

# Cognia Diagnostic Review Report

**Results for: Clinton Middle School**

**February 23-26, 2020**

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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	2
Building-Level Administrators	4
Professional Support Staff (e.g., Counselor, Media Specialist, Technology Coordinator)	6
Certified Staff	34
Noncertified Staff	11
Students	81
Parents	6
Total	144



# 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.	Insufficient
1.9	The institution provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	Insufficient
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.	Insufficient
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.	Insufficient
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Insufficient
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.

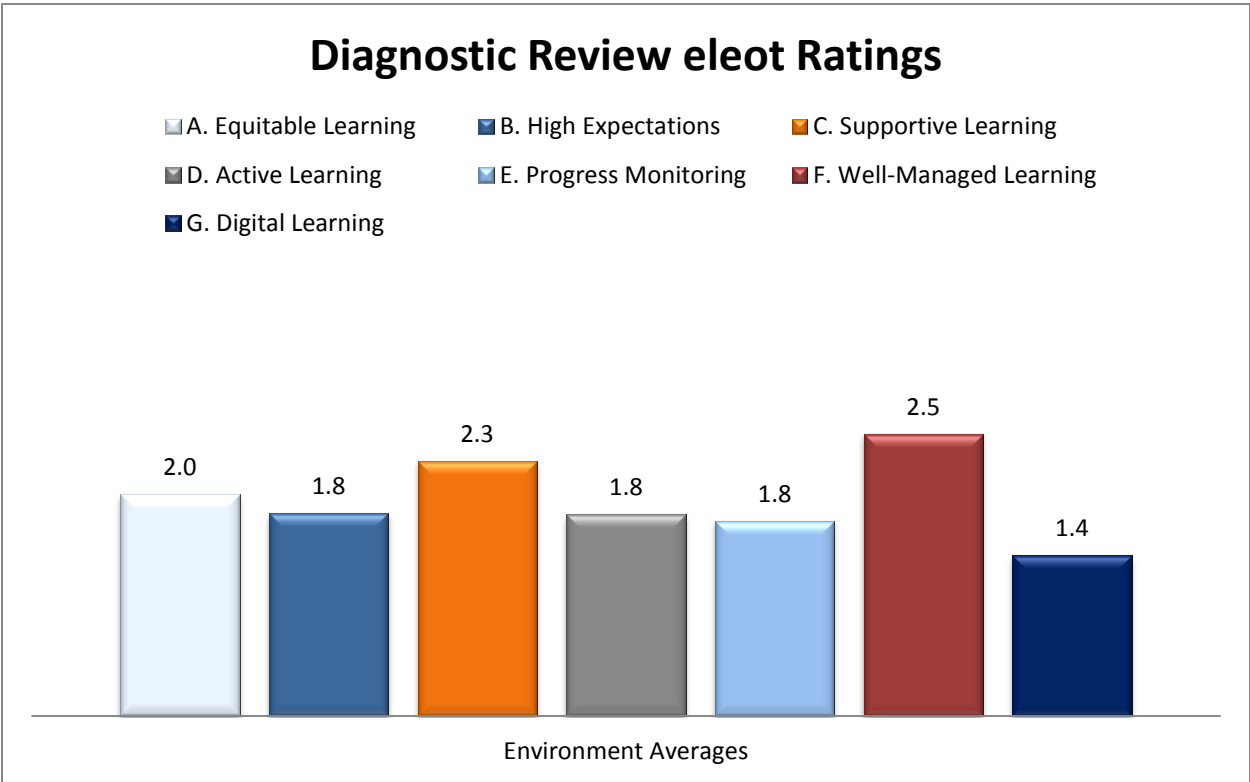
Resource Capacity Essential Standards		Rating
3.1	The institution plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the institution's effectiveness.	Initiating
3.2	The institution's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.	Insufficient
3.4	The institution attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the institution's purpose and direction.	Insufficient
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.	Initiating
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 29 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.



A. Equitable Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
A1	1.5	Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs.	62%	24%	14%	0%
A2	2.2	Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support.	17%	48%	28%	7%
A3	2.7	Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner.	7%	28%	55%	10%
A4	1.6	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.	55%	38%	3%	3%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			2.0			

B. High Expectations Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
B1	1.6	Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher.	52%	41%	7%	0%
B2	2.1	Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable.	14%	69%	14%	3%
B3	1.6	Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work.	55%	31%	14%	0%
B4	1.9	Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing).	24%	66%	3%	7%
B5	2.0	Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning.	21%	62%	14%	3%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			1.8			



C. Supportive Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
C1	2.1	Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful.	24%	52%	17%	7%
C2	2.1	Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback).	28%	41%	24%	7%
C3	2.4	Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers, and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks.	17%	38%	28%	17%
C4	2.6	Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher.	7%	38%	45%	10%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			2.3			

D. Active Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
D1	1.8	Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and teacher predominate.	31%	59%	10%	0%
D2	1.7	Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences.	48%	41%	7%	3%
D3	2.2	Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities.	14%	59%	24%	3%
D4	1.7	Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments.	48%	38%	14%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			1.8			

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.	62%	34%	3%	0%
E2	2.1	Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work.	14%	66%	17%	3%
E3	2.0	Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content.	14%	69%	17%	0%
E4	1.5	Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed.	59%	34%	7%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			1.8			

F. Well-Managed Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
F1	2.7	Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other.	3%	31%	55%	10%
F2	2.5	Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others.	17%	31%	38%	14%
F3	2.4	Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another.	17%	31%	41%	10%
F4	2.5	Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions.	7%	45%	38%	10%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			2.5			

G. Digital Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
G1	1.7	Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning.	59%	17%	21%	3%
G2	1.5	Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.	72%	10%	10%	7%
G3	1.1	Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning.	90%	7%	3%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		1.4				

## eleot Narrative

The Diagnostic Review Team conducted 29 classroom observations in core content classes at Clinton Middle School. In addition, the team also conducted informal observations in classrooms and common areas. Collectively, the data revealed important information about the seven learning environments. The overall ratings for the learning environments, on a four-point scale, ranged from a low of 1.4 for the Digital Learning Environment to a high of 2.5 for the Well-Managed Learning Environment.

The two highest-scoring items were found in the Equitable and Well-Managed Learning Environments. In 65 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that learners “are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner” (A3) and “speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other” (F1). The next-highest-scoring indicator was found in the Supportive Learning Environment. It was evident/very evident in 55 percent of classrooms that “Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher” (C4). Additionally, it was evident/very evident in 52 percent of classrooms that “Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others” (F2). Interview data revealed that systems and procedures were initiated during the school year to strengthen students’ understanding of behavioral expectations.

The Digital Learning Environment earned an overall rating of 1.4, making it the lowest-rated learning environment. The school had an abundance of technology, yet it was evident/very evident in three percent of classrooms that “Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning” (G3). Additionally, it was evident/very evident in 17 percent of classrooms that “Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning” (G2). The availability of technology for all students and the low scores within this learning environment provide an opportunity to leverage student use of technology to increase engagement in rigorous instructional activities. Student engagement could be increased through in-depth research and problem-solving with the use of technology. The underuse of available devices presented a professional development opportunity for teachers to integrate digital learning into core instruction in order to increase student engagement.

Observation data from the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment indicated the need for students to become more self-directed in their learning and in monitoring their progress. It was evident/very

evident in three percent of classrooms that “Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored” (E1). Furthermore, it was evident/very evident in seven percent of classrooms that “Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed” (E4). When students were asked to explain how their work was assessed, many students pointed to their grades as indicators of learning. For example, one student said, “I know when I get my report card.” The team suggests the school use these findings to improve professional practices and student learning. Students need feedback and direction to fully understand the monitoring process.

The team observed different levels of understanding and implementation of differentiated instruction. The primary mode of instructional delivery was whole group with all students working on the same assignment. It was evident/very evident in 14 percent of classrooms that “Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs” (A1). These results provide opportunities to leverage for increased student achievement.

The High Expectations Learning Environment received a rating of 1.8. Practices in this Learning Environment emerged as areas of concern for the team. It was evident/very evident in seven percent of classrooms, for example, that “Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher” (B1). It was evident/very evident in 10 percent of classrooms that “Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)” (B4). It was evident/very evident in 17 percent of classrooms that learners “take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning” (B5) and “engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable” (B2).

# 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

Identify and implement with fidelity a curriculum that aligns with state standards for all content areas and ensures high expectations that meet the needs of individual learners. Establish and monitor instructional expectations (e.g., use of data, rigor, differentiation) to ensure academic growth. As part of the process, design and implement a professional development plan that specifically ensures teachers have the tools to effectively implement the curriculum. (Standard 2.5)

#### **Evidence:**

##### **Student Performance Data:**

The student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, revealed that the percentages of students in sixth through eighth grades at Clinton Middle School who met or exceeded benchmarks on the South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY) in English language arts (ELA) were below the state averages in 2018-2019. In 2018-2019, the percentages of seventh- and eighth-grade students who met or exceeded benchmarks on the SC READY in math were below the state averages, while sixth-grade students performed above the state average. The percentages of student in sixth through eighth grades who met or exceeded benchmarks on the SC READY in ELA and math in 2017-2018 were below the state averages. In 2016-2017, the percentages of seventh- and eighth-grade students who met or exceeded benchmarks on the SC READY in ELA were below the state averages, while sixth-grade students performed slightly above the state average. The percentage of students in sixth through eighth grades who met or exceeded benchmarks on the SC READY in math were below the state averages in 2016-2017. Math scores on the SC READY decreased over a three-year time period. Students in sixth-grade math scored 33.6 percent in 2017-2018; however, scores fell to 27.4 percent for these same students in seventh grade in 2018-2019 and to 17.6 percent when these students were in eighth grade in 2018-2019. On the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS), students performed below the state average in science and social studies in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

##### **Classroom Observation Data:**

Classroom observation data, as detailed previously in this report, revealed that few students engaged in instructional activities that were rigorous and/or aligned with the South Carolina Academic Standards. In seven 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). In 17 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable” (B2). In 14 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work” (B3). Students who “engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)” (B4) were evident/very evident in 10 percent of classrooms. In 17 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning” (B5).

The Diagnostic Review Team observed few students asking questions. One student stated, “I feel safe asking questions from some teachers, but not others.” In three percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that



Learners monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored” (E1). Students who “receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work” (E2) were evident/very evident in 20 percent of classrooms. Classroom observation data revealed that the practice of progress monitoring and providing timely and helpful feedback were infrequently implemented. In 17 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content” (E3). Students who “understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed” (E4) were evident/very evident in seven percent of classrooms.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Data:**

Interview data revealed that few teachers were consistently implementing differentiated and/or small-group instruction in their classrooms. During an interview session, one stakeholder stated that differentiation was “Something that I, along with a lot of other staff members, could be better at.” Classroom observation data revealed a limited use of rigorous instruction aligned to the South Carolina Academic Standards or of differentiation strategies. In addition, during the overview presentation to the Diagnostic Review Team, the principal explained that the focus of instruction included Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies, balanced literacy, and balanced math. However, few classrooms implemented AVID and/or balanced literacy and math strategies.

Although the team found evidence of an administrative walkthrough schedule and walkthrough feedback, many teachers indicated that classroom visits occurred but were short in duration and that the feedback was often superficial. Many teachers could not confirm that classroom walkthroughs provided consistent quality feedback designed to improve the instructional process.

Most teachers, professional support staff, and leaders indicated that professional development opportunities were available to instructional staff. Artifacts such as the School Renewal Plan and the 2019-2020 Professional Development Calendar served to document workshop offerings. Conversely, classroom observations disclosed that limited professional development content was applied during classroom instruction.

#### **Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:**

A review of stakeholder perception data suggested that parents, staff members, and students were not satisfied with the curriculum or the process used to revise the curriculum related to high expectations and preparing students for the next level. Survey data revealed that 64 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All teachers in our school use a process to inform students of their learning expectations and standards of performance” (E5). Sixty-seven percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “My child knows the expectations for learning in all classes” (E10). Fifty-six percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “All teachers in our school provide students with specific and timely feedback about their learning” (E6).

Stakeholder survey results revealed parents and staff members lacked confidence in the school’s ability to collect, analyze, and use data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum and drive revisions to the curriculum to meet the learning needs of students. Sixty-two percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All teachers in our school use multiple types of assessments to modify instruction and to revise the curriculum” (E7). Sixty-four percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that “My child is given multiple assessments to measure his/her understanding of what was taught” (E12). Forty-nine percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All of my child’s teachers provide an equitable curriculum that meets his/her learning needs” (E1). While 70 percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that “My school provides me with a challenging curriculum and learning experiences” (E2), 68 percent agreed/strongly agreed that “In my school, high-quality education is offered” (C3). Seventy percent of students agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “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). Fifty-nine percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “In our school, challenging curriculum and learning experiences provide equity for all students in the development of learning, thinking, and life skills” (E11). Survey results implied that a significant portion of stakeholders were unable to



confirm the existence of the favorable practices and systems required to increase student achievement. The absence of stakeholder agreement clearly signals a leverage point for improvement.

**Documents and Artifacts:**

A review of documents and artifacts revealed a lack of evidence supporting the need for the implementation of high-yield instructional strategies. A review of the School Renewal Plan, 2019-2020 Priority School Progress Monitoring Tool, principal overview for the Diagnostic Review Team PowerPoint, 2019-2020 Professional Development Calendar, Instructional Data Gathering document, Teacher Data Gather document, and Walkthrough Feedback document disclosed an inconsistent understanding and application of systems and processes that monitored high expectations and ensured students were prepared for the next level. Classroom observation and interview data supported the need for systemic processes that are communicated to all stakeholders.

## Improvement Priority #2

Develop, implement, and monitor a systemic process to gather, analyze, and use multiple forms of formative and summative data that lead to verifiable improvement of student achievement and behavior. Provide professional development that builds capacity for data-driven instruction. (Standard 2.11)

### **Evidence:**

#### **Student Performance Data:**

Student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, showed that the school did not successfully develop or implement processes and procedures to significantly improve instructional practices and thereby ensure students learn at high levels. The percentage of students at the school who met the grade-level standards on the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) in 2018-2019, 2017-2018, and 2016-2017 was below the state average in all content areas and grade levels. Student performance data were among those data used to determine Improvement Priority 2.

#### **Stakeholder Interview Data:**

Stakeholder interview data, as previously detailed, revealed that most teachers identified the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment results as the tool most often used to make instructional decisions and set up groups to support the instructional process for students. The processes used to collect and analyze formative and summative data did not yield significant improvements in student achievement. Multiple sources of data were not effectively collected and analyzed to augment instruction. Student achievement data and classroom observation data validated these findings. However, during stakeholder interviews, students and parents were asked if they felt that learners at Clinton Middle School were prepared for the next level. Many stakeholders responded “yes.” Parent, staff member, and student survey data did not align with student and parent interview data.

Behavioral and academic interventions were an area of concern for the Diagnostic Review Team. Few teachers discussed the use of interventions, the school’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Response to Intervention (RtI) process, or how the Three-Tiered Instructional Intervention Model operated at the school. During interviews, a few stakeholders discussed how intervention services were provided by an interventionist and teachers in the Academic Support classes at the school. One stakeholder indicated that names of students were submitted for services, but no one indicated the status of the recommended students. The school provided documentation of data collection activities for the MTSS/RtI process. The Tier 3 RtI document provided scores for 20 students in sixth through eighth grades, listing results of MAP assessments administered in the fall and spring of a previous school year. A review of page 17 of the 2019-2020 Clinton Middle School Faculty Handbook, under the section for curriculum and instruction, stated that a weekly RtI meeting occurred on Wednesdays during each teacher’s first planning period of the day. When asked, school leaders gave no additional information about the process. Some school leaders shared with the team that the formal process for collecting, monitoring, and using data was not being implemented at that time. Interview data indicated that the principal was not aware of the MTSS/RtI process. Still, the school had an interventionist that provided pull-out services to targeted students in the start of the school year. However, the new principal changed it to a push-in model upon his arrival but shared with the team that he might return to the pull-out format.

The school schedule included classes by a group of teachers providing Academic Support Services to targeted students. In addition, an indoor suspension option (ISS) existed at the school along with a 45-day program for students to address serious or persistent behavioral infractions. It was evident to the team that intervention services were being provided to address academic and/or behavioral needs, but services were disjointed and not consistently implemented. Student data were not being collected, analyzed, or used to evaluate system successes, and communication regarding the available services for students was sporadic.

During interviews all stakeholders mentioned, to varying degrees, that student behavior was a concern at the school, but it had improved since the arrival of the new principal in November. There was a perception among



parents and students that behavioral issues were addressed inconsistently and differently based on the staff member tackling the issue or concern. School leaders shared with the team that there was no consistent mechanism or protocol for addressing behavioral issues. Many teachers indicated that earlier in the school year the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system was initiated to establish the behavioral supports and social culture needed for all students to achieve social, emotional, and academic success but that the program was discontinued by school leaders.

#### **Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:**

The stakeholder perception data results suggested that parents, staff members, and students were not satisfied with the school's instructional component and its impact on student achievement. For example, 51 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, "All teachers in our school monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment based on data from student assessments and examination of professional practice" (E1). Sixty-two percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "All teachers in our school use multiple types of assessments to modify instruction and to revise the curriculum" (E7). Sixty percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, "In our school, all staff members use student data to address the unique learning needs of all students" (E14). Forty-nine 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).

Thirty-six percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my child's teachers keep me informed regularly of how my child is being graded" (E7). Sixty-four percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that "My child is given multiple assessments to measure his/her understanding of what was taught" (E12). Forty-six percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, "My child has administrators and teachers that monitor and inform me of his/her learning progress" (G3).

Sixty-eight percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my teachers provide me with information about my learning and grades" (E12). Fifty-three percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my teachers keep my family informed of my academic progress" (E13). The absence of stakeholder agreement clearly signals a leverage point for improvement.

#### **Documents and Artifacts:**

A review of documents and artifacts, such as the Test Breakdown, MAP Conference Data, and MAP Predictions for SC Ready, provided minimal evidence that data were used to inform instruction. Limited evidence was found or provided to the team indicating that multiple forms of formative and summative assessment data were used consistently to monitor systems, processes, and programs for quality and direct impact to student achievement. Teacher interview data supported the findings by the team that data were not used to drive instruction. Additionally, stakeholder interviews and classroom observations validated the limited use of exemplars, rubrics, higher-level questioning, and common grade-level assessments. One teacher commented during stakeholder interviews, "Common assessments would be good, but we don't use them on a week-to-week or month-to-month basis." Another teacher commented that some grade-level team members did collaborate on occasion to create common grade-level assessments.

During the principal overview presentation, school leadership shared MAP fall and winter data, but no evidence was provided or discussed of protocols or processes for how data results were used to drive instruction based on the needs of students. While Fountas and Pinnell was listed as a formative assessment, no evidence was discussed to show how the gathering and analyzing of data and use of findings affected instructional processes.

# 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:

School leaders and staff members demonstrated a commitment to the students at Clinton Middle School. Students had the opportunity to participate in related arts classes such as robotics, Gear Up, chorus, band, and several technology offerings. Stakeholder interview data indicated that parents supported the school. Parents expressed that their children were receiving a good education and were prepared for the next grade level. Several parents indicated that their children were in honors classes. Parents reported that they felt welcomed at the school. In addition, they perceived that their children's teachers were concerned about students. Parents readily described how they were able to communicate with school staff, citing a variety of venues including notes, emails, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and school activities.

Stakeholder interview data revealed that the principal, hired on November 18, 2019, had established a sense of order since coming to the school. Many teachers expressed that prior to his arrival at the school they had been overwhelmed by the number of initiatives. Interview data indicated that some staff members were ready to resign but decided to stay when the change in leadership was announced. During the principal overview presentation, he shared results of a district-administered survey. Data from it showed that 23 percent of teachers and staff members agreed/mostly agreed with the statement, "The level of teacher and staff morale is high at my school." Stakeholder interview data divulged that most staff members felt that the climate and culture at the school improved with the arrival of the new principal in November.

During his initial presentation and interview, the principal shared his areas of focus for the rest of the school year: relationships, leadership, collective leadership, academics, and celebrations. The principal said that he was charged by district leadership with the task of building relationships with all stakeholders as well as being visible. Students and teachers spoke of the many different incentive programs implemented in the last few months designed to recognize student academic and behavioral improvements. The team observed the implementation of the incentive programs throughout the school. Additionally, several students commented during formal and informal conversations with team members about the difference the new principal made to the climate in the school, mentioning the incentive programs and the morning announcements that now included the Pledge of Allegiance, a moment of silent meditation, and a motivational thought for the day.

## Continuous Improvement Process:

Classroom observation, survey, and stakeholder interview data and a review of documents/artifacts suggested that school leaders and staff members did not successfully establish an effective continuous improvement process. During stakeholder interviews, most teachers discussed the use of MAP data to analyze student needs and identify student groups, but few teachers explained how data were used for the ongoing modification of



instruction. Observation data reflected the need for systems and processes to accurately collect, analyze, and use multiple sources of formative and summative data that drive instruction and meet the learning needs of students. The ongoing and effective use of data- and results-driven decision-making by school leaders and teachers was not consistently evident in organizational structures or in instructional practices.

The team agreed that realignment of curriculum and instructional practices were areas in need of improvement for the school. A review of documents, such as the School Renewal Plan, Priority School Progress Monitoring Tool 2019-2020, and the school's Professional Development Calendar, included professional development offerings for teachers designed to enhance student achievement. The offerings included balanced literacy, balanced math/Tabor Rotations, AVID Strategies, unpacking the South Carolina State Standards, conferencing, differentiation, data analysis, and progress monitoring. Interview data indicated that staff members participated in multiple professional development sessions. Many teachers shared that in the beginning of the school year they participated in professional learning community (PLC) meetings up to four times per week during one of their two daily planning periods and in a weekly professional development session or faculty meeting after school. The PLC meetings were not teacher-led and did not follow PLC protocols. A few staff members reported that they were overwhelmed by so many initiatives. When the school's principal left in October, professional development and most initiatives stopped. Interview data revealed that once the new principal started, professional development activities eventually returned and were reduced to one PLC meeting by grade level and a professional development session or faculty meeting weekly.

The Diagnostic Review Team was concerned by eleot observation data that indicated that in 14 percent of classrooms it was evident/very evident that students “engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs” (A1). The High Expectations, Active Learning, and Progress Monitoring Learning Environments each scored an overall rating of 1.8 on the four-point scale. In addition, the team did not observe any small-group, teacher-led instructional practices associated with balanced literacy or math.

School leaders are encouraged to implement and monitor teacher-led systems to accurately collect, analyze, and use data to drive instruction that meets the different learning needs of students. The Diagnostic Review Team suggests the school work to create a challenging curriculum that engages students in discussions and/or tasks that require the use of higher-order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, and synthesizing). Leaders and instructional staff are encouraged to analyze and use multiple sources of data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching and learning. This will ensure that multiple sources of data are used systematically to revise instruction on an ongoing basis to meet the instructional needs of all learners.

## 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
<b>Dr. Maria P. de Armas</b>	Dr. Maria P. de Armas serves as a consultant working with schools, educational entities, and Cognia (Lead Evaluator for Diagnostic Reviews). During her 40-year career as a K-12 educator, administrator, and consultant, she was a classroom teacher (grades 1-8), a bilingual teacher, and an English as a second language teacher in urban settings in New Jersey and Florida. Her administrative experiences include supervising the implementation of curriculum at the district and region levels, overseeing the operations of schools and principals within feeder patterns, creating professional development programs for teachers and administrators, writing and supervising federal grants targeting special populations, facilitating the development and implementation of school improvement plans, supporting schools designated as in need of improvement by the district, and building teacher capacity in the identification of underrepresented students for gifted and advanced academic programs. She was the Administrative Director of Advanced Academics and Gifted Programs, Region Administrative Director, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Support and Assistant Superintendent for Academics in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.
<b>Dr. Marisel Elias-Miranda</b>	Dr. Marisel Elías-Miranda serves as an adjunct professor for International Doctoral level programs in Educational and Organizational Leadership and serves as an education consultant. Dr. Elías-Miranda's professional career spans 39 years in the field of education in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. She is specialized in the fields of elementary, early childhood education, and organizational and educational leadership. She was a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and district administrative director for the Office of Early Childhood Programs in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. She was a lead principal responsible for regional school improvement program reviews. During her tenure as a district administrative director, she was responsible for the analysis of school readiness data and review of improvement plans for school readiness programs.
<b>Sabrina Goff-Mack</b>	Sabrina Goff-Mack currently works as a principal for Georgetown County School District. Her educational career spans 29 years. She began her career as a teacher at Browns Ferry Elementary. She was afforded the opportunity to serve as a curriculum specialist at Sampit Elementary. As a curriculum specialist, her responsibilities included designing and facilitating professional development, coaching and mentoring teachers, and supervising instructional programs and activities. While serving as a member of the leadership team at Sampit, the school was identified as a National Blue-Ribbon school in 2005. She has supported the district's mission by serving as an Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Teaching (ADEPT) Evaluator, ADEPT Mentor Trainer, and district recruiter.
<b>Caley Jones</b>	Caley Jones currently works at a school within the Charleston County School District as a Transformational Coach for the South Carolina Department of Education. She coordinates and supports the leadership and staff at the school through the continuous improvement process to promote equity and raise student achievement. Through her coaching and leadership, her goal is to engage K-8 teachers in a process of learning through collaboration, goal setting, and feedback. Ms. Jones has presented, coached, and trained in several districts around the country in building learner-centered cultures that promote student growth and achievement for all. She teaches courses as an adjunct at Saint Joseph's College of Maine, Educational Leadership Master's program.

<b>Dr. Sharolyn Simmons</b>	<p>Dr. Sharolyn Simmons is a native of Kingstree, South Carolina. She began her educational career at Felton Laboratory School in Orangeburg, SC, where she was a fourth-grade teacher. She was awarded teacher of the year in her third year of teaching and wrote a 21st century grant to help students at her school. She was offered the opportunity to work as the senior extension director for the federal government. This position allowed Dr. Simmons to lead more than 100 staff members and manage a 50 million dollar budget to offer before school, afterschool, and summer programs to more than 30,000 elementary and middle school students. Dr. Simmons is now the Title I Facilitator for Greenville County School. She manages the Title I budget at the district to meet the needs of Greenville County's underserved students and communities.</p>
<b>Jillian Stroud</b>	<p>Jillian Stroud has worked with students in rural, urban, and suburban settings from prekindergarten to fifth grade. She currently serves as a Transformation Coach for the South Carolina Department of Education. In this role, she provides guidance, support, and coaching for schools in building leadership capacity to influence teaching and learning that will positively affect student outcomes. She assists in instructional support and in professional learning and efficacy. Mrs. Stroud has served as a literacy coach, providing coaching to faculty and administration to improve student achievement. She has presented at various conferences and has facilitated school-based professional development. Mrs. Stroud has worked on curriculum alignment, assessment, and leadership teams throughout her career.</p>

# Addenda

## Student Performance Data

**Percentages 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)**

2018-2019					2017-2018				2016-2017			
Grade	ELA School (%)	ELA State (%)	Math School (%)	Math State (%)	ELA School (%)	ELA State (%)	Math School (%)	Math State (%)	ELA School (%)	ELA State (%)	Math School (%)	Math State (%)
6	31.4	41.0	46.9	43.9	30.0	39.9	40.6	42.6	41.0	39.7	33.6	41.5
7	29.7	44.0	29.7	35.3	21.0	40.1	27.4	34.9	24.5	36.4	24.5	33.3
8	36.6	44.6	17.6	36.6	23.3	39.2	15.5	36.6	30.8	40.1	16.2	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)**

Content Area	Grade 6			Grade 7			Grade 8		
	2019 (%)	2018 (%)	2017 (%)	2019 (%)	2018 (%)	2017 (%)	2019 (%)	2018 (%)	2017 (%)
Science	35.0	44.9	39.4				33.3	35.2	46.2
State Avg. Science	47.2	47.7	48.0				47.4	48.7	49.5
Social Studies				52.1	55.3	57.1			
State Avg. SS				64.8	66.4	63.5			

# Schedule

## Sunday, February 23, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
4:00 p.m.	Brief Team Meeting	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:30 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.	Principal Presentation	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members and Principal Scott
5:15 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #1	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

## Monday, February 24, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
7:15 a.m.	Team arrives at school	School Office	Diagnostic Review Team Members
7:40 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		Diagnostic Review Team Members
5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #2	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

## Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
7:30 a.m.	Team arrives at school	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members
7:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Interviews/Classroom Observations/Stakeholder Interviews/Artifact Review	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members
3:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Parent Group Interview	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Team returns to hotel		Diagnostic Review Team Members
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #3	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

## Wednesday, February 26, 2020

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