

FAQ – COGNIA SPECIAL REVIEW

This document contains a list of questions and answers regarding the upcoming Special Review of the Clarke County School District by the accreditation agency Cognia. The document [AdvancED Policies and Procedures for Accreditation and Certification](#) was used as a source to provide these answers regarding the Special Review process and how Cognia confers accreditation status on a system. The last page of this document contains a list of links to documents relating to the Special Review and the complaints filed with Cognia (also posted on the [Clarke County School District website](#)).

Q. What is Cognia?

A. Cognia (formerly AdvancED) is responsible for supporting and monitoring institutional and system adherence to the Cognia Standards and Policies, conducting an Engagement Review to every accredited school or system at least once every five years; conducting a Certification Review to every system holding a certification at least once every five years; reviewing all system reports; granting an accreditation or certification status for all systems; responding to complaints by and about systems; and maintaining accurate, complete, and timely records.

Q. Why is the CCSD under Special Review by the accreditation agency Cognia?

A. December 16, 2019, the accreditation agency Cognia informed the Clarke County School District of its decision to conduct an onsite Special Review. The decision to conduct the review is a result of allegations sent to Cognia regarding the operations of the school district.

Q. When will the Special Review take place?

A. January 26—28, 2020

Q. What happens during the Special Review?

A. Based on the complaints submitted, Cognia informed the district the Special Review Team would interview members of the Board of Education, district administrators, building leaders, and teachers. The law firm hired by the Board of Education (The Employment Law Solution) is supporting the BOE and the district in ensuring all parties have a clear understanding of the Special Review process.

Cognia states in its December 16, 2019 letter to the district that the Review Team will provide Improvement Priorities, if necessary, that will require decisive action for correction on the part of the district with follow-up documentation submitted to Cognia within a timeframe as identified by Cognia. The Clarke County School District will receive a written report of the Special Review.

Q. What is the focus of the Special Review?

A. In performing its duties, Cognia may investigate an accredited system on any matter related to possible violations of Cognia Standards and Policies at any time. Cognia shall use its judgment and discretion in determining if a complaint rises to a level justifying an investigation. Investigations will only be initiated when supported by substantial evidence and when they involve matters that could seriously hinder or disrupt the educational effectiveness of the system and ability of the system to meet the Cognia Standards or Policies for accreditation or certification.

In its December 16, 2019 letter to the district, Cognia stated the Special Review Team would focus on the following five standards:

- Standard 1.4: The governing authority established and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.
- Standard 1.5: The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.
- Standard 1.7: Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.
- Standard 2.1: Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.
- Standard 2.11: Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.

Q. How does this Special Review affect the district's accreditation?

A. There is no immediate impact on the Clarke County School District. The district received its most current accreditation starting with the 2018—2019 school year. The accreditation cycle is for a 5-year period, and as such, the district is accredited through the 2022—2023 school year.

The impending Special Review is utilized to help districts resolve issues and improve effectiveness. There would be a number of additional steps before the possibility of a change in the district's accreditation status.

Accreditation status is a designation provided by Cognia that defines the system's standing relative to the results of an Engagement Review and/or due to the findings of a progress report(s), special review, and/or subsequent monitoring reviews. At this time, the status of the district remains "Accredited."

There are three accreditation statuses that may be conferred on a system:

1. **Accredited.** A status conferred to a system in good standing and based on the most recent Engagement Review, meets all or a substantial number of Standards and criteria and has documented performance results and an Index of Education Quality® (IEQ®) score at acceptable levels. The system having a status of Accredited will continue with that status through the assigned expiration date of the five-year accreditation term as long as the system continuously meets the policies, Standards, and Assurances for accreditation.
2. **Accredited Under Review.** A status conferred to a system in fair standing; and based on the most recent Engagement Review, fails to meet a substantial number of Standards or criteria, has an IEQ score in the bottom 5% of reviews administered in the school year and/or documents levels of poor/unsatisfactory performance results. Additionally, a system may be conferred the status of Accredited Under Review based on the results of a special review or monitoring review wherein the system fails to meet a substantial number of Standards or criteria or is in noncompliance with policies and Assurances impacting the effective operations of the system.

A system having a status of Accredited Under Review will submit an annual progress report(s) to Cognia on Improvement Priorities identified in the most recent review report, host an onsite monitoring review within one year of the previous review, and host subsequent monitoring reviews as prescribed by Cognia.

A system having a status of Accredited Under Review will continue with that status until the system successfully documents adequate progress in Improvement Priorities and/or by providing documented evidence of substantially meeting policies, Standards and Assurances for accreditation.

3. **Accredited Under Conditions.** A status is conferred to a system in poor standing with the following conditions:

- a. Has held the status of Accredited Under Review for at least twelve (12) months and,
- b. Has failed to demonstrate, with documented evidence, substantive progress in addressing the circumstances for which the system was conferred the status of Accredited Under Review.

OR

- c. Has been found by an investigative team to no longer adhere to the accreditation Standards, Policies, and Assurances; fails to cooperate with any Special Review Team investigation or request for information, and circumstances warrant such action.

Q. What is the cost to the school district for the Special Review?

A. The district is responsible for a \$4,500 fee to Cognia, plus travel costs for the members of the Special Review Team.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Documents Related to the Cognia Complaint

- [Notice of Special Review \(sent by Cognia to CCSD\) - 12.19.19](#)
- [Statement Provided to BOE President and Vice President by Superintendent Demond Means at BOE Meeting - 9.13.19](#)
- [Response to AdvancED by Superintendent Demond Means - 9.13.19](#)

Cognia Information

- [Cognia Website](#) (Accreditation and Certification)
- [AdvancED Performance Standards](#)
- [AdvancED Policies and Procedures for Accreditation and Certification](#)

Media Contact

Beth Moore

Communications Manager

Clarke County School District • clarke.k12.ga.us

beth.moore@clarke.k12.ga.us • 706-546-7721, Ext. 20703