



Monitoring Review Report

Dublin City School System

Dublin, Georgia

#215184

February 23–25, 2026

Mr. Travis Nesmith, Regional Accreditation Evaluator

Monitoring Review Report

Introduction and Context

This report presents the findings of the on-site Monitoring Review conducted on February 23–25, 2026 for the Dublin City School System. The Monitoring Review was initiated, in part, as a result of complaints, notifications, and related communications received from the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) regarding the system’s current financial condition. These communications, along with deficiencies through the standard accreditation engagement review process, served as the catalyst for Cognia’s decision to conduct a focused, on-site review for the system. Cognia formally notified system-level leadership of the Monitoring Review through correspondence dated January 13, 2026. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the system’s adherence to Cognia Performance Standards and Assurances, with particular attention given to governance, fiscal management, and the impact of financial conditions on the quality and sustainability of educational services. Consistent with Cognia policy, this review functioned as a special review designed to assess significant concerns that warranted immediate examination beyond the regular accreditation cycle. During the review, the team explained how the system’s financial situation influenced daily operations, long-term planning, and the allocation of resources to support teaching and learning. The team also reviewed the decision-making practices of the governing board and system-level leadership, as well as the degree to which stakeholders were informed and engaged regarding the system’s financial challenges. Focus was placed on how leadership actions and oversight practices contributed to the current financial circumstances and how these conditions affected organizational stability.

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the system’s- current status, the review team evaluated evidence aligned to Cognia Performance Standards and Assurances and considered the effectiveness of the system’s continuous improvement processes. The team examined the extent to which financial challenges disrupted planning, monitoring, and implementation of improvement initiatives and assessed whether systems were in place to ensure accountability, transparency, and responsible stewardship of public funds.

Using the Cognia Performance Standards along with the *Cognia Accreditation and Certification Policies and Procedures* as their guiding framework, the Monitoring Review Team identified areas of concern and examined how these areas align with current improvement practices across the school system and its schools.

Activities of the Monitoring Review Team

Prior to the review, the Monitoring Review Team, led by the Regional Accreditation Evaluator, reviewed the system’s Institution Progress Report and related documentation submitted by the Dublin City School System. During the review, the team engaged in the following activities:

- Reviewing regular and called board meeting agendas and minutes for the past 14 months.
- Attending a regularly scheduled board meeting.
- Conducting interviews with stakeholders, including the interim superintendent, the special advisor assigned by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), who serves as the chief turnaround officer for GaDOE, board members, system-level leadership, building-level leaders, teachers, community members, parents, students, and additional staff members.
- Reviewing evidence.
- Conducting site visits at all schools.
- Deliberating and preparing the Monitoring Review Report.

The table below identifies the stakeholder groups and the number of stakeholders interviewed during the Monitoring Review.

| INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED | NUMBER OF STAKEHOLDERS |
|---|------------------------|
| Interim Superintendent | 1 |
| Georgia Department of Education Chief Turnaround Officer | 1 |
| Georgia Department of Education Finance and Business Operations Department | 3 |
| School Board Members | 7 |
| District Administrators | 4 |
| Interim Chief Financial Officer | 1 |
| School Administrators (includes principals and assistant principals) | 5 |
| Parents | 16 |
| Community Representatives | 15 |
| Counselors, Social Workers, Mental Health Counselors | 2 |
| Support Staff (office staff, nutrition workers, paraprofessionals, environmental specialists, etc.) | 16 |
| Teachers | 24 |
| Students | 40 |
| TOTAL | 135 |

The above numbers reflect the formal and informal interviews conducted to help assess the schools' and school system's continuous improvement efforts and current perceptions.

Findings

The purpose of this Monitoring Review was to evaluate the school system's adherence to the Cognia Performance Standards and required Assurances, with particular emphasis on the implications of its current financial condition. As outlined in the Cognia notification letter, the review team focused on how the school system's financial status may affect its operations and educational outcomes. For each cited standard, the Monitoring Review Team provided a rating, followed by an Improvement Priority, Summary of Findings, and Directives to guide the next steps for the Dublin City School System. The findings of the Monitoring Review Team are reported within four ranges identified by the colors below.

| Level | Description |
|-------|---|
| 4 | Exceeds Standard: Noteworthy systematic process, clear results |
| 3 | Meets Standard: Expected effectiveness, meets the standards |
| 2 | Partially meets Standard: Improving practices, approaching the standard |
| 1 | Does not meet the Standard: Insufficient evidence, limited activity |

Monitoring Review Report

| Culture of Learning | | Rating |
|----------------------|---|--------|
| Standard Number 3 | Cognia Performance Standard Leaders actively engage stakeholders to support the institution's priorities and guiding principles that promote learners' academic growth and well-being. | 1 |

Improvement Priority

- **Develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive stakeholder engagement framework that strengthens communication, solicits meaningful input, enhances financial transparency, empowers school-level governance, and rebuilds confidence in system-level leadership.**

System-level leadership is still working to establish the conditions needed for consistent stakeholder participation and support. Interviews during the review revealed that communication has sometimes been unclear, and existing structures for involvement have not consistently been used to fully include parents and community members in important decision-making practices. In addition, differing understandings of the state's role have contributed to confusion and concern. These factors together have affected confidence in system processes and led to unexpected changes.

Stakeholders consistently reported that system-level decision-making processes were unclear and difficult to follow, with essential information often communicated late or informally. While families and staff praised strong and effective communication at the school level, including frequent emails, ParentSquare messages, surveys, newsletters, and accessible teachers and principals, system-level two-way communication was described as limited and inconsistent. Stakeholders further indicated that ParentSquare messaging at the system level often lacked depth and clarity, particularly regarding financial matters. Parents and community members reported that communications regarding system updates, including information on budget decisions and midyear staffing changes, did not consistently include detailed explanations or structured opportunities for two-way engagement. Following the reduction of family engagement staffing to a single coordinator, parents indicated that some inquiries and phone calls were not returned in a timely manner. These reports arose during a period of cost-saving actions undertaken by the system, during which the Board of Education (BOE) eliminated most family engagement coordinator positions. At a called board meeting on October 14, 2025, the Board approved Phase I of the Deficit Reduction Plan, which included the elimination of family engagement coordinator positions at Hillcrest Elementary, Susie Dasher Elementary, and Moore Street School. On October 20, 2025, the Board approved Phase II of the plan, eliminating the family engagement coordinator position at Dublin Middle School and resulting in one remaining coordinator systemwide. The FY26 Winter stakeholder survey results reflect recurring concerns related to communication and information sharing during the current period of financial and staffing challenges. One respondent commented that "the lack of communication about ongoing teacher turnover and contingency plans for my child's education for Spring is beyond concerning." This statement aligns with a broader pattern in the survey data, where multiple respondents described uncertainty regarding how staffing changes and financial conditions may affect instructional continuity and daily school operations. Several comments indicated that limited information about teacher turnover and contingency planning contributed to questions about stability within schools. Collectively, the survey responses suggest that stakeholders were seeking additional communication to better understand current conditions and planned support. This emphasis is reflected in calls for the system to "have the staff communicate more," which respondents identified to increase clarity and provide reassurance regarding students' educational experience during this time.

Employees and students described notable challenges with internal communication related to staffing reductions. Teachers reported that, in some cases, they received important updates at the same time as the public, rather than through advanced internal communication. During teacher interviews, the teachers explicitly reported these difficult situations, sharing that if a staff member was on the cut list, "somebody comes in during the middle of the school day with kids in the room to tell them that their job has been cut."



School leaders indicated limited involvement in staffing decisions and insufficient explanation of the financial rationale behind those decisions. Multiple stakeholder groups, including parents, employees, students, and community members, reported learning about staffing cuts through social media, word of mouth, or news outlets rather than through official system communication. Students described the sudden loss of teachers as “heartbreaking” and reported that neither they nor their families received formal notification from the system or schools. Collectively, these findings highlight a significant need for the system to strengthen transparent, timely, and consistent communication processes to rebuild trust and ensure stakeholders are adequately informed during critical organizational changes.

The Local School Governance Team (LSGT) framework used by the system assigns teams with defined roles related to financial considerations and resource allocation at the school level. Although the Board of Education still maintains authority over the system, members of the Monitoring Review Team learned that the school system has created a model that allows LSGTs to influence school-level financial matters and support greater involvement by school-level stakeholders. The framework states that, at a minimum, the LSGTs are expected to provide input and recommendations regarding school-level resources. Information shared by stakeholders during interviews indicated that LSGTs were not consistently used as a forum for engaging parents and community members in budgeting and resource allocation decisions. Teachers who participated in interviews indicated interest in opportunities to participate in system-level decisions that affect instructional conditions and student experiences. The LSGT meeting schedule reflects that meetings are planned monthly from August through May, and these meetings are open to the public. These recurring opportunities allow for leaders to gather stakeholder input, maintain transparency, and collaboratively solve financial challenges. Board records indicate that the Deficit Reduction Plans were approved in October 2025. Based on attendance records and interview information, the interim superintendent began attending LSGT meetings in mid-November, following Board approval of the plans. A review of available documentation does not indicate that the Deficit Reduction Plans were presented to or reviewed by LSGTs prior to Board approval. This finding was corroborated through interviews, during which participants described uncertainty regarding financial and staffing changes during this period. The board’s approval of two plans, combined with the timing of related communications, limited the ability to gather structured stakeholder input through existing LSGT meeting schedules during a period of notable financial change. Under Georgia law, charter school systems are required to submit an annual report to the GaDOE. The charter report was submitted by the system-level leadership to the GaDOE on November 6, 2025. According to the report, leaders stated that the system’s LSGTs are designated as “essential partner[s]” in decision-making regarding “staffing, budget priorities, or instructional needs.” As a result, while the system’s LSGT framework and public reporting emphasize the LSGTs as essential partners in financial decision-making, evidence indicates that their role was not fully leveraged during a critical period of fiscal planning. Strengthening alignment between stated expectations and actual practice could enhance transparency, stakeholder confidence, and meaningful engagement in future financial decisions.

The Learning Leaping Leprechaun Academy Daycare was an on-site childcare program located at Dublin High School and operated by the school system. The program was designed to serve children of system employees at no cost to participating staff, with charter system supplemental funds supporting both personnel and operational expenses. According to the system’s personnel action spreadsheet submitted to the Monitoring Review Team, the three staff members assigned to the Learning Leaping Leprechaun Academy Daycare were terminated effective October 8, 2025. These personnel actions were formally approved by the Board of Education at its October 14, 2025, meeting as part of the Phase I Deficit Reduction Plan. Based on the documented effective date of these terminations, the daycare’s operations appear to have ended at or near that time. Following these actions, system-level leadership submitted the required charter system report to the GaDOE on November 6, 2025. In that report, the system stated that “Dublin City Schools strategically allocated its Charter System supplemental funding to support the Learning Leaping Leprechaun Academy, an innovative on-site childcare center located at Dublin High School.” The report further indicated that the program was intended to serve as a recruitment and retention strategy and that “Charter System funds were allocated to cover both personnel and operational expenses, ensuring the program launched and operated at a high level of quality.” Reported uses of charter system funds included staffing, instructional materials, licensing requirements, and day-to-day facility needs. During interviews, a stakeholder described the effect of the daycare’s closure on participating employees. The stakeholder stated that an employee whose child attended the program was “given 7 days’ notice to find new daycare” after

being informed that the facility would no longer be operating. While the charter system report was submitted in November 2025 to the GaDOE and described the daycare as an operational program, available personnel records indicate that the daycare was no longer operating at that time. The submission of the report under these circumstances is concerning, given the apparent difference between the reported program status and the documented operational timeline.

Interviews reflected differing perspectives among individuals involved in system governance regarding financial transparency and the system's website practices. One board member reported that the system has "had the transparency page for years" and explained that financial audits had been posted publicly, although updates were not maintained consistently for a period of time. The same board member also commented that many community members "don't go to our website" and instead rely on "hearsay" when discussing system finances. The interim superintendent described the transparency page as a key component of her efforts to engage with stakeholders. She stated that, in the past, the system "tried to hide anything that was negative" and characterized recent actions as deliberate steps toward making information more accessible. The interim superintendent also stated that "Dublin cannot grow until they are transparent," explaining that consistent access to timely and accurate information is an important factor in supporting the district's long-term stability.

The school system experienced significant public scrutiny during the 2025–2026 school year after a private donor provided targeted funding that prevented three positions from being eliminated as part of the Phase II Deficit Reduction Plan scheduled for December 18, 2025. During a called Board meeting on November 14, 2025, the Board of Education approved a memorandum of understanding to accept this contribution. The decision preserved the jobs of two high school coaches and one middle school administrator. Although the donor's support ensured that these specific roles remained in place for the remainder of the 2025–2026 school year, the decision generated considerable concern among staff and community members. Many stakeholders questioned why the funds were not directed toward addressing the system's significant budget deficit and expressed frustration that athletic programs appeared to receive preferential protection while essential academic support positions continued to be reduced. The Monitoring Review Team reviewed Board meeting agendas and minutes from January 2025 onward. The BOE approved the system's Deficit Reduction Plans in two phases. The initial FY26 Deficit Reduction Plan was unanimously approved at the October 14, 2025 Board meeting. Phase II of the FY26 Deficit Reduction Plan was then unanimously approved at a called Board meeting on October 20, 2025. After the Deficit Reduction Plans were made public, participation from parents, students, and community members increased at BOE meetings. These developments highlighted the need for greater transparency in how financial decisions are communicated and how priorities are weighed during periods of fiscal strain.

In addition, stakeholders, including parents, teachers, staff, building leaders, and community representatives, shared a desire for greater clarity regarding how leaders identify priorities and allocate resources. They recalled that during the financial crisis, private donations helped preserve athletic positions while several academic support roles, including reading interventionists and academic coaches, were reduced. This created lingering questions about how academic needs were balanced during that time. The Cognia Regional Accreditation Evaluator requested documentation listing staff members impacted by Phases I and II of the reduction-in-force (RIF) for FY26. The spreadsheet indicated that three positions originally scheduled for elimination were subsequently retained, with a notation stating that the positions were paid for by a donor. The Cognia Regional Accreditation Evaluator reviewed official Board meeting minutes and District Leadership meeting minutes covering the relevant period. The Board unanimously approved Phase II of the FY26 Deficit Reduction Plan on October 20, 2025. This action authorized the elimination of multiple positions, including an assistant principal position at the middle school level, a physical education position at the high school level, and a driver's education position at the high school level. On November 14, 2025, during a called Board meeting, the Board voted 6 to 0 to approve a memorandum of understanding related to three funded positions. Subsequent documentation from the district leadership continuous improvement Meeting held on November 17, 2025, explicitly referenced a private corporate donor and noted that three positions were restored. The effective date for the Phase II RIF for the three employees was December 18, 2025. Although the three positions noted above were originally scheduled for termination on that date, the final personnel action spreadsheet reflects that the assistant principal position at the middle school, the physical education position at the high school, and the driver's education position at the high school were

retained. Each entry included a notation indicating that the position was funded by a donor. Throughout the stakeholder interviews, many participants described feeling that important decisions sometimes originate at the top without sufficient collaborative discussion. They shared that this contributes to uncertainty and affects their confidence in the system's direction. Some staff members stated that these experiences leave them feeling disconnected rather than fully included as partners in supporting student success. A consistent theme across the interviews was the need for clearer communication and more collaborative decision-making so that stakeholders feel informed, valued, and confident in the school system's direction.

Stakeholders, including community members and some board members, reported being told that the GaDOE dictated specific cuts and set new salaries. This led to frustration and a belief that system-level leadership had no say in the matter. Representatives from the GaDOE clarified that this was not accurate. Members of the Monitoring Review Team learned that GaDOE recommended that the system revise its salary schedule to align staffing levels with the Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding formula and approve a balanced budget. Interviews with representatives from the GaDOE clearly acknowledged that GaDOE does not have the legal authority to demand specific cuts or take punitive action. As part of the review, members of the Monitoring Review Team examined correspondence from the state department to the superintendent and interim superintendent. According to the October 24, 2025, letter from the GaDOE State Superintendent, the agency "is not directing any specific reductions." In the same communication, the state school superintendent further emphasized that state law does not permit the department to make financial decisions on behalf of local school systems. Budget and operational decisions are entirely within the purview of the local school district and community. The state superintendent stated that financial health and budgeting choices remain the responsibility of the local superintendent and Board, describing the department's role as providing support to minimize negative impacts on teachers and students. During interviews, state officials emphasized that they provide "free guidance" and have been encouraging system-level leadership to correct its financial issues for years.

The budget deficits in the system are not a recent development, but rather a structural issue spanning well over a decade. According to the FY2019 annual financial report conducted by the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, the financial distress began more than ten years ago, stating, "Since fiscal year 2011, the School District has maintained a general fund deficit." The system faced severe financial challenges early in 2010. Although leadership slowly reduced this massive shortfall over the next few years, structural budgeting issues persisted. According to the FY2020 Audit Report, the system reported that, "as of June 30, 2020, the School District had a general fund unassigned deficit fund balance of \$780,000 (Governmental Fund Statements)." Evidence revealed the availability of monies provided through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, helped support initial funding shortages. According to the Department of Audits and Accounts' special report, the examination found that "the School District used temporary COVID funds to pay for ongoing personnel and operating expenditures and did not appropriately plan or budget for the expiration of these funds."

The system's Strategic Planning Report Revised January 26, 2023, documents a comprehensive financial recovery and outlines systems intended to support long-term fiscal stability. The report on page 12 explains that one of the district's four strategic goal areas is "Effective and Efficient Use of Environments and Resources," with a specific performance objective "to ensure effective financial management." Within this goal area, the system commits to maintaining foundational financial controls, such as maintaining a positive fund balance, maintaining monthly financial reports to the BOE, increasing the financial efficacy ratings, and decreasing the number of audit findings annually. These measures reflect an emphasis on ongoing monitoring, transparency, and Board oversight of financial operations. Certain indicators include baseline data. Despite the 2023 revision of the report, no data or responses were recorded for the target years 1–5 following approval, indicating that monitoring of the performance measures did not occur. The Strategic Planning Report, Appendix II: Community Engagement Report, acknowledges that fiscal management was a significant concern for the community earlier in the planning process. Survey and engagement data identified "financial management of the district" as an area in need of improvement, and participants in the meetings emphasized "the need to fix the financial situation." The report further explains that "in 2015, the district owed \$18.3 million in bond debt, was in a \$7 million deficit, and faced state austerity reductions." In contrast, the report notes that "as of FY21, the district achieved a \$4 million surplus, and our bond debt will be paid in full by April 1, 2023." In this context, the Community Engagement Report states, "Therefore, we no longer see

finances are one of our primary challenges.” This conclusion may be associated with the use of ESSER funds for budgetary support, while the temporary nature of these funds were not clearly incorporated into long range planning discussions. Stakeholder survey results presented on page 21 of the same report indicate continued financial concern, with “almost half of the survey respondents (43.14%)” identifying funding, state and federal, as the primary challenge facing the system. This was followed by the political environment at 21.57% and a constantly changing population at 17.65%. Accordingly, stakeholder feedback indicates that financial management remained a significant concern, despite the report’s conclusion that finance was no longer a primary challenge. This concern is further underscored by the absence of documented monitoring of Strategic Plan performance measures intended to ensure long-term financial accountability.

Throughout the system’s financial crisis, the state school superintendent consistently reminded local leadership that “the financial health and solvency of Dublin City Schools is the responsibility of the local superintendent and local Board of Education,” and that the GaDOE was only providing emergency support “because of our concern for the students who depend on Dublin City Schools, and the teachers and support staff who rely on the district for their livelihoods.” Highlighting this urgent need to protect the community, he wrote in his September 22, 2025, letter to the system’s superintendent that “The position Dublin City Schools has placed its teachers, support staff, students, and families in is completely unacceptable and untenable – hardworking teachers and staff members should never have to report to work wondering if they will be paid for their time, and students and families should never be uncertain whether their tax dollars will be managed responsibly enough to continue school operations month-to-month.” The GaDOE stressed transparency and urged open communication to prevent the community from learning critical information through the news media. The state school superintendent noted that while systems must make difficult budgetary decisions, the impact of these reductions must not fall disproportionately on teachers, staff, and taxpayers who did not create the financial crisis. He stated that his primary responsibility is to these stakeholders, which is why the Department of Education provided support and funding to ensure educators were paid and students’ learning environments remained stable. Appendix B of the Dublin City Schools Summary Report, developed by the GaDOE, presents legislative recommendations to strengthen financial oversight, transparency, and accountability across Georgia school districts. The recommendations focus on expanding required financial training for system-level leadership and local boards, particularly in districts identified as moderate or high risk. Appendix B also outlines enhanced audit reporting requirements, defines timelines for corrective action, and increases coordination among state agencies to promote early identification and intervention when fiscal concerns arise. In addition, the appendix emphasizes public transparency through the required posting of key financial documents and reinforces accountability measures intended to protect the continuity of district operations and responsible stewardship of public funds. Ultimately, the evidence demonstrates that while the GaDOE offered guidance and support, all final decisions about financial actions and staffing reductions rested with system-level leadership and the Board of Education.

Limited stakeholder engagement became more evident as the school system relied extensively on temporary COVID-19 pandemic ESSER funds to support ongoing personnel expenses, contributing to challenges in long-term financial sustainability. State officials from GaDOE expressed concern about the system’s financial approach, noting that staffing levels were explained during the availability of COVID-19 funds without sufficient long-term planning for the expiration of those funds. The interim superintendent confirmed this timeline, noting that the “district has been in a deficit before ESSER money, then used ESSER for staff.” Because of limited transparency, many stakeholders reported being unaware that one-time funds were being used to offset long-standing financial challenges. Some board members reported that they were not fully aware of the extent of the deficit, noting that they believed the system’s financial concern was stronger than it ultimately proved to be. Another board member corroborated this, stating that the “board was told they had a surplus until last year, when discovered they had a deficit.” Consequently, families and employees were unprepared for the sudden, severe effects that appeared once the funds expired. Mental health staff observed the shock of the abrupt midyear cuts, noting that “teachers had felt like things were going fine, so this situation and news had been difficult.”

A review of system practices suggests there are ongoing opportunities to strengthen system-level communication and expand the use of participation structures. Some past decision patterns have also affected the level of trust within the community. These challenges have resulted in unexpected adjustments,



some disruption to the learning environment, and a feeling among staff and families that information sometimes circulated informally before official updates were provided. The findings highlight the value of building more reliable communication processes, increasing transparency in budgeting, and creating consistent, structured opportunities for families, staff, and community members to share input.

Directives

- Communicate and clarify to internal and external stakeholders the system’s financial condition, root causes of current challenges, and planned recovery strategies by establishing and implementing consistent, timely updates that improve stakeholder understanding and strengthen trust in efforts to protect student learning.
- Engage and facilitate collaboration with stakeholders through structured community forums, advisory groups, LSGTs, and school improvement teams to gather, document, and use input that guides financial priorities, resource adjustments, and investment decisions that support academic growth and student well-being.
- Improve stakeholder awareness by providing relevant and timely workshops, presentations, and written resources that explain the system’s budget status, revenue streams, expenditure patterns, and recovery strategies, and support informed participation as the system prepares to update the 2022-2027 strategic plan.

| Leadership for Learning | | Rating |
|-----------------------------|---|--------|
| Standard Number 8 | Cognia Performance Standard The governing authority demonstrates a commitment to learners by collaborating with leaders to uphold the institution’s priorities and to drive continuous improvement. | 1 |

Improvement Priority

- **Establish and implement consistent governance practices that strengthen transparency, ensure accurate public notices and complete documentation, reinforce fiscal oversight, and support charter system compliance to improve decision-making that prioritizes learners.**

The evidence reviewed indicates that the governing authority is experiencing challenges in fully advancing and sustaining the institution’s strategic priorities. Specifically, gaps were identified in the consistent application of transparent governance practices, effective fiscal oversight, and systematic engagement with both internal and external stakeholders, including system-level leadership. Across multiple areas, such as the conduct and documentation of meetings, financial decision-making processes, personnel management practices, and the fulfillment of charter system responsibilities, recurring patterns suggest a need for closer alignment with applicable legal and regulatory requirements. Additionally, opportunities exist to strengthen responsiveness to community expectations and to more intentionally embed continuous improvement processes. Addressing these areas would enhance the governing authority’s capacity to provide effective oversight, ensure institutional integrity, and more fully support outcomes that advance student learning and success.

Based on its review of available artifacts, the Monitoring Review Team identified inconsistencies in the posting of Board of Education meeting notices and agendas on the school system’s website.

The following 2025 regular and called meetings were reviewed and found to have posting omissions:

- May 27, 6:00 p.m., regular meeting
- October 27, 1:00 p.m., called meeting
- November 3, 10:00 a.m., called meeting
- November 3, 6:30 p.m., called meeting
- November 14, 12:00 p.m., called meeting
- November 24, 12:00 p.m., called meeting
- November 24, 6:00 p.m., called meeting

- November 24, 6:30 p.m.

These posting omissions also occurred with major financial hearings:

- June 23, 5:30 p.m., called budget hearing for the fiscal year (FY) 26 tentative budget
- November 3, 6:30 p.m., tax digest presentation
- November 14, 12:00 p.m., public hearing for millage rate
- November 24, 12:00 p.m., public hearing for millage rate
- November 24, 6:00 p.m.; public hearing for millage rate
- November 24, 6:30 p.m., public hearings for millage rate

Leaders reported that Board meetings are advertised in the local newspaper. However, when financial hearings are not consistently posted on the school system's website, access to timely information for community members may be limited. In 2025, the Board of Education held 22 regular meetings, 28 called meetings, and three called work sessions. The Board of Education held a higher number of called meetings than regularly scheduled meetings during the period reviewed, which may present challenges for stakeholders seeking to consistently engage in public meetings. Legally, special called meetings may be announced on short notice, and depending on the timing, they may not appear on the school system website or in the newspaper because of publication deadlines. However, these patterns make it difficult for stakeholders to stay informed about when key decisions are being made. Ensuring that all meetings and financial hearings are consistently posted online would strengthen transparency and support meaningful community involvement. Clear and consistent posting of Board of Education meetings and financial hearings may help community members better understand when important decisions are being considered.

The review of Board meeting documentation revealed several issues related to the approval, release, and completeness of meeting minutes throughout 2025 and early 2026. During the February 9, 2026, Board meeting, the Board approved the minutes from the January 26, 2026, meeting. After reviewing the January 26 minutes, the Monitoring Review Team noted that the document ends with the Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) superintendent search presentation. The minutes did not record any discussion or approval of the monthly financials or the FY 2023 audit update, even though both items were listed on the agenda. The minutes also did not document any board member votes to enter or exit executive session, nor did they record the action to adjourn the regular session. On February 23, 2026, the Cognia Regional Accreditation Evaluator contacted the system-level leadership to request clarification; however, no response was provided. System-level leadership has since updated the minutes on the school system's website to ensure they are now complete.

In further review of the January 26, 2026, Board meeting minutes, the Monitoring Review Team noted that the name "Lakewood CPA & Associates" appeared on the personnel report as a termination. This firm provides financial and auditing services to the school system, and it is unclear why a contracted vendor would be listed in the Board of Education personnel report as an employee. During the February 9, 2026, and February 23, 2026, Board meetings, the Board of Education approved the minutes for the January 12, 2026, meeting twice.

A review of the Board of Education minutes revealed recurring deficiencies in documenting adjournment actions across multiple meetings, raising concerns about the completeness and reliability of the official record. Specifically, the budget work session minutes for May 17, 2025 (9:00 a.m.), May 29, 2025 (5:30 a.m.), and June 6, 2025 (2:00 a.m.) included adjournment sections that were blank. Additionally, the minutes from the April 14, April 28, and August 25, 2025, meetings noted that the meetings were adjourned but failed to document the required motions, seconds, or votes. While the March 24, 2025, minutes recorded a motion to adjourn, they did not include any record of the vote.

These omissions limit the ability to fully verify the completeness of the official record and to clearly document procedural actions taken by the Board. When such errors recur, they raise broader concerns about the reliability and integrity of governance documentation. Incomplete or inconsistent minutes weaken transparency, reduce public trust, and hinder the institution's ability to demonstrate adherence to Board policies, statutory requirements, and accepted standards of parliamentary procedure. Furthermore,



inadequate documentation impairs the development of a complete and accurate historical record of Board decision-making.

Although some corrective actions have been taken to address these deficiencies, the pattern of inconsistencies underscores the need for more thorough and consistently applied procedures for recording, reviewing, approving, and publishing meeting minutes. Strengthening these processes will support legal compliance, enhance institutional accountability, and ensure that official records accurately reflect Board actions. Implementing such improvements will be essential to maintaining confidence in governance practices and sustaining an effective system of institutional oversight moving forward.

In addition, a sampling of the Board meeting minutes reviewed shifts in reporting practices that reduced clarity and may have made it harder to demonstrate consistent oversight of staffing decisions during a time of financial challenges and staffing reductions. A review of the Board meeting minutes revealed that the Board of Education was inconsistent in posting the board-approved personnel list in the minutes. At the beginning of 2025, the personnel decisions were not posted in minutes. During the spring (specifically the March 24, April 14, April 28, and May 12, 2025 meetings), the Board included a highly detailed, tabular "Personnel Report" directly in the minutes. These tables explicitly listed the employee's name, position, location, who they were replacing, and the effective date. During the summer months, from late May through early September, the Board stopped listing specific personnel names. The minutes during this period stated that the Board voted to "approve the personnel as presented" or noted generally that the report "consisted of new hires and ESS [Education Solutions Services] personnel," without providing any specific identities. Beginning with the September 22, 2025, meeting, the Board resumed posting specific names in the minutes. Instead of full tables, they began listing names in a summarized text format broken down by action (e.g., terminations, resignations, retirements, transfers, and new hires). They have continued this practice of publicly naming the employees involved in personnel actions throughout the district's financial crisis and reduction-in-force (RIF) period in October, November, and December 2025. This pattern reveals that the district has not followed a stable or uniform approach to documenting personnel actions in its official minutes. The inconsistency continues to raise concerns about transparency and the completeness of the public record.

The school system participated in a comprehensive policy review to update the Board's policy manual, which was facilitated by the Georgia School Board Association (GSBA), working in partnership with the Pereira, Kirby, Kinsinger, & Nguyen, LLP (PKKN) Law Firm. Together, the groups examined all the Board of Education policies and organized them into four groups: existing policies that required revisions, outdated policies that needed to be rescinded, new policies to be adopted, and existing policies that could be retained without changes. As each batch was reviewed by GSBA, the superintendent presented the proposed updates to the Board of Education in alphabetical batches, such as Policies A through C, D through F, G through I, and J through M. Each batch went through multiple readings and a tabling period before receiving final approval from the Board of Education over the course of the 2025 calendar year. On June 9, 2025, the Board approved the revisions for Policies A through C. At the January 12, 2026, Board meeting, the Board approved a board member to serve as the board treasurer. To understand this role, the Monitoring Review Team reviewed both the previous policies and the newly adopted **Board Policy BBA: Board Officers**. The previous version of the policy stated, "The Treasurer shall receive and pay out all monies coming to the Board of Education, according to the direction of the Board. All monies shall be deposited in a bank selected by the Treasurer and approved by the Board as a whole." The new policy states, "The Superintendent shall be the ex-officio secretary or treasurer of the Board with all duties as set forth in state and local law." Stakeholders interviewed expressed the perception that, over the past three years, the treasurer's role has lacked a clear definition and has been regarded more as a longstanding tradition than having a set of specific responsibilities. One board member noted that the purpose of the treasurer position has never been clear, especially since the school system's checks now are digitally signed. Traditionally, the treasurer's primary duty was being listed on bank signature cards and signing checks, a practice interviewees indicated is not typical for school boards. Before the recent financial crisis, the treasurer described the position as mostly a name and a face role rather than an active role. However, responsibilities increased after the departure of the former superintendent and finance director. For example, interviews revealed the treasurer recently went to the bank to sign documents so the interim superintendent could access district funds and has begun attending more finance meetings, which represents a significant shift from how the position



functioned in the past. Interviews indicated inconsistent awareness of the policy language among system-level leadership. Specifically, leadership was unaware of the provision stating that the superintendent serves as the ex-officio secretary and treasurer of the Board, with duties defined by state and local law. This context helps explain how the treasurer's role has evolved in practice and why differing understandings of its purpose have emerged. It also underscores the importance of clarity and shared a lack of awareness when policy changes affect governance roles even though board members had voted to approve the change.

In accordance with charter system requirements, the district maintains Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs) to support shared decision-making and advance school-level autonomy. The Cognia Regional Accreditation Evaluator requested documentation listing the LSGT members by schools, their election years, and their term expiration dates. System-level leadership did not provide this information to Cognia. System-level leadership could not confirm if the schools had governance team bylaws or operating guidelines. The annual governance training required for the governance team members was not documented, despite explicit requirements in the charter contract. The only training documentation provided pertained to the local Board. There was limited evidence that governance team members received training on the decision-making matrix, ethics, or conflict-of-interest policies. As a result, the school system was unable to demonstrate consistent implementation and oversight of governance teams in alignment with charter requirements. Additional documentation and clarification are needed to fully verify compliance and effectiveness in this area.

A review of LSGT's agendas, minutes, and other related records indicates inconsistent compliance with statutory requirements governing open meetings, documentation, and shared decision making. Schools posted meeting dates, agendas, and attendance information. However, a review of the LSGT artifacts revealed that school leaders did not document meeting motions, seconds, or recorded votes. Review of LSGT agendas and minutes indicated that documentation related to executive sessions procedures, including recorded votes, stated purposes, and supporting affidavits, was inconsistently maintained. Stakeholders reported that LSGTs were not meaningfully involved in decisions regarding principal hiring, staffing reductions, or budget adjustments. Some parents stated that they learned about major decisions only through media reports. While one principal demonstrated higher engagement by involving the governance team members in financial reviews and hiring processes, this was an exception and not reflective of systemwide practice. These findings suggest opportunities for the governing authority to strengthen its support of the charter governance model and shared decision-making practices. These conditions indicate areas where additional guidance and oversight could help clarify expectations and strengthen consistent implementation of open meeting practices. Increased support may strengthen meaningful participation by governance team members, reinforce the intent of shared governance across the school system, and create opportunities for LSGTs to provide feedback that informs system-level decision making.

Based on the cumulative evidence reviewed, including meeting documentation, audit findings, and stakeholder interviews, the Board demonstrates limited alignment with practices that prioritize learner outcomes. Persistent deficiencies in transparency, documentation, fiscal oversight, personnel reporting, and charter governance point to systemic weaknesses in leadership capacity and accountability structures. Collectively, these issues impede the system's ability to sustain a clear focus on learner outcomes, fulfill its fiduciary and public responsibilities, and engage in meaningful continuous improvement. Without sustained corrective action at the governance and system level, these conditions present ongoing risks to long-term effectiveness, public confidence, and educational quality.

Directives

- Implement and adjust processes to ensure adherence to the Georgia Open Meetings Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 through § 50-14-5) by meeting all posting, notice, agenda, and minutes requirements for all regular, called, work session, and public hearing meetings and by publishing complete and timely agendas and minutes on the system's website.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive board member training program covering roles, responsibilities, ethics, and the use of Robert's Rules of Order while ensuring the annual plan is publicly available, and all completions are documented in the official record.

- Standardize personnel reporting in Board meeting minutes by requiring each personnel action item to include the name, position, location, action type, and effective date in accordance with applicable privacy laws and Board policy.
- Provide annual training required for all Local School Governance Team (LSGT) members on decision-making authority, open meetings and open records requirements, ethics, conflict of interest, and Robert’s Rules of Order and maintain signed training rosters and agendas as documentation of completion.

| Leadership for Learning | | Rating |
|------------------------------|---|--------|
| Standard Number 10 | Cognia Performance Standard Leaders demonstrate expertise in recruiting, supervising, and evaluating professional staff members to optimize learning. | 1 |

Improvement Priority

- **Implement, monitor, and adjust a unified leadership system that builds leaders’ expertise in recruiting, supervising, and evaluating professional staff to strengthen instructional quality.**

Evidence from stakeholder interviews, state accountability reports, financial audits, and system-level documentation consistently indicates long-standing and systemic weaknesses in staffing practices, accountability structures, and overall human capital management. While interim system-level leadership has initiated targeted corrective actions, these efforts have yet to yield the comprehensive, sustainable improvements necessary to ensure effectiveness across the system. Current staffing processes remain insufficiently aligned with instructional priorities, rely inconsistently on data to guide staffing decisions, and lack coherent supervision and evaluation structures to support performance improvement. Collectively, these conditions limit the system’s capacity to deploy personnel strategically, monitor effectiveness, and ensure that staffing decisions meaningfully support instructional quality and student outcomes.

As part of the system’s efforts to support the recruitment, supervision, and retention of instructional staff, system-level leadership has established a formal staff mentor program for teachers who are new to the profession or new to the district. The system’s staff mentor program, as outlined in the FY26 Dublin City School Mentor and Mentee Handbook, is designed to support teachers who are new to the profession or new to the school system. The stated purposes of the program include supporting teacher retention and strengthening instructional practices. Mentors and mentees are required to meet monthly, beginning during the pre-planning period. Program guidelines specify that mentors conduct at least five non evaluative classroom observations of their assigned mentees, scheduled for September, October, November, January, and February. Mentees are also required to observe a mentor or other model teacher in the building at least three times during the school year. Mentors are eligible for a per mentee stipend, issued by June 30 upon receipt of all required documentation, with a maximum of two mentees supported concurrently. During interviews, staff described the mentor program as a structure that pairs new teachers with mentors within their schools and includes a district led new teacher academy in which curriculum directors provide monthly coaching. Interview participants indicated that the program is intended to support new staff throughout their first year. Interviewees also described factors that have affected program implementation. One mentor stated that she is "connecting with her mentee daily after school," but expressed frustration with "not being able to get into the mentee’s classroom the way she wants." School leadership also discussed factors they perceived as influencing program facilitation, with one principal noting, "we have not done a good job," when reflecting on support for mentoring efforts. In addition, staff referenced ongoing financial constraints, noting that recent staffing reductions and budget limitations have affected scheduling and service delivery. Interviewees further reported that funding for the traditional mentor stipend remains uncertain for the current year. Based on documentation review and staff interviews, the staff mentor program is established with clear expectations, defined roles, and articulated support for new teachers. At the same time, interview feedback

indicates that operational factors, including staffing capacity and fiscal conditions, have influenced the consistency with which the programs components are implemented across the system.

Stakeholders, including teachers, staff, parents, community representatives, and board members, consistently described a system culture that lacked a strategic approach to human capital. Stakeholders reported perceptions that hiring decisions were inconsistently applied, with some questioning whether uniform professional standards were used across similar positions. During the interview with the interim superintendent, it was stated that the previous administrations were in the habit of hiring coaches who happened to be teachers, not teachers who could coach. Stakeholders reported perceptions that staffing decisions lacked sufficient transparency and that administrative staffing levels expanded without consistent oversight. Stakeholders reported perceptions that some hiring and placement decisions, including compensation levels and role assignments, were inconsistent with comparable positions. The Monitoring Review Team did not receive documentation sufficient to verify or refute these perceptions. Stakeholders and audit findings indicate that long-standing recruitment, staffing, and oversight practices contributed to fiscal conditions that ultimately required corrective action. The system was unable to demonstrate the use of performance data to guide staffing decisions or financial allocations. During interviews, one board member acknowledged that positions and supplemental pay historically were not consistently monitored. As previously described, stakeholder concerns regarding athletic coaching assignments and related supplements reflect broader weaknesses in the system's human capital oversight. When discussing the failure to forecast staffing needs and the resulting growth in administrative positions, the same board member stated that the Board historically did not exercise sufficient oversight over hiring decisions or the distribution of financial resources. Furthermore, the board member explained that to prevent this from happening again, the Board now must approve positions before anyone is hired, revealing the extent of their past lack of knowledge by stating, "we had directors that we didn't even know about." The board member further acknowledged their failure to monitor financial supplements, noting that there were "people that did get supplements that we did not even know about" and emphasizing that they now carefully review the supplements that coaches receive.

In addition, the elimination of crucial support roles has created severe challenges for staff trying to meet student needs across the district. During interviews, staff noted that while the mental health team only lost the director, there is widespread concern about the future of the program, and stakeholders stated "bluntly" that "they feel the cuts will impact the students' mental health." Instructionally, the midyear reduction of academic coaches and interventionists has forced educators to take on overwhelming responsibilities. Teachers reported that they are absorbing responsibilities left by the reduction in interventionist positions, which has resulted in some tasks going unmet and staff operating in a constant state of daily survival. When asked how Tier 2 and Tier 3 data and support were being managed without these positions, teachers simply responded, "We are not." The reading curriculum was hit particularly hard; teachers pointed out that the elimination of the Read 180 program was a key loss that deeply affected a lot of the reading students, while elementary staff similarly noted that "two math interventionists were lost, which directly impacted students." Read 180 is an intensive literacy program designed to improve reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary through personalized instruction and blended learning. Principals echoed these frustrations, with one describing the situation as a heavy challenge because they lost 18 staff members who are critical, requiring remaining administrators to take on multiple duties. Ultimately, educators feel stretched beyond their capacity, explaining that they had to restructure teams, class sizes, workloads because of the loss of teachers and are now unfairly "expected to put out the same quality [of instruction] without the resources."

Stakeholders expressed deep frustration regarding the inequitable distribution of qualified educators across the system, explicitly noting that some of the certified teachers have been taken away from their base school to staff the Irish Gifted Academy (IGA). This organizational decision created a stark contrast in teacher qualifications between buildings. However, at the IGA, the situation is completely different; stakeholders observed that "Everybody at IGA [is] highly qualified, [with] multiple degrees" and that it is "a program with all certified teachers." Consequently, this drained traditional schools of their certified personnel, leading parents to point out that "most of the teachers outside of IGA are not certified" and prompting them to ask, "Why does the gifted academy get the best of the best." Teachers echoed these concerns, arguing that the district should not "put the best teachers over there with the GT [gifted and talented] kids" in a separate building while leaving traditional schools struggling without certified staff. Through interviews with members of the



Monitoring Review Team, participants acknowledged that current system-level leadership is grappling with the consequences of deeply ingrained programmatic inequities. Community members pointed out that taking these programs "out of the regular schools and turn[ing] into a separate school... is taking away from other schools." Data confirming the percentages of certified and noncertified teachers by school site were not requested by the Monitoring Review Team, which limited the team's ability to verify or refute stakeholders' perceptions.

The Department of Audits and Accounts' special report extensively reported weaknesses in recruiting, supervision, and oversight of compensation. According to the special report, the system "employed roughly twice as many staff members funded through local and federal funds when compared to their peer systems." Furthermore, the report stated that, "As a result, the School District has employed substantially more staff than earned under the state funding formula based on their student count and certified personnel information." Evidence revealed that the system employed nearly twice as many locally and federally funded staff as peer systems from FY 2021 through FY 2025 and used temporary federal COVID-19 pandemic funds to sustain ongoing salaries. The system also maintained high administrative staffing levels that did not align with system needs. The audit found almost no internal controls related to employee compensation. According to the report, it was stated that "During FY 2021 to FY 2025, a single employee was responsible for setting supplement amounts for all staff, with limited to no review."

Furthermore, the system exceeded total salary expenditures than comparable systems and provided disproportionately high coaching and extended-day supplements. The report stated that the system's "extended day and extended year supplement expenditures found that the Dublin City Schools paid more than three times what similar school systems paid for extended day supplements and more than double what peer school systems paid for extended year supplements." The Department of Audits and Accounts' special report found that coaching supplements paid by the School District were about 21% higher than those in comparable districts in FY 2024. The report also documented poor supervision of financial activities, including costly retreats that lacked educational purpose and included expenses for family members. The findings suggest opportunities for the school system to strengthen governance, improve accountability, and align staffing and compensation practices with established standards.

After a comprehensive review of the job descriptions, several significant inconsistencies, drafting errors, and structural issues were identified that may create confusion for employees and administrators. A recurring concern was the incorrect use of another school system's name in the job descriptions. For example, the description for the director of public relations, and the director of human resources and operations identifies the position as part of the school system, while other descriptions reference the mission statement of a different school system. The review also revealed multiple instances of mismatched job titles and apparent copy-and-paste errors. For instance, the assistant principal's job description focuses on the principal's duties rather than the assistant principal's duties. The document titled Director of ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] and Gifted Services refers internally to the coordinator of ESOL and gifted services. The student services coordinator description lists the duties of a student support coordinator. The purpose statement for the nutrition administrative assistant identifies the position as a nutrition bookkeeper. The review of job descriptions revealed numerous inconsistencies, inaccurate district references, and structural errors that could lead to confusion for employees and administrators. Reviewing and aligning these areas may help improve clarity and consistency across the job descriptions. This could support a clearer understanding between both leaders and staff.

Even though the Monitoring Review Team reviewed the Quality Basic Education (QBE) allotment sheets and the Resource Allocation Methodology Plan, it later became apparent that these tools were not used during the decision-making process to determine terminations of people and/or positions. Official minutes revealed that the plan was created after the Board approved the Deficit Reduction Plans, so it did not guide the initial decisions. During interviews, the interim superintendent confirmed that no formal written guidelines were used. Decisions first considered whether the system earned specific positions, then evaluated the most recently hired staff, and finally evaluated uncertified or out-of-field teachers. Additional factors were considered but not identified clearly during interviews. Stakeholders criticized the limited involvement of staff and community members in the process. Stakeholders, including teachers and community representatives, described how many employees received termination notices by text message or while teaching, and one



custodian learned that his position had been eliminated on the same afternoon he was dismissed. Although leaders outlined the factors they considered, the process was neither fully documented nor consistently communicated. This limited clarity left some stakeholders with lingering questions about how decisions were made.

In conclusion, the evidence demonstrates that the system has not yet developed the system-level leadership capacity necessary to effectively recruit, supervise, and evaluate professional staff. Longstanding deficiencies in hiring practices, certification oversight, compensation management, and supervisory accountability have weakened the system's ability to ensure that staffing decisions consistently support high-quality instruction and fiscal sustainability. These weaknesses have contributed to significant financial instability and inconsistent personnel practices across the system. Interim system-level leadership has initiated corrective actions and established foundational controls to address these concerns. While these efforts represent an important first step, they remain under development and have not yet resulted in a cohesive, sustainable approach to human capital management. Meaningful and lasting improvement will require continued governance oversight, the full implementation of clear, comprehensive policies, and a coordinated strategy to rebuild effective staffing systems aligned with institutional priorities and that support improved student learning outcomes.

Directives

- Establish and implement a comprehensive hiring and selection system that aligns with certification requirements, position expectations, and instructional priorities, including written protocols, transparent advertising and screening practices, structured interviews, documented scoring procedures, and required annual training for administrators involved in recruitment, supervisor, evaluation, and legal compliance.
- Maintain a properly staffed and trained human resources department capable of effectively administering recruitment, certification, evaluation, compensation, and reporting requirements and provide regular reports to the Board of Education that summarize hiring activity, evaluation completion, certification status trends, and identified staffing risks.
- Develop, adopt, and enforce formal compensation guidelines that clearly define all salary supplements, extended day pay, and duty assignments; require explicit board authorization for each supplement category, structure, and limit; and prohibit compensation action that lacks documented approval.
- Implement and monitor internal controls and audit processes that ensure payroll accuracy, internal consistency, and compliance with Board policy, including annual payroll and supplement audits and safeguards that prevent any single employee from independently initiating or executing compensation or payroll changes.
- Conduct and maintain accurate, standardized job descriptions aligned with system goals, instructional priorities, and state requirements and adopt formal procedures governing workforce reductions, including criteria, decision-making protocols, communication timelines, and required due process protections for affected employees.

| Leadership for Learning | | Rating |
|-------------------------|--|--------|
| Standard Number 11 | Cognia Performance Standard Leaders create and maintain institutional structures and processes that support learners and staff members in both stable and changing environments. | 1 |

Improvement Priority

- **Develop, implement, and assess unified systems that ensure consistent operating procedures across all academic, operational, and governance environments.**

The system is currently experiencing ongoing disruptions that have affected operational effectiveness, financial stewardship, and human resource stability. Evidence obtained through audits, Board records, and stakeholder interviews reveals a systemic absence of coherent governance structures, consistent processes, and accountability mechanisms necessary to support both learners and staff. The Monitoring Review Team determined that long-standing system-level leadership practices, which were not consistently addressed over time, have contributed to conditions of instability and fragmentation. As a result, the system has experienced challenges in sustaining daily operations, implementing strategic improvements, and responding adaptively to internal and external challenges. These conditions collectively indicate structural deficiencies that warrant coordinated and sustained corrective action.

The Department of Audits and Accounts' special report found that system spending patterns were not consistently aligned with the instructional mission or documented student needs. The report noted numerous expenditures that lacked justification and exceeded reasonable expectations, often without going through any approval process or providing supporting documentation. The special report revealed "significant issues related to the use of School District credit cards", noting "charges were frequently made without documented approval, and many transactions lacked receipts or explanations supporting the business purpose of the expense." Furthermore, "there was no centralized process to monitor or reconcile these charges, nor any policy requiring justification before card usage." Gaps in fiscal monitoring and long-term planning contributed to the persistence and growth of the deficit over several years. The system relied on financial practices that limited the clarity and timeliness of information available to leaders regarding the budget's condition. Monthly financial reports were not provided to the Board, and audits were delivered years later. These practices indicate weaknesses in financial oversight and planning that limited transparency and made it difficult for leaders to fully understand and respond to the system's fiscal condition. The Department of Audits and Accounts' special report stated, "over \$14 million in salaries and benefits expenditures were funded with ESSER monies." According to a review of the general ledger and payroll activity for the period of FY 2020 to FY 2025, the system did not necessarily hire new staff with ESSER funding; however, the funds were used to cover personnel expenses for existing staff. The system reclassified salaries and/or benefits in both FY 2020 and 2021 paid from other funding sources to the ESSER Fund. It was stated, "in FY 2022 and FY 2023, the payroll system initially recorded the majority of salaries and benefits for 55 and 40 employees, respectively, directly in the ESSER Fund." While these practices developed over time, they underscore the need for clearer financial controls and more consistent reporting.

Procurement practices were found to be inconsistent. According to information gained from stakeholder interviews, the leaders and staff lacked a basic purchase order system; there were no processes in place for purchase order approvals, and the person approving a purchase order was often the same person making the payment. During interview sessions, stakeholders noted that while the interim superintendent used a purchase order process in the curriculum department, it was later discovered by the interim superintendent that the rest of the system did not follow this practice. Furthermore, there was rampant, unauthorized use of district credit and fuel cards, which were routinely used without documentation or oversight. Board members reported that internal controls for fuel cards usage were limited or unclear prior to the system's financial crisis. Formal financial reporting to the Board was inconsistent and not implemented with sufficient regularity to support effective oversight. The absence of written guidance also affected compensation practices. Interviews and artifact reviews noted that local salary supplements were assigned without a policy

framework, leading to significant inconsistencies across similar positions. During the Monitoring Review, it was noted that the system currently does not have a permanent chief financial officer but has contracted someone to provide temporary services.

A comprehensive table on page 7 of the Department of Audits and Accounts' special report explicitly documents that the system paid significantly higher salaries than comparable peer systems in FY 2024 across most employee categories. According to special report findings, total salary spending in the system exceeded peer districts by approximately \$3.9 million. The largest differences appeared in administrative and central office positions, where the system spent an estimated \$1.1 million more than peers, including substantially higher pay for the superintendent, directors, finance staff, and public relations personnel. Instructional staff costs were higher by more than \$2.0 million, driven by increased spending on teachers and paraprofessionals, though spending on other instructional personnel was slightly lower than peer averages. Operational services, such as maintenance, food service, and nursing, also showed higher salary costs, totaling about \$750,000 above those of peer systems. The information in the table shows that systems' compensation levels consistently exceeded those of similar districts across most job categories, contributing to elevated personnel costs. Furthermore, the system's extended day, extended year, and athletic supplements were often significantly higher than those in peer systems. According to the Department of Audits and Accounts' special report, exhibit 4 on page 8 shows that the system paid consistently higher salary supplements than comparable peer systems in FY 2024 across all three categories reviewed: coaching, extended day, and extended year. Coaching supplements averaged \$300,950 for the system compared to \$249,166 for peer systems, reflecting higher compensation for athletic and extracurricular responsibilities. The disparity is more pronounced for extended-day and extended-year supplements. The system paid an average of \$209,949 for extended day supplements, while peer systems averaged \$64,261. Extended-year supplements averaged \$72,271 for the system, compared with \$30,904 for peer districts. These differences demonstrate that the system compensated staff at significantly higher rates for additional time worked beyond standard contracts, particularly for extended instructional time, which contributed to elevated overall personnel costs relative to similarly sized school systems.

Stakeholder interviews described long-standing system-level leadership behaviors that created instability across the system. State advisors, with the GaDOE, shared that, based on stakeholder perceptions, the system appeared to be facing significant financial challenges, and some felt that earlier signs of possible waste may not have been fully recognized or addressed by local leaders. Board members approved actions during this period and later stated during interviews that they did not fully understand the extent of the system's financial condition at that time. Collectively, these conditions suggest opportunities to strengthen oversight processes and clarify shared governance roles and responsibilities. Concerns about governance were also evident in the reduction-in-force process. Evidence reviewed during the Monitoring Review did not consistently demonstrate that established selection procedures were applied as outlined in Board policy. Stakeholders described decisions as being guided primarily by certification status and administrative judgment, limited reference to documented job performance data, although **Board Policy GBKA: Professional Personnel Lay-Off** clearly states that the primary factor to be considered by the superintendent in devising a reduction-in-force plan shall be the educator's performance. Interview responses indicate that performance data was not consistently identified by the stakeholders as the primary factor guiding reduction-in-force decisions. When a principal was asked how individuals were selected for the RIF, the principal explicitly confirmed the criteria, stating that the collaborative decision involved assessing the school's needs and asking, "Who could I do without?" Additionally, the principal confirmed that certification played a direct role in these decisions, noting that the goal was to "protect individuals that were certified" while targeting those who were "not certified in a specific content area." Non-certified staff described similar issues. They shared that they felt performance did not play a strong role in the decisions and that, at times, individuals with closer relationships to the administration seemed less affected by the cuts. **Board Policy GBKA: Professional Personnel Lay-Off** also requires the superintendent to notify affected employees in a manner consistent with Georgia law. During interviews, stakeholders stated that the system's notification process lacked structure and professionalism. Stakeholders described multiple notification approaches for personnel actions. Some employees received notice by text message, others had someone enter their classroom during the school day to inform them, and at least one custodian learned of his termination only hours before it took effect. Because the process was disorganized, some staff members posted about their terminations on social media before the system-level leadership made any official

announcement to the public, students, or families. These actions added confusion and contributed to a negative school climate. While these issues create confusion and strain within the school system, they also highlight areas where clearer structures and shared accountability may support improvement.

The system does not maintain the structures needed to anticipate or respond to operational disruptions. Leaders did not act on emerging financial warning signs, develop contingency plans to stabilize the budget, or adjust staffing levels over time. The system annually developed Deficit Reduction Plans, but evidence does not validate that any of the initiatives included in the plans were ever implemented. Key operational functions deteriorated as a result. Reductions in custodial and maintenance staff left buildings with locked restrooms, stained ceilings, and classrooms that were not being cleaned. Some teachers reported purchasing space heaters or sweeping their own floors to maintain basic conditions. These circumstances indicate that the system was unprepared for both routine operational challenges and large-scale changes. Without clearly defined structures to guide financial decisions, personnel assignments, facility upkeep, and emergency response, the system operated largely in a reactive manner as instability increased. Schools lost essential personnel, including academic coaches, interventionists, and assistant principals. Teachers reported working under crisis conditions characterized by uncertainty, limited communication, and a payroll withholding initiative known as the Lucky Loot program. The program involved withholding a portion of employees' paychecks during the fall month to support system cash flow, with repayment intended after receipt of tax revenues, through the program was not documented in the employee handbook. During interviews, participants described these conditions using language that reflected deep frustration with system-level decisions. Teachers explicitly framed themselves as collateral damage, with one educator stating bluntly, "We are casualties of war." Parents and community members also expressed frustration. Many questioned why cuts targeted classroom positions and custodial roles rather than central office positions. Furthermore, the severe reduction in custodial staff led students to endure compromised and unsanitary learning environments. Following a reduction in custodial staffing from five team members to two at some schools, high school students stated that "most of the toilets are closed due to a shortage of staff." Separately, non-certified staff described their work environment as "the filthiest building in the whole system." During the review, the Monitoring Review Team conducted site visits at all campuses and did not identify widespread cleanliness concerns. However, stakeholder perceptions gathered through interviews consistently indicated that, following a reduction in custodial personnel, cleaning responsibilities shifted substantially to instructional and administrative staff. Staff reported assuming tasks that would typically fall within custodial duties. Examples include statements that they "have one custodian and have to sweep their own floors" and that when a student became ill during the school day, "We would have to clean it up." These responsibilities were also described as extending to school leadership. Staff members referenced situations in which a principal was serving as "Custodian... for the day" by managing breakfast and lunch trash. A community member similarly commented that a principal was "teaching math and he is the janitor." Accounts from multiple stakeholder groups indicate differing perspectives on building conditions. Non-certified staff noted that trash removal was inconsistent and floors were not regularly mopped. During interviews, elementary students raised concerns about cleanliness, noting that their school was not consistently clean and citing issues such as unclean bathrooms and leftover food or trash in desks. In contrast, high school students generally reported that their building was adequately clean and well supplied. According to stakeholder perceptions shared during interviews, experiences varied across grade levels and facilities.

Based on a comprehensive review of the evidence, the system has not consistently implemented system-level leadership practices, policies, and operational frameworks necessary to adequately support learners and staff under both stable and evolving conditions. Deficiencies in financial oversight, human resources management, communication, and facilities operations have contributed to systemic instability across the district. Although interim leadership has begun to address these concerns through targeted corrective actions, sustained focus and intentional strengthening of governance structures, processes, and accountability mechanisms will be essential to ensure long-term organizational effectiveness and the provision of a stable, high-quality learning environment.

Directives

- Develop and implement strict standard operating procedures for all financial transactions, including procurement, mandatory pre-approvals, and credit card usage, to ensure consistent compliance, prevent unauthorized spending, and improve audit readiness across all departments.



- Formalize and evaluate a budget development protocol that aligns expenditures with the strategic plan, incorporates stakeholder input, and documents all parameters, assumptions, and priorities, to increase transparency and strengthen decision-making.
- Initiate and deploy user training for purchasing, human resources, payroll, and budgeting systems, including refresher cycles and completion tracking, to ensure staff competency, reduce data entry errors, and improve workflow accuracy.
- Initiate and deploy structured listening sessions before and after major decisions that affect staffing, schedules, or services to strengthen transparency, improve trust, and document stakeholder input and follow-up commitments.

| Leadership for Learning | | Rating |
|-------------------------|---|--------|
| Standard Number 15 | Cognia Performance Standard Learners' needs drive the allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources. | 1 |

Improvement Priority

- **Develop, implement, and monitor a transparent and equitable resource allocation system that ensures fair staffing, consistent transportation practices, timely financial controls, and adequate operational and instructional support across all schools.**

Interviews, document reviews, and onsite observations indicate that the district's allocation and management of human, material, digital, and fiscal resources are not consistently aligned with learner needs. Stakeholders reported persistent inequities across schools, inconsistent implementation of board-approved actions, and insufficient internal controls, all of which hinder the district's ability to equitably and effectively align resources to support all learners. These findings are consistent with the Monitoring Review Team's rating, indicating that professional staff members infrequently analyze learner needs or use data to inform resource allocation decisions.

Stakeholders repeatedly described staffing disparities across the district. Parents, teachers, and community representatives expressed concern that specialized programs draw highly qualified educators away from traditional schools and exacerbate inequities in instructional quality. Concerns extended beyond staffing. Stakeholders reported that athletic programs historically have received greater protection than academic services. During interviews, community representatives voiced deep concerns over the system "cutting teachers/educators instead of cutting administration," suggesting that central office staff could have combined their duties to save money. They pointed out the disproportionate salaries and overstaffing at the central office, stating, "When they cut teachers and janitors, we can cut right here." This inequity was heavily felt by school-level employees; non-certified staff reported that "District office staff are not furloughed. Just school staff," and even shared rumors that people at the board level had recently received raises. Meanwhile, the reductions severely impacted frontline building operations, with schools losing beloved educators and reducing their custodial staff from five down to just two per building. During interviews with the Monitoring Review Team, teachers echoed this frustration, arguing that cuts "should have started from the top" and lamenting that "people in the trenches are being punished more than the ones who got us into this mess."

Before the reduction in force, principals reported that they could "order as many supplies as they wanted" because there was no specific financial allocation or set balance given to the schools. Currently, however, principals have almost no discretionary budget, with one stating, "No general funds are given to the school" and noting they only have about \$5,000 in a principal's account to support activities. Because of this lack of school-level funding, the burden of providing basic classroom supplies has largely fallen on teachers and families. Teachers reported that the system "cut off copier paper," forcing them to use their own personal resources to ensure students are not impacted. Additionally, because the district has not provided the correct headphones with microphones required for digital learning programs like Amira, teachers have had to resort to buying them through DonorsChoose or adding them to student supply lists, which has frustrated parents who are now expected to provide up to three sets of headphones a year. Stakeholders explicitly noted that "parents are buying supplies because the teachers do not have funds." Despite these funding cuts, perspectives on the actual shortages vary among the school community. While teachers and parents feel financial strain, high school students reported they have not noticed any shortages of classroom supplies. Elementary students mentioned they generally have "plenty of materials in their classrooms," though they noted a specific lack of science materials for hands-on learning. Furthermore, non-certified support staff, such as custodians, reported that they are not experiencing shortages and that the system continues to order the cleaning supplies they need.

A review of minutes revealed that the Board approved eliminating school choice transportation routes at the October 20, 2025, meeting; however, stakeholders reported that the changes were not fully implemented during the time of the review. Interviews with system-level leadership later confirmed that some routes remained unchanged, preventing the system from achieving the expected cost savings. During the interviews, stakeholders, teachers, and parents all raised concerns about the shortage of bus drivers. It was noted that the system might be struggling to retain or find drivers because they lost the extra pay they previously earned for transporting students to athletic or academic competitions, as the system has currently eliminated all travel.

To cope with this severe lack of personnel, the system has had to rely on other staff members; teachers reported that principals are driving buses, and students noted that their tennis coach had to get his commercial driver's license (CDL). Students described the effects of these shortages on their learning experiences. As for field trips, stakeholders noted that the parent teacher association used to hold fundraisers to pay for school needs and field trips. Additionally, the system has currently cut all travel funding for academic and athletic competitions to save money. In contrast, specialized transportation for students attending the Irish Gifted Academy continues from their homes or base schools, which many stakeholders perceive as inequitable. As a result, the school system has not fully realized the anticipated cost savings, while students and staff continue to navigate crowded and inconsistent transportation arrangements. The continuation of specialized transportation for certain programs also has led some stakeholders to question consistency and fairness across the school system.

According to stakeholders, the budget deficit and subsequent reduction in force had a "tremendous" impact on the district's career, technical, and agricultural education (CTAE) pathways. District leadership noted that the CTAE department was severely overstaffed; while they only had allocations for 5.5 staff members, they were employing 12 CTAE staff. To correct this imbalance, the system had to eliminate five CTAE staff members in December. Specifically, the Teaching as a Profession pathway was affected by these reductions, though officials stated that the remaining staff members were able to step in and cover the majority of the affected classes. The impact of the budget freeze is highly visible in hands-on learning and extracurriculars. For class projects, elementary students reported that they generally have "plenty of materials in their classrooms." However, this is not equitable across all subjects, as students pointed out that one educator "teaches math and science but focuses on math because there are no science materials." During interviews, participants described these conditions using language such as an administrator's response to questions about budget cuts and their impact on teaching and learning, explaining that "it is killing it." These circumstances have required the system to make adjustments that affect the scope and consistency of CTAE programming and hands on learning experiences. Stakeholders indicated that while staff have made efforts to adapt and maintain instructional coverage, budget limitations continue to shape the depth, resources, and equitable access to learning opportunities across programs.

Based on the evidence shared with the Monitoring Review Team, the system makes two annual payments totaling approximately \$300,000 on the solar panel lease, with the contract ending on May 15, 2037. Interviews with internal stakeholders as well as community members questioned whether the panels are still operational and indicated the leasing company has now gone bankrupt. However, according to information in the Department of Audits and Accounts' special report, the system is still required to pay over \$300,000 annually for the next 11 years. During interviews, stakeholders discussed the system's solar panel project. Stakeholders and state officials raised concerns about the cost effectiveness of the cost effectiveness of the solar panel lease, noting that the system has not verified operational status, realized savings, or required maintenance. The Department of Audits and Accounts' special report stated that the system "has not verified that the solar panels are currently operational, whether anticipated energy cost savings are being achieved, or if required maintenance has been performed." One community representative argued, "Why are we still paying \$300,000 for panels that do not work?" Echoing the community's frustration, the Department of Audits and Accounts concluded that such unmonitored expenditures "are not consistent with best practices for public sector spending and may undermine public trust in the School District's ability to manage funds appropriately." Moving forward, the system faces mounting pressure to "periodically evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the arrangement" before continuing to funnel crucial funds into the 2037 lease.

The findings also indicate that the district is experiencing inequitable resource allocation, limited fiscal and operational stability, inconsistent implementation of board-approved actions, and a lack of data-driven decision-making. These conditions prevent the district from ensuring that each learner receives the human, material, digital, and fiscal resources necessary for success. Stakeholders expressed urgent concerns about the need for consistent processes, transparent decision-making, and equitable resource distribution to rebuild trust and support learning across the system.

Directives

- Implement a predictable budgeting model that provides every school with a per-pupil allocation to ensure that essential supplies are available to meet each learner’s needs.
- Develop an audit preparation calendar that lists every required document, deadline, responsible staff member, and completion date while following the auditor’s minimum readiness requirements and sharing the finalized calendar with the Board of Education and all system-level leadership.

| Growth in Learning | | Rating |
|------------------------------|--|--------|
| Standard Number 24 | Cognia Performance Standard Leaders use data and input from a variety of sources to make decisions for learners’ and staff members’ growth and well-being. | 1 |
| Standard Number 26 | Cognia Performance Standard Leaders regularly evaluate instructional programs and organizational conditions to improve instruction and advance learning. | 1 |

Improvement Priority

- **Develop, implement, and monitor a system-wide, data-informed decision-making system that ensures transparent stakeholder engagement, aligns resources to student learning needs, and evaluates organizational and instructional effectiveness with consistency and fidelity.**

The review revealed significant and longstanding challenges in data use, stakeholder engagement, and the evaluation of both organizational conditions and instructional programs. While the current interim system-level leadership has begun implementing more structured, data-informed practices, the system’s historical decision-making processes have often been subjective, fragmented, and disconnected from students’ academic and well-being needs. These systemic weaknesses became most visible during the implementation of the 2025–2026 Deficit Reduction Plans, where the absence of data-driven structures, combined with limited stakeholder involvement, led to decisions that undermined instructional quality, staff morale, and public trust. This narrative outlines the district’s historical patterns, specific consequences of those practices, and early steps now underway to restore effective and responsible system-level leadership.

When the system faced a \$13 million deficit, the Deficit Reduction Plan process was not driven by information on student learning needs. Rather than analyzing academic data to protect essential instructional support, principals were asked to decide whom they could do without, leading to the loss of reading interventionists, academic coaches, and the mental health director. Principals admitted the selection process came down to asking, "Who could I do without?" Stakeholders described how only principals and central office administrators were consulted. Teachers, parents, and community members were given no opportunity to provide feedback. Community representatives noted that although opportunities for input were presented, they perceived that their feedback was not reflected in subsequent decisions. This lack of inclusive decision-making contributed to deeply harmful notification procedures for employees who lost their jobs. Staff learned about their termination through text messages, social media posts, rumors, or interruptions during instruction

with students present. The remaining employees described morale as level one and reported being in daily survival mode. The absence of data-driven, inclusive decision-making caused lasting harm to students and staff, dismantling critical instructional support, eroding trust, and leaving the system with significant damage to morale and organizational stability.

System and school leaders struggled to evaluate both organizational conditions and instructional programs. The system failed to monitor trends in financial and staffing data, leading to administrative bloat, a deficit, and staff lacking appropriate certification. These conditions contributed to a sudden midyear reduction in force, which resulted in increased class sizes and the elimination of several intervention and coaching positions. Interim system-level leadership is now attempting to correct these failures by reviewing organizational data more carefully. In terms of instructional effectiveness, some school-based teams demonstrate strong data-analysis habits. Principals report weekly on Thursday data digs that include item analysis, evaluation of reteaching strategies, and adjustments to instruction through flexible grouping. At least one school purchased WriteScore after Georgia Milestones Assessment System data showed that writing was an area in need of improvement. However, teachers described frustration with the system's inconsistent evaluation of broader instructional programs. They noted that system-level leadership continues to maintain specialized offerings such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) program even when enrollment drops to one or two students per class. The interim superintendent also questioned whether these supplemental programs have any measurable impact. Financial instability has further weakened the system's ability to evaluate instruction. These findings point to a pressing need for consistent, systemwide evaluation practices that connect financial oversight with instructional decision-making. Until leadership establishes stable processes for monitoring data and program impact, improvement efforts are likely to remain uneven and reactive.

Although system-level leadership stated that Quality Basic Education (QBE) allotment sheets were used to determine the number of staff reductions necessary, the decisions about which positions to eliminate were not driven by academic or non-academic data. Instead of relying on student performance metrics, formal needs assessments, or rigorous employee evaluations, building leaders described the reduction process as a subjective, collaborative decision based simply on asking, "Who could I do without?" Consequently, stakeholders observed that specific position eliminations were heavily influenced by baseline certification status and personal favoritism rather than a strategic analysis of what would best protect student learning and essential support. The system was unable to demonstrate the use of performance data to guide personnel decisions that safeguard essential roles supporting student learning and well-being. As a result, principals relied primarily on subjective judgments when determining which staff positions could be eliminated, rather than on an analysis of performance information aligned to system priorities. Employees reported concerns that reduction-in-force decisions were not consistently grounded in documented performance data and that the criteria used were not clearly communicated or understood. The district also ignored stakeholder feedback in the process. When the community representatives were asked if the leaders genuinely seek and use community input, a community representative explicitly stated, "I think they hear the community-but they do not listen to the community." LSGT members, teachers, and parents were excluded entirely from discussions about staffing reductions. These decisions were concentrated among a few central administrators and principals. Stakeholders noted that financial and political considerations overshadowed academic priorities. According to stakeholder interviews, "top-heavy" administrative roles were preserved while classroom teachers, arts staff, custodians, and intervention specialists were eliminated. These staffing decisions reinforced stakeholder perceptions that financial and political considerations outweighed documented student learning needs. The staffing reduction process lacked transparency, rigor, and an academic focus. Teachers described the notification process as abrupt and disruptive, reporting that, in some cases, notification occurred during the instructional day with students present. Teachers stated they "get news at the same time the public does" and noted there was "very limited district communication." Furthermore, high school students explicitly stated there was "no communication to students or parents of the teachers leaving" and that they relied on "rumors-word of mouth." Decisions reflect financial convenience and personal preference rather than a deliberate effort to protect student learning and essential support. For example, during interviews, parents observed that cost cutting spared leadership while harming classrooms, stating that teachers "took the hit," leaving students to pay the price.

During interviews, staff expressed concern about the status of the Read 180 program and reported that its loss negatively affected struggling readers. Read 180 is a research-based, blended reading intervention designed for students reading below grade level, typically two or more years behind, and provides systematic instruction through teacher-led lessons, adaptive technology, and independent reading. The Cognia Regional Accreditation Evaluator emailed the system-level leadership on March 4, 2026, to request more information about the Read 180 program. However, the system leader did not respond to the requests. The questions included whether the program was renewed, used in any schools, overseen by assigned staff, or replaced by another intervention. In addition to Read 180, Amira remains widely used across the system. Amira is an artificial intelligence–driven literacy platform that listens to students read aloud, assesses oral reading fluency and foundational skills, and delivers individualized, real-time feedback and practice aligned to the science of reading. The evidence suggests that while multiple instructional tools are in use, inconsistent implementation, resource limitations, and lack of oversight reduce their overall effectiveness. Greater coherence and accountability are needed to ensure interventions address documented areas of student need.

The system continues to face significant operational and organizational instability that has eroded confidence among staff, families, and the broader community. Sustained improvement will depend on the intentional and consistent use of data to guide decision-making, transparent and proactive communication across all stakeholder groups, and a renewed commitment to systematically evaluating organizational conditions and instructional programs with fidelity. By prioritizing these actions and maintaining a clear focus on coherence, accountability, and continuous improvement, the institution will be better positioned to restore trust, strengthen effectiveness, and ensure long-term stability and student success.

Directives

- Implement and maintain a system that provides leaders with consistent academic, financial, staffing, and program evaluation data and ensures this information is used to guide decisions that support student and staff growth.
- Develop, implement, and monitor a systemwide evaluation process that identifies all instructional and intervention programs in use, assigns responsibilities for monitoring them, and sets criteria to evaluate alignment, fidelity of implementation, effectiveness, and decisions to continue, modify, or discontinue each program.

Insights from the Review

The Monitoring Review Team conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the school system, encompassing governance and board operations, district facilities, instructional practices, and student performance and outcomes. This multifaceted review was designed to provide a holistic understanding of system effectiveness, organizational coherence, and the conditions supporting student success.

As part of the review process, team members engaged in extensive information gathering through multiple methods. These included structured and informal interviews with a wide range of stakeholders; on-site visits to each district school; detailed reviews of district documents, policies, and instructional and operational artifacts; attendance at a regularly scheduled board meeting; and analysis of relevant articles and media reports. In addition, the Monitoring Review Team conducted classroom observations and held formal interviews with teachers, school and system-level leadership, students, board members, system-level staff, representatives from the GaDOE, and the state-assigned special advisor. Collectively, these activities provided a robust and representative picture of district practices and stakeholder perspectives.

The Monitoring Review Team observed a community that demonstrates a strong commitment to its schools and to the success of all students. Parents, students, and community members consistently expressed pride in their affiliation with the district and articulated a shared desire to collaborate in support of improvement efforts. During school visits, teachers and principals displayed a deep sense of dedication to their students and a sustained focus on instructional quality, amid the challenges experienced during the year. Many schools were noted for effective communication practices, meaningful family engagement, and staff members who consistently exceed expectations to support students' academic, social, and emotional needs, as well as the professional needs of their colleagues.

The review further identified initial steps taken by interim system-level leadership to enhance transparency, strengthen financial controls, and align staffing practices with state requirements. Although these actions remain in early stages, they reflect an intentional effort to establish clearer processes, reinforce compliance, and improve organizational accountability. Stakeholders acknowledged these efforts and frequently conveyed optimism that the establishment of consistent structures and procedures will contribute to rebuilding trust across the district over time.

At the same time, the Monitoring Review Team identified several areas requiring continued attention and system-level strengthening. Stakeholders expressed ongoing concerns related to the clarity and consistency of communication, financial resources, transparency in decision-making processes, and consistency in governance practices. Many stakeholders articulated a need for more predictable and timely system-level updates, clearer rationales for key decisions, and expanded opportunities for staff and families to engage meaningfully in shaping district priorities and solutions.

Overall, the system possesses significant strengths rooted in its people, relationships, and shared commitment to student success. By intentionally building upon these foundations and addressing the systemic challenges identified in this review, Dublin City School System is positioned to establish sustainable practices that promote continuous improvement, restore confidence among stakeholders, and support positive outcomes for all learners.

Next Steps

Upon receiving the Monitoring Review Report, the system is encouraged and/or required to implement the following steps:

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Review the findings and develop strategies to address each Directive within the noted Improvement Priorities for the system:
 - Develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive stakeholder engagement framework that strengthens communication, solicits meaningful input, enhances financial transparency, empowers school-level governance, and rebuilds confidence in system-level leadership.
 - Establish and implement consistent governance practices that strengthen transparency, ensure accurate public notices and complete documentation, reinforce fiscal oversight, and support charter system compliance to improve decision-making that prioritizes learners.
 - Implement, monitor, and adjust a unified leadership system that builds leaders' expertise in recruiting, supervising, and evaluating professional staff to strengthen instructional quality.
 - Develop, implement, and assess unified systems that ensure consistent operating procedures across all academic, operational, and governance environments.
 - Develop, implement, and monitor a transparent and equitable resource allocation system that ensures fair staffing, consistent transportation practices, timely financial controls, and adequate operational and instructional support across all schools.
 - Develop, implement, and monitor a system-wide, data-informed decision-making system that ensures transparent stakeholder engagement, aligns resources to student learning needs, and evaluates organizational and instructional effectiveness with consistency and fidelity.
- Provide Cognia with official written notification regarding the information within the cover letter to the system due to the Monitoring Review Team's recommendation to change the Dublin City Schools System's accreditation status from **Accredited** to **Accredited Under Conditions** to the Cognia Global Commission. The team's recommendation was ratified by the Commission on April 10, 2026.