



The Villages Charter School

The Villages, Florida

February 22-25, 2022

Corporation Accreditation Engagement Review

218877

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Cognia Continuous Improvement System

Cognia defines continuous improvement as “an embedded behavior rooted in an institution’s culture that constantly focuses on conditions, processes, and practices to improve teaching and learning.” The Cognia Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic, fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. Cognia expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions. The findings of the Engagement Review Team are organized by the ratings from the Cognia Performance Standards Diagnostic and the Levels of Impact within the i3 Rubric: Initiate, Improve, and Impact.

Initiate

The first phase of the improvement journey is to **Initiate** actions to cause and achieve better results. The elements of the Initiate phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Engagement and Implementation. Engagement is the level of involvement and frequency of stakeholders in the desired practices, processes, or programs within the institution. Implementation is the process of monitoring and adjusting the administration of desired practices, processes, or programs for quality and fidelity. Standards identified within Initiate should become the focus of the institution’s continuous improvement journey toward the collection, analysis, and use of data to measure the results of engagement and implementation. Enhancing the capacity of the institution in meeting these Standards has the greatest potential impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improve

The second phase of the improvement journey is to gather and evaluate the results of actions to **Improve**. The elements of the **Improve** phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Results and Sustainability. Results come from 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 (a minimum of three years). Standards identified within Improve are those in which the institution is using results to inform their continuous improvement processes and to demonstrate over time the achievement of goals. The institution should continue to analyze and use results to guide improvements in student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Impact

The third phase of achieving improvement is **Impact**, where desired practices are deeply entrenched. The elements of the **Impact** phase are defined within the Level of Impact of Embeddedness. Embeddedness is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the institution. Standards identified within Impact are those in which the institution has demonstrated ongoing growth and improvement over time and has embedded the practices within its culture. Institutions should continue to support and sustain these practices that yield results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Cognia Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal in leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research-based standards, the Cognia Accreditation Process examines the whole institution—the program, the cultural context, and the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of learners. Through the accreditation process, highly skilled and trained Engagement Review Teams gather first-hand evidence and information pertinent to evaluating an institution’s performance against the research based Cognia Performance Standards. Review teams use these Standards to assess the quality of learning environments to gain valuable insights and target improvements in teaching and learning. Cognia provides Standards that are tailored for all education providers so that the benefits of accreditation are universal across the education community.

Through a comprehensive review of evidence and information, our experts gain a broad understanding of institution quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to institutions, which helps to focus and guide each institution’s improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also are obtained through interviews, surveys, and additional activities.

Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results

The Cognia Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution’s effectiveness based on the Cognia Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity**, and **Resource Capacity**. Results are reported within four ranges identified by color. The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Insufficient	Identifies areas with insufficient evidence or evidence that indicated little or no activity leading toward improvement
Yellow	Initiating	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Improving	Pinpoints quality practices that are improving and meet the Standards
Blue	Impacting	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that positively impact the institution

Under each Standard statement is a row indicating the scores related to the elements of Cognia’s i3 Rubric. The rubric is scored from one (1) to four (4). A score of four on any element indicates high performance, while a score of one or two indicates an element in need of improvement. The following table provides the key to the abbreviations of the elements of the i3 Rubric.

Element	Abbreviation
Engagement	EN
Implementation	IM
Results	RE
Sustainability	SU
Embeddedness	EM

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 Standards										Rating
1.1	The organization commits to a documented purpose that defines beliefs about learning, including expectations for the organization.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the organization’s purpose.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.3	The organization engages in a continuous improvement process that leverages its performance and future success based on documented evidence.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.7	The organization markets and promotes itself through processes that are transparent and reflect the organization’s purpose.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.8	Organizational leaders demonstrate business acumen.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
1.9	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness and professional practice.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
1.10	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the organization’s purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

Leadership Capacity Standards										Rating
1.11	The organization provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
1.12	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making for improvement.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.13	The organization implements a documented quality assurance process for its institutions to ensure organizational effectiveness and student learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

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 Standards										Rating
2.1	The organization ensures learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning expectations.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.2	The organization develops and implements equitable, relevant, and targeted programs and/or services to meet the needs of its institutions.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.3	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, relevancy and collaborative problem-solving.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
2.4	The organization's learning culture promotes the development of attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.5	The organization has a formal structure to ensure learners are supported during their educational experiences.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.6	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	

2.7	The organization implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.8	Educators implement instructional strategies that ensure learners' needs are met and that learners are engaged in deeper learning experiences.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
2.9	Learning progress is reliably assessed, and results are used to update curriculum, program services, and instructional practices deployed to educators.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.10	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.11	The organization implements a process to continuously assess its programs, services, and organizational conditions to improve its overall effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	

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 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 Standards										Rating
3.1	The organization plans and delivers professional learning to improve the organization's learning environment and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.2	The organization's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.3	The organization provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.4	The organization attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the organization's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

3.5	The organization integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.6	The organization provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of learners, staff, and the organization.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
3.7	The organization demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the organization's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.8	The organization allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the organization's identified needs and priorities to improve organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	

Assurances

Assurances are statements that accredited institutions must confirm they are meeting. The Assurance statements are based on the type of institution, and the responses are confirmed by the Accreditation Engagement Review Team. Institutions are expected to meet all Assurances and are expected to correct any deficiencies in unmet Assurances.

Assurances Met		
YES	NO	If No, List Unmet Assurances by Number Below
X		

Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality®

Cognia will review the results of the Accreditation Engagement Review to make a final determination concerning accreditation status, including the appropriate next steps for your institution in response to these findings. Cognia provides the Index of Education Quality (IEQ) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. This formative tool for improvement identifies areas of success and areas in need of focus. The IEQ comprises the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: Leadership Capacity, Learning Capacity, and Resource Capacity. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provide information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria. Institutions should review the IEQ in relation to the findings from the review in the areas of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. An IEQ score below 250 indicates that the institution has several areas within the Initiate level and should focus its improvement efforts on those Standards within that level. An IEQ in the range of 225–300 indicates that the institution has several Standards within the Improve level and is using results to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate sustainability. An IEQ of 275 and above indicates the institution is beginning to reach the Impact level and is engaged in practices that are sustained over time and are becoming ingrained in the culture of the institution.

Below is the average (range) of all Cognia Improvement Network (CIN) institutions evaluated for accreditation in the last five years. The range of the annual CIN IEQ average is presented to enable you to benchmark your results with other institutions in the network.

Institution IEQ	380.78	CIN 5 Year IEQ Range	278.34–283.33
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Insights from the Review

The Engagement 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, with examples of programs and practices, and suggestions for the institution’s continuous improvement efforts. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide contextualized information from the team’s deliberations and analysis of the practices, processes, and programs of the institution organized by the levels of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. The narrative also provides the next steps to guide the institution’s improvement journey in its 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 Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on its current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust its plans to continuously strive for improvement.

While conducting the remote corporate system Cognia Engagement Review for The Villages Charter School, the team identified several themes that demonstrate strengths and areas for further consideration to guide the improvement journey.

The corporate system has embedded the expectations of all federal, state, local and accrediting agencies into their policies, procedures and practices. The organizational chart includes a board, chief executive officer (CEO), central office administrators, school administrators, support staff and teachers. Applying policies and procedures for operating the for-profit corporate system running one public workplace charter school (Kindergarten - 12th grade), the corporate system provides governance, monitoring, resources and support. Sumpter Public School System monitors the charter and provides additional governance in accordance with the approved Workplace Charter Application. They also provide support to the teachers and students as inservice opportunities and speech therapists. Standard operating procedures have been developed for each school level and are found in the elementary, middle and high school handbooks. As defined in job descriptions, school leaders are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school using these handbooks. The board meeting minutes indicate that they meet regularly to review the effectiveness of policies, procedures, financial needs, staff needs, facility needs, data charts and more. It was mentioned that a “silly rule” committee helps identify those policies needing an update. All groups interviewed explained their shared responsibility to follow the policies and procedures consistently and routinely. Thus, the team found most performance standards at the embedded level. As the corporate system continues to grow, the team encourages leaders to protect and sustain these highly effective operational practices throughout the institution.

The corporate system’s staff, stakeholders and partners fiercely uphold the mission and core values. During the institution’s continuous improvement presentation, the team was made aware of the corporate system’s journey to embed itself as a workplace charter school within the residential community, The Villages Corporation. Part of the arrangement includes a commitment to the same core values of The Villages residents such as hospitality, hard work, stewardship and creativity. The corporate system’s mission is to provide quality learning opportunities that promote personal responsibility and inspire children's thirst for knowledge. As a workplace charter school, all children

whose parents work for companies that partner with The Villages Corporation may apply to enroll. Parents expressed their appreciation for the ability to bring their children to this highly rated school while they work nearby. When those participating in interview groups were asked the strengths of the corporate system charter school, they all discussed how upholding the core values has created a school-wide culture and a positive learning environment that permeates through all educational levels. Additionally, leaders have attracted and retained highly effective staff who support the mission and core values. Many central office staff, school administrators and teachers have been working for the corporate system for over ten years, some as long as eighteen years. The consistency of staff performing and modeling the expectations helps embed the mission and core values as new staff and students join the school. As the corporate system's school continues to grow, it would benefit from sustaining its culture by modeling the mission and core values to new staff, students and parents.

The corporate system has not established a leadership development program. It implements quality supervision, evaluation, mentoring and coaching programs; however, it has not yet established a leadership development program for teachers and other internal stakeholders. The corporate system abides by performance expectations with job descriptions, the Marzano evaluation system and improvement training. It is also known for encouraging shared leadership and giving staff at all levels enough autonomy to efficiently complete a task. During interviews with internal stakeholders, it was evident that the corporate system assembled a team of professionals who have "grown" from being high-performing teachers into high-performing school-based and corporate-based leaders. This informal leadership development process ensures that qualified staff are available to assist in filling a temporary or permanent leadership role. The corporate system would benefit from a structured leadership development program added to its mentoring and coaching program. This program may include peer observations and job shadowing administrators in addition to coaching and mentoring by experienced administrators. Students are provided leadership roles by serving on the student council. Other students indicated taking leadership roles in many clubs and sports. Students interviewed felt comfortable contacting teachers and administrators with concerns. The corporate system would benefit by surveying students to receive their feedback on topics as they do parents and teachers. Surveys provide students with an opportunity to give anonymous feedback. Parents participate in the Buffalo PRIDE, a parent organization with multiple functions. Some parents interviewed currently serve or had served on this committee. As part of the charter application, parents are expected to volunteer time, services or information to help the school. They have volunteered for school events, committees and fundraising. A community resident boasted of the many leadership and support roles the residents provide, such as sponsoring two booster clubs, judging student competitions and more. The corporate system actively builds relationships and partnerships with agencies, companies and service providers in the community. The team encourages the corporate system to sustain these positive relationships and partnerships and to serve as advocates in the school community.

The corporate system implements a curriculum at all grade levels that is based on high expectations to prepare learners for the next level. The Villages Charter School's academic culture is strong. The school has maintained an "A" school grade for 18 years plus a 100% graduation rate. The school offers a complete schedule of required courses for grades K-12 and a wide range of offerings for high school students. Instruction includes developing a student's content knowledge by direct instruction, project-based learning, personalized support/tutoring during the day, digital learning videos of lessons for those home ill and more. All staff meets to ensure the curriculum meets the vertical and horizontal needs of the children. The focus is to help each student stay on track for success at the next level and graduate with a high school diploma and options for college credit. Interventionists were hired to focus on gaps in student learning that would negatively impact their ability to graduate. The corporate system provides students with a college and career-ready program beginning in middle school. Counselors work with students and parents to help select academic and career tracks that best suit the student's goals.

Academies were established in many technical career fields that provide students related technical certificates used for employment. High school students explained that they can choose a mix of courses, giving them a chance to “try” a subject in a career path to determine their interest. Central office staff described partnerships with technical and academic colleges offering students college credit for courses taken. One student’s goal is to achieve an associate degree by the time he graduates high school. Teachers model core values daily to assist in maintaining a healthy and safe learning environment. Students strongly agree that the location of the school and the safety measures using identification badges on lanyards and strict procedures of non-school staff entering the campus help them feel safe every day. Teachers described the process used to “adopt” a curriculum package. It begins by acquiring a copy of the new Florida Curriculum Framework for the course. Staff conduct extensive research on all products available. They want to ensure the product provides the rigor, application and assessments needed in their subject areas. Once the product is chosen and purchased, all teachers of that subject or grade level collaborate to further dissect the material adding content, practice work, additional quizzes, projects and more to ensure that it will aid the student’s ability to understand and learn that material. The process is thorough and embedded in their practices. As enrollment grows, leaders are encouraged to sustain the practices of selecting and further developing curriculum materials to maintain its strong academic culture for students’ success.

The corporate system implements a strategic planning model for continuous improvement based on the collection, analysis and use of multiple data sources. When discussing the corporation’s planning and decision-making process, board members and the CEO referenced reviewing data provided through an established chain of command. Each central office staff member performs many functions for the corporate system and the school. School-based principals and assistant principals perform shared leadership roles as well. All internal school-based stakeholders follow a procedure of collecting, analyzing, and using data daily to guide students’ learning, close any size gap in a student’s progress, improve curriculum content, improve assessments, and more. Routinely school data are shared with central office administrators and reviewed for trends, best practices, and ideas for improvement. The collaboration at all levels is laser-focused on helping each student succeed. The collective data guide the development of both corporate system and school-based improvement goals. It was explained that some improvement goals are addressed immediately. Other goals are included in the school’s annual improvement plan in accordance with expectations in the Workplace Charter Application. Board members and the CEO discussed the twenty-year strategic plan for the corporate system. Part of that plan is the development of a new school that will allow expansion at all levels. Existing and new buildings will be used for the preschool program, two elementary school levels, two middle school levels and one larger high school. Central office staff shared their part in these plans working on budgets, grants, food service, technology, facilities, human resources, procurement and more. The CEO shared a comprehensive data report developed to annually review the school’s data for the year and over multiple years. The board feels well informed and confident in having the information and data needed to make important decisions about the future of the corporate system and the school. As school enrollment continues to grow, the corporate system would benefit from assessing the effectiveness of giving multiple roles to the central office and school-based administrators.

In conclusion, the team thanks the board members, CEO, central office administrators, school-based administrators, teachers, students, and parents for their participation in the Cognia Engagement Review process. The Villages Charter School has achieved much success and will achieve greater success as the leaders continue striving to provide a world-class school using quality improvement practices.

Next Steps

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

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the areas for improvement identified by the Engagement 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.
- Continue the improvement journey.

Team Roster

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

Team Member Name	Brief Biography (Lead Evaluator Only)
Valerie Sommerville, Lead Evaluator	Valerie Sommerville serves Cognia™ as a Lead Evaluator for system, school, corporation, ESA, digital learning school, religious-based school and early learning school Engagement Reviews. Valerie conducts Readiness Reviews for applicant schools, systems and corporations. Valerie holds a Master’s in Education degree from the University of Central Florida (Florida) and a bachelor’s degree in home economics from Montclair University (New Jersey) with a minor in mathematics. She has 44 years of educational experience teaching at an inner-city middle school, a suburban middle school, a suburban high school, an adult special education program, and postsecondary continuing education. Her administrative positions with Orange County School District (Florida) were serving as a district senior administrator and as an assistant director at two Orange Technical Colleges - Mid Florida Campus (Orlando) and Winter Garden Campus (Winter Garden).
Pilar Fernandez Rives Perez, Principal	
Donna Grant, STEM Coordinator	
Milton Zuniga, School Administrator	

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