Roughrider Education Services Program (RESP)

Dickinson, North Dakota

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Education Service Agency Accreditation Engagement Review 268423



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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 will be organized by the Levels of Impact within i3: Initiate, Improve, and Impact. The organization of the findings is based upon the ratings from the Standards Diagnostic and the i3 Levels of 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 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. Standards identified within Initiate should become the focus of the institution's continuous improvement journey to move toward the collection, analysis, and use of data to measure the results of engagement and implementation. A focus on enhancing the capacity of the institution in meeting the identified 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 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 (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 using results over time to demonstrate 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 the culture of the institution. Institutions should continue to support and sustain these practices that are yielding results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Cognia Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal to leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research-based standards, the 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 Cognia 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. Using these Standards, Engagement Review Teams 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 Cognia's Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: Leadership Capacity, Learning Capacity, and **Resource Capacity.** Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors. 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.

The organization commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about learning, including the expectations for the organization. EN: 4 IM: 3 RE: 2 SU: 2 EM: 3	Leadersh	nip Cap	acity Sta	andards	6							Rating
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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	Capac	ity Stan	dards								Rating
2.1		The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	4	
2.2			on identi eds asse					d service	es based	d on a	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.3		nt, and a	on imple Iligned to								Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.4		s' needs	on imple s are me							ing	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	3	EM:	3	
2.5	The organization gathers, analyzes, and uses formative and summative data to improve student learning and the delivery of programs and services.							Insufficient			
	EN:	2	IM:	1	RE:	1	SU:	1	EM:	1	
2.6	The organization implements a process to continuously assess its programs, services, and organizational conditions to improve organizational effectiveness.								Initiating		
	EN:	2	IM:	3	RE:	1	SU:	1	EM:	1	

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.

Resou	rce Capacity Standards									Rating	
3.1	The organization plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment and organizational effectiveness.								Impacting		
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
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:	4	



Resou	rce Cap	acity St	andards	;							Rating
3.3	The organization provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.								that	Impacting	
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
3.4	,	-	on attrac pose an			ıalified p	ersonne	l who su	pport th	е	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
3.5	operati	ons to ir	on integr nprove p upport lea	rofessio	nal prac	tice and	organiza				Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
3.6			on provid anization					es and	materials	s to	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
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	
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:	3	

Assurances

Assurances are statements 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					
5	1	3					

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. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus. The IEQ is comprised of the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: 1) Leadership Capacity; 2) Learning Capacity, and 3) 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 their improvement efforts on those Standards within the Initiate 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 AIN institutions evaluated for accreditation in the last five years. The range of the annual AIN IEQ average is presented to enable you to benchmark your results with other institutions in the network.

Institution IEQ 328.75 AIN 5 Year IEQ Range 278.34 - 283.33

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, 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 from the levels of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide the next steps to guide the improvement journey of the institution 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 their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

The Engagement Review Team (team) identified five themes aligned to the continuous improvement process at the Roughrider Education Services Provider (RESP). These themes present both strengths and opportunities to guide the improvement journey the agency is actively pursuing. Interviews, observations, and an analysis of multiple artifacts produced supporting evidence. The two strongest themes to emerge include fiscal responsibility and the use of collaboration with stakeholders to provide impactful professional development. These two themes have helped to identify what the future of the RESP holds for stakeholders. The themes will ensure that continuous improvement in the other three areas noted will only increase productivity and impact student learning and instructional capacity in the districts being served. The remaining themes include expanding stakeholder input for the continuous improvement process, the use of data for student achievement, and the use of data for program evaluation.

Fiscal Management has been a strength of RESP at a time when the institution witnessed a significant decrease in funding. The RESP consists of 3.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. These employees have at least six or seven years' tenure. The institution experienced a drastic reduction in funding. The executive director and his team monitored legislative actions over the past few years and understood the Succeed 2020 funding that was a significant part of the budget for RESP was going to be sunsetted by the legislature, resulting in a significant reduction in revenue for the institution. To prepare for this change, the executive director and his team communicated with stakeholder institutions and began to redefine their role in light of the pending reduction in funding. The team was able to view institutional budgets and financial statements that illustrated sources of



revenue and where expenditures go. When the Succeed 2020 initiative from the North Dakota legislature ended, the budget for RESP was cut by more than half, resulting in a loss of more than \$450,000 in revenue. To address the changes, the executive director and his team worked to reduce their FTEs from 8 to the current reality of 3.5. In addition, this small leadership team concentrated efforts on the needs of the districts being served and statutory requirements. As a result, the organization now allocates human and fiscal resources to clearly support the organization's purpose and priorities. By redefining the focus of the institution and adjusting personnel, the leadership team has allowed the institution's existence to continue impacting student achievement in southwest North Dakota. The executive director and his team have worked diligently with the governing board and stakeholders to make the necessary changes to ensure the organization's effectiveness while demonstrating actions that illustrate the RESP's purpose. Through interviews with personnel at RESP and some governing board members, the team learned the governing board has been very supportive of the changes in recent years. The governing board has adhered to policies of the institution and to a code of ethics that made them very responsive to the changes requested by the executive director and his team.

The professional development (PD) designed by and delivered by RESP personnel is comprehensive in nature and addresses North Dakota's statutory requirements and the needs of individual districts served by the institution. Through the concentrated efforts of the executive director and his team during the budget transitions discussed, the RESP chose to focus on professional development as the core area of those listed by the legislature for allowable ESA services. Internal and external PD has become the foundation of services provided to districts served by the service center. To increase the effectiveness of the PD offered, RESP staff trained specifically in areas such as trauma services for students, mental health, English learners, and teacher strategies in English language arts. In addition, the faculty worked with bus driving statutory requirements and provides those services to district stakeholders during this unique time with a pandemic restricting interactions. The RESP staff have individual professional growth plans they complete and review annually. These internal opportunities rely upon attracting highly qualified, motivated personnel within the system who understand the limitations from fiscal restrictions. The team was able to interview RESP personnel and learned of the individual PD growth plans and that staff often pursue training that will directly be used with districts. Through the internal professional development, staff better prepare themselves to work directly with districts served and to meet the unique needs of those districts. The professional development model is one based on the concept that RESP personnel will be able to provide the necessary mentoring and coaching after delivering the professional development. In addition to learning the necessary professional development districts need, RESP personnel have taken it upon themselves to understand how adults learn and to work with district teachers and administrators to provide the quality PD in ways that will make district personnel self-sufficient in time.

In addition to individual PD growth plans, RESP personnel engage stakeholder districts through needs assessment surveys every year and the resulting needs assessment reports are used to help identify annual PD opportunities to be provided to the districts. The PD created through the needs assessments have resulted in opportunities in which district leaders and personnel would not have been able to participate otherwise. These PD opportunities are the result of collaboration with stakeholders to improve organizational effectiveness. Some examples include the use of RESP staff to work with English learners (EL) in the districts. Many of the districts are too small to afford EL work with very limited numbers of EL students and these students would typically go unserved. Through the work with RESP staff, districts now have an EL contact who is able to work with district leaders and teachers to provide EL services on an as-needed basis. These services are examples of how the



RESP personnel are able to use creativity and problem-solving skills to provide equitable, relevant, and research-based training to districts.

Examples of work done with districts can be seen in the PD offered, specifically working with the Pathways to Reading program, Step Up to Writing program, and the Teacher Learning Communities and Principal Learning Communities. The RESP offers these trainings, among others, to any district and have helped some districts become self-sufficient. Interviews revealed the district personnel were very thankful for the work done through RESP with the Step Up to Writing program, but the small district is now in a good position to spend money more wisely because the trainings have made them self-sufficient. In addition to curricular programs noted, the RESP also offers PD on other topics including trauma and suicide prevention, book studies, and instructional coaching.

The RESP surveys participants after each PD opportunity and receives needs assessments from district administrators to determine future PD needs. Directly surveying teachers on an annual basis would add to the needs assessments and could improve the quality and pertinence of the PD offered through RESP. The Engagement Review Team learned through interviews with RESP staff and various district administrators that the executive director and his team plan their PD opportunities based on feedback from PD delivered and from needs assessments provided by district leaders annually to make data-informed decisions about PD. Through discussions, the Engagement Review Team learned there are no direct surveys to teachers being served unless they attended one of the PD opportunities. By creating a feedback mechanism such as an online questionnaire for teachers and allowing them the opportunity to directly state what professional development they would like, the RESP faculty may be better able to directly align their services to the teachers' needs in the case teachers differ from what administrators see as needs of the building. This process could help increase organizational effectiveness and engage more stakeholders in the achievement of the institution's purpose and direction, as well as increasing input from multiple stakeholders in the decision-making process. Seeking input from teachers would also provide an additional data source to determine the needs of the districts and allow for deeper analysis of the data.

The main role the RESP serves with local school districts is to provide professional development on numerous topics; however, there is no process to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development program or any other program within the RESP. With the decrease in funding as noted earlier through the loss of Succeed 2020 funding, the executive director and his team must ensure they are spending all dollars most effectively. Professional development is the single largest core area of services provided by the RESP to districts. In addition to professional development, the other core areas include technology and technology support, data systems, and general school improvement. Currently, there are no systems to ensure that any program is effective and having the impact desired. The only data for effectiveness at this point are anecdotal, qualitative data from participants. A detailed program evaluation process would include creating measurable goals at the beginning of any program implementation that would track the impact the program is having on student achievement and/or instructional capacity of teachers. These metrics could then be evaluated on a regular basis with annual reports to the board indicating if the programs are meeting the initial goals when they were first adopted. This could allow the executive director and his team to better learn the impact any specific program is having on desired areas. This could also ensure that dollars are being spent most effectively and allow for sustainability of effective programs overtime.

The use of formative and summative data for gauging student learning is limited. Increased work with districts to improve the use of data to measure student learning may increase capacity of district personnel to become data-informed decision makers. Through interviews with district administrators and teachers, the Engagement Review Team learned that, while districts





work with multiple forms of data including benchmark formative assessment data and high-stakes state testing summative data, the RESP is not involved in any form of data analysis with the district leaders. Even with limited resources, a concentrated effort to work with district leaders to help them understand how to analyze assessment data and look for trends will not only aid district leaders in understanding how student achievement is progressing, but district leaders can offer these data analyses to the RESP on an annual basis. The executive director and his team could then use the annual data from districts to work on program evaluation noted earlier and make presentations to the board on program effectiveness.

In summary, the Engagement Review Team found the Roughrider Education Service Provider has overcome large obstacles to be the effective institution it is now. The RESP lost more than half of its revenues a few years ago when the Succeed 2020 funding in North Dakota ended. To compensate for the loss of revenue, the executive director and his team reduced the RESP FTEs from 8 to 3.5 and concentrated on professional development most needed in districts. These PD opportunities are planned annually through needs assessments with school administrators with the goal of building capacity of teachers and impacting student achievement. RESP personnel may better understand the needs of districts being served if they were to also survey teachers in addition to administrators. Annual surveys of teachers may provide additional information on the needs of district personnel to increase instructional capacity. Finally, working with districts to better understand data analysis will not only aid district administrators in understanding if student achievement is occurring, but the data can also provide the executive director and his team important information on program evaluation to understand if RESP's limited dollars are having the best return on investment. By continuing the institution's effective practices, adjusting the feedback mechanism to include more stakeholders, and implementing data analysis to track student learning and provide data for program evaluation, the RESP can continue to have a significant impact on building leadership capacity, instructional capacity, and student learning in the districts they serve.

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 eleot 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
Jim Ferrell, Lead Evaluator	Jim Ferrell currently serves as department chair for the educational leadership department at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where he is an associate professor. He also serves as program chair for the school administration program within the Educational Leadership Department. He worked as a classroom teacher for 12.5 years, teaching social studies and Spanish in grades 6-12. After leaving the classroom, he worked as a middle school principal for six years. Dr. Ferrell earned a B.A. degree in history from Oklahoma City University, an M.A. degree in history from the University of Central Oklahoma, and an Ed.D. degree in school administration from Oklahoma State University. He has served on the Oklahoma Council for Cognia and has participated and/or led Cognia teams in Alabama, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.
Jill Vollmers	Mrs. Jill Vollmers is a school counselor at St. Mary's Central High School in Bismarck, North Dakota. She has spent 14 years in education first as a classroom teacher, and now as a school counselor. Vollmers has served during the 2018-19 school year as a Cognia team member. Mrs. Vollmers has earned degrees from Dickinson State University in Dickinson, North Dakota for her undergraduate degree in business education and Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota for her graduate degree in school counseling.
Jennifer Carlson	Jennifer Carlson has been the executive director for the Northeast Education Services Cooperative (NESC), serving 22 public and private schools in the northeast region of North Dakota since 2008. Prior to that, she was the regional technology support specialist for the NESC. She is also the director of the Lake Region Teacher Center as well as the director of the Technology Learning Cooperative. She has a master's degree in business management and a bachelor's degree in business education. She currently is the secretary/treasurer and past president of North Dakota Regional Education Association Leaders (NDREAL) and is also the past president of the North Dakota Teacher Center Network. She is a past board member for the North Dakota Learning Forward. She serves on her local school board and township board.



Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Mike Bugenski	Mike Bugenski is a lead evaluator with Cognia, and is a former teacher, central office administrator, Education Service Agency (ESA) administrator, adjunct university professor, and the former Cognia director in Michigan. He has worked for four years for ESAs in Michigan as a strategic planning consultant and instructional coach to schools. He has also served as the associate director for the Michigan School Administrator Association and directed a state-wide professional development program training prospective for superintendents and principals across Michigan. He is completing his 50th year as an educator with degrees from Michigan State University and Eastern Michigan University. He has lead reviews for Cognia in the Middle East, Europe, and 17 states in the U.S.



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