# Mountain West Montessori Academy

South Jordan, Utah

May 11-14, 2021

School Accreditation Engagement Review 267502



### **Table of Contents**

Cognia Continuous Improvement System	;
Initiate	3
Improve	3
Impact	3
Cognia Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review	ŀ
Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results	ŀ
Leadership Capacity Domain	5
Learning Capacity Domain	;
Resource Capacity Domain	5
Assurances	}
Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality <sup>®</sup>	}
Insights from the Review	;
Next Steps12	2
Team Roster	;
References and Readings14	ŀ





## 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 guality 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 administrations 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.

Leade	rship Cap	acity St	andards	S							Rating
1.1	The instit teaching								efs abou	t	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
1.2	Stakehol the institu								ievemen	it of	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
1.3	The instit evidence professio	, includi	ng meas								Impacting
	EN:	3	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
1.4	The gove are desig							nce to p	oolicies t	hat	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	4	
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.							Impacting			
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	4	EM:	4	
1.6	Leaders professio							esses t	o improv	'e	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
1.7	Leaders organizat								sure		Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
1.8	Leaders purpose			lders to	support	the ach	ievemer	nt of the	institutio	on's	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
1.9	The institution provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.						p	Impacting			
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	3	
1.10	Leaders stakeholo									nt.	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	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.

2.1 Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the institution. Impacting   2.2 EN: 4 M: 4 RE: 3 SU: 2 EM: 3   2.2 The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problems solving. Impacting Impacting Impacting   2.3 The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs, and skills needed Impacting Impacting   2.4 The institution has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers who support their educators inplement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and set prepares learners for their next levels. Impacting Impacting   2.5 Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and best practices. Impacting Impacting   2.6.4 The institution implements a process to ensure the curriculum that is based on high expectations and best practices. Impacting Impacting   2.6.5 Educators implements a process to ensure the curriculum that is based on high expectations and best practices. Impacting Impacting   2.6.4 The institution prove data datigated to meet institution's learning expectations. Impacting Impacting   2.7.6	Learni	ing Capac	ity Stan	dards								Rating
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	2.10			s is relia	ably ass	essed a	nd consi	istently a	and clea	rly		Improving
		EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	2	g



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

#### **Resource Capacity Domain**

The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably, so the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The institution examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and increased student learning.

Resou	rce Cap	acity St	andards	;							Rating
3.1							earning to tution's e			arning	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	
3.2	collabo	ration a		jiality to			and expe performa			e	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
3.3	ensure	all staff		s have t	the know	ledge a	nd coach nd skills				Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
3.4			attracts a pose an			fied pers	sonnel w	ho supp	ort the		Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	4	EM:	3	
3.5	operati	ons to ir		rofessio			eaching, dent per				Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
3.6	The institution provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the institution.						)	Impacting			
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	3	
3.7	long-ra	The institution demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the institution's purpose and direction.						es	Impacting		
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	4	SU:	3	EM:	4	



Resou	rce Capacity Standards						Rating				
3.8	with the	e institut		ntified n	eeds and	d prioriti	scal reso es to imp			ent	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	Assurances Met						
YES	NO	If No, List Unmet Assurances by Number Below					
х							

## 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	351.00	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 identified several themes from the review that support the continuous improvement process for Mountain West Montessori Academy. These themes present strengths and opportunities to guide the institution's improvement journey.

The administration and teachers at MWMA have worked diligently to create a culture that is focused on the well-being of students with an emphasis on "student-centered learning and intellectual curiosity." The institution and stakeholders show diligence and commitment to the Montessori approach and a desire to align their approach with Utah State Standards. The school has noted on their website and as part of their mission statement that providing individualized and interdisciplinary curriculum, hands-on experience, and community involvement is a main tenet of teaching and learning within the school. Students overwhelmingly affirm their confidence and belief that they have trusted adults in the school, as well as peers they can go to for support and encouragement. MWMA has also placed importance on both building and maintaining positive relationships with students, adults, and peers within the school. During student interviews, it was consistently noted that learners demonstrate congenial and supportive relationships with their teachers and felt highly supported. Students are assigned homeroom teachers, who act as advocates and target for the student learning needs. Having adult advocates within the school was appreciated by parents and students alike. It was noted by staff and parents that during this last school cycle, school counseling and other specialists within the school have enhanced learning opportunities for students. These positions were noted to be important in helping students feel cared for and confident in their day-to-day schedule and academic plan. Allowing and supporting intellectual curiosity is a deeply embedded model that permeates the teaching and beliefs of the entire program. MWMA truly embodies teaching the whole child and working with all aspects of social and emotional learning as well as building academic strength while students are in attendance there. Continuation of this blended approach, utilizing both academic and emotional care, will help ensure and maintain this level of safety, security and trust felt by students.

Consistent, on-going communication in many forms have become an embedded practice at the school. This communication has taken place with multiple stakeholder groups to support the achievement of the school's improvement goals. Feedback from parents shows that two-way communication regarding the academic program and student progress is on-going and collaborative. Stakeholder groups are currently taking part in various surveys through the school's feedback and reporting process. The information gained from these surveys was reported by MWMA administration to be vital to programming as it provides a forum and opportunity for students to express their wants and needs in a safe space. Other resources used consistently for communication with stakeholders are standard mail, professional learning community (PLC) meetings, and the collaboration within both grade levels and departments. Evidence in both quality and quantity of contact and ongoing positive engagement with stakeholders, students, and families was shared in the artifacts presented during the



review. Stakeholders' collective input has helped to gain and maintain the positive desired outcomes for learning. Students were appreciative of having this voice in their educational path, and it was noted that was the 'norm' at MWMA. In interviews, students gave examples of clubs and extracurricular activities that had been suggested through feedback that then became part of school programming. Continuing this high level of communication in various forms will allow the school to stay connected to the needs of both leaners, educators, and all stakeholders.

Leaders at MWMA have implemented operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning. Growing and maintaining a culture where leadership effectiveness is supported has been a priority for MWMA. The governing board as well as the on-site administration expect and provide opportunities for leaders to thrive. A leadership retreat has trainings and growth opportunities for the team. Opportunities such as participating in charter school meetings on the state level in support of positive educational growth for charter schools is one such example. The school has demonstrated evidence that they are assessing the programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning consistently. Data drives their efforts to modify and improve programs and services. Staff supervision and evaluation processes are monitored, tracked, and data is used to guide improvement. The collaboration with campus administrators regarding directionality and needs of the school was evident in both interviews and evidence presented. They meet and discuss school needs daily and it was expressed by the teaching team that there is a high level of trust between educational staff and administration. Effective leadership and organizational effectiveness have also helped to retain and attract qualified personnel. Stakeholders express a buy in to the organizational effectiveness and over-whelming support for the leadership at MWMA. By continuing to have a careful eye on the organizational effectiveness within the school and campus-wide, this collaborative, trusting atmosphere will have the best opportunity to thrive.

The institution integrates digital resources into teaching and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness. There is a blend of various types of technology, and access to information resources for both students and teachers. Team members noted that this access to a range of digital tools and updated curriculum provides a well-balanced and quality course experience for students. Parent interviews revealed another source of support in this area as they were very pleased with the human, material, and fiscal resources that were aligned and available within the program. The actions of the board and administration, in looking ahead to evaluate fiscal needs for the school, clearly supports the desire to prioritize campus and student needs. Historical support and consistent long-range planning by the founders and governing board was noted as a strength by on-campus administration. The governing authority also created, maintained, and adhered to a code of ethics, functions, and policies that guide the program both fiscally and with functional and institutional effectiveness. Policies and procedures are clearly communicated in staff and student manuals. Continuing a consistent and comprehensive review of policies and procedures will ensure continuity and clarity of expectations.

Equitable opportunities for learners to succeed were present and appreciated by both students and parents. Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learner's needs and progress is reliably assessed and communicated. MWMA has utilized different grading and courseware tracking over the past five years to provide clear communication to parents and all stakeholders. Collaboration and problem solving were evident, and students were developing skills that would help them achieve the content and learning priorities established by the institution. A priority identified in both survey data and in verbal reporting at the school was college and career readiness for students. The learning culture promoted creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving that would help them achieve this goal. This evidence also demonstrates that MWMA is preparing students for the next level of



education, and that educators are implementing a curriculum that is based on high expectations focused on college and career planning. Students' individual educational futures are being considered, and students have access to adults/peers that support their educational experiences within the school. Artifacts, evidence, and observations involving home teacher supports, counselor support, and individualized education planning support all students. MWMA is commended for the collaborative spirit and commitment to daily problem solving. Sustaining support for this solution-finding environment will allow the school to continue fostering the intellectual curiosity that is the cornerstone of the school.

A systematic process to ensure all educators are engaged in a process to align curriculum, instruction, and assessments to a recognized and rigorous set of standards (i.e., Utah Core Standards or Guaranteed Viable Curriculum) is in progress and improving. Artifacts and evidence provided by the school did show evidence of alignment with the core curriculum being taught. However, it was stated that as part of the current school improvement plan, improvement of teachers' literacy instruction skills through intensive professional development, especially in K-3 grade levels, are a work in progress and targeted for improvement. The school is engaged in a continuous improvement process which has produced evidence showing this as an area of need. Measurable results showing student growth was noted. However, regarding curriculum and alignment it was shared that collaborating entities from other states are supporting and expecting improvement in this area. MWMA can continue to do research regarding best practice and how to establish clear, aligned standards that match to the Utah Core and promote rigor in the classroom. Promoting professional learning communities as a tool to meet this need of teachers could prove useful in building better instructional practices in the classroom.

MWMA has a formal system of induction and mentoring that ensures new teachers are provided with support in a new environment. Staff shared certificates for Utah State Board of Education, Mentoring Competency. There is also a document in artifacts called On-boarding Overview welcoming to our MWMA family from the principal outlining expectations and who to contact for information on specific things. Administration shared that the longevity of many educators who have stayed at MWMA has contributed to a stable learning environment for students. This longevity was directly reported by many teachers as due to the culture and leadership present at MWMA. While teachers are being retained at a consistent level, teacher retention through evaluation of competitive pay, assessment of surrounding districts, budgetary priority of teacher salaries, and benefits are part of the current school improvement plan. Teachers also report that there are some individual professional development plans in place, but that COVID restrictions have limited some opportunities that they hope to see return in the upcoming school year. However, teachers are taking graduate level literacy courses through one of their administrators to better understand the science of reading. They tackle reading through a medical model, first determining if the student can or cannot read well and then administering a strategy using a diagnostic approach. Teachers report that Mountain West Montessori Academy views reading as "sacred and important work" and therefore are carefully analyzing data for optimal results. Administration has done extensive research and is beginning to use the same analytical approach to tackle math data. The daily professional learning structure and schedule promotes collegiality and collaboration. The education team at MWMA has identified that their collaborative team discussion time is targeted to discuss the learner's specific needs, both academic and behavioral, in school. Continuing the evaluation of competitive pay scales and targeted training in identified areas of need will support movement forward in this goal and support the school's improvement plan.



In conclusion, as Mountain West Montessori Academy continues its journey toward school improvement, the strengths of the staff and the insights offered can be used to help monitor and guide this continued growth.

## 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
Joette Hayden, Lead Evaluator	Joette Hayden has worked as a consulting principal and special education teacher in Utah for 22 years. Her experience in alternative educational environments and working primarily with at risk youth has been her passion and focus during her educational career. She taught special education and worked in Youth-in-Custody (YIC) classrooms for ten years and has been in administration working in similar school environments for the past 12 years. She has served on the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) curriculum advisory committee and worked with accreditation teams in Utah for 19 years. She has experience with Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) audits and compliance, particularly in special education, and stays current on law/litigation issues surrounding education in Utah.
Riley Johnson	Ms. Riley Johnson currently works as a resource English teacher at Ridgeline High School in Millville, Utah. This is her third year teaching 9th and 10th grade resource and she is working to complete her Master's in Special Education and Administration.
Jeannie Gross	Ms. Jeannie Krantz Gross is currently serving in the role of principal for Anya itpak Elementary School located in Mohave Valley, Arizona. Krantz Gross was recruited by an advisory committee to the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe to be the first principal to help establish the school which opened their doors in fall of 2019. She was recommended primarily because of her extensive experience and passion advocating for students. Prior to her current role she served as a fine arts teacher, STEAM teacher, and coordinator for a high school mentoring program for Nay Ah Shing, a tribal grant school in Onamia, Minnesota. Krantz Gross worked there for 10 years and served the last three years as process manager on the Leadership team ensuring all documents were submitted to the Bureau of Indian Education. She holds degrees from Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas; Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas and University of Minnesota, Duluth.



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