



# Diocese of Birmingham Parochial School System

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Birmingham, Alabama

**April 4–7, 2022**

**System Accreditation Engagement Review**

214756

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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 the 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 system commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learning.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4
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:	4
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.									Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	3
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for their institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3

## 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	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed for success.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	2
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	2
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational futures and career planning.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	2
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3

Learning Capacity Standards										Rating
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.									Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	2
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	2

## 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 system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4
3.3	The system provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	2
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.									Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	4

Resource Capacity Standards										Rating
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3

## 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 their 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	334.19	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 their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

The Engagement Accreditation Review Team (team) engaged in quality, information-gathering sessions including interviews with stakeholders, a presentation by the Diocese of Birmingham's leadership team, and a comprehensive review of the evidence provided to the team in the workspace. It is within this context that the team offers the following insights which highlight themes across the organization and ideas for the next steps.

**The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.** During the superintendent's presentation of the overview of the system, she stated that "the system's mission is to create a community of learners who navigate their faith and reason to propagate their Catholic beliefs." The Diocese of Birmingham (diocese) school system has a strong belief in its mission statement. Stakeholder interviews shared that Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Birmingham provide an excellent educational experience in the Catholic tradition enabling all students to develop their God-given talents. Further, interviews with the Governing Body and parents shared, "It is important for students to achieve academically while being taught the knowledge of the Catholic beliefs, practices, and traditions." They believe traditions are critical for student development to allow them the opportunity to develop the moral strength to follow Christ in today's world. Leaders of the school system and community stakeholders have worked together to make certain that the mission statement and institutional goals are the foundation for all aspects of school life. District leaders and school system stakeholders commit to the spiritual development of its students while simultaneously maintaining high academic standards and appreciating the rich traditions of a Catholic school education.

The team reviewed meeting agendas, minutes, and sign-in sheets of faculty meetings, departmental meetings, and professional learning communities' meetings which reflected the system's commitment to a high-quality education for all of its students. Decisions regarding human and financial resources, long-range academic planning, and mission fidelity also make the Diocese of Birmingham Parochial Schools a highly effective educational community. The team reviewed mission statement documents, such as handbooks for each stakeholder group. The handbooks provide a specific roadmap for achieving the goals set forth by the diocese. During the interview process, the team discerned an important level of engagement and dedication from each respondent about the institution's culture. These responses included statements such as, "We are a close-knit community. "I know that my child is learning and developing socially." A student volunteered, "My favorite thing is the sense of community and that everyone accepts new people." Statements like this emulate the mission of the system and its local schools; they also corroborated the qualitative evidence from the eleot report supplied by the system. The team reviewed analyzed results from annual surveys for all stakeholder groups and a plethora of

artifacts substantiate these comments. The evidence indicated the participation of stakeholder groups is a part of the system's continuous improvement process. Students reported that they feel supported in their academic and social development. Students also shared that, they have opportunities to grow and learn in an atmosphere very clearly aligned with the mission and vision of what it means to receive a Catholic education. A student from one of the high schools shared, "We have goal setting sheets to keep us on track. When we fall behind, the teacher meets with us to tell us what we need to do in order to get back on track." While very strong in this area, the team suggests a longitudinal data collection on learner goals might further strengthen this impressive practice.

**The board, superintendent, and district leadership share a collegial and collaborative relationship.** The team found that the governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support the effectiveness of the system. Schools throughout the diocese are governed by the Advisory Councils and the parish pastor. During interviews with the pastors, several shared they are very involved in the operational aspects, policies, and procedures which govern the school. Pastors shared with the team that their offices are located adjacent to the school buildings and that they walk next door to the principal's office weekly to receive updates regarding the school. Membership on the board is open to parents, parishioners, and members of the local community. Interviews with board members indicated a strong willingness to work in cooperation with the superintendent and her staff to advance the goals of the school system. As a result, the district currently operates as a unified whole, guided by its strategic plan. These same interviews yielded that this is a challenging task as a result of the vast geographic area of the school system.

The Diocese of Birmingham encompasses the northern half of Alabama from just north of Montgomery to the Tennessee state line and from the border with Mississippi to the border with Georgia. Schools that are a part of the diocese encompass thirty-nine counties over a geographic area of 28,092 square miles in the northern part of the state of Alabama. The Diocese of Birmingham is divided into seven sections with fifty-six parishes and eighteen mission churches serving 110,522 persons of the Catholic faith. Interviews with bishops, pastors, and members of the governing authority informed the team that they felt there was a need to have unity among the schools in the Diocese of Birmingham.

The leadership team of the current superintendent began in 2019 with the task of bringing unity to the district. During interviews with the superintendent and the district leadership team, it was stated that the district has now begun to operate in a spirit of unity. Interviews with teachers, parents, and support staff confirmed the diocese is operating in a more unified manner. Interviews with additional stakeholder groups shared the unification of the district has provided the equitable use of resources across the schools. Currently, there is a K-12 instructional continuity plan, a communication plan, and a strategic plan to help guide the system on its continuous improvement journey. The system's policies and procedures are aligned with school best practices and, along with the strategic plan, are reviewed annually. Stakeholders shared that the superintendent and her leadership team have focused on building a culture of trust and collaboration between the Catholic Schools Office, K-12 schools, and Chancery offices within the diocese. Evidence indicated that the diocese thoroughly and effectively communicates comprehensive information about student learning, school effectiveness, and the achievement of district goals.

Beginning in 2019, there has been an establishment of a functioning, thriving Diocesan Advisory Council with coordinated processes and procedures developed and implemented with a focus on student achievement, recruiting, training, and retaining highly qualified staff. Interviews with principals and teachers informed the team that with the creation of the Human Resources Guidance Manual for principals. With updated processes for staff evaluation, there has been a reduced turnover of school staff and principals. The team reviewed the staff handbook, the human resource guide manual, and evaluation protocols for certified and non-certified staff. These documents revealed that there are

systematic procedures and processes available to use for the supervision and evaluation of staff. During interviews with principals, the team ascertained a keen sense of collegiality despite the vast distance between schools. The team reviewed evidence of a professional learning program for principals and teacher leaders that has been implemented by the diocese beginning in 2019. During interviews with teachers and principals, it was reported that they feel supported by the diocese and there is an understanding of how the diocese oversees and supports the schools. The team reviewed the administrative calendar which reflected meeting dates for stakeholder groups. Agendas, minutes, and sign-in sheets of these meetings were also reviewed by the team. Stakeholder interviews reported that under the new superintendent's leadership, a definite change for the better has occurred. The team reviewed artifacts such as the Catholic Schools Office Targets and Strategies, Diocesan Advisory Council Meeting Reports, and Diocesan Assessment Analysis Reports as evidence of the implementation of these changes. The team suggests that targeted survey information to note the stakeholder satisfaction with changes might reinforce professional practices being implemented.

**Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.**

The institution regularly engages multiple internal and external stakeholder groups to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction. The team reviewed evidence from surveys of all stakeholder groups. The Catholic School Office (CSO) 2020 mission statement is "to create a community of learners who joyfully navigate faith and reason in order to propagate our Catholic beliefs. We ensure vibrant and enduring communities of faith by fostering a sense of belonging, providing a framework of operational support, helping to bring our community of learners closer to their God-given spiritual and academic potential." The mission statement is the standard by which the diocese operates. The Superintendent's Executive Summary stated that the mission statement of the system was revised in 2020. She informed the team that the purpose of revising the mission statement provided an opportunity for the Birmingham Diocese to become unified with other schools across the world. The language of the mission statement requires that a system-wide culture is established to cultivate genuine relationships among teachers, administrators, pastors, and families grounded in love, holiness, and personal witness. During interviews with the District Leadership Team, members confirmed their support of the revised mission statement. They shared with the team "as one Church, we aim to provide a Catholic education rooted and grounded in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, collaboration, a spirit of inclusion, and a courageous commitment to ongoing renewal, innovation, and transformation." As a result, the system is guided by the mission statement, and the goals and core values are ingrained in the culture and operations of the school. The evidence indicates a high degree of embeddedness among all stakeholder groups and the school community at large. A review of the mission documents, the diocese and school websites, the superintendent's report, and focus group interviews validated this finding. The theme of being mission guided was apparent. Each stakeholder group shared similar insights about the mission and how the diocese and schools communicated, shared, and live out these ideals. Teachers and students verified the expectations for teaching and learning and that they were offered solid support from school leaders, parents, and governing boards. Every decision was made through the lens of the diocese's mission statement and its guiding principles. The team encourages the system to review the mission statement regularly in order to reinforce its strong culture and practices.

**The learning culture promotes creativity and innovation with learning priorities established by the system.** Stakeholders are fully vested in student success. All stakeholder groups are focused on the mission of the diocese. The district makes effective use of multi-tiered systems of support. Student achievement is monitored regularly, and instructional strategies are adjusted to meet the needs of individual learners. During interviews, teachers shared that instructional planning utilizes activities that are appropriate to the students' developmental levels and encompass Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Initially, the team concluded the school, and most stakeholders were actively involved and dedicated to providing a quality, student-centered education that furthers the system's mission. The

team reviewed evidence of the structure of the governing boards and committees. Teams provided multiple leadership perspectives to use for continuous improvement initiatives and strategies. The committees and boards include a variety of groups, e.g., Parent Club, Student Alumni groups, Educational Trust, Visioning Board, Parent Advisory Council, Professional Learning Communities, Student Organizational Support, House Captains, Student Council, and Student Government. The work of these groups provided the team with evidence of input from leadership, parents, staff, community stakeholders, and students that contributed to the decision-making process for their schools. Additionally, during interviews, teachers shared they participate in professional development at the local, state, and national levels. Teachers are required to have annual professional development which aligns with the diocese and school goals. The team reviewed samples of these documents in the workspace.

The diocese Leadership Team reported that a team of teachers from across the diocese is currently revising the mathematics standards and evaluating curriculum options for schools. Standards in all academic areas will be revised on a rotating basis moving forward, with English Language Arts (ELA) standards scheduled to be evaluated next in the cycle. Quality instructional time is important for student learning. In reviewing classroom schedules, and in interviews with students, it was evident quality instructional time is clearly established. The superintendent and assistant superintendent shared that when they are visiting classrooms across the diocese, “one will observe a stimulating mixture of active learning, collaboration, and lecture. Technology is integrated when it best meets the desired learning outcomes.” The standards revisions team makes curriculum recommendations. In interviews, students reported that teachers care about their progress and provide before and after school sessions for additional tutoring. They also reported regularly engaging in “data chats” with their teachers.

School leaders and teachers reported that schools in the Birmingham Diocese utilize a variety of teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of learners. Teachers reported that students engage in inquiry-based activities such as STEM programs, Robotics, Science Fair competitions, research projects, and in-class presentations by students. Additional student support for learners is provided before and after school throughout schools in the Birmingham diocese. Participation of students involved in their own learning was validated during student interviews. Students informed the team that they have opportunities to participate in programs and services that will prepare them for their next level of study. Dual enrollment classes, advanced placement classes, and vocational classes with career explorations are a part of the curriculum. Students communicated they feel the educational opportunities that they are provided are helping to prepare them for their future. As a result of creating varied avenues for student involvement in their learning, a dual sense of community and cohesion exists within the Birmingham Diocese. The active engagement of stakeholders helps to provide numerous experiences for learners to develop communication skills, self-direction, and the monitoring of their own learning progress. The team reviewed evidence of curriculum offerings throughout the Birmingham Diocese of Parochial Schools. The team congratulates the system for its superior work and suggests that the curriculum revision cycles be continued as an outstanding practice.

**The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students.** With oversight from the diocese, schools are consistently monitored to ensure that equitable learning opportunities are provided for all students to develop skills and achieve academic success. The team found compelling evidence of a multi-layered process to strengthen school effectiveness and mission fidelity. Sources included the strategic plan, school improvement plans, the Advisory Board meetings’ minutes, survey data, and the annual report presented by the superintendent to the Diocesan Advisory Council. The work of these groups provided the team with evidence of input from school leaders, teachers, parents, staff, and students which contributed to the decision-making process for their schools. Each local school’s staff selects the curriculum which best meets the needs of the school while supporting a strong Catholic identity. Teachers stated that Cardinal Newman Standards

are used to reinforce Catholic Identity in all subject areas. The team encourages the system to integrate technology where deemed appropriate by the leadership to strengthen learner skills.

**The system has a well-developed, goal-oriented, and data-driven action plan and allocated human and financial resources based on identified needs.** The team reviewed evidence of a system-wide process for analyzing and monitoring data to improve and sustain student learning. The school's curriculum focus is student-centered with a continuous progress emphasis that references the dignity of the student and serves the individual's developmental growth needs. The faculty and administration are committed to continuous improvement that yields elevated levels of engagement regarding the mission and leads to student success academically and personally. These concepts were evident among all stakeholder groups. Most groups used the established data analysis process, the written expectations, and a cyclical review of initiatives and programs to monitor progress and adjust accordingly. The school team used interviews, annual stakeholder surveys, program evaluations, and data analysis to ensure organizational effectiveness, especially in the academic areas. During the interview process, teachers shared they met monthly in their professional learning communities and departmental meetings to craft goals based on observations and data in core subject areas. The team reviewed analyses of multiple data streams in both math and language arts over several years.

Along with the Executive Committee of the Diocesan Advisory Council for Catholic Education, regular progress monitoring of the Strategic Plan occurs. Adjustments have been made from the original document and have shifted, and many changes have occurred since 2018-19. A few objectives were removed as priorities based on surveys completed by principals. During district-level meetings, each committee chair provides a status report of the action items. Stakeholder interviews shared that leadership at the district level is transparent and everyone knows what the priorities are of the diocese. At the local school level, there are multiple avenues available for all stakeholder groups to track student progress. Teachers and administrators use data binders to pass along results on assessments. Teachers often meet in teams to monitor students who may need more intensive intervention or academic support. Stakeholder interviews confirmed that there are multiple opportunities available to monitor student progress. Parents have access to student data via the parent portal using FOCUS and Google Classroom platforms. Teachers and school leaders use data from MAP, PSAT, ACT, and SAT assessments to monitor student performance. Throughout the diocese, schools effectively use support personnel to ensure that students develop positive relationships with adults and peers. Additionally, the evidence sources (e.g., focus group interviews and system-provided documents) indicated that most stakeholders engage in actions that cultivate the atmosphere of self-responsibility, leading to preparation for the next level. Several parents commented, "We like how our children feel about their school, the diocese, and the purpose of the school. One respondent noted, "I know that my kids are learning, and it will help them throughout the rest of their lives." The team reviewed results from an eleot report that showed a keen sense of respect between and among classmates, teachers, and school leaders. The team encourages the diocese to continue the implementation and monitoring of its data-driven action plan along its continuous improvement journey.

The team recommends that the diocese develop and implement a formal mentoring program for all staff, including non-instructional staff, which includes structure and resources that will be flexible enough for staff members to participate at any time during the school year. Currently, technology plans are developed at the local school level and there seems to be some ambiguity regarding the equitable allocation of technology use for students. The team recommends that the Catholic Schools Office considers developing a systemwide technology plan. By doing so, the system will create and implement an equitable opportunity for all students to have immediate access to technology in their learning environments.

To conclude, the Diocese of Birmingham Parochial Schools should be commended for the successful way stakeholders are mission-focused. This focus led to actions that were pivotal to the implementation of innovative programs, consistently improving student learning and creating a sense of community. These programs address the needs of students and assist them in preparing for their future. The team encourages the Diocese of Birmingham to use the information included in this Engagement Review Report as they continue their schools' continuous improvement journey.

The team congratulates the institution on their focus and preparation for the Engagement Review and hopes they experience continued success on their improvement journey.

## 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 expertise. To provide knowledge and understanding of the Cognia tools and processes, all Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members are required to complete Cognia training. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography/Title
<b>Joan Belle-McGlockton, Lead Evaluator</b>	Joan Belle-McGlockton is a retired faculty administrator in the Department of Academic Affairs at Florida AM University. Prior to this position, Joan worked as a high school principal for nine years in the State of Florida. Mrs. Belle-McGlockton holds a B.S. degree in education, emphasis on communication, M.Ed. in administration with a focus on curriculum and instruction, and a M.Div. with a focus on pastoral care and counseling. Joan has experience as a classroom teacher, having previously taught grades 1–8, and as special education teacher for students in grades 6–12. Overall, Joan has 15 years of administrative leadership at the middle and high school levels, and 15 years as a classroom teacher. Additionally, Joan has also worked as an instructional coach and worked at the school district level in Exceptional Student Education. Since 2012, she has served on several Cognia engagement review teams.
<b>Rebecca Hammel</b>	Chief Schools Officer, and Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Nashville
<b>Karla Luke</b>	Executive Director of School Operations for the Catholic Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi
<b>Suzanne Troxclair</b>	Independent Educational Consultant; Retired Superintendent of Catholic Schools
<b>Gayle Sitter</b>	Retired, Florida Department of Education Regional Director, Bureau of School Improvement

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