



T.R. Jackson Pre-K Center

Milton, Florida

February 14 - 16, 2022

Early Learning Accreditation Engagement Review

202688

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Cognia Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal in leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research-based standards, the Cognia Accreditation Process examines the whole school—the program, the cultural context, and the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of learners. Through the accreditation process, highly skilled and trained Engagement Review Teams gather first-hand evidence and information pertinent to evaluating an early learning program's performance against the research-based Cognia Performance Standards. Review teams use these Standards to assess the quality of learning environments to gain valuable insights and target improvements in young children's learning, growth and development, and the school's organizational effectiveness. Cognia provides Standards that are tailored for all education providers so that the benefits of accreditation are universal across the education community.

Through a comprehensive review of evidence and information, our experts gain a broad understanding of school quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to schools that helps to focus and guide each school's improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders also are obtained through interviews, surveys, and additional activities.

The Cognia Engagement Review Team used the Cognia Standards for Quality Early Learning Schools, Indicators, and related Criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards but also for how the school functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality. Using the evidence at their disposal, the Engagement Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report.

Definition of Standards, Indicators, and Criteria

The five *Cognia Standards for Quality* are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve organizational effectiveness and quality student performance results. The Indicators are operational definitions or descriptions of exemplary practices and processes. When seen together, the Indicators provide a comprehensive picture of each Standard. Each Indicator is supported by Criteria that outline how a school meets and operationalizes the Indicator. This information also leads to specific areas of strength and opportunity.

Use of Diagnostic Tools

In preparation for the Engagement Review, the school conducted a self-assessment that applied the Standards and Criteria for accreditation. The school provided evidence to support its conclusions about organizational effectiveness in ensuring high-quality learning environments that support the learning, growth, and development of young children, as well as continuous improvement in organizational effectiveness. The Engagement Review Team's findings and critical observations are shared in this report through the description of overall themes that emerged and the identification of Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities. These tools informed each Criteria rating as Met or Not Met.

Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results

The Engagement Review Teams uses the Cognia Standards Diagnostic to evaluate the institution's effectiveness based on Cognia's Quality Standards. The team's final ratings are available in the Standards Diagnostic for Early Learning Schools as an accompanying PDF file in Workspace.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The Cognia Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic, fully integrated solution to help schools map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every school must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. Cognia expects schools to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components so that the implementation of improvement actions drives education quality and improved outcomes for children's learning, growth, and development. Cognia identifies three important components of a continuous improvement process and provides feedback on the components using a rubric to guide the improvement journey. Ratings for these components include data collection and data quality; data analysis and data application; and improvement capacity and improvement evidence. The table below is applied to determine the final Rating for each criterion.

Color	Rating
Red	Insufficient
Yellow	Initiating
Green	Improving
Blue	Impacting

While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key components rated in the Commitment to Continuous Improvement table as follows:

Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Rating
The institution has collected sufficient and quality data to identify school improvement needs.	Impacting
Implications from the analysis of data have been identified and used for the development of key strategic goals.	Improving
The institution demonstrates the capacity to implement their continuous improvement journey.	Improving

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

The principal and leadership staff of T.R. Jackson Pre-K Center in Milton, Florida, support the concept and practice of continuous improvement and are committed to the process of collecting data and relevant information to support their school improvement targeted goals. Their school improvement process includes several required documents from the Improvement Plan of the State of Florida, Santa Rosa County District, and most importantly, the Head Start Continuation Grant. The director of T.R. Jackson Pre-K Center shared the Head Start Continuation Grant, which includes a five-year plan of targeted goals, action steps, data and tools, expected outcomes, and expected challenges specific to their school. Its focus is on phonological awareness and providing resources and education to parents. The extensive Head Start grant aligns with the school's mission and vision statements of the school district and T.R. Jackson Pre-K Center. The school's mission is to prepare students through a comprehensive program and provide opportunities for parents to grow with their children.

The Santa Rosa County District School Improvement Plan creates the basis of the school's continuous improvement efforts and is organized around five areas of improvement: Early Literacy, Early Math, Attendance, Parent Involvement, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics). Each of these improvement goals includes a detailed plan for professional development, complete with proposed dates, follow-up strategies, and monitoring. The plan was drafted by the School Advisory Council that included the principal and leadership team.

The school has aligned sufficient human, fiscal, and material resources to support its continuous improvement process. School policies and practices are optimized and coordinated to support improvement priorities, and monitoring processes are in place to document and enhance efforts. All stakeholders demonstrate a strong commitment to the ongoing improvement process. The school is held accountable to Head Start policies and procedures, as well as the Santa Rosa County District Schools policies. Santa Rosa County Schools Head Start Program's Early Learning Outcomes Framework aligns readiness goals to the curriculum, assessment system, and State Early Standards, complete with action strategies and timelines.

Most impressive about the school and its improvement journey is the commitment on the part of all of the stakeholders and their involvement with providing necessary resources for all of their families, making them true partners in their children's education. The School Advisory Council and Policy Council is made up of over half of the parents of currently enrolled children and is involved in the school improvement planning of the school. Another organization, the Head Start Parent Committee, is coordinated by one of the school's assigned family advocates and is a "voice" for the parents at the school. It makes recommendations on what parent trainings are needed and makes suggestions to the Policy Council for the overall improvement of the school. Because of this strong commitment and organizational structure of the school committees involving administration, parents, teachers, and staff, the school has the capacity to reach and exceed its goals for the students and the school.

Results from the Environmental Rating for Early Learning (erel™)

All children should have access to a high-quality early childhood environment in which they have multiple opportunities to be successful. The purpose of this tool is to identify and document observable evidence of essential environmental requirements that are conducive to the health, safety, and education of young children.

Observations of classrooms or other learning environments are conducted for a minimum of 30 minutes per observation. Every Engagement Review Team member is required to receive training on how to conduct observations using erel. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 60 items based on a four-point scale (4 = very evident; 3 = evident; 2 = somewhat evident; and 1 = not observed). The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the four environmental domains included in erel™.

Total Number of erel™ Observations	8
Environment	School Score
Supportive Interactions - Children	3.67
Supportive Interactions - Adults	3.04
Intentional Learning - Children	3.51
Intentional Learning - Adults	3.42
Positive Guidance - Children	3.46
Positive Guidance - Adults	3.35
Safe and Healthy - Children	2.83
Safe and Healthy - Adults	1.65
erel™ Total	3.12

Number of Requirements for Safe Environments rated as YES for the school	9
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erel Observations Narrative

A total of eight observations were conducted, representing an observation of every age group in the school. The age groups range is from Early Head Start of two-year-olds to Head Start of three- to four-year-olds. The observations were conducted virtually and pre-recorded, managed, and facilitated by the campus staff. All observations were performed under optimal circumstances, with teachers and students going about their usual routines and scheduled learning activities despite the curiosity of a video recorder. In all of the classrooms, children were actively engaged in learning using indicators arranged into four learning environments: Supportive Interactions, Intentional Learning, Positive Guidance, and Safe and Healthy. Each environment is divided into children and adult categories. In analyzing the data gathered through the observations, it is clear the school is providing an excellent

educational experience for all of the young children with overall scores of 3.0 and higher in all Domains except Safe and Healthy.

The Domain of Supportive Interactions Environment was determined to be the strength for the school. Children were encouraged to problem-solve situations and cooperatively interact with their peers as they worked with each other in different learning centers in small groups. Teachers were observed interacting with children using a caring, supportive demeanor, giving them support with different and varied tasks. An observation that demonstrated support and patience from the teacher was during a painting activity that began painting on paper and progressed to allowing students to paint on their hands to make handprints on the paper. The teacher watched and allowed her students to experiment with the paint, which included one student painting both sides of her hands and also her arm, despite the mess. It was evident through the observations that children were comfortable in their classroom environment and not afraid to take risks. All verbal interactions observed between children and their teachers were positive, gentle, and supportive.

The Intentional Learning Environment was determined to be another area of strength observed. Children were actively engaged in meaningful and purposeful activities. Children were given many opportunities to interact with their peers and teachers in small group, independent, and large group settings. Students were enthusiastically involved in planned activities such as building blocks, painting, writing, and participating in a hands-on science experiment. Teachers were observed modeling and encouraging active participation. On several occasions, teachers were observed on the floor with their children initiating purposeful conversations about the activity they were working on. Teachers encouraged children to use academic vocabulary and language to emphasize the importance of their “work.”

In all of the classrooms observed, students demonstrated they understood learning and behavioral expectations. The Domain of Positive Guidance was evident and a strong indicator of positive reinforcement and establishment of rules and routines. Children were observed getting along, sharing materials, listening to their teachers, and taking turns. Teachers often acted as facilitators, allowing children to problem-solve situations regarding social skills, and intervened only when necessary. All interactions and redirections regarding behavior were gentle and positive. A wide variety of materials were available and organized in centers ready for students to explore. Students were observed smoothly transitioning from large group to small group with little or no redirection from their teacher.

In the Safe and Healthy Environment Domain, the scores were significantly lower. However, all requirements for Safe Environments were met. There is no cause of concern in this environment and is not a reflection on the school staff or procedures. The relatively low score is a function of the limitations of pre-recorded virtual observations where there were limited opportunities to witness handwashing and individual personal care routines.

Overall, the scores in all of the learning environments are very good. This is a strong indication that all rules and regulations are implemented with care and fidelity. The teachers are providing their children with a quality pre-school program and implementing a strong curriculum in the classroom settings.

Early Learning Assurances

Assurances are statements that accredited institutions must confirm they are meeting. The Assurance statements are based on the type of institution, and the responses are confirmed by the Accreditation Engagement Review Team. Institutions are expected to meet all Assurances and are expected to correct any deficiencies in unmet Assurances.

Assurances Met		
YES	NO	If No, List Unmet Assurances by Number Below
X		

Findings

Powerful Practices

Powerful Practices reflect noteworthy observations and actions that have yielded clear results in children's learning, growth, and development or the school's organizational effectiveness and are actions that exceed what is typically observed or expected in a school.

Powerful Practice Statement #1: The school fosters and embraces a “welcoming” and positive climate where two-way communication is a priority resulting in a culture of true community and collaboration between all stakeholders of the school.

Evidence: During interviews, parents enthusiastically shared their experiences of having their children enrolled at T.R. Jackson and communicated that one of the greatest strengths of the school was communication and the welcoming family atmosphere. Parent conferences were a positive way to connect with the school, and teachers were always willing to go above and beyond to help them with any materials they needed at home to help reinforce skills taught at school. Many parents commented that concerns were quickly resolved, and all staff members were attentive to help with any needs they might have. Parents indicated that they felt comfortable leaving their children in a nurturing, caring environment with the school always responsive to their needs. The school motto indicated on the Staff Handbook, “We are here to make good things happen for other people...Be the One!” supports its commitment to taking care of its children and families. When interviewing the principal about what made their school so special, she quickly chanted a cheer, “TRJ!!! Where we are HAPPY all DAY!!!” The principal commented that one of the strengths of the school was, “Here, you feel a sense of love. We want everyone to feel good about themselves, and we all work well together.” During the interviews with teachers, they also commented that the school was “family” with so much support given to all. The “environment” was one of love and commitment from all stakeholders.

Link to Criteria: 1.01.001, 2.02.001, 3.06.001, 4.17.002

Powerful Practice Statement #2: School leaders are committed to the growth and development of all staff members by providing them with opportunities for continued and ongoing professional development, including coaching and instructional support.

Evidence: Interviews with leadership and teachers revealed that professional development was a priority and tied directly to their identified goals on continuous improvement. The principal stated that professional development opportunities, due to \$36,908 dedicated out of a portion of the Head Start Grant, have enabled the school to have quality training throughout the year for their teachers and parents. The school was recently able to hire a curriculum coach with the primary responsibility of supporting teachers and curriculum needs. The principal stated, “All trainings allow us to bring awareness, promote learning communities, and enrich all staff which in turn enables us to provide a high-quality program that enriches the lives of the children and families we serve.” The principal also commented that the school pays its staff to attend staff development. The school improvement planning involves the identification of goals with specific professional development tied to each goal area. In addition, there are many organizational systems and teams embedded in the school to provide ongoing support and professional development for staff. There are ongoing opportunities for teachers to plan, collaborate, and reflect on individual student progress, build community, and maintain a strong instructional program.

Link to Criteria: 3.03.001, 3.08.010, 4.02.002

Powerful Practice Statement #3: The school’s leadership team has created and implemented a strong, systematic process to review student data and deliver and track specific interventions to meet the needs of individual learners, including documentation to help identify children who may have a possible disability and need further testing and support.

Evidence: The principal shared that this process is something she is very proud of, and there is a great support team in place to help provide support for teachers who have concerns for specific children not making the expected progress they should despite interventions. One of the goals of the school is to keep disabled and non-disabled children learning together in the same classroom environment and at the same time provide needed support for the classroom teachers. The MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) leadership team meets every Tuesday to review and recommend students in need of classroom and learning interventions. Through this process, teachers are given intervention strategies via a brainstorming approach after a thorough discussion of the child. Assessment data are used to determine what is best for each individual child. Further observation and testing may result from these meetings with more services given to a child if warranted. During interviews with teachers, they stated this is one process that is very supportive of what they do.

Link to Criteria: 4.13.001, 3.02.001, 3.03.001, 3.02.002, 3.02.010

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement are actions that will guide and direct schools to specific areas that are worthy of additional attention.

Opportunity for Improvement Statement #1: Utilize community resources and investigate ways to provide both in-house field trips and outside-of-school field trips to enhance the curriculum and provide children with opportunities to explore their world outside of the classroom environment.

Evidence: Due to COVID concerns, the school has been limited on providing field trips outside of the school environment, but the leadership team acknowledged the importance of providing these meaningful experiences for their children and has begun plans to resume field trips as soon as possible. During stakeholder interviews, teachers shared that this was a practice that has a huge impact on the children

they teach and would like to see field trips return. The principal shared that there is money already set aside in the budget to spend on field trips.

Link to Criteria: 4.16.010, 4.16.011, 5.01.003

Improvement Priorities

Improvement priorities are developed to enhance the school's capacity to reach a higher level of performance and reflect the areas that the Engagement Review Team identified as having the greatest impact on improving children's learning, growth and development and the school's organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority Statement #1: Explore community resources and create opportunities to promote and educate reluctant parents to become knowledgeable of the Head Start program and application process at T.R. Jackson Pre-K Center.

Evidence: During stakeholder interviews, parents expressed concern that other families may not be aware of the Head Start program and, because of their positive experiences with the school, would like other families to have the same opportunities as they have. The parents were so complimentary of the school and stated specifics about how important early intervention has been for their children. Many of the parents said that they found out through "word of mouth," but some families may not have those connections. In speaking with the principal, it is evident that despite efforts of advertising, she acknowledges there are families who continue to be uneducated about the Head Start program and often do not have the resources to complete the application process online. The school has, in many cases, invited parents to come to school where there is a team of professionals to help them enroll their children. The school acknowledges this is an ongoing goal to reach all families and create an awareness of the Head Start program and how it can benefit their children. Parents and teachers expressed a concern that transportation getting to and from school may also prevent families from enrolling their children. In the Santa Rosa Head Start Continuation Grant, the program facilitates ongoing recruitment opportunities via email communications, recruitment flyers, postcards, brochures, LEA, social media, interagency meetings, and community events. T.R. Jackson serves one of the areas with the highest percentage of poverty, identifying this area as one with the neediest families.

Link to Criteria: 4.16.005, 4.16.007, 4.16.009

Improvement Priority Statement #2: Increase attendance percentage for all students by monitoring attendance reports, educating parents on the importance of regular attendance, and implementing specific strategies with incentives for parents to get their children to school on time each day.

Evidence: This is a goal written in the school improvement plan, which identifies obstacles getting in the way of achieving this goal, such as linking lack of understanding of the importance of attendance with the poverty level of parents and the lack of reliable transportation. Stated as one of the Head Start Performance Standards as a strategy is to call parents within the hour when a student is absent from school. The principal shared that at one time, the school had transportation available for parents, but this was discontinued due to the expense and safety concerns of small children on a bus. In the past, staff personnel was assigned to ride the school buses, which also proved to be difficult. As an alternative, the school is willing to help parents find neighbors for possible carpooling to school. Parents and teachers

indicated during interviews that lack of transportation might be a contributing factor to attendance and tardy issues. In addition, COVID issues have impacted the school's attendance and tardy numbers this year.

Link to Criteria: 1.01.001, 3.06.001, 3.06.003, 3.06.010

Insights from the Review

The Engagement Review Team identified key themes and findings from the review. This narrative identifies major observations that identify strengths or promising practices, as well as themes for improvement that may not be directly addressed in a finding.

In reviewing Cognia's Standards and Criteria for Early Learning as well as supporting artifacts, documentation, and evidence, the Engagement Review Team (team) was in agreement with all of the school's self-assessment scores. The high expectations and intense monitoring of both Head Start and the Santa Rosa School District, along with the hands-on daily support in place at the school, impact the school's ability to successfully meet Cognia's Early Learning Criteria. Completing this assessment review of the school, T.R. Jackson Early Learning Center is an excellent school whose operational and instructional effectiveness is synonymous with its vision and mission.

The school maintains a strong, enthusiastic, and dedicated teaching and administrative staff who are committed to the school, not only to delivering quality instruction for their students but going above and beyond to provide support and services to all of the families they serve.

Stakeholder interviews were positive without exception. Specific examples were shared by parents stating how the school had supported their needs ranging from help with potty-training strategies to meeting basic needs such as food and clothing. They stated on numerous occasions how they wish more students could be reached and share the same positive experience they have had with the school. The parents described their experience as "The Best School In The World." During the interview with staff, one teacher said that she drives over 30 minutes each day to work at the school because of the environment and the support provided to help her teach. In interviewing the principal, she explained that each classroom is assigned an advocate who participates in parent/teacher conferences and works with families to identify any concerns or needs they may be experiencing. School leadership provided a preponderance of evidence that commitment to the mission of the school is shared by both staff and parents. The school is encouraged to continue to seek out opportunities for parent engagement and education to support their children in their learning.

Communication among and between all stakeholders is pervasive. During the interviews, teachers discussed the support they receive from administrative staff and the programs that are in place organized to encourage collaboration with each other. The teachers shared that they feel confident in their delivery of instruction and are empowered to adjust lessons based on the individual needs of their students. Teachers also stated the support given to them from the MTSS process and felt comfortable coming to this committee with any concerns they had with any of their children. Parents unanimously spoke highly of the communication with and from teachers and the administrative staff, noting that it was easy to get any issues or concerns resolved quickly. They commented that all concerns were "welcomed" by all at the campus. One parent shared that the staff was always willing to share and give them tools because they really wanted to know what they could do to help. The parent/teacher conferences have provided tremendous support for parents. One parent stated that if it weren't for the meeting with her child's teacher, she would not have realized that her child had a fine motor delay. By the end of the day, the parent had all kinds of tools to help her strengthen her child's struggle with fine

motor. The principal shared that the process of parents bringing and dropping off their children at school has improved and allowed for continuous and improved communication between home and school. The leadership team is encouraged to promote parent involvement and create opportunities to develop strong family and school connections.

The school's leadership demonstrates a commitment to the continuous improvement process.

The school improvement plan consists of several documents and is detailed with goals well stated in addition to a connection with professional development. Providing a high-quality education for children along with educating parents in the process is the highest priority of the school. This is evidenced by indicators documented as "Met" in the analysis of both the internal and external standard assessments. As written in the school's improvement plan, the school should continue to educate and plan family literacy opportunities to promote reading.

Children's growth and development are supported by a research-informed early childhood curriculum, and the school is well-equipped with indoor and outdoor learning spaces that are safe, secure, and attractive. The Head Start Program's Early Learning Outcomes Framework Readiness Goals is the primary focus of the curriculum tied to the Frog Street Curriculum Learning Goals and the Galileo Assessment to track progress with academics as well as social-emotional progress. The staff behaviors and the strong curriculum, Frog Street, and an additional program added this year, Haggerty Phonics, demonstrate the school's commitment to consistently implementing a quality program of established early learning best practices in the areas of social, emotional, physical, linguistic and cognitive development. The "Wish You Well" activity was observed in many of the classrooms, and the principal stated that the parents love this activity because when their children are absent from school, they have told their parents that they will be missed. This component of the curriculum reinforces positive discipline and is a daily activity. Remote observations completed as part of the Early Learning Review produced evidence of strong and frequent connections to early literacy and numeracy concepts in all of the classrooms. Purposeful stations were set up in all of the classrooms with hands-on activities for children. Teachers were observed sitting in centers with their students, engaging in meaningful conversations about what they were learning. The classrooms were organized and rich with colorful displays, including children's work. Leaders are encouraged to provide training and support for the STEAM Lab and outdoor classroom activities to strengthen learning experiences for children.

The Early Learning Review revealed teachers, leaders, and parents demonstrating an unwavering commitment to the school's children, continuous improvement, and professional growth. As such, the team is highly confident that leaders, staff, and stakeholders will use these review findings and insights to enhance their capacity to provide high-quality early learning experiences for all children.

Accreditation Requirements

To ensure the early learning school meets requirements for accreditation, the Engagement Review Team must confirm the following for the early learning school:

- All nine Required Criteria were rated as Met.
- A minimum of 80 percent of the total Criteria were rated as Met (76 or fewer Criteria were rated as Not Met).
- A minimum of 80 percent of the Criteria specific to the age groups of Infants, Toddlers, and Kindergarten were rated as Met.

Were ALL Required Criteria Met					
YES	NO				
X		Criteria Met =	376/378	99.47%	
		Infant Criteria Met =			X N/A (school does not serve Infants)
		Toddler Criteria Met =	18/19	94.74 %	N/A (school does not serve Toddlers)
		Kindergarten Criteria Met =			X N/A (school does not serve Kindergarten)

Next Steps

The results of the Engagement Review provide the next step to guide the school's improvement journey to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve young children's learning, growth, and development, and the school's organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the school in reflecting on their current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

- Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report, the school is encouraged to implement the following steps:
- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the Engagement Review Team.
Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the school's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report.
- Continue the Improvement Journey.

Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams comprise professionals with varied backgrounds and professional experiences. All Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members complete Cognia training to provide knowledge and understanding of the Cognia tools and processes. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography (Lead Evaluator Only)
Sandi Killo, Lead Evaluator	Sandi Killo is a retired public school administrator in the Texas school system. Her positions include classroom teacher, instructional specialist, and elementary and middle school administrator. Most recently, Mrs. Killo has been working as a principal “coach” for several private schools in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. In addition, Mrs. Killo has served as a Cognia Lead Evaluator, Associate Lead Evaluator, and team member for several Early Learning School Accreditation reviews. Mrs. Killo is a graduate of the University of Texas in Austin and holds a master’s degree in educational mid-management from the University of Texas in San Antonio.

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