



# Cognia Diagnostic Review Report

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Results for: Felton Laboratory Charter School

January 26-29, 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
Board Member	1
Building-Level Administrators	2
Professional Support Staff (e.g., Counselor, Media Specialist, Technology Coordinator)	3
Certified Staff	14
Noncertified Staff	4
Students	173
Parents	6
Total	203

# 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
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	Initiating
1.7	Leaders implement operational process and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.	Improving
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the institution's purpose and direction.	Initiating
1.9	The institution provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	Initiating
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.	Insufficient

# Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement and success is the primary expectation of every institution. An effective learning culture is characterized by positive and productive teacher/learner relationships, high expectations and standards, a challenging and engaging curriculum, quality instruction and comprehensive support that enable all learners to be successful, and assessment practices (formative and summative) that monitor and measure learner progress and achievement. Moreover, a quality institution evaluates the impact of its learning culture, including all programs and support services, and adjusts accordingly.

Learning Capacity Essential Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the institution.	Initiating
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Initiating
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.	Initiating
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Initiating
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Initiating
2.12	The institution implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Insufficient

## Resource Capacity Domain

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

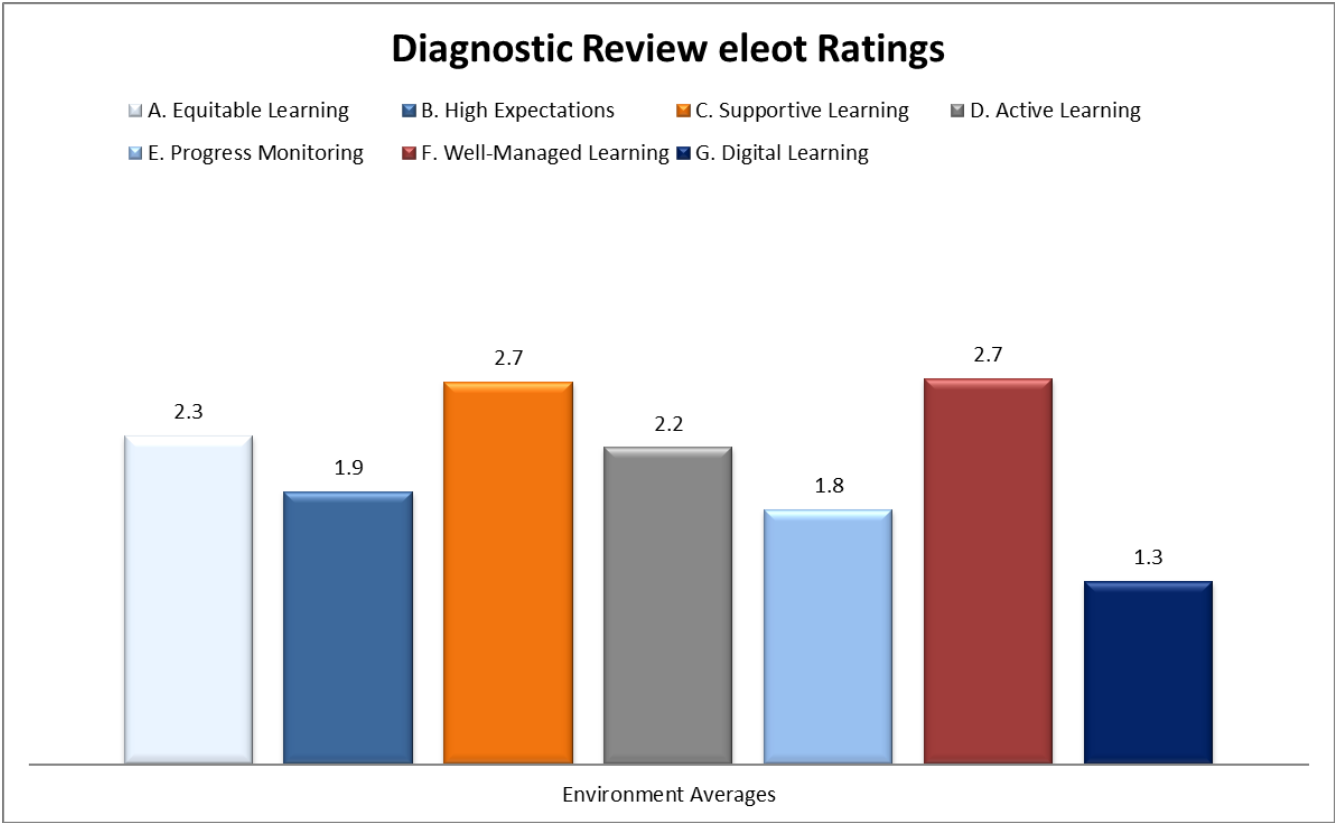
Resource Capacity Essential Standards		Rating
3.1	The institution plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the institution's effectiveness.	Initiating
3.2	The institution's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration 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.	Initiating
3.7	The institution demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the institution's purpose and direction.	Insufficient
3.8	The institution allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the institution's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Initiating



# Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) Results

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

Every member of the Diagnostic Review Team was eleot certified and passed a certification exam that established inter-rater reliability. Team members conducted 32 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	1.4	Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs.	72%	16%	13%	0%
A2	2.8	Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support.	6%	28%	44%	22%
A3	2.8	Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner.	6%	34%	31%	28%
A4	2.3	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.	28%	34%	22%	16%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			2.3			

B. High Expectations Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
B1	1.9	Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher.	34%	44%	19%	3%
B2	2.2	Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable.	22%	41%	34%	3%
B3	1.7	Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work.	47%	38%	13%	3%
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).	44%	31%	19%	6%
B5	1.9	Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning.	44%	31%	13%	13%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			1.9			



C. Supportive Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
C1	2.8	Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful.	3%	34%	44%	19%
C2	2.7	Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback).	16%	25%	38%	22%
C3	2.6	Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers, and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks.	16%	34%	25%	25%
C4	2.8	Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher.	6%	41%	25%	28%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			2.7			

D. Active Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
D1	1.9	Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and teacher predominate.	34%	44%	16%	6%
D2	2.1	Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences.	38%	25%	31%	6%
D3	2.6	Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities.	13%	28%	44%	16%
D4	2.3	Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments.	25%	34%	25%	16%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			2.2			

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
E1	1.5	Learners monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored.	63%	25%	13%	0%
E2	2.2	Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work.	28%	34%	28%	9%
E3	2.1	Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content.	25%	44%	28%	3%
E4	1.4	Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed.	69%	22%	9%	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	3.0	Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other.	3%	28%	38%	31%
F2	3.0	Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others.	0%	22%	56%	22%
F3	2.3	Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another.	34%	19%	28%	19%
F4	2.6	Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions.	16%	31%	31%	22%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:			2.7			

G. Digital Learning Environment						
Indicators	Average	Description	Not Observed	Somewhat Evident	Evident	Very Evident
G1	1.3	Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning.	75%	16%	9%	0%
G2	1.3	Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.	84%	6%	3%	6%
G3	1.2	Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning.	84%	9%	6%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		1.3				

## eleot Narrative

The Diagnostic Review Team conducted 32 eleot classroom observations in core content classes and multiple informal observations across the school. The Supportive Learning Environment earned an overall rating of 2.7 on a four-point scale. It was evident/very evident in 63 percent of classrooms that “Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful” (C1), and in 60 percent of classrooms that “Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)” (C2). Learners who “demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher” (C4) were evident/very evident in 53 percent of classrooms. It was evident/very evident in 50 percent of classrooms that “Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers, and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks” (C3).

The Well-Managed Learning Environment also earned a 2.7 overall average rating. In 78 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that students “demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others” (F2), indicating that they generally understood and obeyed rules and displayed compliant behaviors. Students who “speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other” (F1) were evident/very evident in 69 percent of classrooms.

The Active Learning Environment received a rating of 2.2 on the four-point scale. Learners “actively engaged in the learning activities” (D3) were evident/very evident in 60 percent of classrooms. While there was some evidence to support active engagement in classrooms and learning activities, it was evident/very evident in 22 percent of classrooms that “Learners’ discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and teacher predominate” (D1) and in 37 percent of classrooms that “Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences” (D2).

Several areas of concern emerged. In 13 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs” (A1). In the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment, it was evident/very evident in 13 percent of classrooms that “Learners monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored” (E1). Additionally, it was evident/very evident in nine percent of classrooms that “Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed” (E4).

The High Expectations Learning Environment earned an overall rating of 1.9. It was evident/very evident in 37 percent of classrooms that “Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable” (B2). In 16 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work” (B3). Also, it was evident/very evident in 22 percent of classrooms that “Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher” (B1). In addition, it was evident/very evident in 25 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). Learners who “take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning” (B5) were evident/very evident in 26 percent of classrooms.

Although the Diagnostic Review Team observed an abundance of technology in classrooms and throughout the school, the Digital Learning Environment earned the lowest rating with a 1.3. Learners who “use digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning” (G3) were evident/very evident in six percent of classrooms. In nine percent of classrooms, instances of students who “use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning” (G2) were evident/very evident. Finally, in nine percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning” (G1).

# Findings

## Improvement Priorities

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

### Improvement Priority #1

Develop and implement an ongoing, schoolwide continuous improvement process (e.g., practices, structures, procedures, systems). Ensure the process includes a framework for collecting evidence, providing feedback to teachers based on observations and student performance, and using current and emerging data to inform school improvement decisions. (Standard 1.3)

#### **Evidence:**

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

Student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, indicated that processes and procedures were not developed or implemented to support teaching and learning. For two consecutive years, the percentage of students who reached the benchmark of “meets and exceeds” in math on the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY) was below state averages. Specifically, for the 2017-2018 test administration, the percentage of students who scored “meets and exceeds” in math at third grade was 28.9 percent, at fourth grade was 20 percent, at fifth grade was 9.3 percent, at sixth grade was 34.9 percent, at seventh grade was 24.4 percent, and at eighth grade was 17.5 percent. Student proficiency in math in 2018-2019 for third grade (25.5 percent) and sixth grade (15.2 percent) decreased from 2017-2018. While the percentages of students who reached “meets and exceeds” in math in fourth grade (21.4 percent), fifth grade (20.5 percent), seventh grade (34.1 percent), and eighth grade (23.3 percent) increased from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019, they remained below the state averages. English language arts (ELA) performance for students in third through eighth grades remained below the state averages for two consecutive years; however, the percentage of students who reached “meets and exceeds” increased from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019 in fourth grade (from 20 percent to 33.3 percent), in seventh grade (from 24.4 percent to 51.2 percent), and in eighth grade (from 17.5 percent to 41.9 percent).

Additional student performance data on the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SCPASS) revealed that students in fourth, sixth, and eighth grades consistently performed below the state average in science and that students in seventh grade consistently performed below the state average in social studies. Data also revealed that there was a three-year decline in proficiency for students in eighth-grade science (from 28.6 percent in 2016-2017 to 27.5 percent in 2017-2018 to 23.3 percent in 2018-2019). Likewise during that same time, there was a decline in student performance in fifth-grade social studies (from 76.9 percent in 2016-2017 to 65.1 percent in 2017-2018 to 49.7 percent in 2018-2019).

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

Interview data revealed that the school did not implement operational processes and procedures with fidelity to ensure that organizational effectiveness supported teaching and learning. Although stakeholders could articulate some components of the school improvement plan, such as afterschool programs, Saturday Academy, and student mentoring programs with South Carolina State University, the team found a lack of consistency and focus. The interview data showed stakeholders consistently referred to structures and processes that existed prior to the

current school administration. Interview data revealed staff members inconsistently defined the intent, purpose, and impact of each component of the school improvement plan.

Stakeholder interview data also indicated that professional learning was often a response to corrective actions from assessment data and was not part of a long-term plan. Time was designated weekly for teachers to engage in professional learning community (PLC) meetings. That time, however, was often used for teacher planning with no specific instructional goal or focus. In other cases, the time was used to introduce a new lesson plan template or to present an overview of data with no explicit connection made as to how these documents or data aligned with or were used to inform the continuous improvement process. The interview data also revealed that professional learning opportunities were present for teachers and administrators, but the Diagnostic Review Team found no process for connecting the learning to classroom practice or for evaluating the implementation of new learning.

During interviews, stakeholders were unable to articulate a clear understanding of school improvement models and processes. Administrators and staff members, for example, indicated they frequently reviewed Scantron reading and math data to determine whether students were performing at grade level. Although data were reviewed and analyzed by domain, interview responses indicated no presence of a data protocol for analyzing student performance. Teachers lacked a process to collectively determine trends or next steps. As one interviewee mentioned, “Data was not shared in previous years. There were no phases of collecting and sharing data, so we began with the foundations.”

Interview data indicated that a schoolwide expectation for posting and communicating daily learning targets or “I Can” statements had been established. Interview data also revealed formal and informal focused walkthroughs and observations as an area of concern. Teachers stated they were informally observed; however, no “look-fors” or instructional focus areas were identified, limiting the opportunity for teachers to receive feedback from the observer about their professional performance.

Interview data revealed that the principal formed leadership teams for instruction and school improvement, but the designated faculty members serving on the teams were unclear about their team roles, how they participated in decision-making, and the process for communicating information and receiving feedback from their peers. Staff members had limited opportunities to give input into school decisions.

Parent interview data revealed that the school informally solicited input on school direction. Of the parents interviewed, several explained how they were given the opportunity to provide input regarding improvements that could be made, to serve on a school committee, or to fill leadership roles. Interview data indicated a lack of parental or community member input about the development of improvement processes.

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

Stakeholder survey data indicated that 96 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement “Our school has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions and measures of growth” (C5). Data also showed that stakeholder perceptions lacked consistency regarding a continuous improvement plan and the level of stakeholder input. Eighty-four percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that “Our school communicates effectively about the school’s goals and activities” (D5). Sixty-five percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that “Our school ensures that all staff members monitor and report the achievement of school goals” (G1). However, 49 percent of middle school students agreed/strongly agreed that “All of my teachers change their teaching to meet my learning needs” (E9).

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

The school uploaded documents and artifacts in preparation for the Diagnostic Review, but the team found a lack of processes and procedures for monitoring and supporting curriculum implementation and instructional practices. For example, the “Reteaching Reassessing Practices” document that was reviewed was the teachers’ handbook. While the document addressed expectations for teaching, assessing, and learning, evidence did not support that modeling of the expectations and/or professional development for the expectations occurred. Another artifact



called “Kagan Professional Development for Teachers” was an invoice quote for “Cooperative Learning Workshops and Coaching,” yet, the team found no explanation of the expectations for implementation of new learning. In addition, a review of documents showed no evidence of instructional feedback to teachers, data analysis, the use of findings for instructional decisions, program evaluation, or a formal, ongoing professional development plan in support of teaching and learning. The majority of documents and artifacts provided to the Diagnostic Review Team included letters to students and parents (e.g., science fair letter to parents), PowerPoint presentations (e.g., Fall Data Meeting: Using MAP to Inform Instruction), and various quotes or invoices for professional services and resources.

## Improvement Priority #2

Develop and implement a curriculum that focuses on high expectations and promotes success for students at their next level. Include a process that integrates grade-level standards-based monitoring and high-yield classroom strategies. Provide a level of rigorous instruction and performance expectations that prepares every student for success and requires teachers to monitor learning and provide feedback to students. (Standard 2.5)

### Evidence:

#### Student Performance Data:

Student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, indicated that student learning did not increase across all grade levels and content areas. Felton Laboratory Charter School students performed below the state average on the SC READY assessments in nearly every content area for three consecutive years (2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019) with the exception of seventh-grade ELA in 2018-2019. Further, negative trends were noted for the percentage of students who reached the benchmark of “meets and exceeds” in fourth- and fifth-grade ELA from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019.

#### Classroom Observation Data:

The classroom observation data, as previously discussed, revealed a lack of rigorous instruction and high expectations for student learning. It was evident/very evident in 22 percent of classrooms that students “strive to meet or are able to articulate high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher” (B1). In 37 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable” (B2). Instances of learners who “demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work” (B3) were evident/very evident in 16 percent of classrooms. In 25 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident 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). In 26 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning” (B5).

#### Stakeholder Interview Data:

Interview data revealed the lack of pacing guides for core content classes and the absence of schoolwide curriculum. Teachers indicated that they participated in training for the Balanced Literacy framework, but no resources for ELA or math were organized. The development of pacing guides and lesson planning was initiated. Interview data also showed some teachers referred to supplemental programs, assessments, and tools (e.g., CompassLearning, SC READY, Who’s Reading) as the curriculum. According to interview data, teachers created their own pacing guides without training, guidance, or support. Because teachers did not participate in training or were not provided the appropriate resources for analyzing student performance data, they were unclear about how to ensure accuracy and logical sequencing when developing pacing guides. For example, when asked how data were analyzed and used by teachers and the school, one faculty member said, “We pull up state test data to review and compare to our data to understand standards, group students, and align our walkthroughs.” This statement was representative of similar responses from other faculty members, indicating a lack of strategic and intentional effort to assess student data for the purpose of monitoring and adjusting their practices (in the absence of a curriculum) in order to improve student achievement. Finally, staff member interview data revealed that long-range goals were not consistently or meaningfully communicated. When asked how students knew the learning expectations and standards for performance, one faculty member said, “Last year, data was not shared. . . . [The principal] had to start with the foundation, focusing on lesson plans, ‘I Can’ statements, and collecting data.” This comment was consistent with many classroom observations that indicated that “I Can” statements were posted in every classroom, and students were aware of their daily learning objectives. However, faculty members were not assessing student understanding of the daily objectives. The Diagnostic Review Team suggests the school adopt or design a curriculum that explicitly states learning objectives and requires teachers to ensure students understand and master content in order to meet schoolwide improvement goals.



**Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:**

Stakeholder survey data indicated inconsistencies among observations and interview data, indicating that school leadership and staff members could benefit from opportunities to build collective efficacy around curriculum and instructional design. For example, 90 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “All teachers in our school have been trained to implement a formal process that promotes discussion about student learning (e.g., action research, examination of student work, reflection, study teams, and peer coaching)” (E10). However, stakeholder interview data indicated that teachers were unclear of school improvement processes, and the Diagnostic Review Team found no evidence of a school improvement process beyond reviewing and interpreting data. In addition, interview data revealed a lack of understanding about assignment complexity, differentiation, progress monitoring, and student feedback.

**Documents and Artifacts:**

A review of documents and artifacts provided by the school yielded no evidence of a schoolwide curriculum or pacing documents. In the overview presentation, the principal shared that the school used a variety of practice tools (e.g., CompassLearning, SC READY, Who’s Reading). However, none of these tools were representative of a curriculum. Classroom observation and interview data indicated that for instructional delivery, teachers primarily relied on a variety of different resources that were not aligned with standards or student needs. Many of these resources were used with all students working on the same assignments, illustrating a lack of individualization to address the learning needs of all students (e.g., struggling, advanced).

## Improvement Priority #3

Develop a strategic resource management plan that aligns and distributes human and fiscal resources to maximize and sustain long-range planning (instructional, financial, facilities). Articulate action steps to implement the plan. Monitor process and evaluate results to identify when adjustments to the plan are needed. (Standard 3.7)

### **Evidence:**

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

Student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, indicated that resources were not allocated or used strategically to support teaching and learning in alignment with schoolwide improvement goals. The percentage of students at Felton Laboratory Charter School who scored “meets and exceeds” was significantly below state averages in most content areas.

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

Staff member interview data indicated that professional development was inconsistent and that implementation expectations were not clearly communicated. Teachers indicated that this school year they had attended several days of professional development programs led by product vendors. They also noted that professional development sessions were led by the assistant director. Interview data showed these days were considered beneficial; however, teachers were unclear about how professional development should be implemented. Interview data also showed that the school held half-day professional development sessions led by the instructional leadership team on early dismissal Wednesdays, but these just began during the last few months prior to the Diagnostic Review. During these sessions, teachers were introduced to the new template for lesson planning and learned to reflect on their student assessment data. Staff member interview data did not yield any information regarding a long-range professional development plan to build teacher capacity in alignment with schoolwide improvement goals.

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

According to survey data, staff members reported that the school provided the necessary resources to support student learning and to achieve schoolwide improvement goals. For instance, 100 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school provides instructional time and resources to support our school’s goals and priorities” (F2). Also, 95 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “Our school provides sufficient material resources to meet student needs” (F3). Survey data also showed that 85 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “Our school provides protected instructional time” (F4). The survey data were inconsistent compared to the student performance and stakeholder interview data and a review of documents and artifacts, which indicated the absence of a strategic resource management plan.

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

The Diagnostic Review Team reviewed documents and artifacts from the school and found no formal professional development plan. Meeting agendas and presentation slides from past professional development sessions were reviewed, but the team found no minutes or evidence of follow-up. As mentioned earlier, the majority of artifacts and documents provided information related to expectations; however, evidence did not support follow-up after the initial communication, which may be because current administration had been in place for less than six months. For example, professional learning presentations such as Kagan Professional Development for Teachers indicated that training was provided for Cooperative Learning Workshops and Coaching; however, when the team reviewed the document, they found an invoice or quote with no supporting evidence related to the training. Another document called “Reteaching Reassessing Practices” was part of the teacher handbook and included lists of expectations for planning and professional practice. The school provided reports for student performance on Scantron Reading and Math but provided no additional evidence to the team that demonstrated how data were being addressed to meet the needs of those students.



The Diagnostic Review Team was not provided with some key evidence items. For example, the Charter and Special Projects Plans (equivalent to the School Renewal Plan) were not a part of the original evidence that the school provided, but the Diagnostic Review Team was able to obtain a copy. While activities and strategies were listed that align to the long-range plan, such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) focus; Balanced Literacy Approach; and Project Based Learning, interview and classroom observation data showed little evidence of their existence. The team concluded that faculty and staff members were not involved in developing the plan, and the contents of the plan were not shared with them. Other documents not found by the Diagnostic Review Team included the schoolwide professional development plan and a comprehensive school budget. Interview data indicated that funds were spent on items such as trainings and conferences, software and courseware, afterschool programming, and technology for instruction; however, the team found no artifacts or evidence supporting this or no direct connection to schoolwide goals. In addition, the team could not find a protocol or process for budget requests to provide clarity on approvals for allocation of funds.

# 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:

Stakeholder interview, classroom observation, and survey data indicated strong relationships existed among students, staff, and parents. When asked to explain the best thing about this school, three students and three parents all stated that it was the people. Felton Laboratory Charter School was consistently referred to as a family. Another parent emphasized that "Trust and relationships are important here. We know about the legacy of Felton." Students indicated that teachers were nice to them and helped them learn. One parent echoed the sentiment expressed by others that teachers work hard and genuinely care about their children. She stated, "It is like a family." The parents reported the family culture was largely due to the small class sizes, which allowed students and teachers to interact beyond a surface level.

Strong relationships were seen in classroom observations, as students generally were treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner. The team also observed that learners demonstrated a congenial and supportive relationship with their teachers, resulting in a well-managed and safe learning environment. The team noted that Felton Laboratory Charter School staff members had access to numerous resources that could be used in support of improving student academic outcomes, including supplemental academic programs (e.g., CompassLearning, Saturday Academy, mentoring, afterschool programs with South Carolina State University). In addition, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) provided human resources (i.e., instructional and leadership support) to the school. The SCDE provided human resources (i.e., Transformation Coach) to provide support to staff members and school leaders. Interview data showed that a Transformation Coach provided instructional coaching, classroom resources, and training to understand the Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) plan and associated improvement priorities. One teacher stated, "Our Transformation Coach assists us with lesson planning and professional learning." The Diagnostic Review Team suggests the school leverage that support to improve student academic outcomes.

## Continuous Improvement Process:

The school implemented numerous academic programs and processes (e.g., afterschool academic support and enrichment program, "I Can" statements, lesson plan template, data analysis protocol) in the last few months to raise student academic performance. The Diagnostic Review Team noted the importance for all stakeholders at Felton Laboratory Charter School to be intentional and consistent in their implementation and use of programs and practices to ensure efforts are aligned with the academic goals defined in the school improvement plan. Identifying and focusing on priority academic goals in order to develop practices, processes, and procedures are leverage areas for improvement. The team also noted that consistent monitoring and evaluation of programs and processes are needed to assess impact. Finally, as a way to build collective efficacy and improve teaching and

learning, the team recommends the school develop a long-term professional development plan that provides consistent, ongoing, and embedded professional learning opportunities for staff members about specific academic programs, instructional design, and the use of data for instructional decisions that meet individual needs.

The afterschool academic support and enrichment program could be aligned to promote student learning related to student performance. The team suggests monitoring the effectiveness of these supports and taking steps to ensure correct understanding of how to maximize effectiveness. For example, targeted support for struggling students was not fully addressed. When asked how students were grouped to address their learning needs, staff members were unable to provide an answer. During eleot observations, students were working to complete the same tasks in small groups with no differentiation. This system of support could be leveraged to promote the same structures focused on instruction, academic student performance, and practices around monitoring and evaluation as part of the school's continuous improvement process. As structures are identified and implemented to build teacher capacity, the team suggests the school weigh the cost versus benefit as it applies to student academic performance.

Felton Laboratory Charter School needs strong, consistent, and visible instructional leadership to guide these improvement efforts. The school principal and an assistant director for curriculum and instruction were recently hired, and interview data revealed that both leaders have initially focused on the design of "I Can" statements and the implementation of forms (i.e., lesson plan and data analysis templates). The Diagnostic Review Team suggests that instructional leaders clearly communicate school improvement goals, identify strategies and expectations to meet these goals, develop processes and procedures to monitor their progress (e.g., professional development plan aligned to the school improvement goals, supervision and evaluation system, performance coaching model), and implement a plan to build teacher capacity. The team also recommends that instructional leaders shift the culture at Felton Laboratory Charter School from compliance-oriented (e.g., submitting lesson plan forms) to results-oriented (e.g., designing engaging, standards-based lessons) in order to address the individual needs of all students.

Finally, the team suggests the school conduct research and select and implement a curriculum program. Observation and interview data revealed that while staff members took the initiative to create pacing guides, no evidence supported that state-adopted standards were consistently used to align what was being taught to what was being assessed. Also, while daily learning objectives were posted, they were rarely communicated to students. Evidence showed that teachers used supplemental programs in place of a formal curriculum and lacked consistent formative assessment practices during or at the conclusion of a lesson. Observation data showed that lessons lacked rigor, differentiation, or opportunities for students to reflect or think critically. In summary, instruction lacked consistency and structure across the school. The team suggests instructional leadership ensure that teachers are provided with a standards-based, rigorous curriculum program to guide their instruction.

## 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. Shannon Stanley</b>	Dr. Shannon Stanley currently serves as a Cognia Lead Evaluator and as a School Improvement Leadership Coach with Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). She has served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent of K-8 instruction, deputy superintendent of teaching and learning, and superintendent. She also serves as an adjunct professor in Educational Leadership for Jacksonville State University and The University of Alabama, as well as working with Alabama's aspiring and new superintendents through The University of Alabama Superintendent's Academy. Finally, Dr. Stanley also works with school districts in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.
<b>Dr. Cynthia Cash-Greene</b>	Dr. Cynthia Cash-Greene serves as superintendent of Palmetto Unified School District. She has also served in other administrative positions including area superintendent, executive director of schools, principal, assistant principal, educator associate with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), director of personnel and educator quality. Her current role requires oversight of high schools and adult education centers statewide. Cynthia has served on the South Carolina Cognia Advisory Committee for the past eight years. She has also served as Team Lead, Associate Lead, and Team Member in the following states: Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.
<b>Mallika Stubbs</b>	Mallika Stubbs is a Transformation Coach working with the Office of School Transformation at the SCDE. In this position, she assists Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools with professional learning, principal support, and instructional support. She is one of the primary influencers behind the Race to the Top Grant in Charleston County School District. She served as a personalized learning coach, supporting teachers with innovative instructional strategies to enhance instruction and affect student growth and achievement. The work done during this time helped advance the personalized learning model and increased participation throughout the state. Prior to joining SCDE, Ms. Stubbs was a lead teacher at Sullivan's Island Elementary, serving as chair for multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) meetings, and designated LEA for special education meetings. Mallika has experience working at the school, district, and state levels. She has supported K-12 educators with designing and implementing curriculum, prioritizing standards, establishing professional learning communities, and improving climate and culture.
<b>Jennifer Gnann</b>	Jennifer Gnann is a Transformation Coach for the SCDE. Jennifer has spent the last 19 years working with students and adults in North Carolina and South Carolina. She was a teacher of math and science to first through third graders in a North Carolina charter school and dean of academic affairs and principal at another North Carolina charter school. She has been a SCDE Transformation Coach for the past three and a half years.

# Addenda

## Student Performance Data

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

Grade	2018-2019				2017-2018			
	ELA School	ELA State	Math School	Math State	ELA School	ELA State	Math School	Math State
3	31.9	49.7	25.5	57.7	33.3	45.2	28.9	55.7
4	33.3	51.2	21.4	50.5	22.2	43.9	20.0	48.1
5	10.3	41.0	20.5	45.4	20.9	38.9	9.3	45.2
6	19.6	41.0	15.2	43.9	34.9	39.9	34.9	42.6
7	51.2	44.0	34.1	35.3	33.3	40.1	24.4	34.9
8	41.9	44.6	23.3	36.6	27.5	39.2	17.5	36.6

**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	26.2	24.4	40.0				26.1	23.3	22.2				23.3	27.5	28.6
State Avg. Science	52.0	49.8	48.4				47.2	47.7	48.0				47.4	48.7	49.5
Social Studies				49.7	65.1	76.9				42.9	64.4	47.5			
State Avg. SS				70.1	69.9	70.9				64.8	66.4	63.5			

# Schedule

## Sunday, January 26

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/Superintendent Presentation	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members
5:15 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #1	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

## Monday, January 27

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		
5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #2	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

## Tuesday, January 28

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

## Wednesday, January 29

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