

# Performance Standards and Rubrics

K-12 and Postsecondary Institutions



# Introduction: What makes a good school?

The quality of a school goes beyond its name, location, or reputation. An education institution succeeds when it supports every learner every day, offering opportunities for every learner to reach further.

One hallmark of a good school is that it continually strives for improvement. Like the member institutions we serve, Cognia® works to innovate and improve. In spring 2021, we completed a research and development cycle that takes place every five years, examining and updating the Cognia Performance Standards to acknowledge changes and set expectations for quality education institutions in a new era. Based on current research in education, input from practitioners, and multiple expert reviews, this cyclical development process assures that the standards at the foundation of our improvement and accreditation strategies continue to be viable, feasible, and relevant to educators in today's world.

## One set of standards

If you're familiar with the previous Cognia standards for different institution types, you'll notice a significant change: One set of standards now applies to all K–12 and postsecondary institution types, including systems of institutions.

All education institutions share a fundamental common goal: to inspire and equip learners so that they succeed to their highest potential. The new, research-based standards acknowledge that commonality. They are appropriate for all institutions, placing emphasis on quality and effective practices that benefit all learners in any K–12 or postsecondary non-degree granting setting. The details relevant to different types of institutions will be addressed in Assurances and in other Cognia Accreditation resources that will be available to members. (Early Learning and Extended Learning institutions continue to have dedicated standards.) Standards for Education Service Organizations, including Charter School Authorizers, and State Education Agencies are also available separately.

## New concepts

Every iteration of Cognia's Performance Standards builds on the prior version to support ongoing improvement. Many of the themes of the previous standards are reflected in the new standards. The 2022 standards also include several significant new concepts to guide institutions forward, including:

**LEARNER-CENTERED:** Cognia's new standards focus on the learner, describing the impact on the learning journey of processes and practices, which reflect the performance of the institution. Further, the standards emphasize student agency.

**LEARNER WELL-BEING:** Learning depends on more than skilled instruction. Institutions must address multiple aspects of learners' circumstances and environment, so that every learner can grow.

**INQUIRY-BASED APPROACH:** Action research fosters inquiry and dialogue among educators, guiding informed improvements to instructional practices.

## Quality characteristics

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

**LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING:** the responsibility of an institution's leaders to influence and impact all aspects of the institution in positive ways

**ENGAGEMENT OF LEARNING:** the inclusion of all learners in the learning process, and their development of confidence and love of learning

**GROWTH IN LEARNING:** the growth of learners in the programs and curricula provided by the institution and their readiness to successfully transition to next levels of learning

These characteristics serve as our model for identifying and discussing school and system quality. Additional information will be available to members to show how the standards align with these characteristics.

## Framework for improvement

Our new standards and the 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 Cognia Performance Standards, in effect as of July 1, 2022, 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.

## Rating the standards

During an institution's self-assessment and Accreditation Engagement Review, each standard will be rated according to a unique four-point scoring rubric. The point-value definitions appear below.

<b>LEVEL 4</b>	<b>Demonstrating noteworthy systematic and systemic practices that produce clear results and positively impact learners</b>
<b>LEVEL 3</b>	<b>Engaging in practices that provide evidence of expected effectiveness that is reflected in the standard</b>
<b>LEVEL 2</b>	<b>Developing or improving practices that provide evidence that effort approaches desired level of effectiveness</b>
<b>LEVEL 1</b>	<b>Reflecting areas with insufficient evidence and/or limited activity leading toward improvement</b>

# Key Characteristic 1: Culture of Learning

## What it means

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).

## Keys to A Culture of Learning

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

### STANDARD 1

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

4	Leaders consistently model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members consistently implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision-making that embody the values of respect and fairness for all learners and are free from bias.
3	Leaders regularly model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members routinely implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision-making that embody the values of respect and fairness for all learners and are free from bias.
2	Leaders occasionally model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members sometimes implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision-making that embody the values of respect and fairness for all learners and are free from bias.
1	Leaders rarely model the attributes and implement practices that shape and sustain the desired institution culture, clearly setting expectations for all staff members. Leaders and professional staff members seldom implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision-making that embody the values of respect and fairness for all learners and are free from bias.

## STANDARD 2

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

4	Staff members continually demonstrate commitment to learners' academic and non-academic needs and interests. The institution's practices, processes, and decisions are documented and regularly reviewed for consistency with its stated values.
3	Staff members routinely demonstrate commitment to learners' academic and non-academic needs and interests. The institution's practices, processes, and decisions are documented and are consistent with and based on its stated values.
2	Staff members occasionally demonstrate commitment to learners' academic and non-academic needs and interests. The institution's practices, processes, and decisions are consistent with and based on its stated values.
1	Staff members seldom demonstrate commitment to learners' academic and non-academic needs and interests. The institution's practices, processes, and decisions may not be based on its stated values.

## STANDARD 3

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

4	Leaders establish and sustain conditions that consistently result in support and active participation among stakeholders. Leaders consistently collaborate with stakeholders to advance identified priorities. Institutions implement a formal process to choose areas of focus based on analyzed data on learners' needs and consistent with guiding principles.
3	Leaders establish and sustain conditions that regularly result in support and active participation among stakeholders. Leaders routinely collaborate with stakeholders to advance identified priorities. Institutions choose areas of focus based on analyzed data on learners' needs and consistent with guiding principles.
2	Leaders establish conditions that occasionally result in support and participation among stakeholders. Leaders sometimes collaborate with stakeholders to advance identified priorities. Institutions choose areas of focus that are sometimes based on data on learners' needs and consistent with guiding principles.
1	Leaders establish conditions that rarely result in support and participation among stakeholders. Leaders seldom collaborate with stakeholders. Institutions choose areas of focus that are rarely based on data about learners.

## STANDARD 4

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

4	A formal structure is planned and consistently implemented to promote a culture and climate in which learners receive support from adults and peers. Peer and adult interactions and behaviors consistently demonstrate respect, trust, and concern for one another's well-being.
3	A formal structure is planned and regularly implemented to promote a culture and climate in which learners receive support from adults and peers. Peer and adult interactions and behaviors routinely demonstrate respect, trust, and concern for one another's well-being.
2	A formal structure may be planned and is minimally implemented to promote a culture and climate in which learners receive support from adults and peers. Peer and adult interactions and behaviors sometimes demonstrate respect, trust, and concern for one another's well-being.
1	A formal structure is not planned or implemented to promote a culture and climate in which learners receive support from adults and peers. Peer and adult interactions and behaviors rarely demonstrate respect, trust, and concern for one another's well-being.

## STANDARD 5

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

4	The institution's documented operating practices cultivate and set expectations for collegiality and collaboration and are monitored for fidelity of implementation. Professional staff members consistently interact with respect and cooperation, learn from one another, and consider one another's ideas. Professional staff members intentionally and consistently work together in self-formed or assigned groups to review information, identify common problems, and implement solutions on behalf of learners.
3	The institution's documented operating practices cultivate and set expectations for collegiality and collaboration. Professional staff members regularly interact with respect and cooperation, often learn from one another, and routinely consider one another's ideas. Professional staff members often work together in self-formed or assigned groups to review information, identify common problems, and implement solutions on behalf of learners.
2	The institution's operating practices somewhat cultivate and set expectations for collegiality and collaboration. Professional staff members generally interact with respect and cooperation, periodically learn from one another, and somewhat consider one another's ideas. Professional staff members sometimes work together in self-formed or assigned groups to review information, identify common problems, and implement solutions on behalf of learners.
1	The institution's operating practices rarely cultivate and set expectations for collegiality and collaboration. Professional staff members may or may not interact with respect and cooperation, learn from one another, or consider one another's ideas. Professional staff members rarely work together in self-formed or assigned groups to review information, identify common problems, and implement solutions on behalf of learners.

## STANDARD 6

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

4	Professional staff members consistently receive adequate resources and assistance based on data and information unique to the individual. A formal structure ensures that professional staff members receive personalized mentoring and coaching from leaders and peers.
3	Professional staff members receive adequate resources and assistance based on data and information unique to the individual. Professional staff members receive personalized mentoring and coaching from leaders and peers.
2	Professional staff members receive some resources and assistance based on data and information unique to the individual. Professional staff members periodically receive mentoring and coaching from leaders and peers.
1	Professional staff members receive few or no resources and assistance based on data and information unique to the individual. Professional staff members rarely receive mentoring and coaching from leaders and peers.

# Key Characteristic 2: Leadership for Learning

## What it means

The ability of a leader to provide leadership for learning is a key attribute of a good institution. Leaders who engage in their own learning while tangibly supporting the learning process for learners and teachers have a significant positive impact on the success of others. Leaders must also communicate the learning expectations for all learners and teachers, continuously, with consistency and purpose. The expectations are embedded in the culture of the institution, reflected by learners', teachers', and leaders' behaviors and attitudes toward learning.

## Keys to Leadership for Learning

Leadership for learning is demonstrated when school leaders:

- Communicate expectations for learning
- Influence and impact the culture in positive ways
- Model and engage in learning while supporting others to do so

## STANDARD 7

Leaders guide professional staff members in the continuous improvement process focused on learners' experiences and needs.

4	Leaders consistently engage professional staff members in developing, communicating, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting the continuous improvement process. The continuous improvement process is based on analyzed trend and current data about learners' academic and non-academic needs and the institution's organizational effectiveness. Leaders and professional staff members consistently implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that improve learning and engage stakeholders.
3	Leaders regularly engage professional staff members in developing, communicating, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting the continuous improvement process. The continuous improvement process is based on analyzed data about learners' academic and non-academic needs and the institution's organizational effectiveness. Leaders and professional staff members routinely implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that improve learning and engage stakeholders.
2	Leaders occasionally engage professional staff members in developing, communicating, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting the continuous improvement process. The continuous improvement process is sometimes based on data about learners' academic and non-academic needs and the institution's organizational effectiveness. Leaders and professional staff members sometimes implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that improve learning and engage stakeholders.
1	Leaders seldom engage professional staff members in developing, communicating, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting the continuous improvement process. The continuous improvement process is rarely based on data about learners' academic and non-academic needs and the institution's organizational effectiveness. Leaders and professional staff members rarely implement ongoing practices, processes, and decision making that improve learning and engage stakeholders.

## STANDARD 8

The governing authority demonstrates a commitment to learners by collaborating with leaders to uphold the institution's priorities and to drive continuous improvement.

4	The governing authority's policies and decisions are regularly reviewed to ensure an uncompromised commitment to learners and the institution's identified priorities. The governing authority and institution leaders use their respective roles and responsibilities to consistently and intentionally collaborate to further the institution's improvement.
3	The governing authority's policies and decisions demonstrate a commitment to learners and support the institution's identified priorities. The governing authority and institution leaders use their respective roles and responsibilities to collaboratively further the institution's improvement.
2	The governing authority's decisions demonstrate some commitment to learners and sometimes support the institution's identified priorities. The governing authority and institution leaders use their respective roles and responsibilities to focus the institution's improvement.
1	The governing authority's decisions demonstrate minimal commitment to learners and rarely support the institution's identified priorities. The governing authority and institution leaders seldom collaborate on the institution's improvement.

## STANDARD 9

Leaders cultivate effective individual and collective leadership among stakeholders.

4	Leaders consistently recognize and actively encourage leadership potential among stakeholders. Leaders create conditions that ensure formal and informal leadership opportunities, and provide customized support for individuals and groups to improve their leadership skills. Stakeholders show initiative and eagerness to take on individual or shared responsibilities that support the institution's priorities.
3	Leaders frequently recognize and encourage leadership potential among stakeholders. Leaders create conditions that regularly offer formal and informal leadership opportunities, and support individuals and groups to improve their leadership skills. Stakeholders demonstrate a willingness to take on individual or shared responsibilities that support the institution's priorities.
2	Leaders occasionally recognize and encourage leadership potential among stakeholders. Leaders sometimes create conditions that offer leadership opportunities and support individuals and groups to improve their leadership skills. Stakeholders sometimes volunteer to take on individual or shared responsibilities that support the institution's priorities.
1	Leaders seldom recognize and encourage leadership potential among stakeholders. Leaders rarely create conditions that offer leadership opportunities and support individuals and groups to improve their leadership skills. Stakeholders rarely volunteer to take on individual or shared responsibilities that support the institution's priorities.

## STANDARD 10

Leaders demonstrate expertise in recruiting, supervising, and evaluating professional staff members to optimize learning.

4	Leaders intentionally and consistently identify, develop, and retain qualified professional staff members who contribute to the institution's purpose and priorities. Leaders consistently use analyzed data from a variety of sources to forecast future staffing needs and employ best practices to attract qualified candidates from a broad range of backgrounds. Leaders implement and monitor documented practices and procedures for supervision and evaluation that improve professional staff members' performance to optimize learning.
3	Leaders identify, develop, and retain qualified professional staff members who contribute to the institution's purpose and priorities. Leaders routinely use data from a variety of sources to forecast future staffing needs and employ best practices to attract qualified candidates from a broad range of backgrounds. Leaders regularly implement practices and procedures for supervision and evaluation that improve professional staff members' performance to optimize learning.
2	Leaders hire qualified professional staff members who contribute to the institution's purpose and priorities. Leaders sometimes use data to forecast future staffing needs. Leaders supervise and evaluate professional staff members to improve performance.
1	Leaders hire qualified professional staff members without consideration of contribution to the institution's purpose and priorities. Leaders rarely use data to forecast future staffing needs. Leaders seldom supervise and evaluate professional staff members to improve performance.

## STANDARD 11

Leaders create and maintain institutional structures and processes that support learners and staff members in both stable and changing environments.

4	Leaders consistently demonstrate awareness of potential influences on institution stability and engage stakeholders in planning and implementing strategies to maintain stability and respond to change. The institution's structure and processes are documented, monitored, and thoroughly communicated so that learners and staff members know what to do and expect in everyday circumstances. The institution's structure and processes include emergency and contingency plans that support agile and effective responses to both incremental and sudden change.
3	Leaders regularly demonstrate awareness of potential influences on institution stability and engage stakeholders in planning and implementing strategies to maintain stability and respond to change. The institution's structure and processes are documented and communicated so that learners and staff members know what to do and expect in everyday circumstances. The institution's structure and processes include emergency and contingency plans that support responses to both incremental and sudden change.
2	Leaders sometimes demonstrate awareness of potential influences on institution stability and engage stakeholders in planning and implementing strategies to maintain stability and respond to change. The institution's structure and processes are occasionally documented and communicated so that learners and staff members know what to do and expect in everyday circumstances. The institution's structure and processes include emergency and contingency plans to respond to change.
1	Leaders seldom demonstrate awareness of potential influences on institution stability. The institution's structure and processes are not well documented or communicated so that learners and staff members know what to do and expect in everyday circumstances. The institution's structure and processes may not include emergency and contingency plans to respond to change.

## STANDARD 12

Professional staff members implement curriculum and instruction that are aligned for relevancy and effectiveness for each and every learner.

4	Professional staff members systematically implement, review, and adjust curriculum and instruction based on recognized and evidence-based content standards. Curriculum and instructional practices are regularly assessed through a formal, systematic process to assure alignment, relevancy, and effectiveness for each and every learner.
3	Professional staff members implement, review, and adjust curriculum and instruction based on recognized and evidence-based content standards. Curriculum and instructional practices are regularly assessed to assure alignment, relevancy, and effectiveness for each and every learner.
2	Professional staff members implement curriculum and instruction based on recognized and evidence-based content standards. Curriculum and instructional practices are sometimes assessed to assure alignment, relevancy, and effectiveness for each and every learner.
1	Professional staff members implement locally adopted curriculum and instruction. Curriculum and instructional practices are rarely or not assessed to assure alignment, relevancy, and effectiveness for each and every learner.

## STANDARD 13

Qualified personnel instruct and assist learners and each other in support of the institution's mission, purpose, and beliefs.

4	All staff members demonstrate commitment to enhancing their professional practice over and above the required knowledge and skills for their positions. Staff members work collaboratively to instruct and assist learners and colleagues in support of the institution's guiding principles. Staff members' individual and collective decisions and behaviors consistently demonstrate alignment and coherence with the institution's mission, purpose, and beliefs.
3	All staff members demonstrate the required knowledge and skills for their positions. Staff members work cooperatively to instruct and assist learners and colleagues in support of the institution's guiding principles. Staff members' individual and collective decisions and behaviors demonstrate alignment and coherence with the institution's mission, purpose, and beliefs.
2	Most staff members demonstrate the required knowledge and skills for their positions, and a plan is being implemented to ensure that all staff members are qualified for their positions. Staff members sometimes work cooperatively to instruct and assist learners and colleagues in support of the institution's guiding principles. Staff members' individual and collective decisions and behaviors sometimes demonstrate alignment and coherence with the institution's mission, purpose, and beliefs.
1	Some staff members do not demonstrate the required knowledge and skills for their positions, and a plan does not exist to ensure that all staff members are qualified for their positions. Staff members rarely work cooperatively to instruct and assist learners and colleagues in support of the institution's guiding principles. Staff members' individual and collective decisions and behaviors rarely demonstrate alignment and coherence with the institution's mission, purpose, and beliefs.

## STANDARD 14

Curriculum and instruction are augmented by reliable information resources and materials that advance learning and support learners' personal interests.

4	Professional staff members consistently suggest and provide thoughtfully selected information resources and materials for learners that broaden and enrich the learning process and support learners' personal interests. A systematic process is used to identify and verify that information resources and materials are selected from credible sources.
3	Professional staff members suggest and provide thoughtfully selected information resources and materials for learners that broaden and enrich the learning process and support learners' personal interests. These information resources and materials are selected from credible sources and based on verifiable information.
2	Professional staff members sometimes suggest and provide information resources and materials for learners that broaden and enrich the learning process and/or support learners' personal interests. These information resources and materials are usually selected from credible sources and based on verifiable information.
1	Professional staff members rarely suggest and provide information resources and materials for learners that broaden and enrich the learning process or support learners' personal interests. These information resources and materials are rarely selected from credible sources or may not be based on verifiable information.

## STANDARD 15

Learners' needs drive the allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources.

4	Professional staff members engage in a systematic process to analyze learners' needs and current trend data to adjust the allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources to ensure each and every learner's needs are met. Adjustments to resource allocation are consistently based on current data at any point in time.
3	Professional staff members routinely analyze learners' needs and current trend data to adjust the allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources to ensure each and every learner's needs are met. Adjustments to resource allocation are routinely based on current data and at predetermined points in time.
2	Professional staff members sometimes analyze learners' needs, current, and trend data to adjust the allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources to ensure each and every learner's needs are met. Adjustments to resource allocation are sometimes based on current or updated data.
1	Professional staff members rarely analyze learners' needs and trend data to adjust the allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources. Resources are rarely allocated in alignment with documented learners' needs or to ensure each and every learner's needs are met.

# Key Characteristic 3: Engagement of Learning

## What it means

A good institution ensures that learners are engaged in the learning environment. Learners who are engaged in the learning environment participate with confidence and display agency over their own learning. A good institution adopts policies and engages in practices that support all learners being included in the learning process.

## Keys to Engagement of Learning

Engagement is demonstrated when all learners:

- Are included in the learning process
- Participate with confidence
- Have agency over their learning

### STANDARD 16

Learners experience curriculum and instruction that emphasize the value of different cultures, backgrounds, and abilities reflective of the global community.

4	Respect for different cultures, backgrounds, and abilities is embedded in every aspect of the institution's culture and learning environments. The presence and contributions of the global community are authentically integrated in the curricular content and instructional practices.
3	Respect for different cultures, backgrounds, and abilities is clearly present in the institution's culture and learning environments. The presence and contributions of the global community are intentionally included in the curricular content and instructional practices.
2	Respect for different cultures, backgrounds, and abilities is somewhat present in the institution's culture and learning environments. The presence and contributions of the global community are inconsistently included in the curricular content and instructional practices.
1	Respect for different cultures, backgrounds, and abilities is rarely present in the institution's culture and learning environments. The presence and contributions of the global community are not included in the curricular content and instructional practices.

## STANDARD 17

Learners have the support and opportunities to realize their learning potential.

4	Professional staff members develop relationships with and understand the needs and well-being of individual learners. Academic and non-academic experiences are tailored to the needs and well-being of individual learners. Learners are challenged and supported to strive toward maximal levels of achievement and self-efficacy without barriers or hindrances by schedules or access to academic and non-academic offerings.
3	Professional staff members know their learners well enough to develop and provide a variety of academic and non-academic experiences. Learners have access and choice in most academic and non-academic opportunities available according to grade levels or through expected sequencing of courses. Learners rarely encounter barriers when accessing academic and non-academic experiences most suited to their individual needs and well-being. Learners are challenged and supported to strive toward individual achievement and self-efficacy.
2	Professional staff members consider varying learner needs and well-being when developing and providing academic and non-academic experiences. Learners have access to some variety in academic and non-academic opportunities available according to grade levels or through expected sequencing of courses. Learners may encounter barriers when accessing some academic and non-academic experiences most suited to their individual needs and well-being. Learners are sometimes challenged and supported to strive toward individual achievement and self-efficacy.
1	Professional staff members give little or no consideration to individual learner needs and well-being when developing and providing academic and non-academic experiences. Academic and non-academic opportunities are limited and standardized according to grade levels or a predetermined sequencing of courses. Learners frequently encounter a variety of barriers when accessing academic and non-academic offerings that would be well-suited to their individual needs and well-being. Learners are rarely challenged to strive toward individual achievement and self-efficacy.

## STANDARD 18

Learners are immersed in an environment that fosters lifelong skills including creativity, curiosity, risk taking, collaboration, and design thinking.

4	Conditions across all aspects of the institution promote learners' lifelong skills. Learners engage in ongoing experiences that develop the non-academic skills important for their next steps in learning and for future success. A formal structure ensures that learning experiences collectively build skills in creativity, curiosity, risk-taking, collaboration and design-thinking.
3	Conditions within most aspects of the institution promote learners' lifelong skills. Learners engage in experiences that develop the non-academic skills important for their next steps in learning and for future success. Collectively, the learning experiences build skills in creativity, curiosity, risk-taking, collaboration and design-thinking.
2	Conditions within some aspects of the institution promote learners' lifelong skills. Learners engage in some experiences that develop non-academic skills important for their next steps in learning and for future success. Some learning experiences build skills in creativity, curiosity, risk-taking, collaboration and design-thinking.
1	Learners engage in environments that focus primarily on academic learning objectives only. Little or no emphasis is placed on non-academic skills important for next steps in learning and for future success. Learning experiences rarely build skills in creativity, curiosity, risk-taking, collaboration or design-thinking.

### STANDARD 19

Learners are immersed in an environment that promotes and respects student agency and responsibility for their learning.

4	Conditions across all aspects of the institution promote learners' active discovery and expression of their needs and interests. Learners give input into the instructional and learning activities they pursue and the methods in which they learn. Learners consistently identify their learning targets and monitor their progress.
3	Conditions within most aspects of the institution are learner-centered and promote learners' active discovery and expression of their needs and interests. Learners give input into most of the instructional and learning activities available to them. Learners are frequently involved in identifying their learning targets and monitoring their progress.
2	Conditions within some aspects of the institution are learner-centered and promote learners' active discovery and expression of their needs and interests. Learners have some opportunity for input into the instructional and learning activities available to them. Learners are sometimes involved in identifying their learning targets and monitoring their progress.
1	Learners engage in environments that are heavily instructor-centered. Learners have little or no input into the instructional and learning activities available to them. Learners are rarely expected to monitor their learning progress.

### STANDARD 20

Learners engage in experiences that promote and develop their self-confidence and love of learning.

4	Learners consistently pursue challenging opportunities that may not always result in success, knowing that they will be supported when needed. Learners readily and consistently show motivation, curiosity, and excitement about their learning.
3	Most learners pursue opportunities that may not always result in success, knowing they will be supported. Most learners show motivation, curiosity, and excitement about their learning.
2	Some learners pursue opportunities that may not always result in success, but only with significant, individual support. Some learners show motivation, curiosity, and excitement about their learning.
1	Most learners primarily pursue opportunities they believe to be risk-free or heavily guaranteed to be successful. Most learners show little motivation, curiosity, or excitement about their learning.

### STANDARD 21

Instruction is characterized by high expectations and learner-centered practices.

4	Learners engage in instructional activities, experiences, and interactions based on their individual needs and interests. Professional staff members consistently deliver instruction designed for learners to reach their potential.
3	Most learners engage in instructional activities, experiences, and interactions based on their individual needs and interests. Professional staff members routinely deliver instruction designed for learners to reach their potential.
2	Learners engage in instructional activities, experiences, and interactions based on needs and interests typical of most students. Professional staff members infrequently deliver instruction designed for learners to reach their potential.
1	Instructional activities are primarily designed around curriculum objectives with little or no focus on learner needs and interests. Professional staff members rarely deliver instruction designed for learners to reach their individual potential.

## STANDARD 22

Instruction is monitored and adjusted to advance and deepen individual learners' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

4	Professional staff members consistently monitor and adjust instruction based on each learner's response to instruction and achievement of desired learning targets. Professional staff members use a formal, systematic process for analyzing trend and current data to deepen each learner's understanding of content at increasing levels of complexity.
3	Professional staff members regularly monitor and adjust instruction based on each learner's response to instruction and achievement of desired learning targets. Professional staff members routinely analyze trend and current data to deepen each learner's understanding of content.
2	Professional staff members sometimes monitor and adjust instruction based on each learner's achievement of desired learning targets. Professional staff members sometimes analyze data to deepen each learner's understanding of content.
1	Professional staff members rarely monitor and adjust instruction. Professional staff members rarely analyze data to deepen each learner's understanding of content.

## STANDARD 23

Professional staff members integrate digital resources that deepen and advance learners' engagement with instruction and stimulate their curiosity.

4	Professional staff members seamlessly and deliberately integrate digital resources that add value to the learning process and encourage learners' active engagement in the learning process. Digital resources consistently support learners' pursuit of interests and deepen or extend curriculum topics to stimulate learners' curiosity.
3	Professional staff members intentionally select and integrate digital resources that add value to the learning process and encourage learners' active engagement in the learning process. Digital resources routinely support learners' pursuit of interests and deepen or extend curriculum topics to stimulate learners' curiosity.
2	Professional staff members occasionally select and integrate digital resources that add value to the learning process or encourage learners' active engagement in the learning process. Digital resources sometimes support learners' pursuit of interests and deepen or extend curriculum topics to stimulate learners' curiosity.
1	Professional staff members select and integrate few or no digital resources or select digital resources that rarely add value to the learning process or encourage learners' active engagement in the learning process. Digital resources rarely support learners' pursuit of interests or deepen or extend curriculum topics to stimulate learners' curiosity.

# Key Characteristic 4: Growth in Learning

## What it means

A good institution positively impacts learners throughout their journey of learning. A positive impact on the learner is reflected in readiness to engage in and preparedness for the next transition in their learning. Growth in learning is also reflected in learners' ability to meet expectations in knowledge and skill acquisition.

## Keys to Growth in Learning

Growth is evident when:

- Learners possess non-academic skills that ensure readiness to learn
- Learners' academic achievement reflects preparedness to learn
- Learners demonstrate growth in meeting expectations of learning as defined by the institution
- Learners attain knowledge and skills necessary to achieve goals for learning

### STANDARD 24

Leaders use data and input from a variety of sources to make decisions for learners' and staff members' growth and well-being.

4	Leaders consistently demonstrate skill and insight in considering a variety of information, choosing relevant and timely information, and interpreting data. Leaders make intentional decisions by consistently taking into account data and additional factors that have an impact on learners and staff members, such as institution history, recent experiences, and future possibilities.
3	Leaders regularly demonstrate skill and insight in considering a variety of information, choosing relevant and timely information, and interpreting data. Leaders make decisions by routinely taking into account data and additional factors that have an impact on learners and staff members, such as institution history, recent experiences, and future possibilities.
2	Leaders sometimes demonstrate skill and insight in considering and choosing information and interpreting data. Leaders make decisions that occasionally take into account data and additional factors that have an impact on learners and staff members, such as institution history, recent experiences, and future possibilities.
1	Leaders rarely demonstrate skill and insight in considering and choosing information and interpreting data. Leaders make decisions that rarely take into account data and additional factors that have an impact on learners and staff members, such as institution history, recent experiences, and future possibilities.

## STANDARD 25

Leaders promote action research by professional staff members to improve their practice and advance learning.

4	Leaders intentionally create and preserve a culture that invites inquiry, reflection, and dialogue about instructional problems and issues relevant to the institution and/or individual learning environments. Professional staff members, as a group or as individuals, consistently engage in action research using an inquiry-based process that includes identifying instructional areas of improvement, collecting data, and reporting results to make informed instructional changes. Leaders provide and engage in learning opportunities customized for professional staff members about action research.
3	Leaders regularly create and preserve a culture that invites inquiry, reflection, and dialogue about instructional problems and issues relevant to the institution and/or individual learning environments. Professional staff members, as a group or as individuals, routinely engage in action research using an inquiry-based process that includes identifying instructional areas of improvement, collecting data, and reporting results to make informed instructional changes. Leaders provide and engage in learning opportunities for professional staff members to implement action research.
2	Leaders occasionally create and preserve a culture that invites inquiry, reflection, and dialogue about instructional problems and issues relevant to the institution and/or individual learning environments. Professional staff members, as a group or as individuals, sometimes engage in action research using an inquiry-based process that includes identifying instructional areas of improvement, collecting data, and reporting results to make informed instructional changes. Leaders provide and engage in some learning opportunities for professional staff members to implement action research.
1	Leaders rarely create a culture that invites inquiry, reflection, and dialogue about instructional problems and issues relevant to the institution or learning environments. Professional staff members seldom engage in action research to make informed instructional changes. Leaders provide and engage in few or no learning opportunities for professional staff members about action research.

## STANDARD 26

Leaders regularly evaluate instructional programs and organizational conditions to improve instruction and advance learning.

4	Leaders consistently implement a documented process to determine the effectiveness of the institution's curriculum and instruction, including staffing and resources. Leaders use a formal, systematic process for analyzing current and trend data and stakeholder input to make decisions about retaining, changing, or replacing programs and practices.
3	Leaders routinely implement a documented process to determine the effectiveness of the institution's curriculum and instruction, including staffing and resources. Leaders use analyzed current and trend data and stakeholder input to make decisions about retaining, changing, or replacing programs and practices.
2	Leaders occasionally implement a process to determine the effectiveness of the institution's curriculum and instruction, including staffing and resources. Leaders sometimes use data and stakeholder input to make decisions about retaining, changing, or replacing programs and practices.
1	Leaders rarely implement a process to determine the effectiveness of the institution's curriculum and instruction, including staffing and resources. Leaders seldom use data and stakeholder input to make decisions about retaining, changing, or replacing programs and practices.

## STANDARD 27

Learners' academic and non-academic needs are identified and effectively addressed through appropriate interventions.

4	The Institution consistently addresses the range of developmental, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs to support learners' ability to learn. Strategies and interventions for these needs are formally and systematically planned and implemented based on analyzed information, data, and instructional best practices to ensure learners' success.
3	The Institution routinely addresses the range of developmental, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs to support learners' ability to learn. Strategies and interventions for these needs are regularly planned and implemented based on analyzed information, data, and instructional best practices to ensure learners' success.
2	The Institution sometimes addresses the range of developmental, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs to support learners' ability to learn. Strategies and interventions for these needs are occasionally planned and implemented based on information, data, and instructional best practices to ensure learners' success.
1	The Institution rarely addresses the range of developmental, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs to support learners' ability to learn. Strategies and interventions for these needs are seldom planned and implemented based on information, data, or instructional best practices.

## STANDARD 28

Learners pursue individual goals including the acquisition of academic and non-academic skills important for their educational futures and careers.

4	Professional staff members consistently engage with learners to help them recognize their talents and potential and to identify meaningful, attainable goals that support academic, career, personal, and social skills. Learners consistently choose activities and monitor their own progress, demonstrating active ownership of their stated goals.
3	Professional staff members regularly engage with learners to help them recognize their talents and potential and to identify meaningful, attainable goals that support academic, career, personal, and social skills. Learners routinely choose activities and monitor their own progress, demonstrating active ownership of their stated goals.
2	Professional staff members sometimes engage with learners to help them recognize their talents and potential and to identify meaningful, attainable goals that support academic, career, personal, and social skills. Learners occasionally choose activities and monitor their own progress, demonstrating active ownership of their stated goals.
1	Professional staff members rarely engage with learners to help them recognize their talents and potential and to identify meaningful, attainable goals that support academic, career, personal, and social skills. Learners do not choose activities or monitor their own progress toward goals.

## STANDARD 29

Understanding learners' needs and interests drives the design, delivery, application, and evaluation of professional learning.

4	Professional learning is learner-centered, customized around the needs of individual or groups of professional staff members, and focuses on improving pedagogical skills and knowledge to better address learners' needs and interests. A documented process to select, deliver, implement, and evaluate professional learning is fully implemented and monitored for fidelity.
3	Professional learning is learner-centered, designed around the principles that professional staff members need opportunities to focus on improving pedagogical skills and knowledge to better address learners' needs and interests. A documented process to select, deliver, implement, and evaluate professional learning is being fully implemented.
2	Professional learning is occasionally learner-centered and designed around the principles that professional staff members need opportunities to focus on improving pedagogical skills and knowledge to better address learners' needs and interests. A documented process to select, deliver, implement, and evaluate professional learning exists but is not fully implemented.
1	Professional learning is rarely learner-centered and may or may not focus on improving pedagogical skills and knowledge to better address learners' needs and interests. A documented process to select, deliver, implement, and evaluate professional learning does not exist.

## STANDARD 30

Learners' progress is measured through a balanced system that includes assessment both for learning and of learning.

4	Professional staff members and learners collaborate to determine learners' progress toward and achievement of intended learning objectives based on assessment data gathered through formal and informal methods. Assessment data are systematically used for ongoing planning, decision making, and modification of curriculum and instruction.
3	Professional staff members and learners regularly use assessment data gathered through formal and informal methods to determine learners' progress toward and achievement of intended learning objectives. Assessment data are routinely used for ongoing planning, decision making, and modification of curriculum and instruction.
2	Professional staff members occasionally use assessment data gathered through formal and informal methods to determine learners' progress toward and achievement of intended learning objectives. Assessment data are sometimes used for ongoing planning, decision making, and modification of curriculum and instruction.
1	Professional staff members seldom use assessment data to determine learners' progress toward and achievement of intended learning objectives. Assessment data are rarely or inconsistently used for ongoing planning, decision making, and modification of curriculum and instruction.

### STANDARD 31

Learners demonstrate growth in their academic performance based on valid and reliable assessments.

4	The institution consistently sustains high levels of learner performance over time and/or shows consistent trends of improvement in low-performing areas. The institution continually monitors and uses results from multiple required and/or selected valid and reliable assessments of student learning and implements formal plans to address areas of low performance. The institution consistently communicates results and plans for improving learner performance with stakeholders.
3	The institution routinely sustains high levels of learner performance over time and/or shows trends of improvement in low-performing areas. The institution regularly monitors and uses results from multiple required and/or selected valid and reliable assessments of student learning and implements plans to address areas of low performance. The institution routinely communicates results and plans for improving learner performance with stakeholders.
2	The institution occasionally sustains high levels of learner performance over time and/or shows trends of improvement in low-performing areas. The institution sometimes monitors results from multiple required and/or selected assessments of student learning and implements plans to address areas of low performance. The institution occasionally communicates results and plans for improving learner performance with stakeholders.
1	The institution rarely sustains high levels of learner performance over time or shows trends of improvement in low-performing areas. The institution inconsistently monitors or uses results from multiple required and/or selected assessments of student learning and implements plans to address areas of low performance. The institution seldom communicates results or plans for improving learner performance with stakeholders.



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