



Coweta County School System

Coweta Committed to Student Success

Press Release

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[2021 Cognia Report for Coweta Schools](#)

COGNIA Team Gives Coweta Schools Highest Marks, Recommends School System Re-accreditation

In recommending five-year re-accreditation for the Coweta County School System, a team for the Cognia accreditation organization has given Coweta Schools one of its highest possible rankings of school and school system effectiveness.

Overall, Coweta Schools received an “Index of Education Quality” score of **363.7 (out of a possible 400)**, which well exceeds Cognia’s average score of approximately 280 awarded to school systems in recent years. It is also an increase over Coweta’s score of 357 earned during its 2016 accreditation visit, during which the school system was described as an “Exemplar” district.

The ranking indicates the school system is meeting all standards, reaching an “Impact” level in its overall operations, and is engaged in practices that are sustained over time and are becoming ingrained in a culture of system excellence, according to Cognia.

[Cognia](#) - formerly known as AdvancED - provided Coweta Schools with an accreditation review February 7-11, 2021. The accreditation agency issued its final report to the system on Tuesday, March 23, based on their review. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Based on reviewed evidence, system and community interviews, and school visits, the review team awarded the school system high marks in standards covering student learning, system leadership, and resource management

Each of the 31 standards used to evaluate those areas are ranked on a four-point scale. A three is the goal for each standard, and receiving a four shows exceptional system effectiveness in each category. Coweta was awarded a level “4” (highest rating) in 28 of the 31 COGNIA standards, and a “3” in three other areas.

“I am so proud of the teachers and employees of our school system,” said Superintendent Evan Horton. “This report signifies that our system is performing at an extraordinarily high level of effectiveness, in multiple aspects examined by Cognia. That is a result of what our employees are

doing every day in service to the students of this community, and they are to be commended for that service.”

Horton said that the accreditation review - undertaken every five years by the school system - is a highly detailed, data-driven and all-encompassing examination of school and school system practices.

“This process is intimidating enough all on its own,” said Horton. “But to go forward with this level of review during a pandemic, during such a difficult year for our students, families and schools, is doubly intimidating. And to have such a rewarding review in those circumstances is remarkable. It really is a reflection of the excellence of our schools and system staff.”

Assistant Superintendent Karen Barker led the school system team that prepared for the team’s February visit. She noted that though the review of school system standards and practices is comprehensive, it is something that schools have built into their ongoing operations.

“We had an excellent, rewarding accreditation visit in 2016. And as soon as the review team walked out the door last time, we began work on re-accreditation for the next five years,” said Barker. The system builds accreditation standards into continuous school evaluations, and it’s strategic plan, which was reworked based on the accreditation team’s 2016 report and updated standards. “So all of us have been working toward this goal of continuous improvement and re-accreditation for five years. We evaluate ourselves by their standards, and it is how we do business day-in and day-out. And that meant that we had a lot of very strong data to present the team for their evaluation of how we operate.”

“Certainly the result is an affirmation of the incredible work that is happening in our schools every day, and the level of effectiveness across the whole district” said Barker.

During its February visit - which was held remotely to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic - the six-person COGNIA review team met with system leaders, employees, parents, students and community members. 162 interviews were conducted, and virtual visits to six representative schools - Brooks, Glanton, Arnall, Lee, Newnan High School and the Central Educational Center - were held.

The team reviewed extensive evidence and data from all 31 of Coweta’s schools and from district departments overall, reflecting five years of school and system performance, and were able to meet representatives from every school during their visit.

“We tried to have a wide variety of people who represented our entire district,” said Barker. “The interviews included teachers, custodians, bus drivers, content specialists, school nurses, clerical personnel, food service workers, counselors, administrators, SROs - just a very wide variety of roles and responsibilities in our schools, as well as our parents and community members and our school board members. We wanted to make sure everyone’s voice was heard.”

The report makes dozens of observations outlining the data gathered by the team and their conclusions. Some of those include:

- *Through a review of evidence and interviews, the team found that CCSS students have the same variety of needs as most children. However, the district's services ensure success by aligning efforts where needed, so students receive support and interventions to continue focusing on their academics. CCSS plans for uneven services to meet the uneven needs of students.*
- *The district's track record of effective stewardship has provided them with the resources needed during a state reduction of funds and the pandemic. Exemplary audits, State Financial Efficiency STAR rating of 4 out of 5, Balanced State Scorecard data, and the Coweta Effectiveness Evaluation Plan indicate the district is well managed financially.*
- *Staff surveys indicate teachers are happy in their roles. With educator effectiveness as a priority, the district's overall teacher retention rate is 92.1%, compared to the state average of 83.3%.*
- *Collective decisions on the school calendar and the opening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between the workforce and schools. All considered the impact on employees and the children's health and safety.*
- *CCSS builds a collaborative culture through the intentional involvement of stakeholders... This action builds trust and a level of consistency in actions and expectations for staff and citizens. It has resulted in community ownership, transparency of actions, a clear understanding of processes, expectations, procedures, and community commitment to student success. In interviews with stakeholders, it was clear they feel valued by the school system.*
- *A strong collaborative culture and shared leadership build effectiveness for the district. The team commends the district for the development of effective leadership and encourages the system to intentionally protect the culture and collaboration as the community grows and to plan for onboarding of this culture to the new staff and new families.*

Though there are no formal recommendations from the review team, Horton and Barker said that the review itself has provided the school system with a great opportunity for self-reflection, as well as affirmation.

"Any time you do a self-analysis, you find opportunities for growth," said Barker. "In Coweta, we are tougher on ourselves than an external group would be, so we are going to find areas based on this report that we can continue to grow in and better benefit our students."

Dean Jackson

Office of Public Information

Coweta County School System

P.O. Drawer 280 * Newnan, GA 30264 * 770-254-2801

dean.jackson@cowetaschools.org

Cell: 678-673-7722

Phone: 770-254-2736

Fax: 770-254-2807

www.cowetaschools.net, - @CowetaSchools