



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

Alabama  
State Board  
of Education

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Governor Kay Ivey  
President

## Alabama State Department of Education Recommended to Proceed with Cognia Accreditation

Jackie Zeigler  
District I

**Montgomery, Ala.** – The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) has been granted candidacy and officially recommended to proceed for full accreditation by Cognia, a global nonprofit organization recognized as the largest education accreditor in the world.

Tracie West  
District II

This distinction places Alabama in an elite group, and the only state in the southeast, to achieve this external validation. Alabama will proceed to the next level and anticipates achieving full accreditation during the 2026-27 school year. North Dakota is the only state that has earned Cognia accreditation and served as the model for program development in 2024. Once received, the Cognia SEA accreditation will signify that the ALSDE has met rigorous performance standards and has demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement, collaboration, and effective support for school systems across the state.

Kelly Mooney  
District III  
President Pro Tem

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.  
District IV

State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Eric Mackey said earning Cognia accreditation will be a significant milestone for the department and a reflection of the hard work taking place at the ALSDE and in schools all across Alabama.

Tonya S. Chestnut, Ed.D.  
District V

“This process challenged us to take a close look at how we operate and how we support our schools,” Mackey said. “We are committed to continuous improvement, and this recognition affirms that we are moving in the right direction to better serve our students, educators, and communities.”

Marie Manning  
District VI  
Vice President

The Cognia accreditation process evaluates the “whole” organization, including policies, programs, practices, learning conditions, and organizational culture. As part of the review, ALSDE demonstrated the capacity to meet Cognia’s performance standards and key competencies, designed to strengthen Alabama’s ability to support schools and districts in improving student outcomes.

Allen Long, M.D.  
District VII

Shanthia Washington, ALSDE Assistant State Superintendent over *Evaluation, Accountability, and Support*, said candidacy for Cognia accreditation speaks to the department’s goals and ability to achieve them.

Wayne Reynolds, Ed.D.  
District VIII

“We are honored that the candidacy review team has officially recommended us as a candidate for State Education Agency (SEA) accreditation, marking a significant benchmark in our journey toward sustained excellence and continuous improvement,” Mrs. Washington said. “This process directly reinforces the *goals of Alabama Achieves, as we strive to fulfill our mission for Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day.*”

Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.  
Secretary and  
Executive Officer

—more—

*Recommended to Proceed with Cognia Accreditation*

Through the process, Cognia conducted a comprehensive evaluation that included a professional review team, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of evidence aligned to research-based standards. The resulting candidacy for accreditation affirms ALSDE's ongoing work to enhance efficiency, improve collaboration, and ensure high-quality educational opportunities for all students in Alabama.

Cognia has more than 130 years of experience in advancing educational quality and has expanded its accreditation services over time to include schools, school systems, and now state education agencies. They have worked in more than 40,000 schools / school systems and in more than 100 countries around the world. This accreditation pathway reflects a growing national focus on strengthening the role of state agencies in driving educational excellence.

Dr. Marcus Vandiver, ALSDE program coordinator for Accountability, said achieving candidacy through the Cognia SEA Accreditation Candidacy Review is something the department is really proud of.

"This a reflection of the wonderful people who show up every day and give their best for the children of Alabama. It means a lot to see that work recognized, and we're excited about what comes next," Vandiver said.

With this achievement, Alabama reinforces its commitment to accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in education, positioning the state to better serve students, educators, and communities now and in the future.

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