to identify and address the specialized social, emotional, developmental, and academic needs of students.	Insufficient
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Initiating
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Initiating
2.12	The institution implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Insufficient

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 that 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.
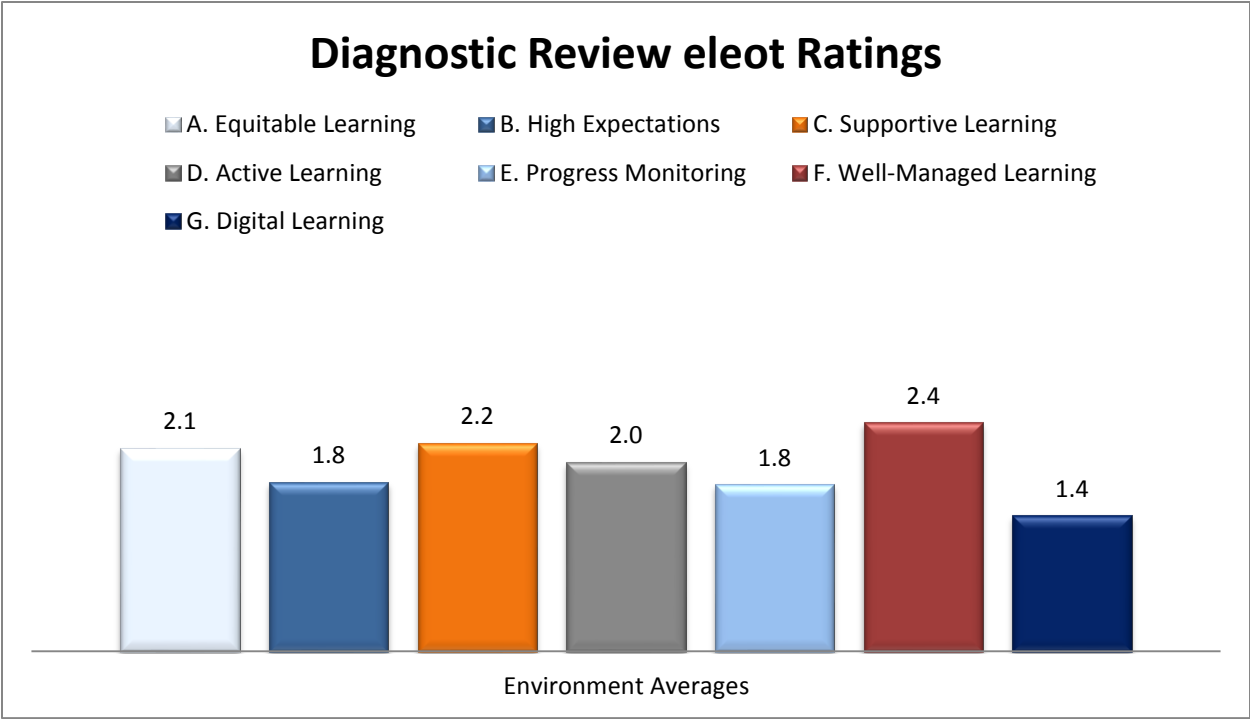
Resource Capacity Essential Standards		Rating
3.1	The institution plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the institution's effectiveness.	Insufficient
3.2	The institution's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.	Initiating
3.4	The institution attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the institution's purpose and direction.	Initiating
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.	Insufficient
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.	Initiating

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) Results

The eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot) is a learner-centric classroom observation tool that comprises 28 items organized in seven environments aligned with the Cognia Standards. The tool provides useful, relevant, structured, and quantifiable data on the extent to which students are engaged in activities and demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, and dispositions that are conducive to effective learning. Classroom observations are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes.

Every member of the Diagnostic Review Team was eleot certified and passed a certification exam that established inter-rater reliability. Team members conducted 15 observations during the Diagnostic Review process, including all core content learning environments. The following charts provide aggregate data across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments.

Diagnostic Review eleot Ratings

- A. Equitable Learning
- B. High Expectations
- C. Supportive Learning
- D. Active Learning
- E. Progress Monitoring
- F. Well-Managed Learning
- G. Digital Learning

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2.1	1.8	2.2	2.0	1.8	2.4	1.4

Environment Averages

A. Equitable Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
A1	1.4	Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs.	67%	27%	7%	0%
A2	2.7	Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support.	7%	27%	53%	13%
A3	3.0	Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner.	0%	20%	60%	20%
A4	1.4	Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions.	73%	13%	13%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**2.1**				

B. High Expectations Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
B1	1.9	Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher.	33%	40%	27%	0%
B2	1.7	Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable.	40%	47%	13%	0%
B3	1.5	Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work.	60%	27%	13%	0%
B4	1.7	Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing).	47%	40%	13%	0%
B5	2.0	Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning.	33%	33%	33%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**1.8**				

C. Supportive Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
C1	2.0	Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful.	40%	20%	40%	0%
C2	1.9	Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback).	40%	27%	33%	0%
C3	2.3	Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers, and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks.	7%	67%	20%	7%
C4	2.5	Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher.	7%	40%	47%	7%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:	**2.2**					

D. Active Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
D1	2.1	Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and teacher predominate.	33%	33%	27%	7%
D2	1.9	Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences.	40%	33%	20%	7%
D3	2.2	Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities.	20%	40%	40%	0%
D4	1.7	Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments.	53%	20%	27%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:	**2.0**					

\n**E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment**						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
E1	1.4	Learners monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored.	73%	13%	13%	0%
E2	1.9	Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work.	33%	47%	13%	7%
E3	2.1	Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content.	27%	40%	33%	0%
E4	1.6	Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed.	53%	33%	13%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**1.8**				

\n**F. Well-Managed Learning Environment**						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
F1	2.6	Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other.	7%	40%	40%	13%
F2	2.8	Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others.	7%	20%	60%	13%
F3	1.9	Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another.	40%	33%	27%	0%
F4	2.3	Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions.	13%	40%	47%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**2.4**				

G. Digital Learning Environment			Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**				
G1	1.7	Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning.	60%	13%	20%	7%
G2	1.3	Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.	87%	0%	7%	7%
G3	1.2	Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning.	87%	7%	7%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**1.4**				

eleot Narrative

The Diagnostic Review Team conducted 15 observations in core classrooms using eleot and a number of additional informal observations in common areas and non-core content classrooms. Results from the seven learning environments ranged from an overall average rating of 1.4 to 2.4 on a four-point scale. An area of strength was found in the way staff members treated students. In the Equitable Learning Environment, which earned an overall average rating of 2.1, the team noted the fair treatment of students. For example, in 80 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that "Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner" (A3). In 66 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that "Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support" (A2). In over half of the classrooms, the team observed respectful relationships between students and teachers. It was evident/very evident in 54 percent of classrooms that "Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher" (C4).

The Diagnostic Review Team found a number of low-rated items across all learning environments that could be leveraged by the school to improve teaching and learning. For example, students rarely engaged in challenging work at their level. It was evident/very evident in 13 percent of classrooms that students "engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable" (B2) and "engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)" (B4). These data showed that instructional rigor and challenging learning tasks were not aligned with the depth of knowledge expected by the South Carolina performance standards.

While it was evident/very evident in 73 percent of classrooms that "Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others" (F2), the team found that instruction was sometimes lost to inefficient use of class time. Learners who "use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions" (F4) were evident/very evident in 47 percent of classrooms, and learners who "transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another" (F3) were evident/very evident in 27 percent of classrooms. Likewise, it was evident/very evident in 40 percent of classrooms that "Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities" (D3). Collectively, these data provided a significant leverage point for the development of rituals and routines that could maximize instructional and transitional time.

The Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment was rated 1.8 on the four-point scale. The items in this learning environment focus on ongoing monitoring of student learning, students monitoring their own learning progress, and students taking ownership of their learning. Items in this learning environment provided opportunities for improvement. For instance, in 13 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that students "monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored" (E1) and "understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed" (E4). Additionally, it was evident/very evident in 20 percent of classrooms that "Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work" (E2).

In most classrooms, technology was used primarily by teachers, with student use being infrequent and often low level. In 27 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that "Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning" (G1). Also, learners who "use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning" (G2) were evident/very evident in 14 percent of classrooms, and instances of learners who "use digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning" (G3) were evident/very evident in seven percent of classrooms.

Findings

Improvement Priorities

Improvement priorities are developed to enhance the capacity of the institution to reach a higher level of performance and reflect the areas identified by the Diagnostic Review Team to have the greatest impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority #1

Develop and implement an ongoing, collaborative, and continuous improvement structure and process that includes the analysis of a variety of data sources (e.g., universal screeners, South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards, common assessments, formative assessments, disciplinary records) to inform decision-making. Routinely monitor all aspects of the improvement process, use stakeholder input, build staff capacity through effective professional growth and evaluation systems (including feedback), and ensure the plan is adjusted as needed to guarantee an increase in student learning. (Standard 1.3)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

Student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, indicated that the percentage of students who met grade-level standards on the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) was below state averages in fourth-grade science and fifth-grade social studies for 2017, 2018, and 2019. Meanwhile, student performance was mostly above state averages in sixth through eighth grades. In sixth-grade science and seventh-grade social studies, the percentages of students who met grade-level standards were above state averages in 2017 and 2018 but below the state average in 2019. In eighth-grade science, the percentage of students who met grade-level standards was above state averages for all three years.

On the South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY), the percentages of students who achieved the benchmark of "Meets and Exceeds" in math were below state averages in all grade levels, except seventh grade in both 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. In English language arts (ELA), the percentage of students meeting benchmark was above the state averages in third, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades in 2017-2018, while only two grades (seventh and eighth) had higher percentages than the state averages in 2018-2019.

The middle school state accountability score increased from 51 in 2017-2018 to 58 in 2018-2019, improving its rating from good to excellent. The elementary school received a state accountability rating of unsatisfactory each of the past two years, with an index score of 28 out of 100 in 2017-2018, and a score of 31 in 2018-2019.

Classroom Observation Data:

The classroom observation data, as previously discussed, indicated that few students engaged in learning tasks that met their unique academic needs. Artifacts and administrator interviews referred to a learning environment that valued differentiated learning. However, the Diagnostic Review Team found that it was evident/very evident in seven percent of classrooms that "Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs" (A1). It was evident/very evident in 13 percent of classrooms that students "engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable" (B2) and "engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)" (B4). In 27 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that "Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher" (B1).

Stakeholders frequently referred to the school's small class sizes, but the school failed to capitalize on this opportunity to provide differentiated and engaging instruction. It was evident/very evident in 40 percent of classrooms that "Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities" (D3) and in 13 percent of classrooms that "Learners monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby learning progress is monitored" (E1). The school used data cards for recording state and local assessment scores. However, students were not using these data to monitor their own growth. It was evident/very evident in 20 percent of classrooms that "Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work" (E2).

Stakeholder Interview Data:

The Diagnostic Review Team found that parent perceptions of the school were very positive. A safe environment, good communication, and free tutoring after school were among the highlights shared during interviews. Parents stated that the school prepared their children for success at the next grade level. Students felt safe and supported by teachers, and most indicated that they had an adult in the school who they could trust. Parents, staff, and students liked the small class sizes and experienced a caring, family-oriented environment.

Staff interviews revealed that many teachers chose to teach there for the autonomy they were given. Administration allowed teachers to choose their teaching strategies and resources, as long as those were tied to state curriculum standards. However, staff interviews also revealed that administration did little to monitor the learning environment, was not easily accessible, was often unresponsive, and was rarely visible, all of which resulted in frustration among staff due to a lack of instructional leadership. Most staff indicated having seen administration in their classroom one or two times, with few having received a formal observation or useful feedback.

Since the school's designation as a Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school, structures and training were established by the transformation coach to support instruction, including informal observations, data analysis, and feedback. Although professional learning communities (PLCs) were established, those meetings often focused on housekeeping, training, and organizational or informational topics rather than specifically on data and student learning. Staff interviews revealed that data cards were not effectively used to inform daily instruction, were not supported by administration, and were not used by students to monitor their own growth. Stakeholder interview data and a review of artifacts indicated that afterschool tutoring lacked structure and monitoring to ensure an effective contribution to student learning. Finally, staff indicated they made requests to participate in more professional growth opportunities; however, these requests often went unanswered. Despite this, structures were initiated this year to provide staff training on data analysis, Mastery Connect, and IXL during PLCs and prior to the start of the school year.

Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:

Survey data showed 96 percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my child's teachers help me to understand my child's progress" (E6), while 90 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "My child's teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities" (E3). Ninety-two percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions, and measures of growth" (C5), while 75 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "All teachers in our school participate in collaborative learning communities that meet both informally and formally across grade levels and content areas" (E9).

Because several new staff members had been hired over the past two years, the Diagnostic Review Team was concerned that zero percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "A formal process is in place to support new staff members in their professional practice" (E16). Administration indicated that the South Carolina system for assisting, developing, and evaluating professional teaching (ADEPT) was used for support of new teachers, but a review of artifacts and staff interview data indicated this support did not occur. Support and feedback for all staff members appeared to be lacking as well, as 58 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school's leaders regularly evaluate staff members on criteria designed to improve teaching and learning" (D7). Forty-one percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "All teachers in our school have been trained to

implement a formal process that promotes discussion about student learning (e.g., action research, examination of student work, reflection, study teams, and peer coaching)" (E10). Further, 50 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school's leaders ensure all staff members use supervisory feedback to improve teaching and learning" (D8), and that "In our school, all staff members participate in continuous professional learning based on identified needs of the school" (E17).

Among middle school students, 21 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my teachers change their teaching to meet my learning needs" (E9) and 47 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "My school provides me with challenging curriculum and learning experiences" (E2). Twenty-four percent agreed/strongly agreed that "In my school, a high quality education is offered" (C3) while 41 percent agreed/strongly that "My school provides learning services for me according to my needs" (E7).

Documents and Artifacts:

A review of the school's CSI plans for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 showed budgets for professional development materials and training totaling more than $69,000. However, a review of artifacts and staff interview data indicated that little was spent on staff development. Administration provided a walkthrough checklist that did not appear to be research-based or tied to school goals, and there was no evidence that either the checklist or any other formal type of evaluation or feedback was being used. The transformation coach used a 3P (Praise, Polish, Ponder) feedback tool multiple times in classrooms throughout the year. Finally, teachers used a standard lesson plan format across all grade levels. There was little evidence to indicate that teachers received monitoring or feedback from administration on these plans to ensure congruency with standards, instructional effectiveness, differentiation, alignment between grade levels, or support of the school's improvement goals.

Improvement Priority #2

Develop and implement processes that ensure the individual needs of students are met. Establish a process to provide social and emotional and academic support through a multi-tiered system of intervention. Implement frequent progress monitoring of student data, adjustments to processes, and program evaluation to meet student needs and improve student learning. (Standard 2.9)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

The Diagnostic Review Team found that data from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Mastery Connect, and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), as well as data analysis tools were used to inform classroom instruction and instructional grouping of students. However, the use of these data did not lead to consistent or significant student growth across grade levels. The Diagnostic Review Team examined and gave thoughtful consideration to these data and the student performance data detailed in an addendum to this report to determine Improvement Priority 2.

Classroom Observation Data:

Classroom observation data, as previously discussed, showed that in 80 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that "Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner" (A3), while in 13 percent of classrooms it was evident/very evident that "Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions" (A4). Despite multiple references to the small class sizes and opportunities that teachers had for individualized learning, observations indicated that in seven percent of classrooms it was evident/very evident that "Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs" (A1). It was evident/very evident in 40 percent of classrooms that "Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful" (C1). Interview data indicated that students felt supported by teachers for academic or socio-emotional needs. However, observation data revealed it was evident/very evident in 27 percent of classrooms that "Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers, and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks" (C3) and in 54 percent of classrooms that "Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher" (C4). The Diagnostic Review Team found it evident/very evident in 53 percent of classrooms that "Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other" (F1).

Stakeholder Interview Data:

Interview data showed that most students stated they felt comfortable discussing concerns (academic, social, personal) with their teachers, and some indicated they felt comfortable discussing similar issues with administration. However, students, parents, and staff expressed concern regarding the lack of a guidance counselor and that staff have informally assumed the counselor's role. Staff interviews revealed low morale among employees and a desire to change the mindset from "what the school cannot do to what it can do." Staff, parents, and students wanted more opportunities to celebrate student accomplishments, to offer extracurricular activities, and to provide students and staff with positive reinforcement. The school previously conducted regular morning meetings, which instilled a sense of community. However, staff shared that because academic goals were more of a priority for administration, the morning meetings and other culture-building activities rarely occurred. Although staff and administration viewed academic improvement as important, interviews indicated that many students did not feel academically challenged. Staff revealed that the school's academic Response to Intervention (RtI) model lacked structure, monitoring, and data-driven decision-making. Administrator and staff interviews showed no formal system for schoolwide behavior monitoring, supports, or positive reinforcement. Students, parents, and staff were in agreement that offering field trips, clubs, and extracurricular activities for students was important.

Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:

Middle school student survey data showed that 47 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my teachers use a variety of teaching methods and learning activities to help me develop the skills I will need to succeed" (E8), while 21 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "My teachers change their teaching to meet my learning needs" (E9). Sixty-four percent of middle school students agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, "In my school, the purpose and expectations are clearly explained to me and my family" (C2). Twenty-seven percent agreed/strongly agreed that "My school considers students' opinions when planning ways to improve the school" (G2). Among elementary students, 74 percent agreed that "My teachers use different activities to help me learn" (E2).

Ninety-two percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school uses multiple assessment measures to determine student learning and school performance" (G1). Seventy-five percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "All staff members use student data to address the unique learning needs of all students" (E14) and that "Our school has a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and using data" (G3). However, only 42 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school ensures all staff members are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data" (G4). The Diagnostic Review Team was concerned that the school may have spent more time collecting data than effectively using the data to transform student learning.

Sixty-seven percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "School leaders monitor data related to student achievement" (G6). However, interview data revealed that monitoring focused more on compliance than impact on learning. Parent interview and survey data consistently indicated a high level of satisfaction with the curriculum. Eighty-two percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my child's teachers meet his/her learning needs by individualizing instruction" (E4), while 90 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my child's teachers provide an equitable curriculum that meets his/her learning needs" (E1).

Documents and Artifacts:

A review of MAP and DIBELS assessments indicated that they were being used to determine overall class performance, areas of strengths and weaknesses, action steps, and ability groups. The process for using these data was established this year by the transformation coach but was not actively monitored by administration. Furthermore, a Progress Monitoring Tool was in place according to CSI state requirements, but artifacts and interviews indicated this, too, was not being effectively monitored or used to inform instructional or organizational practices.

Although behavior data were entered into Power School, there was no evidence to indicate that these data were tracked or analyzed systematically. Administration developed a "Gold Pin Reward" system, whereby students were given a pin to wear each day, and infractions ranging from disrespect to bringing a weapon to school could result in the loss of their pin for three days. The stated purpose was to "recognize and reward positive behavior," yet this program was not implemented with fidelity, was focused on punitive consequences, and was not widely supported based on staff interviews.

Insights from the Review

The Diagnostic 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, examples of programs, and practices and provide direction for the institution's continuous improvement efforts. The insights from the Review narrative should provide contextualized information from the team deliberations and provide information about the team's analysis of the practices, processes, and programs of the institution within the **Levels of Impact of Engagement**, **Implementation**, **Results**, **Sustainability**, and **Embeddedness**.

Engagement is the level of involvement and frequency with which stakeholders are engaged in the desired practices, processes, or programs within the institution. **Implementation** is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are monitored and adjusted for quality and fidelity of implementation. **Results** represent 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 (minimum of three years). **Embeddedness** is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the institution.

Strengths:

A common theme among students, staff, parents, and administration was that the most positive aspect of the school was its size. Students felt that staff knew who they were and that there was someone they could reach out to if they had any type of need. One parent stated, "I love that the teachers are so invested in our children's learning and all around well-being." Another said, "Teachers appear to demonstrate a passion for teaching." One student called school their "happy place," while many referred to the feeling of safety and caring from adults in the building. Staff surveys also indicated that the size of the school allowed a greater opportunity to get to know each student and staff member. One said, "Our school staff members truly love and care for each student and each student's individual success." The school's board of directors had a high level of confidence in the ability of administration and staff to transform the school and improve student learning.

Observations and interviews revealed that staff felt a strong bond among themselves and frequently offered one another support. The implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) improved communication, consistency, and collaboration among staff. The opportunity to teach as each teacher saw fit was an aspect that most staff found appealing. One stated, "The best part about this school is my ability and privilege to create my own curriculum based on standards. I have taken such great pride in my work, more than I ever have before. The students can see how passionate I am about their learning and it helps them in their own success in the classroom." Staff organized well-received reading and math nights and other activities for parents and students.

The school was in the process of implementing processes for student data analysis. A number of programs and processes were recently introduced and being utilized to inform and improve instruction. Training and PLC discussions regarding the use of Mastery Connect, IXL, Wonders, MAP, pacing guides, Lexiles, and DIBELS were occurring frequently, and staff were beginning to understand how these tools and related data could individualize and improve student learning.

Academically, there were bright spots in the data. Most notably, the school improved its state assessment scores for both elementary and middle school from 2018 to 2019, with the middle school improving its rating from good to excellent. South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) scores in sixth- and eighth-grade science, with one exception, were significantly higher than state averages since 2017. ELA scores on the South Carolina College-and Career-Ready (SC READY) assessments were above state averages in seventh and eighth grades in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The school established measurable improvement goals along with activities and strategies for achieving them. A "20/20 Initiative" was integrated into the instructional day to provide content that was aligned to the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards with an emphasis on math.

Continuous Improvement Process:

While the school collected and reviewed MAP, DIBELS, Lexiles, state assessment, and other data and grouped students based on these data three times annually, the team found no evidence that feedback and formative assessment data were systematically analyzed and routinely used to adjust instruction. Interview data indicated that administration was not actively involved in this process, and less than half of staff members indicated on the staff survey that school leaders held themselves accountable for student learning.

Observation and interview data revealed a lack of support for building staff capacity. The Diagnostic Review Team found no formal system for teacher hiring, onboarding, evaluation, or feedback, other than periodic informal observations and feedback from the transformation coach. Teachers met regularly in PLC meetings; however, school administration rarely attended or participated. Moreover, the team found that while some academic performance data were collected, no system was in place for effectively monitoring the effectiveness of instruction, congruency with state standards, and student performance. A curriculum coach was budgeted into the school's 2019-2020 improvement plan, yet this position was not filled. Administration indicated that they planned to hire this coach, but no timeline was provided. The transformation coach provided staff with a number of tools, resources, and strategies for improving teacher capacity. The Diagnostic Review Team felt these supports could be further leveraged by the addition of a curriculum coach and engagement of administration with teachers and the instructional process.

The school implemented new curriculum programs (e.g., Mastery Connect, Wonders, IXL) and provided some professional development at the beginning of the year. Interview data revealed, however, that little time was provided to align the new resources with instruction and state standards. Some staff felt they were not fully trained or equipped to use these resources effectively. A significant amount of money was budgeted for professional development in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. Staff interview data indicated a desire for additional training, yet administration provided little beyond what was offered prior to the start of school and through PLCs. Some staff members paid for professional development out of their own personal funds, while others received no response from administration when requests to attend trainings were made. Establishing a protocol for selecting research-based professional development aligned with state standards and assessments and facilitating staff attendance could engage and better equip staff to improve student learning.

While the school focused on communication with parents and board members, internal communication between administration and staff members needed improvement. Decisions that affected staff or the school day were often made with little or no advance notice. This decision-making process resulted in undue stress and, in some cases, loss of instructional time. The team found little evidence of intentional shared leadership or opportunities for input regarding decisions that affected staff and students. Surveys were developed but could be further leveraged and more frequently used to gain insights, input, and buy-in for school programs, initiatives, and goals.

Although adequate technology appeared to be available, the team found it was most frequently used by learners to access information or process documents. Learners rarely used digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning, or to communicate or collaborate with others during the learning process.

Finally, survey and interview data revealed that many students who were enrolled in the school faced a number of social and/or emotional issues, and many lacked opportunities to connect with other students. Hiring a guidance counselor could help address students' social and emotional needs and positively affect student academic achievement. The school offered very little in the way of extracurricular activities. The implementation of clubs, sports, or other opportunities could further engage students and positively affect the culture of the school.

Next Steps

The results of the Diagnostic Review provide the next step for guiding the improvement journey of the institution with their 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 Diagnostic Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on current improvement efforts and adapting and adjusting their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

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

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the Diagnostic 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.

Team Roster

Diagnostic Review Teams comprise professionals with varied backgrounds and professional experiences. All Lead Evaluators and Diagnostic Review Team members complete Cognia training and eleot® certification to provide knowledge and understanding of the Cognia tools and processes. The following professionals served on the Diagnostic Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Dan Costellow	Dr. Dan Costellow has 24 years of experience in the Warren County Public School District in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He was a high school teacher for 15 years before becoming an administrator in 2010 at the middle school level and principal in 2014 at Rich Pond Elementary. His school was recognized by the United States Department of Education in 2017 as a National Blue Ribbon School. Dr. Costellow serves as a mentor and resource to new principals in his district. He also serves as a Lead Evaluator for Cognia Diagnostic Reviews.
Stephanie Gregg	Stephanie Gregg currently serves as a transformation coach for the South Carolina State Department of Education. In this role, she serves as a liaison for the department of education and supports Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools through coaching administration, leadership teams, and teachers with implementing structures and evidence-based strategies. She has 17 years of experience including elementary and secondary assistant principal, secondary instructional literacy coach, and elementary and secondary teacher.
Ashton Jones	Ashton Jones has 10 years of experience as an educator ranging from the elementary to the collegiate level. She is currently an assistant principal at an elementary school in Columbia, South Carolina. In that position, she supervises all classified staff and provides supervision and support to teachers and students in grades 2-5. Mrs. Jones also serves as the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) site coordinator, Title I administrator, and language immersion administrator.

Addenda

Student Performance Data

Percentage of students meeting benchmark of "Meets and Exceeds" on South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY) by grade level (2018-2019, 2017-2018, 2016-2017)

Grade	2018-2019				2017-2018				2016-2017			
	ELA School	ELA State	Math School	Math State	ELA School	ELA State	Math School	Math State	ELA School	ELA State	Math School	Math State
3	35.7	49.7	42.9	57.7	47.1	45.2	47.1	55.7	50.0	42.1	62.5	52.5
4	41.2	51.2	35.3	50.5	35.3	43.9	5.9	48.1	35.7	40.9	14.2	46.4
5	11.1	41.0	16.7	45.4	15.4	38.9	15.4	45.2	38.9	38.3	33.4	40.0
6	25.0	41.0	25.0	43.9	47.1	39.9	23.5	42.6	35.7	39.7	42.8	41.5
7	57.9	44.0	36.8	35.3	43.8	40.1	56.3	34.9	33.3	36.4	33.4	33.3
8	50.0	44.6	28.6	36.6	70.6	39.2	29.4	36.6	33.3	40.1	33.3	34.5

Percentages of students meeting grade-level standards at the school on the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) by grade level (2018-2019, 2017-2018, 2016-2017)

	Grade 4			Grade 5			Grade 6			Grade 7			Grade 8		
	2019	2018	2017	2019	2018	2017	2019	2018	2017	2019	2018	2017	2019	2018	2017
Science	23.5	17.6	35.7	■	■	■	37.5	56.3	57.1	■	■	■	57.1	70.6	66.7
State Avg. Science	52.0	49.8	48.4	■	■	■	47.2	47.7	48.0	■	■	■	47.4	48.7	49.5
Social Studies	■	■	■	44.4	69.2	66.7	■	■	■	63.2	75.0	66.7	■	■	■
State Avg. SS	■	■	■	70.1	69.9	70.9	■	■	■	64.8	66.4	63.5	■	■	■

Schedule

Sunday, March 8, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
4:00 p.m.	Brief Team Meeting	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members
5:00 p.m. - 5:45 p.m.	Principal Presentation	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members
5:45 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #1	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Monday, March 9, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
7:45 a.m.	Team arrives at school	School Office	Diagnostic Review Team Members
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Interviews / Classroom Observations / Stakeholder Interviews / Artifact Review	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Team returns to hotel		
5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #2	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
7:45 a.m.	Team arrives at school	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Interviews / Classroom Observations / Stakeholder Interviews / Artifact Review	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Team returns to hotel		
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #3	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Final Team Work Session	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members