



NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**



## **Important North Dakota Accreditation and Continuous School Improvement Update**

This communication will address three related topics:

1. Accreditation Model Transition from Cognia School Level to Cognia Systems (District) Level.
2. Alignment of Cognia Accreditation to Marzano's High Reliability Schools (HRS).
3. Cognia Diagnostic Reviews for Targeted Support Intervention (TSI) and Select Comprehensive Support Intervention (CSI) Schools.

### **1. Accreditation Model Transition from School Level to Systems (District)**

North Dakota schools will participate in an exciting shift in accreditation on a statewide basis. Upon several months of collaboration and input from school leaders from across North Dakota and Cognia™, we will transition from school-level accreditation to a systems (district) model for the 2020-2021 academic year.

#### **• What is System (District) Accreditation?**

- System (District) accreditation is based on continuous school improvement starting at the district level. It has the power to nurture and support individual school improvement *and* align school improvement with overall school system improvement goals. As the result, the system moves in one direction together. Human and fiscal resources are invested in deliberate support of system-wide efforts.

#### **• What will this mean for my school's accreditation?**

- The district will host one Engagement Review for the entire district, every five years. During each visit, an Engagement Review team will visit the entire district and delivers a

comprehensive report that reflects the status of the district as a system.

- NDDPI and Cognia will collaborate on a process to build cohorts of North Dakota Engagement Review team members to serve within North Dakota. Schools with a student enrollment above 1,000 will have a Lead Evaluator from outside of North Dakota while those with a student enrollment below 1,000 will have a Lead Evaluator from within North Dakota. This is a North Dakota-specific solution with Cognia because traditionally, the Cognia-systems model requires all Lead Evaluators to come from outside of the state of the Engagement Review. The Engagement Review will be held from the collective district perspective incorporating supporting and aligned school-level goals and plans. Each school will retain its own individual accreditation, in addition to the district-level accreditation.

- **When will the accreditation process take place?**

- Districts that are currently participating in Systems Accreditation and are scheduled for a 2020-2021 Engagement Review will have their event between September and December 2020.
- Systems (District) Accreditation will begin in fall of 2020 and districts will have the option to shift to systems if one of their schools is hosting a 2020-2021 Engagement Review. The event will occur between January and May 2021 to afford time to prepare and transition appropriately.
- All reviews in North Dakota will follow a systems model by Fall 2021.

- **How will my school and system be supported?**

- As with continuous school improvement training, Cognia will offer a variety of face-to-face and/or virtual training opportunities to explore systems thinking, to support system-wide alignment, and to assist in preparation for the Accreditation Engagement Review.
- Systems (District) accreditation is a proven, clear, and powerful protocol for school and school system improvement that provides a more comprehensive analysis to drive continuous improvement and inform needed actions to improve student success. Alignment and equity are key components of the systems protocol. Cognia, as the largest accreditation organization in the country, has been offering systems (district) accreditation for approximately 15 years. A majority of school districts nationally that work to achieve the high standards of earning their accreditation at the elementary, middle and high school levels also do so through the systems (district) model.

- **Why is accreditation moving to a system (district) model and our annual improvement plans required to be developed at the school district level?**

- The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that annual improvement plans be created for each school within a district. Additionally, the systems (district) model does include an evaluation of both district and school plans as part of the accreditation process.

## **2. Alignment of Cognia Accreditation to Marzano's High Reliability Schools (HRS)**

- A number of school districts engage with the Marzano HRS program alongside Cognia Accreditation. There has been collaborative discussions with school districts, NDDPI and Cognia for some time regarding how these initiatives can best co-exist given their common rigor yet distinctly different objectives (Marzano HRS supports **instructional effectiveness** and Cognia Accreditation supports overall continuous improvement broadly though organizational effectiveness including additional factors beyond instruction such as finance, governance, etc.). To assist affected schools in implementing both Cognia Accreditation to Marzano HRS, please find a [crosswalk document attached](#).

## **3. Cognia Diagnostic Reviews for TSI/CSI Schools**

- TSI/CSI schools and districts will be offered the opportunity to undergo the Cognia Diagnostic Review process during the 2020-2021 academic year. During the process, schools go through a deep dive root cause analysis of their current instructional effectiveness. Affected schools and districts will receive more information in coming weeks including how this process will work in alignment and support of accreditation.

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Please watch for ongoing communication from Cognia and NDDPI for additional information, training, and support. If you would like to reach out in the meantime, please contact [Betsy Deal](#), Cognia Senior Director for North Dakota, at 888.413.3669 ext. 5379.

As always, visit the [NDDPI/Cognia Resource Page](#) and the [Cognia home page](#) to familiarize yourself with support specific to North Dakota and to the Cognia Network.

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