



Barnwell School District 45

Innovation – Integrity – Investment – Community

CONTACT:

Crissie Stapleton
Superintendent, BSD45
803-541-1300
Warhorses@bsd45.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Barnwell School District 45 Achieves High Scores from Cognia Accreditation Team

Barnwell, S.C. {April 25, 2022} – Barnwell School District 45 was recently recommended for Cognia accreditation based upon findings of an External Review Team (ERT) who evaluated the district in November of 2021. Cognia is a non-profit organization that accredits primary and secondary schools throughout the United States and internationally. Cognia was formed from the merger of AdvancED (formerly Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – SACS) and Measured Progress in 2019. Cognia nationally recognizes school systems that meet rigorous standards focused on productive learning environments, equitable resource allocation that meets the needs of learners, and effective leadership. Earning accreditation from the Cognia Global Accreditation Commission means that the school district is recognized across the nation as a school district that meets Cognia Standards of Quality and maintains a commitment to continuous improvement.

With COVID-19 restrictions, the five-member team virtually visited the district November 1st through 4th. During that time, the team conducted 133 interviews with stakeholders, including board members, district administrators, school administrators, professional staff, parents, community/business partners, and students. During the review, the evaluators gathered first-hand information to serve as evidence for the district's performance in regard to the Cognia Performance Standards by interviewing internal and external stakeholder groups, reviewing documentation provided by the district and school Cognia teams, and analyzing performance data and survey data to gain insights about teaching and learning.

Cognia provides an Index of Education Quality (IEQ), which is a holistic measure of overall performance based on the comprehensive set of Cognia standards and review criteria. The IEQ is based on ratings which are divided into three domains: Leadership Capacity, Learning Capacity, and Resource Capacity. The IEQ ranges from 100 to 400 points, and the average IEQ over the past five years in the Cognia Improvement Network ranged from 278.34 – 283.33 points. Barnwell School District 45 was proud to significantly exceed that average range with an overall IEQ of 340.48 points. The district rated at the highest possible level in over half of the performance standards covered across the three domains.

When evaluating the district, the evaluators identified themes which were recognized in these outstanding results, and these included an alignment to mission and vision, two-way stakeholder

communications, staff support and professional collaboration, and use of data in data-driven decisions. The lead evaluator commended BSD45 on strong governance and leadership and spoke greatly of the sense of community that they said was highly evident across the schools.

The evaluators recognized “the stability and knowledge of the current board of education with their knowledge of current practices and expectations” and believe this has resulted in successful board operations, interactions, and effectiveness. The review team also commended the district and its schools for actively engaging in effective processes to provide information and collect feedback from internal and external stakeholders to guide the decision-making process. The team evaluator noted that the district maintains a clear, consistent, and two-way outreach to effectively engage stakeholders in the achievement of the established purpose and desired outcomes for learning. Team members who conducted interviews shared that they repeatedly heard comments from internal and external stakeholders applauding the value placed on their input and the varied opportunities provided for their voice in decision-making. Specific examples included, but were not limited to, the District Advisory Council made of community members, parents, and business leaders, as well as the District Teacher Advisory Council, School Improvement Councils at each school, and several open forums and meetings in which stakeholders are invited to participate in district plans.

The evaluators also commended the district for “effectively implementing standardized formal and informal evaluation methods to monitor instructional and organizational practices, provide programs of support to maximize the potential of each staff member, and to strive to maintain a qualified and engaged staff.” The evaluator noted that there was “powerful evidence of the efficacy of BSD45 hiring and retention practices” including sharing stories of staff members who had left but wanted to return to work in BSD45 and others who said they joined the BSD45 team because of the great things they heard about the district. According to the final report, Cognia evaluators concluded, “The district has effectively developed and communicated a mission and vision that drives all aspects of the organization, provides the foundation for strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, as well as operational and instructional practices promoting continuous improvement.”

At the conclusion of a Cognia review, the team provides feedback to the district that helps guide the ongoing improvement journey. In some reviews, there are required steps for improvement and continued accreditation status; however, the team did not determine any such areas for BSD45. The final notes provided to the district were to reinforce “the many positive practices which make the district unique, track data on improvement efforts to measure impact on student learning and success over time, and celebrate the district’s positive traits highlighted here giving accolades to all those who engaged in stakeholder interviews.”

Overall, BSD45 leaders applaud the staff members for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to the continuous improvement journey. BSD45 celebrates the successes noted in the report and will continue their intentional efforts toward sustaining the district’s improvement journey.

BSD45 Superintendent Crissie Stapleton commended the staff, “I have said many times that our people are our greatest resource in Barnwell School District 45. I am honored to work alongside our Board of Trustees and our staff members and am in awe of their commitment and dedication. I could never

acknowledge this success without applauding our community, as well. Our strong business and community partnerships, as well as supportive families, allow our schools and district to be successful. To receive this rating and to be reminded of the wonderful things happening across our district from an unbiased external review team, this confirms what great things are happening across Barnwell School District 45. This is the work of everyone fulfilling his or her role to make our district successful.”

BSD45 Board of Trustees all participated in the Cognia interviews as part of the external review. Chairperson Rosey Anderson, on behalf of the BSD45 Board of Trustees, echoed the praises the evaluators shared, “This accreditation demonstrates to our community our commitment to excellence, our openness to external review and feedback, and our desire to be the best we can be on behalf of the students we serve. We are so proud of all of our staff members working together and showing a dedication to our schools, our students, and our community.”