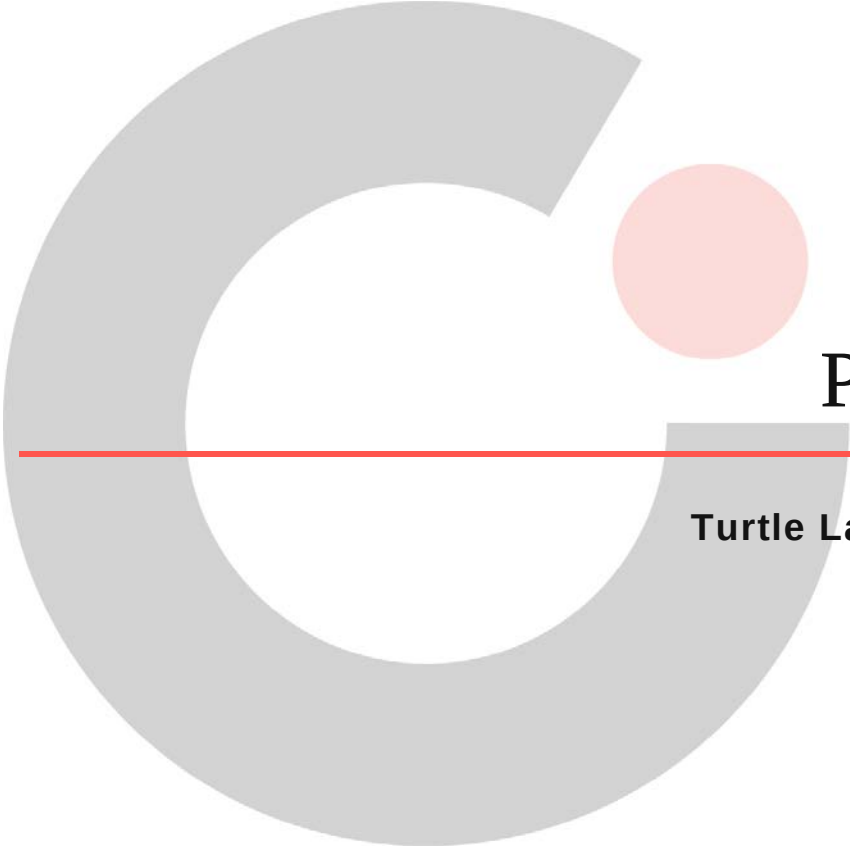




Mid-Cycle Progress Report

Turtle Lake-Mercer School District

Turtle Lake, North Dakota

Institution #259578

Introduction

This report is designed to reflect on your institution's progress as related to the findings of the most recent Accreditation Engagement Review. This report allows your institution to provide information relevant to the progress in meeting the Cognia Performance Standards and/or Assurances as outlined in the Area(s) for Improvement. It also allows Cognia to review and respond to the same.

Using evidence to support your responses, you will summarize your institution's progress and other general information relevant to the Area(s) for Improvement. Cite and share evidence of results based on your institution's progress.

Accreditation is Continuous Improvement

Accreditation is a continuous improvement process. 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."

Cognia believes all institutions can improve no matter how well they are currently performing. 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 analyses of data from diverse sources to select and implement actions that drive improvement in education quality and student performance. Cognia recognizes that each institution's improvement journey is unique and, as such, actions designed for improvement must be tailored to meet the needs of the institution and its learners.

Following the Engagement Review, the institution is expected to review the findings in the report and initiate plans to address the Area(s) for Improvement. These Area(s) for Improvement provide the basis for the Progress Report.

Results of Improvement Actions

This Progress Report should include narratives for each Area for Improvement that provide the results of your improvement efforts. The narratives should include descriptive evidence about how you have **engaged** stakeholders, practices and processes you have **implemented**, **results** you have achieved, how you plan to **sustain** your improvements, and how these new practices will become **embedded** in the culture of your institution. These **five levels of impact** align with the three phases of the i3 Rubric that are outlined below.

Additional Requirements for Early Learning Schools

Cognia institutions that have earned separate and distinct Cognia Early Learning Accreditation are required to complete additional items, which are found at the end of this template.

i3 Rubric

You will use Cognia's i3 Rubric to guide your assessment of your efforts since your previous Engagement Review. Examine each Area for Improvement, and related standards, against the rubric to determine which level of impact within the phases--Initiate, Improve, or Impact--your institution is currently in and identify your plan to move the policy, process, and/or practice to the next level of impact.

In Cognia's approach to change management, the i3 Rubric, we use three phases that describe the change process. These phases help leaders to investigate and evaluate the contexts of change within their organization. In this process it is important to note that, while each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions:

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 stakeholders are engaged in the desired practices, processes, or programs within the institution. **Implementation** is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are monitored and adjusted for quality and fidelity of implementation. Processes and practices you identify within the Initiate phase should become the focus of the institution's continuous improvement journey to move toward the collection, analysis, and use of data to measure the results of engagement and implementation. A focus on enhancing the capacity of the institution in meeting the identified goals 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** represent the collection, analysis, and use of data and evidence to demonstrate attaining the desired outcome(s). **Sustainability** is results achieved consistently to demonstrate growth and improvement over time (minimum of three years). Processes and practices identified within the Improve phase are those in which the institution is using results to inform their continuous improvement processes and using results over time to demonstrate 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 the 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. Processes and practices identified within the Impact phase are those in which the institution has demonstrated ongoing growth and improvement over time and has embedded the practices within the culture of the institution. Institutions should continue to support and sustain these practices that are yielding results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

i3 Rubric

INITIATE		IMPROVE		IMPACT
Engagement	Implementation	Results	Sustainability	Embeddedness
<i>The level of involvement and frequency stakeholders are engaged in the desired practices, processes, or programs.</i>	<i>The desired practices, processes, or programs are monitored and adjusted for quality and fidelity of implementation.</i>	<i>The collection, analysis, and use of data and evidence to demonstrate attaining the desired result(s).</i>	<i>Results achieved consistently demonstrate growth and improvement over time (minimum of three years).</i>	<i>The desired practices, processes, or programs are deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the institution.</i>
Few stakeholders are involved in support of the desired practice or program.	The desired practice or program is minimally implemented.	There is little or no data and evidence of attaining the desired result(s).	The institution has little or no data and evidence to indicate growth and improvement over time.	The desired practice or program is not ingrained in the institution.
Some stakeholders are frequently involved in support of the desired practice or program.	The desired practice or program is being monitored for implementation.	The institution collects and analyzes data and evidence to demonstrate the progress toward attaining the desired result(s).	The institution has some data and evidence to indicate growth and improvement over time.	The desired practice or program is ingrained in parts of the institution.
Many stakeholders are frequently involved in support of the desired practice or program.	The desired practice or program is being monitored and adjusted for quality and fidelity of implementation.	The institution collects, analyzes, and uses multiple sources of data and evidence to demonstrate progress toward attaining the desired result(s).	The institution has consistently documented data and evidence to indicate growth and improvement over time.	The desired practice or program is ingrained in the culture of the day-to-day work of the institution.
Most stakeholders are frequently involved in support of the desired practice or program.	Formal processes are used to demonstrate that the desired practice or program is implemented and monitored with quality and fidelity.	Formal processes are implemented to collect, analyze, and use multiple forms of data and evidence to demonstrate progress toward attaining the desired result(s).	The institution has consistently documented data and evidence to indicate sustained growth and improvement over time.	The desired practice or program is deeply ingrained and protected throughout the culture and the operations of the institution.

You will see that each level of impact has its own rubric to move from minimal practices within that level to best practices. For example, in Engagement, the frequency of involvement is *low* with *few* stakeholders engaged, while the best practice is that *most* stakeholders are *frequently* engaged.

As you determine your institution's level of impact on the i3 Rubric, identify 1) ways in which your institution will move from one level to the next, 2) how the levels guide and impact your improvement process, as well as your programs, processes, and practices, and 3) goals and activities that will support your institution's movement to and movement through the next level of impact.

Completing the Progress Report

Using evidence to support your responses, summarize your institution's progress and other general information relevant to the Area(s) for Improvement. Select your institution's level of impact from the i3 Rubric and follow the narrative prompts provided below.

Areas for Improvement

The following Area for Improvement was identified in the Engagement Review Report.

Area for Improvement #1: Adopt a specific model that provides pathways for all students to have voice and ownership of their learning.

Institution Response

i3 Rubric. Based on your findings, what level of impact from the i3 Rubric is your institution demonstrating in this Area for Improvement?

Results

Narrative.

- State whether you have achieved your goals relative to this Area for Improvement
- Document your findings
- Cite supporting evidence
- Specifically outline your plans and related activities towards continuous improvement based on your assessment with the i3 Rubric and pursuing Embeddedness
- Plans to continue working towards improvement related to this Area for Improvement

The Turtle Lake – Mercer School has made meaningful progress toward our goal of adopting a model that ensures every student has a voice in their education and opportunities to take ownership of their learning. While we have achieved significant milestones, our assessment indicates that this remains an area for continued growth, refinement, and sustained focus.

Professional development provided by Dr. Brenda Tufte in the area of high-impact educators has been instrumental in helping staff implement strategies that engage students more deeply in their learning. Teachers have reported greater confidence in fostering student-centered environments where learners are encouraged to participate, contribute, and self-advocate.

Our Enrichment and Intervention Days for K–12 students have provided flexible, personalized learning opportunities. These days are designed for students to receive targeted academic support or explore enrichment opportunities that align with their personal interests, ensuring that learning pathways are not “one-size-fits-all.”

Data collection through ELEOT classroom observations and the annual student engagement survey has revealed evidence of student ownership, particularly in classrooms where teachers have consistently applied student-centered strategies.

Additional supports, such as Teacher Tip Tuesdays, Strategy Cards, and Learning Walks, have strengthened professional collaboration and encouraged the sharing of best practices in student engagement. These initiatives have led to greater consistency across classrooms and a stronger school-wide culture of shared learning.

High school students now benefit from expanded course opportunities through online platforms and ITV classes, allowing them to pursue advanced coursework and areas of personal interest not otherwise available

within the district. Similarly, our school counselor's scheduling surveys ensure that student voice plays an active role in course selection, aligning schedules with individual interests and goals.

Student feedback mechanisms, including the school lunch survey, highlight our ongoing commitment to valuing student voice beyond academics and recognizing their perspectives in the overall school experience.

Meanwhile, co-curricular organizations such as FCCLA and FFA have continued to provide meaningful leadership and project-based learning opportunities where students are able to exercise ownership, collaboration, and advocacy.

While progress has been documented, the team recognizes that adopting a unified, systematic model for fostering student voice and ownership remains a priority. Evidence shows that efforts are making a difference, yet results are not yet fully consistent across grade levels and content areas.

To continue our growth in this area, our plans include:

- Continued Professional Development in the areas of student engagement, Science of Reading, effective math instruction, etc.
- Continued use of elect observations to gauge student engagement in the classroom.
- Continued use of surveys to gather student input in the areas of classroom engagement, class offerings providing a voice and choice in their education.
- We will continue to look at how we can best utilize and improve our Advisory Time that has been added to our 7th – 12th grade schedule.
- Continue to foster sharing of teaching strategies and resources amongst staff.
- We plan to continue to provide opportunities for high school students through additional online and ITV partnerships, as well as continuing to promote leadership pathways through FCCLA, FFA, and other organizations.

In summary, the Turtle Lake – Mercer School has taken significant steps to adopt practices that give students a stronger voice and ownership of their learning. Our evidence demonstrates meaningful progress, yet also indicates the need for continued, structured growth. We are committed to sustaining these efforts through ongoing professional development, data-driven adjustments, expanded learning opportunities, and intentional structures for student input. By doing so, we will continue to move closer to our goal of ensuring that all students have meaningful pathways to own their educational journey.

Cognia's Assessment of Area for Improvement #1.

The following is an assessment of the evaluator's findings.

Sufficient progress - no further action required

Summary of Cognia's Findings

The Turtle Lake–Mercer School demonstrates clear and measurable progress toward developing a systemwide approach that elevates student voice and strengthens learner ownership. Evidence across classrooms shows that the district is transitioning from emerging practices toward a more intentional, replicable model, consistent with the Improving stage of the Cognia i3 matrix and moving steadily toward Sustainability.

The district's commitment to professional learning has been a central driver of this growth. Training focused on high-impact educator practices has strengthened teachers' capacity to create student-centered environments and

increased the consistency with which engagement strategies are used. Structures such as Learning Walks, collaborative planning opportunities, and ongoing strategy sharing have reinforced these practices, contributing to greater coherence across grade levels.

Students now experience expanded opportunities to direct aspects of their learning. Flexible academic support and enrichment structures, broader course access through virtual and ITV offerings, and intentional scheduling processes empower students to make choices aligned with their needs and interests. Co-curricular programs continue to provide authentic, real-world contexts where students apply leadership, collaboration, and self-advocacy skills.

The district's use of multiple evidence sources—including eleot® observations, student surveys, and classroom data—demonstrates a growing culture of reflection and continuous improvement. These processes provide insights into student experiences and guide the district's refinement of advisory programming, instructional practices, and course offerings.

While the district has built meaningful momentum, leaders recognize the need to formalize a unified model that ensures student voice and ownership are embedded consistently across all classrooms. Planned actions—including continued professional development, strengthened monitoring tools, expanded student feedback systems, and ongoing enhancement of advisory structures—reflect readiness to advance toward deeper impact.

Overall, the Turtle Lake–Mercer School is progressing along the Cognia i3 continuum through deliberate structures, purposeful professional learning, and a sustained focus on student-centered practices. The district's actions and evidence signal a clear trajectory toward a more systematic, coherent model that ensures every learner is engaged, empowered, and able to influence their educational experience.

The following Area for Improvement was identified in the Engagement Review Report.

Area for Improvement #2: Formalize and document a research-based systematic process to implement, monitor, and adjust instructional programs and curriculum.

Institution Response

i3 Rubric. Based on your findings, what level of impact from the i3 Rubric is your institution demonstrating in this Area for Improvement?

Sustainability

Narrative.

- State whether you have achieved your goals relative to this Area for Improvement
- Document your findings
- Cite supporting evidence
- Specifically outline your plans and related activities towards continuous improvement based on your assessment with the i3 Rubric and pursuing Embeddedness
- Plans to continue working towards improvement related to this Area for Improvement

The Turtle Lake – Mercer School has made measurable progress toward formalizing and documenting a systematic, research-based process for implementing, monitoring, and adjusting instructional programs and curriculum. While we have not yet fully achieved our long-term goals in this area, substantial structures have been established, and the consistent collection and use of evidence-based practices show that we are on a positive trajectory.

The district has prioritized aligning curriculum with state standards and systematically documenting instructional progress. We have completed Central Regional Education Association (CREA) standards mapping in several subject areas, including elementary and high school mathematics, elementary English Language Arts, elementary science, and elementary social studies. This work has created a clear framework that ensures curriculum alignment with standards and provides a foundation for instructional decision-making. To strengthen accountability and monitoring, the district has hosted regular Data Days for ELA and math. These sessions provide teachers with structured time to review progress monitoring data, identify areas of concern, and adjust instruction to meet student needs. The process has been effective in ensuring instruction is not only standards-aligned but also responsive to the diverse learning needs of students. Progress monitoring has been a key component of this process, and the addition of Math Corps beginning in the 2025–26 school year represents a proactive step to address learning gaps and provide targeted intervention support. Alongside interventions, Enrichment and Intervention Days continue to serve as an opportunity for both remediation and advanced learning, ensuring that all students have access to tailored instruction based on their individual needs.

At the system level, the school has prioritized transparency and accountability by sharing Student Outcomes at monthly school board meetings for the past three years. This practice not only documents progress but also formalizes a feedback loop between administration, educators, school board, and the community. It highlights the district's commitment to ongoing monitoring and public reporting of instructional effectiveness. To continue working towards further implementation of a research-based process to implement, monitor, and adjust instructional programs and curriculum we are working to schedule another session with CREA for high school English, History, and Science, as well as, 2nd grade for them to complete the standards mapping. Our Data Literacy team is working to solidify an MTSS process this school year. The Turtle Lake – Mercer School has built a strong foundation in formalizing and documenting a systematic approach to instructional programs and curriculum. Our evidence shows progress in standards alignment, monitoring, and accountability practices, with plans for further refinement to create a fully documented, research-based framework. While this goal is not yet fully achieved, our current efforts and outlined plans demonstrate a clear path forward toward ensuring instructional effectiveness and student success across all content areas.

Cognia's Assessment of Area for Improvement #2.

The following is an assessment of the evaluator's findings.

Sufficient progress - no further action required

Summary of Cognia's Findings

The Turtle Lake–Mercer School has made significant and measurable strides in creating, documenting, and

implementing a coherent, research-aligned system for guiding instructional programs and curriculum. Evidence indicates the district is progressing steadily along the Cognia i3 continuum toward Sustainability, with emerging structures and increasingly consistent use of evidence-based practices informing decision-making. While the system has not yet fully reached its long-term goal, its current trajectory reflects strong momentum and growing coherence across classrooms and grade levels.

The district has prioritized curriculum alignment with state standards and has established a documented framework through completed CREA standards mapping in elementary and high school mathematics, elementary ELA, elementary science, and elementary social studies. This work has enhanced instructional consistency and created a clear foundation for ongoing curriculum refinement.

Efforts to strengthen a systematic, research-based approach are further reinforced through Data Days for ELA and math. These structured, collaborative sessions provide educators with dedicated time to examine progress-monitoring data, identify instructional needs, and make timely adjustments. This process demonstrates the district's commitment to ensuring instruction remains both standards-aligned and responsive to diverse learner needs.

Progress monitoring continues to serve as a central element of the district's instructional system. The addition of Math Corps in the 2025–26 school year represents a proactive strategy to address identified learning gaps and expand targeted intervention support. Enrichment and Intervention Days have further enhanced the district's ability to deliver remediation and enrichment, ensuring instruction is customized to individual student needs.

At the system level, a strong culture of transparency and accountability has taken root. For three consecutive years, Student Outcomes have been reported monthly to the school board, creating a consistent feedback loop that engages administration, educators, board members, and the community. This practice underscores the district's commitment to monitoring instructional effectiveness and publicly documenting progress.

Planned next steps—including completing CREA standards mapping for high school English, history, and science, as well as second grade, along with continued work by the Data Literacy Team to solidify MTSS processes—demonstrate a clear and intentional path toward fully implementing a comprehensive, research-based instructional framework.

Overall, Turtle Lake–Mercer School has built a strong foundation for a systematic, evidence-driven approach to curriculum and instructional programs. The district has documented progress in standards alignment, monitoring systems, data-informed decision-making, and accountability structures. While continued refinement is needed for full maturation, the district's established practices and forward-looking actions reflect meaningful advancement toward sustainable, research-based systems that support long-term student success.

Reflections

Successes. Summarize your institution's successes with continuous improvement.

Over the past several years, Turtle Lake – Mercer has built a strong culture of continuous improvement, marked by intentional planning, data-driven practices, and a focus on student voice and achievement.

1. Elevating Student Voice and Ownership of Learning

- Implemented Enrichment and Intervention Days for K–12, offering targeted support and enrichment tailored to student needs.
- Expanded opportunities for high school students through ITV and online courses, supported by school counselor surveys that ensure scheduling reflects student interests.
- Strengthened student voice through surveys (engagement, school lunch, scheduling) and by supporting leadership in co-curricular organizations such as FCCLA and FFA.
- Enhanced teacher practice through professional development with Dr. Brenda Tufte, Learning Walks, and Teacher Tip Tuesdays, increasing student engagement and ownership.

2. Formalizing Instructional and Curriculum Processes

- Completed CREA standards mapping for elementary and high school mathematics, elementary ELA, science, and social studies to ensure alignment with standards.
- Established Data Days for ELA and math, providing structured time to review student performance and adjust instruction.
- Expanded progress monitoring efforts and committed to Math Corps (starting in 2025–26) to provide targeted intervention.
- Strengthened accountability and transparency by sharing student outcomes monthly at school board meetings for the last three years.

3. Building a Sustainable Culture of Improvement

- Demonstrated consistency in using multiple data sources (ELEOT, surveys, assessments, student outcomes) to inform decisions.
- Fostered collaboration across staff through professional learning opportunities and regular reflection on instructional practices.

Turtle Lake – Mercer has successfully established a strong foundation for continuous improvement by prioritizing student voice, aligning curriculum with standards, and embedding data-driven decision-making into everyday practice. While work continues to fully formalize our processes, the district has demonstrated meaningful growth in building pathways for all students to succeed and in creating sustainable systems that ensure instruction is monitored, evaluated, and adjusted for impact.

Challenges. What challenges did your institution encounter with the improvement initiatives?

While the district has experienced meaningful successes in continuous improvement, we still face several challenges.

1. Staff Training and Retention

- The addition of new staff members has required consistent retraining in established improvement processes, such as CREA standards mapping, Data Days, Critical Initiative teams, and use of engagement/monitoring tools.
- Ensuring new teachers are brought fully up to speed has required additional time, coaching, and resources to maintain consistency across classrooms.

2. Scheduling Complexities

- The planned implementation of Math Corps in grades 7 and 8 has highlighted the challenge of balancing interventions with student schedules, particularly in a smaller district with fewer course sections.
- The transition to a 4-day school week has also required careful planning to maximize instructional time.

3. Sustaining Consistency

- As the district builds new systems and communication channels (school app, Apptegy Rooms, podcast, Facebook outreach), the challenge remains to sustain consistent use and engagement across all families and amongst staff.

Turtle Lake – Mercer's improvement journey has not been without obstacles. Training new staff, ensuring full buy-in, navigating scheduling complexities for interventions like Math Corps, and sustaining consistent momentum across all initiatives have presented challenges. However, these challenges have also provided valuable learning opportunities, reinforcing the district's commitment to building resilient, adaptable systems that continue to evolve in response to student, staff, and community needs.

Institution's Next Steps

- Submit your completed Progress Report, in **Microsoft Word** only, in the Workspace.
- Upload evidence in the Workspace that you deem relative and supportive of your progress.
- Notify your Cognia Regional Office of your submission in the Workspace.

Institution's Submission

This report was completed and submitted by:

Name	Sheila Schlafmann
Title	Superintendent
Date	10/13/2025

Summary of Cognia’s Review

Pursuant to the Cognia Accreditation and Certification Policies and Procedures, the following recommendation will be reviewed, along with other documentation, by Cognia and the Cognia Global Commission for action. For details related to each status, please see Policy 3.

X	Continued Accredited status with no further actions
	Accredited Under Review status recommended based on an incomplete report and/or insufficient progress

Next Steps

The following tasks should be completed before the next review. Cognia representatives stand ready to help you complete these tasks.

1.	Continue to enhance and monitor your systemwide MTSS and data-literacy process, ensuring teams use data to make informed instructional adjustments and support student learning needs.
2.	Continue to work on standards-aligned curriculum mapping, coupled with a systemic review and revision process to ensure consistency and coherence across grade level and content areas.
3.	Strengthen and systematize structures that promote student voice and choice to ensure consistent opportunities for learners to actively engage and take ownership in their learning.
4.	Sustain high-quality professional learning focused on student engagement and effective instruction to ensure consistent implementation of evidence-based practices across the system.
5.	Prepare for the Accreditation Engagement Review in 2028-29.

Mark Vollmer

Mid-Cycle Report Reviewer

November 17, 2025

Date

Shannon Vogler

Cognia Representative
Accreditation Director

November 18, 2925

Date