

Performance Standards for K–12 and Postsecondary Institutions

Excellence in education relies on high standards

All education institutions share a fundamental common goal: to inspire and equip learners so that they succeed to their highest potential. The current, research-based standards acknowledge that commonality through one set of standards. They define the practices of a good education institution and provide the criteria for improvement efforts that will energetically and visibly grow learners, teachers, leaders, and organizations in any K–12 or postsecondary non-degree granting setting. Early learning and extended learning institutions, and state education agencies continue to have dedicated standards.

Another hallmark of a high-quality school is that it continually strives for improvement. Like the member institutions we serve, Cognia works to innovate and improve, by embarking on a research and development cycle that takes place at least every six years. Our 2022 standards, and the important concepts and key characteristics are the foundation for Cognia's approach to continuous improvement—not just to accreditation. These are the elements that should guide every educational institution to ensure high-quality teaching and learning and overall organizational effectiveness.

The Standards

- View the performance standards and key characteristics
- Download standards for K–12 and postsecondary institutions
- Read about our standards-based approach to high-quality schooling

Performance Standards

Four key characteristics are evident when institutions effectively adopt the Cognia Performance Standards and engage in Cognia's peer review process for accreditation and continuous improvement.

CULTURE OF LEARNING | LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING | ENGAGEMENT OF LEARNING | GROWTH IN LEARNING

Key Characteristic 1: Culture of Learning

The institution's focus on the challenges, joys, and opportunities for learning, and the coherence with its mission and vision

A good institution nurtures and sustains a healthy culture for learning. In a healthy culture, learners, parents, and educators feel connected to the purpose and work of the institution as well as behave in alignment with the stated values and norms. The institution also demonstrates evidence that reflects the mission, beliefs, and expectations of the institution (e.g., student work; physical appearance of the institution; participation in institution activities; parents attendance at institution functions).

A healthy culture is evident where:

- Stakeholders are actively engaged and supportive of the institution's mission
- Learners' academic and non-academic needs and interests are the focal point
- Stakeholders are included and supported

Standards

STANDARD 1: Leaders cultivate and sustain a culture that demonstrates respect and fairness for all learners and is free from bias.

STANDARD 2: Learners' well-being is at the heart of the institution's guiding principles such as mission, purpose, and beliefs.

STANDARD 3: Leaders actively engage stakeholders to support the institution's priorities and guiding principles that promote learners' academic growth and well-being.

STANDARD 4: Learners benefit from a formal structure that fosters positive relationships with peers and adults.

STANDARD 5: Professional staff members embrace effective collegiality and collaboration in support of learners.

STANDARD 6: Professional staff members receive the support they need to strengthen their professional practice.

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