Accreditation & Accountability in support of K-12 Improvement

Jake Goldsmith, Vice President, Regional Services
Tony Siddall, Senior Director, Regional Services
What We’ll Cover Today

- Who is Cognia
- What is Accreditation
- Accreditation & Accountability
- Building Coherence
Our Vision

To impact and inspire education providers to advance and enable pathways for success for all learners

Our Mission

To serve as a trusted partner in advancing learning
History At-a-Glance

1895
NCA CASI
SACS CASI

1933
NSSE

1983
Advanced
Systems in
Measurement
and Evaluation

2000
Advanced
Systems
becomes
Measured
Progress

2006
NCA CASI, SACS
CASI & NSSE
become
AdvancED

2008
AdvancED
acquires CITA

2018
AdvancED &
Measured
Progress merge

2019
AdvancED &
Measured Progress
become Cognia

2023 & Beyond
Continuous
Improvement
Journey
The network

125 years of knowledge and expertise in continuous improvement

36,000 schools and districts

92 countries

The world’s largest accreditation and improvement network
Continuous Improvement

“An embedded set of behaviors rooted in an institution’s culture that constantly focuses on conditions, processes and practices to improve teaching and learning.

-Cognia Self Assessment Workbook
A Multi-Year Cycle of Continuous Improvement

1. Self-Assessment
   - Participate in orientation and training from Cognia
   - Reflect and collaborate on your school's current status
   - Administer Cognia Culture and Climate Survey
   - Identify, collect, and analyze meaningful evidence and data
   - Complete Cognia Self-Assessment Workbook
   - Complete Cognia Diagnostics and Assurances

2. Engagement
   - Cognia evaluators schedule the Leadership Overview Presentation, review submitted evidence, and rate Performance Standards
   - Following evaluation, you’ll receive an Engagement Review Report that details Cognia’s findings, highlights your noteworthy practices, and identifies areas for improvement
   - Cognia Global Commission confirms that the findings in the report demonstrate your institution’s commitment and quality and confers your accreditation

3. Progress
   - Cognia evaluators schedule follow-up for your institution to assess the status of your continuous improvement efforts
   - Receive continued collaboration and guidance from your Cognia team
   - Toward the middle of your accreditation term, complete the institution’s part of the Progress Report, describing your improvements in the areas outlined in your Engagement Review Report
Regional K–12 accreditation is a private, not-for-profit system of voluntary self-regulation carried out by the education profession to help improve practices and results.

Accreditation is a rigorous, multi-year process in which school and district leaders work with teams of peer reviewers to demonstrate that their schools meet or exceed standards set by the profession, which are based on research about what helps improve school and student performance.

- *The Role of Regional Accreditation and Accountability Systems in Improving K-12 Education, Cognia 2022*
A Standards-Based Process

30 **Standards** Organized in Four **Key Characteristics**

**CULTURE OF LEARNING:** the institution’s focus on the challenges, joys, and opportunities for learning, and the coherence with its mission and vision

**LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING:** the responsibility of an institution’s leaders to influence and impact all aspects of the institution in positive ways

**ENGAGEMENT OF LEARNING:** the inclusion of all learners in the learning process, and their development of confidence and love of learning

**GROWTH IN LEARNING:** the growth of learners in the programs and curricula provided by the institution and their readiness to successfully transition to next levels of learning
Self Assessment & Peer Review

Building capacity to **gather**, **analyze** and **use** evidence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather Evidence &amp; Analyze Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate Performance Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write Reflective Narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Theories of Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accreditation can help answer...

- What kinds of activities are students asked to do in the classroom, and how well do those activities align with the intended curriculum?
- What does the school do to support its lowest performing students?
- What is happening in the culture and learning environment of the school?
- How active are families in the school community?
- How are teachers hired and supported to grow professionally?
- What are school leaders doing to build the morale of teachers and staff?
- How actively are students engaged in their learning?
# Accreditation vs. Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Regional Accreditation</th>
<th>Accountability Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Root Causes</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Voluntary (ideally)</td>
<td>Compulsory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Peer-driven</td>
<td>Policy-driven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Purpose**: Continuous Improvement vs. Determine Status

**Focus**: Root Causes vs. Outcomes

**Evidence**: Holistic vs. Quantitative

**Participation**: Voluntary (ideally) vs. Compulsory

**Authority**: Peer-driven vs. Policy-driven
For accreditation to be effective, schools need to be ready and willing to invest the time in self-reflection and peer review. It will not be effective in schools or districts unwilling to abide by the rigorous process and make meaningful changes.

- The Role of Regional Accreditation and Accountability Systems in Improving K-12 Education, Cognia 2022
Building Coherence

• Maintain a clear distinction between regional accreditation and state accountability
• Set a state strategy to intentionally pair continuous improvement supports with accountability
• Improve the formative usefulness of state assessments
• Broaden the data collected (but do not attach stakes)
• Consider tiered models of support grounded in diagnostic reviews
Tiered Models of Support

Accreditation → Continuous Improvement Services → Diagnostic Improvement Review → School Turnaround Services

Intensity of Interventions

VOLUNTARY → MANDATED
Accreditation for State Education Agencies

STANDARD 5
Agency personnel embrace collegiality and collaboration in support of clients and their learners.

STANDARD 8
Leaders use data and input from a variety of sources to make decisions and model personal accountability.

STANDARD 12
The agency ensures accountability of schools, districts, and the agency regarding the implementation of state and federal policy.

STANDARD 16
The agency collects, evaluates, and responds appropriately to feedback and data for continuous improvement.

STANDARD 17
The agency partners with organizations that build the agency’s capacity to impact educational improvement.

STANDARD 22
Personnel regularly reflect on prior results, create action steps related to improvement goals, and hold themselves and others accountable for those actions.
Equity & Reciprocity
Key Standards for Equity

STANDARD 1
Leaders cultivate and sustain a culture that demonstrates respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion, and is free from bias.

STANDARD 15
Learners’ needs drive the equitable allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources.

STANDARD 16
Learners experience curriculum and instruction that emphasize the value of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and abilities.

STANDARD 17
Learners have equitable opportunities to realize their learning potential.

STANDARD 18
Learners are immersed in an environment that fosters lifelong skills including creativity, curiosity, risk taking, collaboration, and design thinking.

STANDARD 30
Learners’ progress is measured through a balanced system that includes assessment both for learning and of learning.
Improving Access to Evidence Tools
Actionable Feedback

Accreditation identifies **noteworthy practices** and surfaces **root causes**.

Specific, **forward-looking feedback** supports positive change.