

## **Spartanburg School District Four Achieves Cognia Accreditation**

Spartanburg School District Four was recently recommended for Cognia accreditation based upon findings of an External Review. Following an extensive review of documents and a three-day, virtual visit, an Exit Report was presented by Mrs. Mary Brinkman, Lead Evaluator for the Cognia External Review Team. In her presentation, Mrs. Brinkman commended District Four for its strong leadership and community relations. She stated, "In all my reviews, I have never seen a community partnership as strong as this one."

Cognia is a global non-profit organization that provides international protocols for districts committed to systematic and sustainable improvement. Cognia builds capacity of the district to improve and sustain student learning and stimulates and improves effectiveness and efficiency throughout the district. Cognia was formed from the merger of AdvancED (formerly Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – SACS) and Measured Progress in 2019.

Due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions, a five-member External Review Team virtually visited District Four on March 1 – March 3, 2021. During that time, the team conducted 99 interviews of stakeholders, including board members, district administrators, campus leadership, professional staff, parents, community/business partners, and students. The Cognia evaluators were from Texas, Indiana, and North Carolina. They were tasked with gathering first-hand information to evaluate the district's performance against the Cognia Performance Standards by interviewing stakeholder groups, reviewing documentation provided, and assessing the quality of learning environments to gain insights about teaching and learning. They also provided feedback to the district that helps to focus and guide the ongoing improvement journey.

Cognia utilizes the Index of Education Quality (IEQ) to measure the district's adherence to the Cognia Performance Standards, which are divided into three domains: Leadership Capacity, Learning Capacity, and Resource Capacity. The IEQ ranges from 100 to 400 points. Over the last five years, the average IEQ in the Cognia Improvement Network ranged from 278.34 – 283.33 points. Spartanburg District Four significantly exceeded that range with an IEQ of 361.77 points. The district rated at the highest or next to the highest level in the 31 standards covered across the three domains.

District Four's shared leadership, support systems, and management of resources were recognized in these outstanding results. In addition, the strong community partnership between the schools and the various community members (businesses, non-profits, churches, governmental agencies, and universities) was considered a tremendous asset to both the district and the community. Dr. Rallie Liston, Superintendent, said, "We believe District Four is an excellent school district. Our students, teachers, support staff, and administrators work hard every day. However, it is very important to have our

policies, procedures, and practices measured according to international protocols by an external committee. To achieve these unbiased results from an outside team confirms our purpose and supports our ongoing improvement efforts.”

Mr. Melvin Brewton, Chairman of the District Four Board of Trustees, participated in the Cognia interviews and echoed those sentiments by stating, “We are very proud of District Four Schools. I would like to thank the teachers, staff, and administrators for their hard work every day. I would like to thank our board members and the community partners for their support of District Four and its students.”