



Panhandle Area Educational Consortium

Chipley, Florida

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Education Service Agency Accreditation Engagement Review

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Table of Contents

Cognia Continuous Improvement System	2
Initiate	2
Improve.....	2
Impact.....	2
Cognia Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review.....	3
Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results	3
Leadership Capacity Domain	4
Learning Capacity Domain	5
Resource Capacity Domain.....	5
Assurances	6
Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality®	7
Insights from the Review	7
Next Steps	13
Team Roster.....	14
References and Readings.....	15

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 organization commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about learning, including the expectations for the organization.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	4	SU:	4	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 produces evidence, including measurable results of professional practice and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	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:	3	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:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.7	Leaders implement operational process and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the organization's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	
1.9	The organization provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	2	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	
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:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	4	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 learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	
2.2	The organization identifies and develops programs and services based on a data-driven needs assessment of its institutions.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.3	The organization implements programs and services that are equitable, relevant, and aligned to research and best practice to meet the needs of its institutions.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	
2.4	The organization implements instructional strategies that ensure adult learners' needs are met and that learners are engaged in deeper learning experiences.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
2.5	The organization gathers, analyzes, and uses formative and summative data to improve student learning and the delivery of programs and services.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
2.6	The organization implements a process to continuously assess its programs, services, and organizational conditions to improve organizational effectiveness.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	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 learning environment and organizational effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	

Resource Capacity Standards										Rating
3.2	The organization's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve organizational effectiveness.									Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
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.									Improving
	EN:	2	IM:	2	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	
3.4	The organization attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the institution's purpose and direction.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	
3.5	The organization integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness, as well as to support learning and program delivery.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	4	EM:	
3.6	The organization provides access to information resources and materials to support its organization, programs, and services.									Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	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:	3	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:	4	SU:	4	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 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	361.88	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 Review Team (team) identified four themes aligned to the continuous improvement process at Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC). These themes present both strengths and opportunities to guide the improvement journey the educational service agency is actively pursuing. Due to the COVID pandemic, this was a remote review. Themes include the commitment to effective and efficient governance and operational processes, quality and equitable service, a culture of learning aligned to identified professional development and student learning needs of school districts, and strategic management of resources aligned with the mission and purpose.

PAEC is committed to elevating student achievement through shared service support and professional development for districts and schools and is an inclusive, collaborative, data-driven information conduit between districts and state and federal entities. PAEC mission, vision, and

tagline are prominently identified in the strategic plan summary and as part of the electronic signature for all staff. Event templates and letterhead all include “Advancing School and Communities for student success.” The Service Guide, linked on the website, includes detailed and comprehensive information on the history, purpose, and services that PAEC provides to 14 rural county school districts. Student artwork hangs in a PAEC building hallway with the vision statement prominently displayed. During stakeholder interviews, the team heard many say that they did not know the exact wording of the PAEC mission but then provided multiple examples of activities and support that clearly demonstrate a mission to “provide a continuum of shared services that elevate student achievement throughout all consortium school districts” being demonstrated and validated. District leaders described PAEC actions aligned to their mission as “to support each small and rural district and support student learning. They are there to problem solve and make sure our needs are met.” A 30-year member of the consortium stated, “Everything is to increase student achievement – every department and service is geared toward increasing student achievement.” The annual reports highlight data-driven decisions, regional and local services, extensive resources, and technical assistance, with services provided by a competent and professional staff. These annual reports include data on all programs and services in the form of charts and graphs. Additionally, the Regional Education Consortium Services Grant (TAPS #19A082) provides a detailed spreadsheet of all services rendered for each service year from 2018-2019 to the present. An intentional alignment of actions to PAEC’s purpose is evident throughout the organization and is an embedded practice.

An active engagement of stakeholders is valued, supported, and expected. Monthly meetings with district leaders and advisory groups are venues to discuss the unique challenges of rural county school districts. The team heard how PAEC student data services “fills in the gaps for small districts that could not have the time or staff to identify and test software systems when updates come out. They fill in with training materials and sessions for us and our staff members. We would be lost without them.” Interviews confirmed the use of a trouble ticket system. “For example, if I have a problem with Skyward, I send in a ticket. They answer it and send it to other districts to see if they are experiencing the same thing and have input to share.” Another school leader shared that “They keep us up to date, even as a big district.” Repeatedly identified by stakeholders was expanded community collaboration that resulted from the deep understanding of PAEC leadership and staff dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. District superintendents explained the effective, efficient, and personal manner in which they were supported. “They came in the day after the storm with risk managers on-site to say, ‘what do we have to do to stop the bleeding?’ We had no power or cell phone access, but PAEC was there, in person, assisting us through emergency board meetings and the risk management program. We could not have done it without PAEC. PAEC is a champion.” The team heard how this PAEC collaborative effort is supporting districts as they work to rebuild their schools, as well as providing cost savings to districts by being in a consortium to deal with legal actions as they arise. Embedded in the consortium is stakeholder expectation for and response to PAEC’s practices for regular, consistent, and meaningful communication. Best said by district superintendents to summarize the palpable commitment to quality and equitable service was, “We wrap our arms around PAEC, and PAEC wraps their arms around us.” The team heard the self-reflection that historically, “We have not done a good job of blowing our own horn. We are a background with the attention on teachers and students to help people understand our services. We do not want the spotlight.” Celebrate Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS), Students with Emotional Behavior Disabilities (SEDNET), and the many accomplishments. Continue the outstanding work within the consortium while also considering opportunities to expand legislative interactions and awareness. Additional avenues to garner and maintain support from Florida legislative bodies could include building upon current plans to engage corporate and post-secondary partnerships for workforce program initiatives. Consider enhancing PAEC branding to highlight district and student success and the effective connection with community

organizations and services, thereby spotlighting students while also keeping PAEC's impact clear to legislators. Risk management, cooperative purchasing, and Gateway and Skyward student data system supports are extremely strong programs that could easily become exemplars for other ESAs.

Leadership and the representative governance board are thoroughly invested in continuous improvement aligned with the PAEC mission and vision, and PAEC staff consistently engage in best practice procedures for effective, efficient, and customer-service operations. The history of PAEC provided on the website and confirmed by interviews with leadership reflects organizational dynamics since 2016 that include hiring the current superintendent, dealing with the line-item removal of PAEC from the state budget, and the process to revisit and clarify PAEC mission and vision statements. Wrestling with conversations across the country about eliminating small school districts, first and foremost, is the PAEC commitment to keep student success broadly aligned to more than academics. "We, and our board, see us as extensions of the districts to help provide them what they need." Goals and strategies established for 2021 include service to districts, partnerships, and advocacy as a voice promoting legislative priorities benefiting member districts, along with branding-marketing strategies to support goals with outreach and virtual presence. Survey opportunities are provided to stakeholders several times each year and target the identification of district needs. Communication for the identification and sharing of needs and results is open and fluid and fosters continuous improvement efforts. Interviews confirm that PAEC communication is open and fluid, with committees used to validate the work. Board members indicate that "We don't surprise the director" as further evidence of established continuous communication improvement procedures and practice. Continue work to formalize the continuous improvement process as well as meeting and communication processes to ensure these good practices continue with new staff and stakeholders into the future. Formalization can also provide a clear and established avenue for review and revision. Ensuring processes for the future is invaluable and especially important in the fluid climate of grant and state legislative funding.

PAEC is not a separate fiscal entity. Washington County School District is the fiscal agent and governing authority of record, as detailed in the resolution document for member district participation in the PAEC consortium. The PAEC governing body, comprised of superintendents from each of the 14 districts, participates in at least ten board meetings each year and is involved in critical decisions on budgets and the introduction of new programs aligned with the improvement process. Pursuant to section 112.3142 Florida Statutes, district school board members and superintendents of schools are required to complete four hours of ethics training each calendar year. Ethics training is provided through the Superintendent's Association. As evidence of PAEC's governance commitment to ethics in education, professional development activities from Delta Kappa Gamma Society International for teacher training (learning in safe schools through ethical conduct of teachers) are provided. The PAEC service guide identifies policies encompassing the latest state legislation with updates provided twice annually. The team encourages the continuance of the service guide and suggests researching additional methods for sharing it with the public and other entities to garner support for PAEC work. A board policies document includes a revisions record dating back to 2001 revisions. Board agendas included the identification of board legislation dinner meetings. Tri-Consortia Executive Director meeting agendas always include a standard review and revision item. Minutes of PAEC Professional Development Council meetings included evidence of the policy for recording and sharing committee work. The PAEC governing body's commitment to the establishment and adherence to policies promotes the effective operations of the educational service agency and its districts.

A data-driven culture for decisions regarding academic and organizational programs and services is embedded at PAEC. Grant deliverables, committee agendas, and minutes from meetings address programs, services, and organizational conditions. Interviews with district leaders and PAEC program consultants described the immediate feedback and guidance provided to professional development

participants during electronic, face-to-face, and blended courses. Services through the electronic Professional Development Center (ePDC) offer a full array of courses, including tier one support with specific workshops related to management systems for student data and financial software for fiscal oversight. Florida's Buy Program, risk management, fiscal/human relations, and grant data tracking over time are evident. Newer grant programs and long-term professional development programs are in the process of long-range analysis and intended outcome impact.

Evaluation and supervision for staff improvement of professional practice is a routine and expected practice within PAEC. Annual reviews with growth opportunity discussions aligned to defined job responsibilities and expectations for services provided to the member school districts are the norm. Self-reflection, personal growth opportunities, cross-training, and staff multi-tasking were all cited during an interview for PAEC growth-oriented evaluation and supervision. Staff members are encouraged to be in professional organizations. A national award received by one PAEC staff member for work in the ESL organization was one of several examples shared with the team. The collaborative culture of PAEC is deeply embedded and visible with everyone deeply committed to the established mission of service to the district in support of student learning. Interviews with PAEC leaders and internal staff reveal informal leadership opportunities and resources to support additional training. Well-crafted professional development opportunities for district current and potential leaders are firmly in place and highly valued. Stepping back with an eye to the benefits of these programs clearly in view, and examining how and when the equivalent support and training might be provided to internal staff, is suggested as a growth opportunity.

The PAEC culture of learning is aligned with identified professional development (PD) and student learning needs of consortium school districts. A uniform commitment to the learning culture based on shared beliefs is embedded throughout all PAEC programs and services. Regular meetings with the board of directors include agenda items for the presentation of PAEC services and budgets. New teacher academy, math textbook adoption and rigorous instruction, and social-emotional learning (SEL) video conferences represent the ongoing array of services and PD being provided by PAEC. Organization-wide book studies, collaboration among Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources System (FDLRS) with its four functions for child find, parent services, human resources, and technology, Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), and Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (SEDNET) reflect the culture of learning the drives PAEC. Programs and services are developed from stakeholder feedback. Evidence of both internal and external feedback for all the many programs includes preschool parent and migrant parent, PD, and superintendent surveys, along with grant report deliverables. PAEC funding and operational structure are primarily based on school district internal projects and state/federal grant-funded initiatives. Reports to committees and state/federal government are prepared and submitted verbally or in writing during meetings to verify alignment with initiatives. Quarterly and ongoing data analysis is the norm, as confirmed during stakeholder interviews. Interviews also highlight the development and delivery of school-level PD based on best practice, targeted on specific strategies to meet relevant needs that include reading/literacy, math, autism, English Language Learners (ELL), SEL, and student behavior. PD is delivered by highly qualified experts. Topics are covered in depth and are delivered and supported over time. Monitoring for implementation with fidelity is addressed through data collection and on-site visits.

PD provides knowledge on content but also on best practice instructional delivery or implementation. Participant credit hours are granted only after completion of each follow-up requirement. Workshop evaluation data is collected, analyzed, and used for decision-making to improve PD, provide differentiated instruction, and monitor student learning growth based on the specific training. Perception data in the form of surveys is another tool for data gathering at PAEC. Interviews confirm the consistent use of the Professional Learning Design Survey results in improvement efforts. PAEC leadership and

staff demonstrate a shared commitment to PD and support that provides districts and their staff with experiences and activities that require them to think, problem-solve and apply knowledge, collaborate, and self-reflect critically and creatively. PAEC might benefit from digging deeper into adult learning theory to further strengthen train the trainer and other adult learning models and track aspects of these adult learning models on student progress. Another avenue for consideration could be from a study of the Wellman and Lipton book, [Got Data, Now What? Creating and Leading Cultures of Inquiry](#), and determining if and how this research-based approach could positively impact work with districts and schools.

A commitment to the integration of digital resources for instruction, student progress monitoring, and operations is demonstrated with PAEC actions. PAEC has a strong history of utilizing technology and digital resources and formats to deliver PD and student online courses and was therefore poised to pivot, adapt, and expand remote PD and communications to high levels serving as an exemplary model during the COVID pandemic. During the Improvement Journey presentation, the team heard how PAEC leadership researched technology that could be used for free, used it deliberately, expanded on these aspects during COVID, and “shoved reluctant people over the edge.” As a result, data confirm that current attendance and participation in PD and advisory activities have increased significantly. PAEC’s website is rich with easy-to-access information and resources. Eduvition provides the digital format for student learning in a safe, easily managed learning environment. ePD online resources target professional development for teachers, principals, administrators, coaches, and superintendents. PD is sustained, relevant, and targeted to meet the needs of these various stakeholders and is aligned to state standards and requirements. Student data, financial, and instructional technology have undergone major upgrades that impact purchasing and risk management in addition to online learning and PD. Efficient and effective use of technology in support of student learning and operations is embedded in the work of PAEC.

The strategic management of resources reflects data-driven decision-making processes aligned with the PAEC vision to advance member school and student success by ensuring sufficient support for appropriate personnel, information resources and technology integration, funding, and facilities. The team learned that with the 2016 appointment of a new PAEC executive director, compounded by a threat of defunding by the state, much work went into establishing a lean and viable staffing structure to deliver their mission. Job descriptions were clarified and documented. Wide skill sets, ability to change gears quickly, demonstrated resource connections, and relationship-building talents were identified as essential hiring criteria. A staff was created that is flexible, highly-skilled, and knowledgeable. The team reviewed examples of identifying and recruiting for key positions for the past five years and noted a consistent focus on staff utilization for efficiency and quality across a small organization. Many long-term employees, as well as strategic new hires in recent years, carry out the on-demand work that encompasses the PAEC mission. The team heard staff talking of teaching themselves and expanding their skills so that they are better able to reach out and help the districts. From all employee groups, the team heard expressions of pride in contributions to the organization and its mission and the overwhelmingly positive aspects of being a member of the PAEC team. As explained by one staff member, “We work until the job is done. Even when it is a heavy lift and much is needed, we still work on it. When something is going on, people come from every corner of the building to help. It is understood that if you are not tied up, you get your hands dirty and share the load.” Interviews confirm the respect and mutual appreciation for staff members’ expertise and commitment. Words consistently used throughout the interview process to describe PAEC include respect, helpful, outreach, flexible with assisting everybody, facilitate, step in whenever there is a solution needed, service-oriented, and “We come through hell or high water. We are people they can trust.”

Clearly evidenced is the strong administrative system utilization of technology for effectiveness and efficiency in the areas of student data systems, financial software, and digital services. The use of Zoom, distance, electronic, and digital PD resources provide online staff training. Interviews, board minutes, technology group minutes, annual reports, and website data-sharing reports are used in strategic resource management and support for the PAEC mission. The team learned of a deliberate priority focus over the past few years on the physical facility, conference room technology upgrades for consortium-wide PD and communication, IT upgrades, and physical plant safety and general maintenance. The PAEC board room, with enhanced technology, provides for easy engagement with district leaders from the geographically wide-spread area of consortium members. Career and technical education (CTE) opportunities with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, a welcomed partner, enhance programs and service.

PAEC's heavy dependence on grant funds and state legislative annual line-item budgets has led to the development of zero funding contingency plans for two years with no further long-range plans in place. Identified during governing body and leadership interviews was the decision, five years ago, to move away from projects not aligned to the core purpose or were no longer efficient or best practice. Decisions were made based on input from advisor committees, adherence to grant guidelines, and state requirements. The long history of PAEC (the only one of the Florida consortia which has continuously operated since 1967) is strong evidence of skillful allocation of human, material, and fiscal resources aligned to the mission. PAEC is encouraged to continue the development of contingency plans addressing unknown future legislative financial support.

Professional growth for PAEC staff beyond grant or state legislated requirements is encouraged through book studies on targeted topics, conference attendance, as well as membership and participation in professional organizations. Individualized employee evaluation processes allow for discussion of needed professional development. During monthly staff meetings, informal and ongoing departmental discussions and sharing of cross-over tasks are opportunities for professional growth. Daily workgroups analyze and adjust administrative functions as exemplified by the IT tag system for service. Interviews confirm the collaborative, service-oriented culture of PAEC. Onboarding and orientation processes for the few new hires over the past five years are in place; however, official coaching or mentoring supports are not identified. The team recognizes the many powerful programs to support and intentionally build the skills of district leaders and teachers and suggests formalizing a PAEC mentor and staff-learning process with similar quality and rigor. Celebrate accomplishments and consider continuing with strong technology training for internal and external stakeholders in all areas of instruction, organization management, and operations.

In conclusion, the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium Leadership team is encouraged to study these themes, Standards ratings, and other information reported to create action plans for continuous improvement. The team suggests planning for reinforcement of the many positive practices which make this institution unique. PAEC is encouraged to track data on improvement efforts to measure the impact on student learning and success over time. Leaders are urged to celebrate positive traits highlighted and give accolades to all those who engaged in stakeholder interviews. The continuous improvement journey ensures that powerful practices and opportunities for improvement are addressed with formal steps in improvement plans.

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
<p>Cecelia Wiar, Lead Evaluator</p>	<p>Mrs. Cecelia Wiar contributed to the education of children in Michigan public school systems as a teacher, elementary school principal, junior high assistant principal, and district director of Title I and English as a second language programs. She retired in 2004 and, from 2006 to 2016, participated in Michigan’s MIExcel Project, designed to assist low-performing schools in the use of data and research-based instructional strategies to increase student academic proficiency and school success. Mrs. Wiar received extensive training in coaching, using data for instructional decision-making, and establishing and strengthening professional learning communities. In addition to MIExcel services, she provided consulting and technical support to schools utilizing federal and state grants for supplemental services to target the specific needs of their school populations. Mrs. Wiar earned a bachelor’s degree in education, a master’s degree in reading from Oakland University, and an educational specialist degree in elementary school administration from Michigan State University and completed all doctoral-level coursework in organizational development at Wayne State University. Since 2012, Mrs. Wiar has been a team member or lead evaluator for numerous Cognia engagement reviews for schools, districts, educational service agencies, and special purpose institutions throughout the United States.</p>
<p>Brenda Pacey, Retired University professional development and statewide Project Lead The Way STEM program Affiliate Director</p>	

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