Cognia Diagnostic Review Report

Results for:

Palmetto Academy for Learning Motorsports

March 8-11, 2020

cognia™

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

Stakeholder Groups	Number
District-Level Administrators	2
Building-Level Administrators	2
Professional Support Staff (e.g., Counselor, Media Specialist, Technology Coordinator)	1
Certified Staff	9
Noncertified Staff	4
Students	10
Parents	4
Total	32

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.	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

Learning Capacity Domain

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

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

Resource Capacity Domain

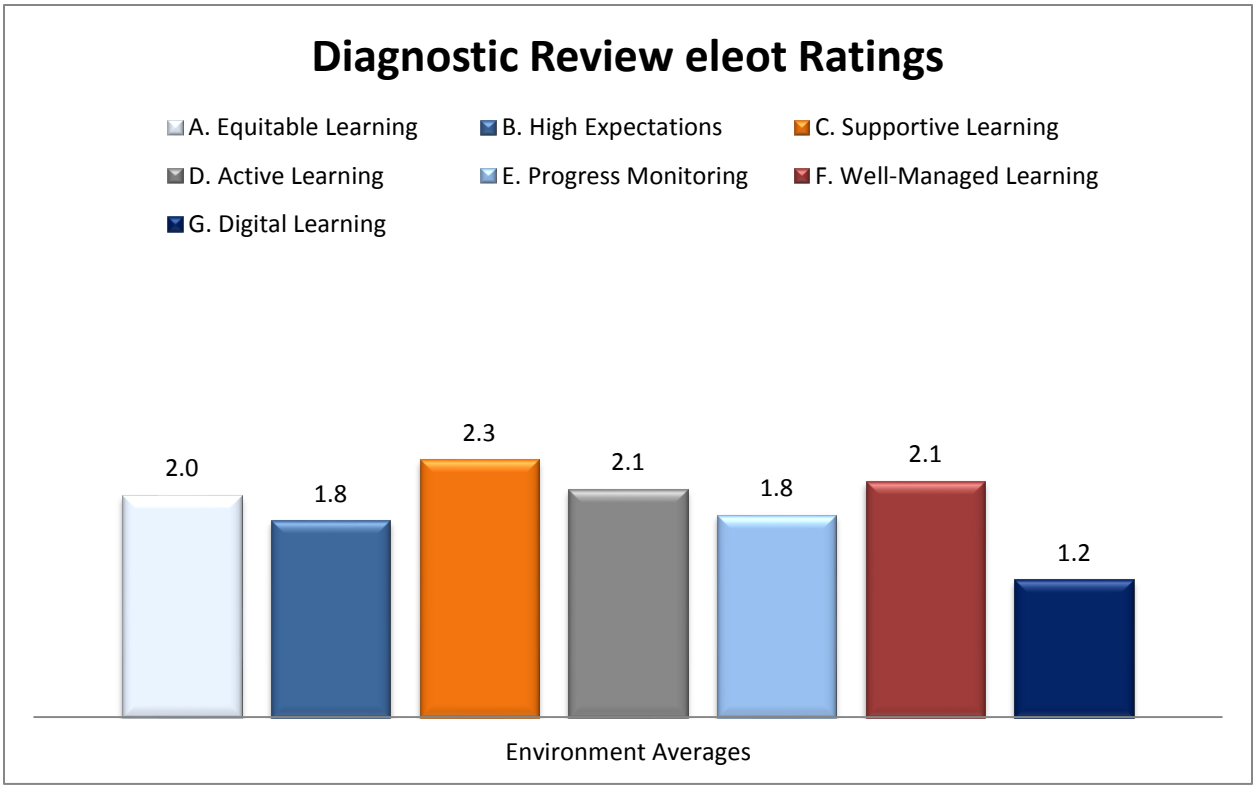
The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably so that the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning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

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

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) Results

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

Every member of the Diagnostic Review Team was eleot certified and passed a certification exam that established inter-rater reliability. Team members conducted 14 observations during the Diagnostic Review process, including all core content learning environments. The following charts provide aggregate data across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments.



A. Equitable Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
A1	1.5	Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs.	71%	14%	7%	7%
A2	2.4	Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support.	7%	50%	36%	7%
A3	2.7	Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner.	0%	36%	57%	7%
A4	1.4	Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions.	71%	21%	7%	0%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**2.0**				

B. High Expectations Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
B1	1.7	Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher.	43%	50%	0%	7%
B2	1.9	Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable.	36%	43%	14%	7%
B3	1.6	Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work.	57%	29%	7%	7%
B4	1.8	Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing).	43%	43%	7%	7%
B5	1.8	Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning.	36%	57%	0%	7%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**1.8**				

C. Supportive Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
C1	2.0	Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful.	21%	64%	7%	7%
C2	2.1	Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback).	36%	29%	29%	7%
C3	2.6	Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers, and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks.	0%	50%	43%	7%
C4	2.6	Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher.	14%	14%	64%	7%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**2.3**				

D. Active Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
D1	2.1	Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and teacher predominate.	29%	43%	21%	7%
D2	1.9	Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences.	43%	29%	21%	7%
D3	2.2	Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities.	21%	43%	29%	7%
D4	2.0	Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments.	50%	7%	36%	7%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**2.1**				

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
E1	1.6	Learners monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored.	57%	21%	21%	0%
E2	1.9	Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work.	36%	43%	14%	7%
E3	1.9	Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content.	43%	36%	14%	7%
E4	1.9	Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed.	43%	36%	14%	7%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**1.8**				

F. Well-Managed Learning Environment						
Indicators	**Average**	**Description**	**Not Observed**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Evident**	**Very Evident**
F1	2.6	Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other.	14%	21%	50%	14%
F2	2.4	Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others.	21%	29%	43%	7%
F3	1.5	Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another.	64%	29%	0%	7%
F4	2.0	Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions.	29%	50%	14%	7%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:		**2.1**				

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.	79%	14%	7%	0%
G2	1.2	Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.	93%	0%	0%	7%
G3	1.2	Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning.	93%	0%	0%	7%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale:	**1.2**					

eleot Narrative

The Diagnostic Review Team conducted 14 observations in core content classrooms and numerous informal observations in classrooms and common areas. These observations provided the team with insight into the learning process of students. Using a four-point scale, the seven learning environments' scores ranged from an overall average rating of a 1.2 in the Digital Learning Environment to a 2.3 in the Supportive Learning Environment.

The highest-rated items related to how students and teachers treated one another. In 71 percent of classrooms, for example, it was evident/very evident that "Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher" (C4). Also, in 64 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that "Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other" (F1) and "Learners are treated in a fair, clear, and consistent manner" (A3).

The Diagnostic Review Team was concerned that in the majority of classrooms most students worked on the same assignment, indicating that few students were engaged in differentiated learning activities. In the Equitable Learning Environment, for example, it was evident/very evident in 14 percent of classrooms that "Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs" (A1). Instruction was mostly teacher-directed, as it was evident/very evident in 28 percent of classrooms that "Learners' discussions/dialogues/ exchanges with each other and teacher predominate" (D1).

The Diagnostic Review Team seldom observed students monitoring their own learning or responding to teacher feedback about their learning progress. In the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment, which got a 1.8 rating, it was evident/very evident in 21 percent of classrooms that "Learners monitor their own progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored" (E1), "Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work" (E2), "Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content" (E3), and "Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed" (E4). The team viewed the lack of progress monitoring and providing students with feedback about their learning as an opportunity to improve student achievement. Also the team suggests that students be provided with exemplars of work, rubrics, and scoring guides to guide their learning.

The team was also concerned with the low level of rigor observed in most classrooms. In 14 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). Additionally, it was evident/very evident that “Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable” (B2) in 21 percent of classrooms. The final two areas that concerned the team were wasted instructional time and the lack of students using technology. The Diagnostic Review Team frequently observed students who were off task and not engaged in their learning. Instances of learners who “are actively engaged in the learning activities” (D3) were evident/very evident in 36 percent of classrooms. Collaborative learning was seldom observed, as it was evident/very evident that “Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments” (D4) in 43 percent of classrooms. Students rarely used technology to learn at high levels. For instance, it was evident/very evident in seven percent of classrooms that student use digital tools/technology “to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning” (G1), “to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning” (G2), and “to communicate and work collaboratively for learning” (G3).

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, implement, and monitor a continuous improvement process (e.g., use of data to inform decision-making, Charter School Plan updated based on current and emerging data, professional development based on data, data-driven decision-making, ongoing analysis of current and emerging data) that improves instructional and organizational capacity and produces measurable results that demonstrate high levels of student learning. (Standard 1.3)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

The student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, showed that the percentage of students who scored at 70 or above on the End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) decreased from 32.5 percent in 2017-2018 to 30.0 percent in 2018-2019 in Algebra I, and decreased from 26.2 percent to 25 percent in Biology. The percentage in English I scores stayed the same from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019 at 27.5 percent. U.S. History was the only content area that showed an increase. All content areas were at least 20 percentage points below the state average with English I 28.8 percentage points below the state average. The graduation rate increased slightly from 59.1 percent in 2018 to 63.5 percent in 2019, although the school rate was significantly below the state graduation rate of 86.1 percent.

Stakeholder Interview Data:

Stakeholder interview data indicated the school lacked a robust continuous improvement process that addresses both schoolwide and classroom-level practices. The team found little evidence of data-driven decisions that positively affect student learning. Interview data showed that teachers typically taught in isolation with autonomy and seldom received feedback to help them improve their practices and student learning. Also at the classroom level, stakeholder interview data showed that teachers taught four blocks per day with no planning time. The only planning time essentially occurred on short Fridays, and that time often was used for other meetings. Beyond the School Improvement Team (SIT) meetings, the Diagnostic Review Team found no interdisciplinary planning or professional learning community (PLC) meetings. The school added some supports (e.g., academic interventionist, in-school suspension) this year to target the school's academic goals.

Interview data revealed that most stakeholders could not articulate the details of a school improvement plan. Some staff members were aware of the four goals that were developed to address the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school designation; however, the team found no ongoing data-driven decision-making practices that informed instructional and schoolwide practices.

The Charter School Board received reports (e.g., financial, operations, technology, marketing, facilities) about different areas of the school at each monthly meeting. The team found no evidence that a process integrating all school systems was established.

Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:

Stakeholder survey data were mixed and did not indicate that a robust continuous improvement process was established and fully implemented with quality and fidelity. Survey data, for example, showed that 82 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “Our school has a continuous improvement process based on data, goals, actions and measures of growth” (C5). On the other hand, only 54 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school has a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and using data” (G3). Also, 72 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school leaders monitor data related to school continuous improvement goals” (G5).

Interview data showed parents were rarely involved or informed of the school improvement process, yet 86 percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school has established goals and a plan for improving student learning” (C3), and 78 percent agreed/strongly agreed that “Our school communicates effectively about the school’s goals and activities” (D5). Likewise, while interview data did not show that progress toward reaching improvement goals was systematically communicated to parents, survey data showed that 74 percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school ensures that all staff members monitor and report the achievement of school goals” (G1). Collectively these data, along with interview and student performance data and a review of documents revealed the school lacked an articulated, robust, and fully functioning school improvement process that includes a system to seamlessly use data to make schoolwide decisions that improve teaching and learning.

Documents and Artifacts:

A review of documents uncovered a Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) state plan for special projects that primarily contained a justification for CSI funding, but the Diagnostic Review Team did not find a school improvement plan. In addition, another important part of a continuous improvement process is professional development, yet the school did not provide the team with a professional development plan or process that addressed staff needs. A review of documents (e.g., SIT meeting minutes, notes from other meetings such as faculty or curriculum) did not reveal evidence that data were consistently used to inform decision-making either schoolwide or at the classroom level. While student data (Measures of Academic Progress [MAP] assessment, EOCEP, graduation rates) were evident for specific academic areas, the team found no documents that showed how data were used to improve instruction or for systematic schoolwide decision-making. Although an Academic Monitoring Plan that contained the names of students who scored a grade of 61 percent or less was provided to the Diagnostic Review Team, a review of documents and interview data failed to uncover action steps designed to assist identified students. The school, however, did provide an academic in-house time during the day and after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays and on some Fridays. The team found the schedule and the names of students who were identified to attend, but no specific activities were identified to improve student learning. In addition, the team found no monitoring plans for the academic in-house program.

Improvement Priority #2

Implement specific actions and instructional activities to promote creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving. Develop a process to use data in order to monitor the implementation of these and other high-yield instructional strategies and to measure their impact on student learning. (Standard 2.2)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

The student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, showed that high-yield instructional strategies were not consistently used to improve student learning. The student performance data were used to determine Improvement Priority 2.

Classroom Observation Data:

Classroom observation data, as previously discussed, showed that instruction in most classrooms was teacher-directed. It was evident/very evident in 28 percent of classrooms, for example, that “Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and teacher predominate” (D1). Also, the Diagnostic Review Team noted that most instruction was low-level and lacked rigor. Instances of learners who “engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)” (B4) were evident/very evident in 14 percent of classrooms. Further, it was evident/very evident in 21 percent of classrooms that “Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable” (B2).

Instruction generally was not designed to meet individual learning needs or based on formative assessment data. In 14 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that “Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs” (A1). Instances of learners who “make connections from content to real-life experiences” (D2) were evident/very evident in 28 percent of classrooms. Additionally, it was evident/very evident in 36 percent of classrooms that “Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities” (D3).

Stakeholder Interview Data:

Stakeholder interview data revealed that core content area teachers and vocational teachers rarely collaborated about instructional planning. In addition, interview data and a review of documents revealed the lack of a process for providing job-embedded professional development about high-yield instructional strategies and expectations to transfer new learning into classroom practices. Interview data also indicated that the school did not establish a robust and ongoing cycle of observation, feedback, and continuous support to improve individual teacher instructional practices and schoolwide instructional capacity. Also, staff member interview data indicated that teachers were not sufficiently trained to maximize class time. The Diagnostic Review Team was concerned that teachers were mostly on their own to improve their instructional practices. Further, interview data showed that teachers shared that they did not have time to seek professional development or plan and collaborate with colleagues, due to teaching all day without a planning period. Interview data revealed that one professional development session addressed project-based learning. Finally, interview data also showed the perception that Horry County Schools would not allow staff members to attend their professional development sessions, as they were allocated their own professional development monies.

Interview data indicated the lack of a process to continuously collect, monitor, and adjust instruction based on current and emerging data. While teachers submitted weekly grade checks as part of the process to identify students who need additional assistance, the team found no evidence that formative assessment data were used consistently to inform instruction. Students who were identified as needing additional academic assistance were pulled from their Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes and given small-group assistance called the academic in-house plan. Although the academic in-house and the afterschool tutoring times on Tuesdays,

Thursdays, and some Fridays were offered, documents and interview data failed to uncover action steps designed to assist identified students. The team found little data evaluating the effectiveness of these programs.

Class sizes were the largest in the academic classrooms, with CTE and special education resource teachers having smaller numbers of students.

Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:

Student survey data indicated that 79 percent of students agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “In my school, the purpose and expectations are clearly explained to me and my family” (C2), which was not consistent with student performance and classroom observation data that indicated a lack of clearly defined academic expectations.

Survey data showed mixed responses about meeting the learning needs of students. For example, 78 percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All of my child’s teachers meet his/her learning needs by individualizing instruction” (E4), yet 91 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “All teachers in our school personalize instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs of students” (E2). Also, 47 percent of students agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All of my teachers change their teaching to meet my learning needs” (E9). Seventy-eight percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “All of my child’s teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities” (E3). Sixty-eight percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that “All of my teachers use a variety of teaching methods and learning activities to help me develop the skills I will need to succeed” (E8).

Survey data indicated that 91 percent of 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). Sixty-four percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that “My school provides me with challenging curriculum and learning experiences” (E2). Students also reported that progress monitoring and feedback to guide their learning was not a consistently implemented practice. For example, 65 percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that “All of my teachers use tests, projects, presentations, and portfolios to check my understanding of what was taught” (E11).

Documents and Artifacts:

A review of the academic in-house and afterschool time showed that on Tuesdays and Thursdays and some Fridays, the school offered help for students who needed additional assistance. The Diagnostic Review Team was unable to find exit criteria for the afterschool time, the specific learning activities that were planned, or evidence of effectiveness.

No formal or informal plans were provided to the team showing school improvement efforts or professional development activities for staff members. While the school collected data from a variety of sources, the team found no evidence that action steps were developed from these sources to improve student learning. The team also reviewed an Academic Monitoring Plan that listed the names of students who earned a grade of 61 percent or below; however, the team found no action steps associated with student needs.

A review of lesson plans submitted to the Diagnostic Review Team showed no cross-curricular (i.e., CTE and core content) projects. Classroom assignments frequently lacked rigor. Students were seldom provided rubrics, scoring guides, or exemplars of proficient work to guide their learning. Additionally, there was no evidence of teacher feedback provided to students on the examples of student work reviewed by the team.

Improvement Priority #3

Establish a professional learning process (e.g., ongoing, job-embedded professional development) that provides the structure and articulates the expectations for transferring learning into practice. Ensure the process provides ongoing collaboration (e.g., professional learning communities that include both CTE and core content teachers) that improves instructional and organizational capacity across the school. (Standard 3.2)

Evidence:

Student Performance Data:

The student performance data, as detailed in an addendum to this report, showed the school did not sufficiently establish a professional learning process that translated into increased instructional capacity and high levels of student learning. The student performance data were used to determine Improvement Priority 3.

Stakeholder Interview Data:

Interview data showed staff members were unaware of a schoolwide professional development process (e.g., professional development plan, job-embedded professional development, expectations to implement new learning into classroom practices) and could not identify professional development opportunities available to them. Interview data showed that teachers attended a few professional development sessions (e.g., how to use newly installed LED projectors, project-based learning). Interview data showed some staff members reported they could request approval to attend professional development but added that finding time to identify and attend the sessions proved to be problematic. The interview data indicated that staff members received little feedback on their instructional practices beyond the state-mandated evaluation system. Most staff members expressed the desire to have some collaborative time to meet and discuss instructional and interdisciplinary strategies; however, no time was available during the day. The only time in the weekly schedule was the shortened day each Friday, but interview data revealed those days were often used for other issues such as staff, SIT, and department meetings, which rarely addressed professional learning. The data showed staff members reported having few opportunities to build their instructional capacity through professional development because of the current school structure. The Diagnostic Review Team suggests that staff members be provided specific professional development with ongoing support and feedback, as well as coaching, to improve instructional practices.

Stakeholder Perception/Experience Data:

Stakeholder survey data showed mixed results regarding collaboration among staff members. For example, 70 percent of students agreed/strongly agreed that “In my school, teachers work together to improve student learning” (C5) and 82 percent of parents agreed/strongly agreed that “All of my child's teachers work as a team to help my child learn” (E5). Yet, only 64 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed that “All teachers in our school participate in collaborative learning communities that meet both informally and formally across grade levels and content areas” (E9). Additionally, 54 percent of staff members agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, “Our school's leaders support an innovative and collaborative culture” (D3). Seventy-two 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).

Documents and Artifacts:

A review of documents and artifacts provided to the Diagnostic Review Team uncovered no professional development plan. Also the team found that data were rarely used to identify the instructional needs of teachers as a way to increase their instructional capacity. Interview data showed that teachers, typically, were on their own to seek professional development without guidance from their supervisor. The Friday meetings generally did not include data-driven instructional decisions to improve student learning.

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:

The current school facility, according to interview data, was a vast improvement over the previous building, and stakeholders expressed appreciation for the new environment.

The Diagnostic Review Team observed that staff members and leaders demonstrated support for the school concept and cared about their students. Parents were generally supportive of the school, and the Charter Board echoed that support. Interview data showed students generally reported that they liked the small school atmosphere. Students usually were respectful of teachers, with some exceptions.

At the time of the Diagnostic Review, the school was focusing on its graduation rate because that was a primary factor in being labeled a Comprehensive Support and Improvement school. The school was helping students recover credits to increase the graduation rate. The school provided virtual classes and afterschool tutoring to assist students who were falling behind in current classes and in the total class credits they needed to graduate.

Project-based learning was a prevalent teaching method in Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. The school also offered incentives (e.g., member of pit crew, money, A-B honor roll, early release for lunch) for students to be successful and to demonstrate effort. Teachers in CTE classes actively engaged students in hands-on projects.

Each day, the school emailed or called parents or guardians of students who were absent. The school used several forms of communication (e.g., fliers, call system) to notify parents of upcoming or current events at school.

Continuous Improvement Process:

The Diagnostic Review Team found the school lacked a robust schoolwide and classroom-level continuous improvement process. In addition, some important aspects of a continuous improvement process (e.g., professional development process; data-driven decision-making at class and school level; stakeholder involvement; collaborative leadership; needs assessment process; cycle of observation, feedback and ongoing support to improve instructional practices) were missing or not fully functioning.

Interview data revealed little collaboration occurred between academic and CTE teachers. The school had SIT meetings, but those meetings were mostly informative rather than collaborative. In addition, the administration primarily controlled the allocation of funds, and most all decision-making took place with little stakeholder input.

School leaders hired extra personnel (i.e., academic interventionist, in-school suspension person) to improve ACT and EOCEP scores, but school leaders had not adequately addressed the lack of student engagement, differentiated instruction, data-informed instruction, and other essential aspects of an effective school.

The team found that staff morale was low across the school, and interview data revealed that they perceived themselves as disenfranchised and isolated. The Diagnostic Review Team suggests school leaders create a collaborative environment where all stakeholders are heard and involved and mutual respect exists.

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
Mike Hurt	Mike Hurt has over 35 years of experience as an educator. He served as teacher, principal, personnel director, supervisor of instruction, transportation and facilities director, and associate superintendent. As a principal, Mike was awarded the Kentucky Media Association's Principal of the Year Award. In addition, his middle school was identified as a Kentucky Middle School to Watch. Mike has been an invited speaker in many districts across the country and was a Fulbright participant, spending several weeks in China writing curriculum. He led scholastic audit teams in Kentucky for almost 10 years, providing feedback and recommendations to low performing schools. Most recently, Mike served as a consultant, assisting in opening a state-of-the-art career and technical center for secondary students.
Tina Jamison	Tina Jamison is an Education Associate on the School Improvement Team in the Office of School Transformation at the South Carolina Department of Education. Tina has over 23 years of experience in education, including nine years as a high school and middle school English teacher. Tina has served as the Director of the South Carolina High Schools that Work and the Making Middle Grades Work State Director. Currently, she is co-director for the South Carolina Schools to Watch program and is on the Board of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform.
David Long	David has worked in the education field for 23 years. He began his career as a counselor at Midlands Technical College and then became director of a college and career readiness program for Charleston County School District. David has also coached high school girls' basketball at three different schools over the last 20 years. Currently, David serves as part of the School Improvement Team at the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). His main responsibility is managing the School Improvement Grant, but he also assists with other office initiatives such as Cognia Diagnostic and Progress Monitoring Reviews. David also manages the School Improvement Advisory Board. He is completing his fourth year at SCDE.
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 schools to assist with data management through PowerSchool to ensure data are accurate and with Power Scheduling to ensure student schedules lead to graduation and a college or career pathway. She also assists with building data walls to facilitate teachers' use of data to inform instruction. 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.

Addenda

Student Performance Data

Percentages of students scoring at 70 or above on the End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019)

Content Area	% School (18-19)	% State (18-19)	% School (17-18)	% State (17-18)	% School (16-17)	% State (16-17)
Algebra I	30.0	54.9	32.5	60.5	N/A	N/A
English I	27.5	56.3	27.5	53.9	N/A	N/A
Biology	25.0	54.4	26.2	59.5	N/A	N/A
U.S. History	25.0	47.7	16.7	48.9	N/A	N/A

Percentage of students meeting Platinum, Gold, or Silver National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) at school and in the state (2017-2018, 2018-2019)

	% School (18-19)	% State (18-19)	% School (17-18)	% State (17-18)
Platinum	0	3.0	0	2.5
Gold	3.2	10.2	0	6.8
Silver	45.2	50.5	29.3	54.

Graduation Rates

	School 2019	State 2019	School 2018	State 2018	School 2017	State 2017
Graduation Rate	63.5	86.1	59.1	81.0	43.9	84.6

ACT average score for students in grade 11 (2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019)

Content Area	Composite School (18-19)	Composite State (18-19)	Composite School (17-18)	Composite State (17-18)	Composite School (16-17)	Composite State (16-17)
Composite Avg Scale Score	14.3	18.6	13.9	19.0	14.1	18.7
English	11.5	17.5	13.3	18.0	12.0	17.5
Math	15.5	18.5	14.8	18.8	15.7	18.6
Reading	13.0	19.0	13.1	19.3	14.3	19.1
Science	16.5	18.7	13.9	19.2	13.7	18.9

Schedule

Sunday, March 8, 2020

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

Monday, March 9, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
8:00 a.m.	Team arrives at school	School Office	Diagnostic Review Team Members
8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Interviews / Classroom Observations / Stakeholder Interviews / Artifact Review	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Team returns to hotel		
5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Team Work Session #2	Hotel Conference Room	Diagnostic Review Team Members

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

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

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Time	Event	Where	Who
8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Final Team Work Session	School	Diagnostic Review Team Members