

# How the SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey Supports Cognia Accreditation

Cognia accreditation is a comprehensive continuous improvement process that assesses the quality and effectiveness of districts and schools based on established performance standards. Once accredited, educational institutions are encouraged to engage in ongoing self-assessment. Part of that process includes incorporating evidence of how data are used to make decisions and measure progress in achieving goals aligned to the 30 Cognia Performance Standards.

A common misunderstanding in the Cognia accreditation process is viewing initial accreditation and subsequent 5-year accreditation reviews as singular events, instead of parts of a continuous improvement cycle. Preparing for a Cognia accreditation review can be far less time consuming and challenging when districts engage in ongoing documentation and review of standards and current practices. The SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey (SCTWCS) provides valuable evidence that can be used to support this process.

The SCTWCS is a survey administered to South Carolina public school PK–12 teachers by SC TEACHER every two years. Participating districts receive comprehensive, district-specific insights into teachers’ perceptions of working conditions via a dynamic data dashboard and ongoing support. A major goal in survey administration is to provide district leaders with actionable data they can use for ongoing internal assessment.

Figure 1. Survey Constructs Included on the SCTWCS

RESOURCES	DEMANDS	OUTCOMES	NEW TEACHER MENTOR SUPPORT
Administrative Support (10)	Workload (11)	Job Satisfaction (8)	Mentor Support for Teaching (13)
Professional Development Support (6)	Student Engagement (6)	Intention to Stay in the Classroom (1)	Mentor Support Outside of Teaching (6)
Parent Support (4)	Student Behavior (10)	Choose Teaching Again (1)	Mentor Proximity (3)
Coworker Support (5)	Organizational Demands (5)		
Shared Governance (5)			
Classroom Autonomy (8)			

Note. The number next to each survey construct reflects the number of items within that construct.

# Cognia + SCTWCS Alignment

While the Cognia Performance Standards and the SCTWCS focus on different aspects of the educational environment, strong alignment exists between at least 11 of the 30 performance standards and 9 of the 16 survey constructs (69 survey items).

For example, under Cognia’s Leadership Capacity domain, Performance Standard 1.7 states, “Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.” Evidence of teachers’ perceptions regarding administrative support, captured through their responses to questions on the SCTWCS, can provide insights to inform what and how leaders may need to change to be most effective in this area. In this same vein, SCTWCS data provides similar evidence for Performance Standard 1.10: “Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.”

Another example of alignment falls under the Cognia Resource Capacity domain. The first three performance standards in this domain reflect the necessity of providing professional learning through structures that promote collegiality and collaboration, as well as coaching and mentoring programs. SCTWCS data provide evidence that can be used to self-assess performance for all three of these standards and in continuous improvement.

Table 1. Further Examples of Alignment Between Cognia Performance Standards and SCTWCS Constructs and Items

COGNIA PERFORMANCE STANDARD	SCTWCS CONSTRUCT + ITEM
<p><b>STANDARD 3</b> Leaders actively engage stakeholders to support the institution’s priorities and guiding principles that promote learners’ academic growth and well-being.</p>	<p><b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b> Administrators at your school include your input on selecting instructional materials.</p>
<p><b>STANDARD 10</b> Leaders demonstrate expertise in recruiting, supervising, and evaluating professional staff members to optimize learning.</p>	<p><b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b> The administrators (e.g., principal, assistant principal) at your school provide ongoing, constructive feedback about your teaching.</p>
<p><b>STANDARD 12</b> Professional staff members implement curriculum and instruction that are aligned for relevancy, inclusion, and effectiveness.</p>	<p><b>AUTONOMY</b> In your teaching, you are able to adapt the learning material in order for students to master the content.</p>

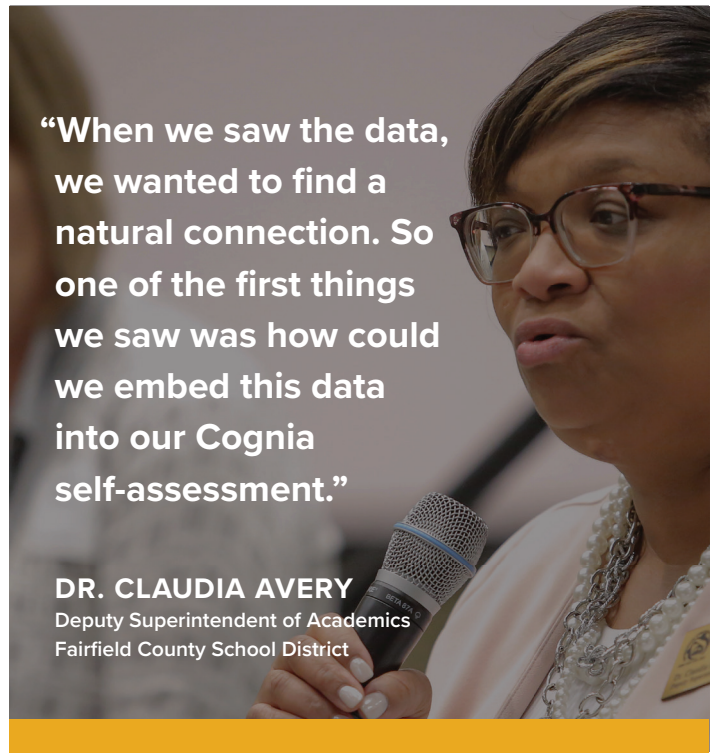
## Regarding full processes around Cognia assessment, districts can use their SCTWCS data to...

- Determine current strengths and challenges related to Cognia Performance Standards.
- Conduct and provide evidence of research-based strategic planning.
- Conduct and provide evidence of ongoing self-assessment.
- Measure progress toward goals with new data from each survey administration.

# From Insight to Impact

Since their participation in the 2023 SCTWCS administration, Fairfield County School District has invested in using their district-specific data (as well as other data sources) to support Cognia self-assessment.

One opportunity for alignment Fairfield has already identified is with Performance Standard 1.10. (See excerpt below.) In Spring 2024, Dr. Claudia Avery coordinated team consideration of ways to engage instructional staff and counselors in sharing responsibility for a district goal: ensuring wellbeing, safety, and readiness to learn for students. Seeing that SCTWCS data signaled teachers' desire to have input into key decisions within their schools, the district engaged in deeper discussions with instructional staff to explore making existing resources more accessible. District leaders were then able to more effectively connect counselors and classroom teachers with comprehensive strategies for student support.



## RESOURCES

For resources, responses are measured on an agreement scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*).

Cognia Performance Standard	SCTWCS Construct & Operational Definition	SCTWCS Item	Cognia Alignment
<p><b>STANDARD 1:</b> Leaders cultivate and sustain a culture that demonstrates respect, fairness, equity, and inclusion, and is free from bias.</p> <p><b>STANDARD 7:</b> Leaders guide professional staff members in the continuous improvement process focused on learners' experiences and needs.</p> <p><b>STANDARD 10:</b> Leaders demonstrate expertise in recruiting, supervising, and evaluating professional staff members to optimize learning.</p> <p><b>STANDARD 11:</b> Leaders create and maintain institutional structures and processes that support learners and staff members in both stable and changing environments.</p>	<p><b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b> Administrators' (e.g., principals) assistance of teachers through providing information and their emotional, instrumental, and appraisal support</p>	The administrators (e.g., principal, assistant principal) at your school...	
		seem to value the work you do.	1
		listen to your concerns.	1, 11
		recognize your accomplishments.	1, 10
		show confidence in your ability as a teacher.	1
		provide ongoing, constructive feedback about your teaching.	1, 7, 10
		show fairness in your teaching evaluation.	1, 10
		address major student discipline problems.	1, 11
		have positive interactions with you.	1
		seem interested in your ideas.	1
		fairly and equitably enforce school rules.	1, 11

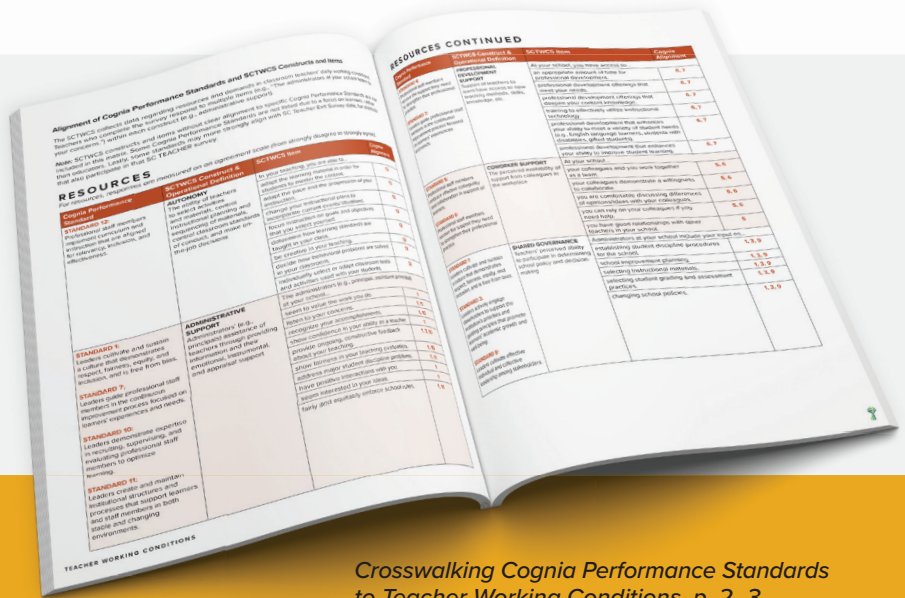
This excerpt from *Crosswalking Cognia Performance Standards to Teacher Working Conditions* shows how districts can integrate SCTWCS data analysis into their Cognia review process, as modeled by Fairfield County School District. The crosswalk is an available resource for districts participating in Data + Insight Workshops with SC TEACHER. See page 4 for more details.



# Acting on Data for Cognia Self-Assessment

This guide is an introduction to the many inherent connections between SCTWCS data and the Cognia accreditation process. Districts digging deeper into this work are invited to attend strategic planning sessions focused on unpacking data through a Cognia lens. Workshops are hosted by SC TEACHER with facilitators on hand to provide support and thought partnership to district teams (at no cost).

At each convening, participants will engage with and receive access to an in-depth matrix, aligning Cognia Performance Standards and survey items. This crosswalk guides administrators through incorporating SCTWCS findings into their accreditation evidence.



Crosswalking Cognia Performance Standards to Teacher Working Conditions, p. 2–3

## What other opportunities for data alignment could support your district?

SC TEACHER is developing planning tools for Title funds, professional development, PADEPP, and more. Contact us at [SCTinfo@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:SCTinfo@mailbox.sc.edu) to suggest a guide or session topic your district is interested to explore through the lens of SC TEACHER data.

For updates on the latest resources, sign up for our newsletter.

