Cognia Diagnostic Review Report

Results for: Cyber Academy of South Carolina

Date: March 15–18, 2021

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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
Governing Board Members	2
Charter Authorizer Representatives	3
Building-Level Administrators	2
Professional Support Staff (e.g., Counselor, Media Specialist, Technology Coordinator)	6
Certified Staff	6
Noncertified Staff	5
Students	12
Parents	13
Total	50

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.	Initiating
1.3	The institution engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.	Initiating
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.	Impacting
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	Improving
1.7	Leaders implement operational process and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.	Insufficient
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
1.11	Leaders utilize ethical marketing and communication processes.	Improving

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.	Initiating
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
2.6	The institution implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.	Insufficient
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the institution's learning expectations.	Initiating
2.9	The institution implements, evaluates, and monitors processes to identify and address the specialized social, emotional, developmental, and academic needs of students.	Improving
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Improving
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.	Initiating
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.	Improving
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
3.9	The institution provides an effective Learning Management System (LMS).	Improving
3.10	The institution's technology infrastructure supports teaching, learning, and operational effectiveness.	Initiating

Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning

The Diagnostic Review Team used the Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning, which provides a format for reviewing five major key areas of the digital environment: Instructional Design, Learning Engagement, Platforms and Technologies, Assessment for Learning, and the Digital Learning Community. The tool provided the contextual framework for the team in conducting classroom observations, whether synchronously or asynchronously, and established a common language for team discussion. Additionally, these five areas (with their accompanying indicators) provided support for the team as they interviewed leaders, teachers, and students about the digital learning environment of your school.

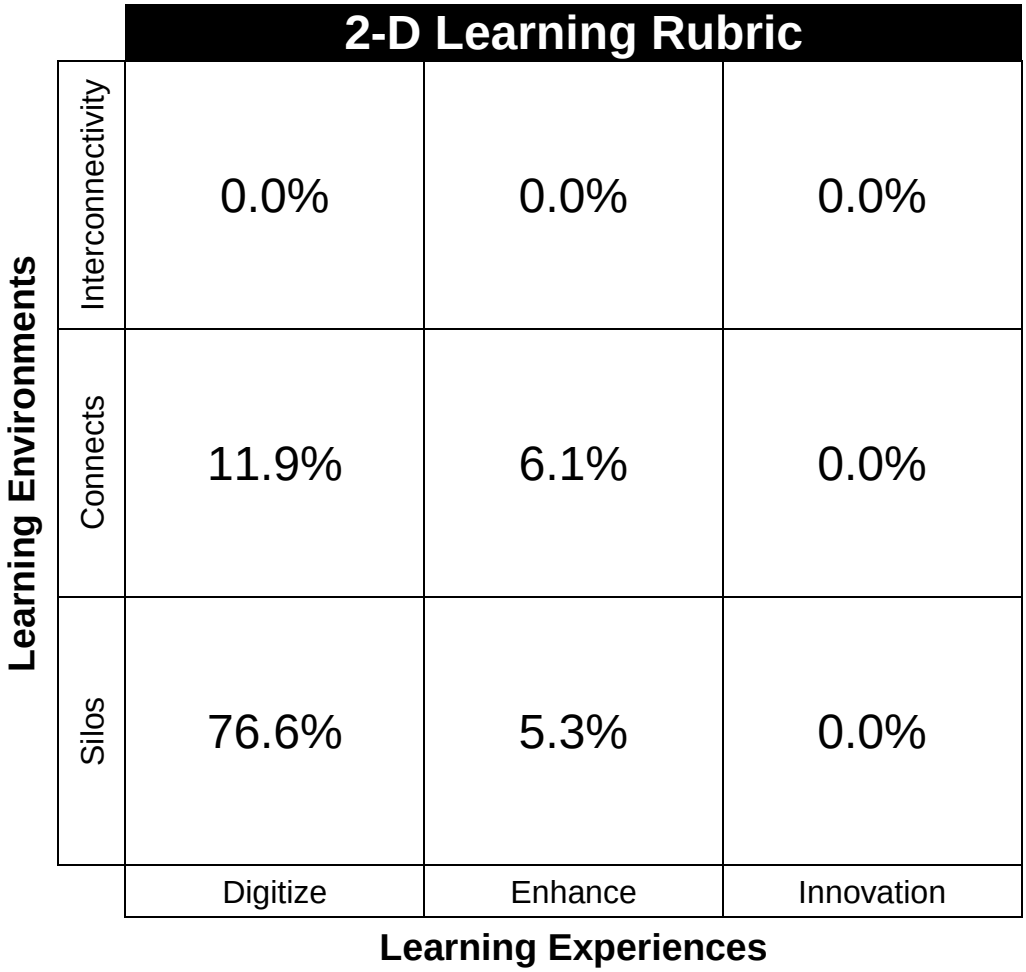
The 2-D Learning Rubric focuses on the instructional delivery with the key areas from a two-dimensional (2D) perspective that measures the Learning Environments and Learning Experiences. The 2-D Learning Rubric identifies the percentage of scores that fall into nine possible cells and will serve as a baseline for the educational provider's continuous improvement journey. The ratings and averages are in support of the findings of the Diagnostic Review Team. The results of the observation tool will also be posted in Workspace for additional access. The Learning Experiences are categorized as Digitize, Enhance, and Innovation. Learning Environments are categorized as Silos, Connects, and Interconnectivity. The relationship between the experience and the environment is then rated.

These data support the team's findings and your own review of your program. Scores derived from these observations have no mathematical impact on the final ratings of any of the Standards. They, in fact, support the areas of strength and needs for improvement identified in this report.

Elementary and High School Combined Observation Data

Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning						Institution	Cognia Average
Instructional Design: Instruction is designed to promote interactive engagement with personalized academic content.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.32**	***2.53***
A1 Learners have access to appropriately challenging curriculum (providing rigor, relevance, and fostering positive relationships).	6%	57%	33%	4%	0%	2.65	***2.92***
A2 Learners engage in a competency-based curriculum.	8%	41%	20%	31%	0%	2.27	***2.80***
A3 Instructional design incorporates evidence-based strategies appropriate for digital learning environments.	6%	53%	33%	8%	0%	2.57	***2.56***
A4 Instruction is designed to encourage collaboration with peers and mentors in meeting high learning expectations.	8%	14%	39%	35%	4%	1.96	***1.97***
A5 Learners demonstrate work that reflects the high expectations of the instructional design.	8%	22%	45%	22%	2%	2.17	***2.41***
Learning Engagement: Dynamic learning environments support interactive engagement to create personalized learning experiences.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**1.99**	***2.24***
B1 The mentors and learners collaborate on personalized learning experiences that provide equity in learner voice and choice (e.g., competencies, rigor, time, place, and pace).	6%	18%	35%	37%	4%	1.94	***2.31***
B2 Learners engage in rigorous learning experiences, including interaction between peers and mentors and the use of higher-order thinking skills.	4%	8%	59%	24%	4%	1.91	***2.12***
B3 Learner interactions with peers, mentors, and the academic content permeate the digital environment.	6%	20%	57%	12%	4%	2.21	***2.09***
B4 Learners make connections from the digital learning environment to real-life experiences.	4%	18%	37%	37%	4%	1.89	***2.43***
Platforms and Technologies: Technology platforms are dynamic and enable innovative interactions between mentors and learners in support of personalized learning pathways.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.26**	***2.35***
C1 Learners have equal access to resources in a Learning Management System (LMS) or Content Management System (CMS) to enable classroom discussions, activities, digital tools, and support.	22%	63%	10%	2%	2%	3.08	***3.04***
C2 Learners use digital resources to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning.	6%	37%	47%	8%	2%	2.42	***2.50***

Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning						Institution	Cognia Average
C3 Learners use digital resources to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.	8%	12%	45%	31%	4%	1.98	*2.24*
C4 Learners use digital platforms to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning.	6%	41%	33%	18%	2%	2.35	*2.17*
C5 Learners and mentors engage in interactive digital platforms that have capacity to support new technologies (e.g., adaptive technology, technology-enhanced items, virtual reality, or augmented reality).	2%	0%	37%	53%	8%	1.47	*1.82*
Assessment for Learning: Assessment for learning promotes the development of learning goals, support and progress monitoring, and student ownership of the learning process.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**1.72**	*2.26*
D1 Learners engage in a process that includes goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection on learning with support from mentors.	0%	6%	35%	49%	10%	1.52	*2.18*
D2 Learners engage consistently in active communication (static and dynamic) with mentors about their learning goals.	2%	10%	45%	33%	10%	1.80	*2.30*
D3 Learners engage in the coaching process with their mentors in their progress toward learning goals.	4%	10%	37%	39%	10%	1.77	*2.20*
D4 Learners take responsibility in the creation and attainment of their learning goals.	0%	6%	24%	59%	10%	1.41	*2.17*
D5 Learners engage consistently in active feedback (static and dynamic) with mentors.	4%	14%	65%	12%	4%	2.11	*2.44*
Digital Learning Community: The community promotes positive interactions and relationships between and among learners and mentors.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.21**	*2.18*
E1 Learners are engaged in promoting digital citizenship and a culture of connectedness.	0%	33%	43%	20%	4%	2.13	*2.18*
E2 Learners communicate and interact respectfully with mentor(s) and each other.	16%	59%	12%	10%	2%	2.83	*2.65*
E3 Learners and mentors have opportunities to develop empathy and respect for personal and sociocultural differences among members within the community.	0%	8%	41%	41%	10%	1.64	*1.75*
E4 Learners and mentors have opportunities to build a sense of community by fostering positive relationships (peer to peer, peer to adult, adult to adult).	2%	31%	49%	12%	6%	2.24	*2.14*



Observation Data Narrative

The Diagnostic Review Team conducted 46 classroom observations in core content classes at the high school and elementary levels in synchronous and asynchronous digital learning environments.

Observation data revealed that most classrooms relied heavily on teacher-led, directive instruction with few accommodations to meet students' individual needs. Overall, students engaged in few opportunities for meaningful collaboration. The Diagnostic Review Team found little assessment to promote the development of learning goals, student ownership of the learning process, and use of digital platforms for innovative interactions and personalized learning pathways. Instructional Design received the highest overall rating of 2.32 on a four-point scale, and the lowest rating was Assessment for Learning, which earned a score of 1.72.

The team observed that Instructional Design was both a strength and a weakness. In 63 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Learners have access to appropriately challenging curriculum (providing rigor, relevance, and fostering positive relationships)" (A1). Increasing the rigor of the curriculum is an opportunity for growth. In 22 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Instruction is designed to encourage collaboration with peers and mentors in meeting high learning expectations" (A4). In 30 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Learners demonstrate work that reflects the high expectations of the instructional design" (A5).

Although small group class sessions were scheduled for personalized learning experiences, the team observed that Learning Engagement presented an opportunity for growth. For example, in 12 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners engage in rigorous learning experiences, including the interaction between peers and mentors and the use of higher-order thinking skills” (B2). In 22 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners make connections from the digital learning environment to the real-life experiences” (B4). In 24 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “The mentors and learners collaborate on personalized learning experiences that provide equity in learner voice and choice (e.g., competencies, rigor, time, place, and pace)” (B1). It was evident/highly evident that “Learner interactions with peers, mentors, and the academic content permeate the digital environment” (B3) in 26 percent of classrooms.

Synchronous and asynchronous classroom observations revealed that most classrooms relied heavily on teacher-led instruction. Students had few opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue with their teachers or collaborate with their peers. It was also noted that instruction did not promote higher-order critical thinking skills. For example, while teachers posed questions to students, the team found few questions required students to explain their rationale.

Assessment for Learning was also identified as an area of opportunity. In six percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that learners “engage in a process that includes goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection on learning with support from mentors” (D1) and “take responsibility in the creation and attainment of their learning goals” (D4). In 12 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners engage consistently in active communication (static and dynamic) with mentors about their learning goals” (D2). In 14 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners engage in the coaching process with their mentors in their progress toward learning goals” (D3). In 18 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners engage consistently in active feedback (static and dynamic) with mentors” (D5).

Platforms and Technologies emerged as both an area of strength and an opportunity to improve. It was evident/highly evident in 85 percent of classrooms that “Learners have equal access to resources in a Learning Management System (LMS) or Content Management System (CMS) to enable classroom discussions, activities, digital tools, and support (C1). In 20 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners use digital resources to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning” (C3). In two percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners and mentors engage in interactive digital platforms that have the capacity to support new technologies (e.g., adaptive technology, technology-enhanced items, virtual reality, or augmented reality)” (C5).

The Digital Learning Community also emerged as a strength. In 75 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners communicate and interact respectfully with mentor(s) and each other” (E2). However, in eight percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners and mentors have opportunities to develop empathy and respect for personal and sociocultural differences among members within the community” (E3).

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 continuous improvement processes to ensure that all internal and external stakeholder groups (i.e., parents, students, faculty and staff, community partners) are involved in the development and successful achievement of the institution's immediate goals to affect sustainable improvements in student performance. (Standard 1.8)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

Student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, indicates that developing and implementing a process for continuous improvement, including meaningful input from all stakeholders, is an area of opportunity. Elementary student performance on the fourth-grade South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) science and fifth-grade SCPASS social studies assessments decreased between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The team further noted that high school student performance on all end-of-course assessments except in English I decreased between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. Further, high school student performance on these assessments was below the state average in all content areas.

Classroom Observation Data:

In six percent of the classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that learners "engage in a process that includes goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection on learning with support from mentors" (D1) and "take responsibility in the creation and attainment of their learning goals" (D4). In 12 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Learners engage consistently in active communication (static and dynamic) with mentors about their learning goals" (D2). In 14 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Learners engage in the coaching process with their mentors in their progress toward learning goals" (D3). In 18 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Learners engage consistently in active feedback (static and dynamic) with mentors" (D5).

Stakeholder Interview Data:

Interviews with multiple stakeholder groups revealed that their participation in the continuous improvement process was limited to providing feedback on perception surveys. Parent interviews revealed that many surveys are administered throughout the school year, but they reported being unclear about how results were used to inform improvement goals or improvement planning. Interviews with multiple stakeholder groups (e.g., board members, parents, students, faculty, staff) also revealed a lack of awareness of the continuous improvement process or the schoolwide improvement goals.

Documents and Artifacts:

The principal's presentation slides revealed that the institution has not presented continuous improvement goals to the charter authorizer. The school documents revealed the absence of data protocols to monitor progress toward meeting improvement goals and a lack of stakeholder involvement in the continuous improvement

process. The school's Title One Survey document revealed that 30 percent of staff members and 40 percent of parents were not involved or aware of their ability to participate in the development of the Parent Compact.

Improvement Priority #2

Develop and implement a process to ensure that the curriculum and assessment framework is based on high expectations, prepares learners for their next levels, and clearly aligns to the South Carolina state standards. (Standard 2.6)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

As detailed in an addendum to this report and discussed in Improvement Priority 1, the student performance data were used to determine Improvement Priority 2.

Classroom Observation Data:

It was evident/highly evident in 63 percent of classrooms that "Learners have access to appropriately challenging curriculum" (A1). It was evident/highly evident in 49 percent of classrooms that "Learners engage in a competency-based curriculum" (A2). In 22 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Instruction is designed to encourage collaboration with peers and mentors in meeting high learning expectations" (A4). In 30 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that "Learners demonstrate work that reflects the high expectations of the instructional design" (A5).

Stakeholder Interview Data:

Faculty interviews revealed concerns about the curriculum's alignment and the absence of clear and consistent practices. Faculty and staff interviews revealed that the Online School (OLS) curriculum is not aligned with South Carolina College- and Career-Ready (SCCCR) content standards. Classroom teachers must incorporate SCCCR standards into their synchronous instruction and supplement with outside resources. Additionally, faculty are required to use USA Test Prep, Mastery Connect, the Renaissance STAR Assessment, and the Developmental Reading Assessment to measure student progress. Faculty and staff interviews also revealed that due to addressing the increase in student enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year, the team found that limited time existed for adjusting the OLS to ensure students address curriculum aligned to SCCCR.

Faculty and staff interview data also revealed inconsistent data analysis practices for making curriculum adjustments. Interview data showed that while data are collected and discussed, teachers often looked at different data (except the three times yearly benchmark assessments). The institution lacked expectations regarding the format and use of formative assessments. Faculty and staff interview data revealed no evidence of how data are used to influence instructional decisions aside from grouping students.

Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:

Perception survey data revealed that data is being used inconsistently to make decisions related to curriculum and instruction. Ninety-two percent of high school 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). Ninety-eight percent of high school staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school uses data to monitor student readiness and success at the next level" (G5). Eighty-two percent of high school 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, student teams, and peer coaching)" (E10).

Ninety-two percent of elementary staff members agreed/strongly agreed that "All teachers in our school monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment based on data from student assessments and examination of

professional practice” (E1). Ninety-five percent of elementary staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “All teachers in our school use a variety of technologies as instructional resources” (E4).

Documents and Artifacts:

The Diagnostic Review Team reviewed the curriculum alignment documents and found unit plans instead of documents about curriculum alignment. The team also reviewed artifact links labeled as Curriculum Review Cycle; however, the team was unable to access the documents.

Improvement Priority #3

Build teacher capacity to implement and monitor instructional practices that promote creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem solving. (Standard 2.2)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

As detailed in an addendum to this report and discussed in Improvement Priority 1, the team used student performance data to determine Improvement Priority 3.

Classroom Observation Data:

Observation data indicated an opportunity to develop teacher capacity in instructional design. It was evident/highly evident in 22 percent of classrooms that “Instruction is designed to encourage collaboration with peers and mentors in meeting high expectations” (A4). It was evident/highly evident in 30 percent of classrooms that “Learners demonstrate work that reflects the high expectations of the instructional design” (A5).

Classroom observation data also indicated an opportunity to build teacher capacity in the use of platforms to enable innovative interactions between mentors and learners in support of personalized learning pathways. It was evident/highly evident in two percent of classrooms that “Learners and mentors engage in interactive digital platforms that can support new technologies (e.g., adaptive technology, technology-enhanced items, virtual reality, or augmented reality)” (C5). It was evident/highly evident in 20 percent of classrooms that “Learners use digital resources to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning” (C3).

Observation data also revealed that while the schedule included many small group class sessions about personalized learning experiences, the team found few personalized opportunities for collaboration. In 12 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners engage in rigorous learning experiences, including interaction between peers and mentors and the use of higher order thinking skills” (B2). In 22 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “Learners make connections from the digital learning environment to the real-life experiences” (B4). In 24 percent of classrooms, it was evident/highly evident that “The mentors and learners collaborate on personalized learning experiences that provide equity in learner voice and choice (e.g., competencies, rigor, time, place, and pace)” (B1). It was evident/highly evident that “Learner interactions with peers, mentors, and the academic content permeate the digital environment” (B3) in 26 percent of classrooms.

Stakeholder Interview Data:

Interview data revealed that Stride Inc. provides professional learning on instructional practices. The team also found that professional learning sessions have primarily focused on using platforms, including the new synchronous learning platform. Interview data revealed little dedicated time for collaborative planning between grade-level or content-area teams. Student interview data also indicated limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate with their peers in the synchronous learning environment.

Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:

Ninety-four percent of high school staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All teachers in our school use a variety of technologies as instructional resources” (E4). Ninety-two percent of high school staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All teachers in our school personalize instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs for students” (E2). Ninety percent of high school staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All teachers in our school regularly use instructional strategies that require student collaboration, self-reflection, and development of critical thinking skills” (E3). In contrast, 56 percent of high school students agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All of my teachers change their teaching to meet my learning needs” (E9). Sixty-nine percent of high school students agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “In my school, computers are up-to-date and used by teachers to help me learn” (F4).

Documents and Artifacts:

A review of documents and artifacts revealed a lack of expectations for asynchronous and synchronous classroom instruction. Unit plans revealed a lack of activities that promote creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem solving.

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:

Through interviews with multiple stakeholder groups and classroom observations, the Diagnostic Review Team noted a positive school culture as a strength of the Cyber Academy of South Carolina (CASC). Teachers reported that they feel valued. They consistently receive acknowledgments of appreciation from school leadership, ranging from gift cards and lunch deliveries to shout-outs in weekly internal school communications. Teachers feel they have a voice, as they are provided with surveys that allow them to give feedback. Many teachers recruit their friends to work for the school. Parents also expressed how pleased they are with the school. Parents reported instructional staff are supportive of their children and meet their needs. Parents also expressed an appreciation for the community meet-ups and extracurricular opportunities. Students reported feeling supported and cared for by their teachers, and they stated they feel their teachers go above and beyond to get to know them.

The Diagnostic Review Team also noted that flexibility is a strength. Many stakeholders indicated this was their reason for choosing CASC, whether for work (teachers) or their education (parents/students). The school allows stakeholders to balance school/work with their lives.

Continuous Improvement Process:

The Diagnostic Review Team identified areas of opportunity for the school, including curriculum alignment and implementation of a continuous improvement process, including all stakeholder groups and the development and implementation of a professional development program to build instructional capacity. As noted in multiple interviews and observations, the Stride Inc. curriculum is not aligned to the state standards, which forces teachers to adjust and use outside resources. Faculty do not have a process or procedure for making adjustments; instead, each faculty member responds independently to curricular needs. This lack of consistency in curriculum contributes to the lack of academic growth demonstrated in state assessment metrics. The absence of academic improvement emerged as a concern because of the school's rapid growth. The institution has not established a process to prepare new teachers to modify the curriculum as they learn their new roles.

It was also noted that CASC lacks a formalized and consistent continuous improvement process to involve all stakeholders in identifying, monitoring, and developing strategies to address needs, and evaluating school improvement goals. While the school does a good job of collecting feedback via surveys, seeking stakeholder involvement in the overall improvement process is necessary to move the school forward.

Finally, the school lacks an internal professional development program focused on the design and delivery of instruction that promotes collaboration and higher-order thinking skills. Professional development is limited to the use of the digital platform instead of building instructional capacity. Staff and students would benefit from

professional learning experiences that develop teacher capacity in asynchronous and synchronous instructional delivery and foster engaging, collaborative lessons that promote higher-order thinking.

The team concluded that an intentional focus on these areas of opportunity would positively affect the institution's continuous improvement efforts.

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
Dr. Staci Kimmons	Staci Kimmons has over 20 years of experience as an educator. She most recently served as the director of curriculum and instruction in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to that, she served as an administrator at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Dr. Kimmons holds a Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy from Marquette University. She also has a master's degree in educational psychology, a bachelor's degree in psychology, and add-on certification in educational leadership. Dr. Kimmons serves as a director of accreditation services for Cognia. She also serves as an adjunct professor for Grand Canyon University and Eastern Washington University, where she has developed and taught online courses in educational leadership.
Beverly Hamm	Beverly Hamm began her teaching career as an eighth-grade science teacher. She took a brief intermission in her formal career and taught at a homeschool cooperative and tutored before joining the inaugural team at Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA) in 2007. While at GCA, she served as a school leader and helped build the middle school program and establish parameters for authentic standards assessment in the virtual environment. After moving to high school and building the initial environmental science course, she once again took a leadership role and helped build a successful credit recovery program. Ms. Hamm continued to serve the school as a member of the initial faculty advisory committee and as the trainer and support person for teachers administering and leading state testing sites. Ms. Hamm has earned degrees from Allegheny College and Emory University.
Blake Pratt	Blake Pratt currently serves as a transformation coach for the South Carolina Department of Education. He is a former middle school math teacher and has eight years of experience as an academic coach in multiple districts in Michigan. In his previous positions, Blake provided professional development and instructional coaching to K-12 educators, wrote and received multiple grants, and was the strategic communications coordinator for an educational non-profit. Mr. Pratt and his colleagues in the SCDE Office of School Transformation partner with schools to consider how structures, strategies, and consistency can promote a positive school culture and increase academic achievement for students.

Dr. Carol Miner	Dr. Carol Miner has 25 years of experience as a teacher and administrator. She is currently a transformation coach for the South Carolina Department of Education. In her role, she works with identified CSI (Comprehensive Support and Intervention) schools to assist them with data management through PowerSchool to make sure the data are accurate and scheduling students to ensure they are working toward graduation and a college or career pathway. She also assists with building data walls in those schools to facilitate teachers' use of the data to inform instruction. Dr. Miner holds a Ph.D. in K-12 educational administration from Capella University and has her Ed.S. in educational leadership. She earned a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from National-Louis University. Dr. Miner has experience in the elementary and middle school classrooms as a teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal. Her experience at the district level includes director, assistant superintendent, and interim superintendent.
Dawn Patterson	Dawn Patterson has over 25 years of experience in public education. She currently serves as a transformation coach for the South Carolina Department of Education. Ms. Patterson received her bachelor's degree in special education with a minor in elementary education from Clemson University and her master's degree in educational administration from Jones International University. She has experience in teaching special education in grades 5-12. Ms. Patterson began her administrative career as a career and technology education director and assistant administrator at the high school level. In addition, she has served as an assistant principal at the elementary and high school level. Dawn is a passionate advocate for all students and wants to continue to make a positive impact on student outcomes by providing support for teachers and administrators in South Carolina.
Erin Hynum	Erin Hynum is an assistant principal at South Carolina Connections Academy (SCCA), a K-12 public virtual charter school that serves approximately 6,500 students throughout the state. Erin's current responsibilities include supporting the ninth- and twelfth-grade teachers and students at SCCA and overseeing the math and science departments. After earning a degree in mechanical engineering from Clemson University in 2004, Erin realized she was meant to be in a classroom and went back to school to earn a master's degree in teaching from Converse College in 2006. Prior to joining the staff at South Carolina Connections Academy in 2014, Erin taught secondary mathematics at Hillcrest High School and the I CAN Learning Center in Simpsonville, SC. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in administration and leadership from Southern Wesleyan University.

Addenda

Student Performance Data

Percentages of students scoring at 70 or above on the End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) (2017-2018, 2018-2019)

Content Area	% School (18-19)	% State (18-19)	% School (17-18)	% State (17-18)
Algebra I	30.1	54.9	32.2	60.5
English I	45.2	56.3	40.6	53.9
Biology	33.2	54.4	33.7	59.5
U.S. History	20.1	47.7	27.2	48.9

Graduation Rates

	School 2020	State 2020	School 2019	State 2019	School 2018	State 2018
Graduation Rate	72.4	82.2	61.1	81.1	50.6	81.0

ACT average score for students in grade 11 (2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020)

Content Area	Composite School (19-20)	Composite State (19-20)	Composite School (18-19)	Composite State (18-19)	Composite School (17-18)	Composite State (17-18)
Composite Avg Scale Score	16.9	18.1	19.6	18.6	17.3	19.0
English	16.0	16.9	19.6	17.5	16.4	18.0
Math	15.6	18.0	17.5	18.5	16.3	18.8
Reading	18.6	18.7	21.7	19.0	18.1	19.3
Science	17	18.4	19.8	18.7	17.5	19.2

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	24.3	31.7													
State Avg. Science	49.1	49.4													
Social Studies				40.9	41.4										
State Avg. SS				67.6	68.6										

Schedule

Date: March 15, 2021

Time	Event	Where	Who
7:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	Review of LMS / Classroom Observations / Stakeholder Interviews	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	Team Break		
5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	Team Work Session	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Date: March 16, 2021

Time	Event	Where	Who
8:00 a.m.	Team Work Session	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members
9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	Classroom Observations / Stakeholder Interviews / Artifact Review	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	Team Break		
5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	Team Work Session	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Date: March 17, 2021

Time	Event	Where	Who
8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	Artifact/Document Review / Informal Interviews / Finalize Findings and Evidence	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	Team Break		
5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	Team Work Session	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Date: March 18, 2021

Time	Event	Where	Who
8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Artifact/Document Review / Informal Interviews / Finalize Findings and Evidence	Zoom	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Elementary School Observation Data

Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning						Institution	Cognia Average
Instructional Design: Instruction is designed to promote interactive engagement with personalized academic content.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.64**	***2.53***
A1 Learners have access to appropriately challenging curriculum (providing rigor, relevance, and fostering positive relationships).	6%	39%	2%	0%	0%	3.09	***2.92***
A2 Learners engage in a competency-based curriculum.	8%	20%	0%	18%	0%	2.39	***2.80***
A3 Instructional design incorporates evidence-based strategies appropriate for digital learning environments.	6%	24%	16%	0%	0%	2.78	***2.56***
A4 Instruction is designed to encourage collaboration with peers and mentors in meeting high learning expectations.	8%	12%	16%	10%	0%	2.39	***1.97***
A5 Learners demonstrate work that reflects the high expectations of the instructional design.	8%	14%	20%	4%	0%	2.57	***2.41***
Learning Engagement: Dynamic learning environments support interactive engagement to create personalized learning experiences.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.33**	***2.24***
B1 The mentors and learners collaborate on personalized learning experiences that provide equity in learner voice and choice (e.g., competencies, rigor, time, place, and pace).	6%	16%	10%	12%	2%	2.36	***2.31***
B2 Learners engage in rigorous learning experiences, including interaction between peers and mentors and the use of higher-order thinking skills.	4%	8%	33%	2%	0%	2.30	***2.12***
B3 Learner interactions with peers, mentors, and the academic content permeate the digital environment.	6%	16%	22%	0%	2%	2.64	***2.09***
B4 Learners make connections from the digital learning environment to real-life experiences.	2%	10%	18%	14%	4%	2.00	***2.43***
Platforms and Technologies: Technology platforms are dynamic and enable innovative interactions between mentors and learners in support of personalized learning pathways.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.41**	***2.35***
C1 Learners have equal access to resources in a Learning Management System (LMS) or Content Management System (CMS) to enable classroom discussions, activities, digital tools, and support.	14%	27%	4%	0%	2%	3.23	***3.04***
C2 Learners use digital resources to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning.	4%	18%	20%	2%	2%	2.55	***2.50***

Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning						Institution	Cognia Average
C3 Learners use digital resources to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.	4%	8%	20%	10%	4%	2.14	*2.24*
C4 Learners use digital platforms to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning.	4%	20%	16%	2%	2%	2.55	*2.17*
C5 Learners and mentors engage in interactive digital platforms that have capacity to support new technologies (e.g., adaptive technology, technology-enhanced items, virtual reality, or augmented reality).	2%	0%	20%	22%	2%	1.59	*1.82*
Assessment for Learning: Assessment for learning promotes the development of learning goals, support and progress monitoring, and student ownership of the learning process.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**1.93**	*2.26*
D1 Learners engage in a process that includes goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection on learning with support from mentors.	0%	6%	18%	20%	2%	1.68	*2.18*
D2 Learners engage consistently in active communication (static and dynamic) with mentors about their learning goals.	2%	8%	22%	10%	4%	2.05	*2.30*
D3 Learners engage in the coaching process with their mentors in their progress toward learning goals.	2%	10%	18%	12%	4%	2.05	*2.20*
D4 Learners take responsibility in the creation and attainment of their learning goals.	0%	4%	16%	22%	4%	1.57	*2.17*
D5 Learners engage consistently in active feedback (static and dynamic) with mentors.	4%	8%	31%	2%	2%	2.32	*2.44*
Digital Learning Community: The community promotes positive interactions and relationships between and among learners and mentors.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.46**	*2.18*
E1 Learners are engaged in promoting digital citizenship and a culture of connectedness.	0%	20%	22%	4%	0%	2.35	*2.18*
E2 Learners communicate and interact respectfully with mentor(s) and each other.	12%	35%	0%	0%	0%	3.26	*2.65*
E3 Learners and mentors have opportunities to develop empathy and respect for personal and sociocultural differences among members within the community.	0%	2%	24%	16%	4%	1.67	*1.75*
E4 Learners and mentors have opportunities to build a sense of community by fostering positive relationships (peer to peer, peer to adult, adult to adult).	2%	22%	18%	2%	2%	2.55	*2.14*

High School Observation Data

Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning						Institution	Cognia Average
Instructional Design: Instruction is designed to promote interactive engagement with personalized academic content.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**2.03**	***2.53***
A1 Learners have access to appropriately challenging curriculum (providing rigor, relevance, and fostering positive relationships).	0%	18%	31%	4%	0%	2.27	***2.92***
A2 Learners engage in a competency-based curriculum.	0%	20%	20%	12%	0%	2.15	***2.80***
A3 Instructional design incorporates evidence-based strategies appropriate for digital learning environments.	0%	29%	16%	8%	0%	2.38	***2.56***
A4 Instruction is designed to encourage collaboration with peers and mentors in meeting high learning expectations.	0%	2%	22%	24%	4%	1.54	***1.97***
A5 Learners demonstrate work that reflects the high expectations of the instructional design.	0%	8%	24%	18%	2%	1.80	***2.41***
Learning Engagement: Dynamic learning environments support interactive engagement to create personalized learning experiences.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**1.69**	***2.24***
B1 The mentors and learners collaborate on personalized learning experiences that provide equity in learner voice and choice (e.g., competencies, rigor, time, place, and pace).	0%	2%	24%	24%	2%	1.56	***2.31***
B2 Learners engage in rigorous learning experiences, including interaction between peers and mentors and the use of higher-order thinking skills.	0%	0%	27%	22%	4%	1.54	***2.12***
B3 Learner interactions with peers, mentors, and the academic content permeate the digital environment.	0%	4%	35%	12%	2%	1.84	***2.09***
B4 Learners make connections from the digital learning environment to real-life experiences.	2%	8%	18%	22%	0%	1.80	***2.43***
Platforms and Technologies: Technology platforms are dynamic and enable innovative interactions between mentors and learners in support of personalized learning pathways.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**1.53**	***2.35***
C1 Learners have equal access to resources in a Learning Management System (LMS) or Content Management System (CMS) to enable classroom discussions, activities, digital tools, and support.	8%	37%	6%	2%	2%	1.36	***3.04***
C2 Learners use digital resources to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning.	2%	18%	27%	6%	2%	1.57	***2.50***

Cognia Observation Tool for Digital Learning						Institution	Cognia Average
C3 Learners use digital resources to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.	4%	4%	24%	20%	4%	1.52	*2.24*
C4 Learners use digital platforms to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning.	2%	20%	16%	14%	2%	1.26	*2.17*
C5 Learners and mentors engage in interactive digital platforms that have capacity to support new technologies (e.g., adaptive technology, technology-enhanced items, virtual reality, or augmented reality).	6%	0%	16%	31%	8%	1.92	*1.82*
Assessment for Learning: Assessment for learning promotes the development of learning goals, support and progress monitoring, and student ownership of the learning process.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**1.53**	*2.26*
D1 Learners engage in a process that includes goal setting, self-assessment, and reflection on learning with support from mentors.	0%	0%	16%	29%	8%	1.36	*2.18*
D2 Learners engage consistently in active communication (static and dynamic) with mentors about their learning goals.	2%	2%	22%	22%	6%	1.57	*2.30*
D3 Learners engage in the coaching process with their mentors in their progress toward learning goals.	4%	0%	18%	27%	6%	1.52	*2.20*
D4 Learners take responsibility in the creation and attainment of their learning goals.	0%	2%	8%	37%	6%	1.26	*2.17*
D5 Learners engage consistently in active feedback (static and dynamic) with mentors.	4%	6%	35%	10%	2%	1.92	*2.44*
Digital Learning Community: The community promotes positive interactions and relationships between and among learners and mentors.	**HE**	**EV**	**SE**	**NE**	**NA**	**1.98**	*2.18*
E1 Learners are engaged in promoting digital citizenship and a culture of connectedness.	0%	12%	20%	16%	4%	1.92	*2.18*
E2 Learners communicate and interact respectfully with mentor(s) and each other.	4%	24%	12%	10%	2%	2.44	*2.65*
E3 Learners and mentors have opportunities to develop empathy and respect for personal and sociocultural differences among members within the community.	0%	6%	16%	24%	6%	1.61	*1.75*
E4 Learners and mentors have opportunities to build a sense of community by fostering positive relationships (peer to peer, peer to adult, adult to adult).	0%	8%	31%	10%	4%	1.96	*2.14*