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School Accreditation Engagement Review 318971



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# Cognia Continuous Improvement System

Cognia defines continuous improvement as "an embedded behavior rooted in an institution's culture that constantly focuses on conditions, processes, and practices to improve teaching and learning." The Cognia Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic, fully integrated solution to help institutions 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 institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. Cognia expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions.

The findings of the Engagement Review Team are organized by the ratings from the Cognia Performance Standards Diagnostic and the Levels of Impact within the i3 Rubric: Initiate, Improve, and Impact.

#### Initiate

The first phase of the improvement journey is to **Initiate** actions to cause and achieve better results. The elements of the Initiate phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Engagement and Implementation. Engagement is the level of involvement and frequency of stakeholders in the desired practices, processes, or programs within the institution. Implementation is the process of monitoring and adjusting the administrations of the desired practices, processes, or programs for quality and fidelity. Standards identified within Initiate should become the focus of the institution's continuous improvement journey toward the collection, analysis, and use of data to measure the results of engagement and implementation. Enhancing the capacity of the institution in meeting these Standards has the greatest potential impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

#### **Improve**

The second phase of the improvement journey is to gather and evaluate the results of actions to Improve. The elements of the Improve phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Results and Sustainability. Results come from the collection, analysis, and use of data and evidence to demonstrate attaining the desired result(s). Sustainability is results achieved consistently to demonstrate growth and improvement over time (a minimum of three years). Standards identified within Improve are those in which the institution is using results to inform their continuous improvement processes and to demonstrate over time the achievement of goals. The institution should continue to analyze and use results to guide improvements in student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

#### **Impact**

The third phase of achieving improvement is Impact, where desired practices are deeply entrenched. The elements of the Impact phase are defined within the Level of Impact of Embeddedness. Embeddedness is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the institution. Standards identified within Impact are those in which the institution has demonstrated ongoing growth and improvement over time and has embedded the practices within its culture. Institutions should continue to support and sustain these practices that yield results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.



### 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 institution 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 institution'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 teaching and learning. 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 institution quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to institutions, which helps to focus and quide each institution's improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also are obtained through interviews, surveys, and additional activities.

# Cognia Standards Diagnostic Results

The Cognia Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution's effectiveness based on the Cognia Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of three Domains: Leadership Capacity, Learning Capacity, and Resource Capacity. Results are reported within four ranges identified by color. The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Insufficient	Identifies areas with insufficient evidence or evidence that indicated little or no activity leading toward improvement
Yellow	Initiating	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Improving	Pinpoints quality practices that are improving and meet the Standards
Blue	Impacting	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that positively impact the institution

Under each Standard statement is a row indicating the scores related to the elements of Cognia's i3 Rubric. The rubric is scored from one (1) to four (4). A score of four on any element indicates high performance, while a score of one or two indicates an element in need of improvement. The following table provides the key to the abbreviations of the elements of the i3 Rubric.

Element	Abbreviation
Engagement	EN
Implementation	IM
Results	RE
Sustainability	SU
Embeddedness	EM



#### **Leadership Capacity Domain**

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

Leade	rship Ca	pacity	Standar	ds							Rating
1.1		The institution commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.							Improving		
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	
1.2			ollective purpose						nievemer	nt of	Improving
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	
1.3	evidend		ding me						nat produ rning an		Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
1.4			authority suppor					ence to <sub>l</sub>	policies t	hat	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	4	
1.5			authority nd respo			ode of et	thics and	function	ns within	l	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
1.6			nent sta actice ar					cesses t	to improv	/e	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	4	
1.7			nent ope effective								Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	4	
1.8		s engag e and di		olders to	o suppo	rt the ac	hieveme	ent of the	e instituti	on's	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	1	EM:	3	
1.9	The ins		provides	experie	nces tha	at cultiva	ite and ir	mprove I	eadersh	ip	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	h D
1.10			t and and						tiple proveme	nt.	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	



#### **Learning Capacity Domain**

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement and success is the primary expectation of every institution. An effective learning culture is characterized by positive and productive teacher/learner relationships, high expectations and standards, a challenging and engaging curriculum, quality instruction and comprehensive support that enable all learners to be successful, and assessment practices (formative and summative) that monitor and measure learner progress and achievement. Moreover, a quality institution evaluates the impact of its learning culture, including all programs and support services, and adjusts accordingly.

Learn	ing Capa	city Sta	andards								Rating
2.1			equitable iorities e					and achi	eve the o	content	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	4	
2.2	The lea	•	ulture pro	omotes o	creativity	, innova	tion, and	l collabo	rative pr	oblem-	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	1	EM:	1	
2.3	The lea	_	ulture de	velops le	earners'	attitudes	s, beliefs	, and sk	ills need	ed for	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	4	
2.4		ships w	has a foi ith and h								Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	1	EM:	4	
2.5			ement a ers for th			s based	on high	expecta	itions an	d	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	4	
2.6			impleme best pra		ocess to	ensure	the curri	culum is	aligned	to	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
2.7			onitored learning			meet in	dividual	learners	' needs	and	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	
2.8		titution reer plar	provides nning.	prograr	ns and s	ervices	for learn	ers' edu	cational	futures	Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	
2.9	The institution implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.										
	EN:	3	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	1	EM:	3	
2.10		Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.							Impacting		
		4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	4	,



Learni	ng Capa	g Capacity Standards Rating									
2.11		Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to the demonstrable improvement of student learning.									
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	
2.12	The institution implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.										
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	3	

### **Resource Capacity Domain**

The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably, so the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The institution examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and increased student learning.

Resou	rce Cap	acity St	andards	;							Rating
3.1		The institution plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the institution's effectiveness.									
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	4	
3.2	collabo	ration a		jiality to			and expe perform			е	Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	4	
3.3	ensure	all staff		rs have t	he know	/ledge a	nd coach nd skills				Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	4	
3.4			attracts a			fied pers	sonnel w	ho supp	ort the		Impacting
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	3	SU:	3	EM:	4	
3.5	operati	ons to ir		rofessio			eaching, dent per				Improving
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	1	
3.6	suppor	The institution provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the institution.									
	EN:	4	IM:	4	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	4	
3.7	long-ra	The institution demonstrates strategic resource management that includes ong-range planning and use of resources in support of the institution's purpose and direction.									
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	2	SU:	2	EM:	4	



Resou	rce Cap	ce Capacity Standards									Rating
3.8	The institution allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the institution's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.										
	EN:	4	IM:	3	RE:	3	SU:	2	EM:	3	

#### 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.

Assuran	ces Met	
YES	NO	If No, List Unmet Assurances by Number Below
х		

# Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality®

Cognia will review the results of the Accreditation Engagement Review to make a final determination concerning accreditation status, including the appropriate next steps for your institution in response to these findings. Cognia provides the Index of Education Quality (IEQ) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. This formative tool for improvement identifies areas of success and areas in need of focus. The IEQ comprises the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: Leadership Capacity, Learning Capacity, and Resource Capacity. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provide information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria. Institutions should review the IEQ in relation to the Findings from the review in the areas of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. An IEQ score below 250 indicates that the institution has several areas within the Initiate level and should focus their improvement efforts on those Standards within that level. An IEQ in the range of 225-300 indicates that the institution has several Standards within the Improve level and is using results to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate sustainability. An IEQ of 275 and above indicates the institution is beginning to reach the Impact level and is engaged in practices that are sustained over time and are becoming ingrained in the culture of the institution.

Below is the average (range) of all Cognia Improvement Network (CIN) institutions evaluated for accreditation in the last five years. The range of the annual CIN IEQ average is presented to enable you to benchmark your results with other institutions in the network.

Institution IEQ 323.00	CIN 5 Year IEQ Range	278.34 - 283.33	
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# Insights from the Review

The Engagement Review Team engaged in professional discussions and deliberations about the processes, programs, and practices within the institution to arrive at the findings of the team. These findings are organized around themes guided by the evidence, with examples of programs and practices, and suggestions for the institution's continuous improvement efforts. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide contextualized information from the team's deliberations and analysis of the practices, processes, and programs of the institution organized by the levels of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. The narrative also provides the next steps to guide the institution's improvement journey in its efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on its current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

The Engagement Review Team (team) identified five themes to provide a perspective regarding the school's standing in its improvement journey and how it may move forward to serve the future needs of the Georgian American High School (GAHS) stakeholders. These themes were developed through stakeholder interviews and analysis of artifacts shared by the school. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic. the review was conducted virtually.

GAHS conducts itself in compliance with the principles of publicity and transparency of the national government of Georgia, which provides the foundational requirements. GAHS is guided by the Constitution of Georgia and the Law of Georgia through the General Education National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

GAHS leaders and staff engage in strong, two-way communication processes with all stakeholders to impact policy decisions, improve student learning and well-being, and strengthen institutional effectiveness at all levels. During interviews, the team heard that owners, administrators, heads of department, and academic coordinators meet regularly to discuss the budget, student learning and achievement, policy implementation, and related programs. To ensure that the mission is carried out by all, GAHS leaders engage with stakeholders through daily, weekly, monthly, and annual meetings. Instructional staff meet daily and weekly. The psychologist and counselor reported participation in staff meetings and support on an as-needed basis to address student learning and well-being. The librarian and information technology (IT) coordinator participate in regular meetings and as needed for services.

Focused parent meetings are held four times within the school year. All stakeholders confirmed that they have reviewed the school's mission, vision, and values statements. Parent signatures verify receipt of updated handbooks at registration. Parents have electronic access to information concerning quidelines and curriculum through the school's website and Facebook page as well as through email and the learning management system. SchoolBook is used for daily communication of formative and summative assessment reports for students and parents, homework, attendance, and behavior. The team noted meeting minutes and interviews that are evidence of the discussion of survey results, curriculum revisions, budget needs, and technology improvements. Leadership reported that the school adapted the schedule during the COVID-19 lockdown based on parent and student council recommendations. The school added a gymnastics class to the curriculum for primary students based on parent recommendations and student requests. Student council reported that they have say in recommending clubs and activities.



Administration reported that alumni are a source of feedback that comes from school visits with teachers and students. The GAHS coordinator reported that a database is kept of alumni university certifications. Higher education partnerships exist with organizations, such as the British University in Georgia, International Black Sea University, and Klaipeda International University to address identified staff development needs, present career information to students, and collaborate with the career counselor. In addition, GAHS has agreements with the International Model United Nations Association, Tunisian Association for the Future of Sciences and Technology, and International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology to identify and provide student activities.

GAHS completed an updated school improvement plan for 2021–2026 through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis process. All stakeholders participated in its planning and development via surveys and meetings.

All stakeholders reported that there is an open-door policy for communication among leaders, administration, teachers, staff, parents, and students. GAHS implements surveys of various stakeholders to improve policies and institutional practices. The implementation of surveys, using multiple virtual communication tools, establishing regular meetings, and having an open-door policy demonstrate the school's commitment to engaging the entire community to inform decision-making.

GAHS leaders are encouraged to deeply ingrain and protect stakeholder involvement practices in the systematic operations of the school to improve student learning and strengthen school effectiveness.

GAHS's practice of collaboration and the cultivation of instructional leaders ensure that instructional staff are continuously engaged in improving their own teaching to help students learn. Aligned with the Georgia national requirements, GAHS has a documented process for the supervision, evaluation, monitoring, follow-up, and improvement of instructional practices and effectiveness to improve student learning. GAHS has implemented the Georgia Ministry of Education Teacher Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme as described in the Teacher Performance Handbook. The program outlines a four-level pathway of professional development for teachers with the purpose of increasing the motivation and status of existing teachers, providing relevant professional development, enhancing collaboration opportunities, and supporting retention of quality staff to improve student learning. As described in the Teacher Performance Handbook, professional development steps include participation in horizontal and vertical curriculum meetings, grade-level collaboration meetings, data review, and classroom observations with an understanding of appropriate criteria for an effective lesson and ways to communicate lessons.

Teachers shared that school leadership supports the opportunity for consistent professional development and that opportunity for advancement is reflected in their careers at the school. Teacher files reflect their participation in the teacher leadership program—80% of teachers have been at the school more than six years, and 15% more than three years. As per the school improvement plan, school overview, and interviews with administration, hiring well-qualified teachers is a priority to support the teacher development program and to model effective instruction for improved student learning. Of the 114 licensed teachers, 77 have master's degrees. Teachers expressed support for the constructive collaborative interaction with peers and the opportunity to move up levels in their career. The team encourages school leaders to consistently collect data about collaborative and teacher leadership processes to demonstrate that the practices show sustained growth and improvement over time.

There is limited use of analyzed trend data to evaluate programs or determine effective instructional strategies to increase overall student growth and achievement. GAHS has several processes in place to engage stakeholders as well as to implement processes and adjust them to address the immediate needs of students, teachers, and parents. When determining areas for





immediate improvement of instruction, GAHS has a process for the collection of supervision/observation and evaluation data related to monitoring practices in the classroom. There were limited quantitative data and analyses related to professional development data. The school has data of teacher participation in the Teacher Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme. Teacher retention is considered a result of the program; however, trend data of retention or impact analyses of the program were not provided. The eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) has been implemented; although results are available, they have not been used to identify trends.

Subject data are available, but analysis related to program decision-making was not evident. Report card data have been collected over the past three years based on grades, and data were provided from various subjects using formative and summative results. These data are used to determine instructional focus and individual student needs. The team did not see a trend analysis of this information to determine curriculum or instructional decisions. GAHS tracks alumni university grades and certificates. The team did not see a formal data-base or analysis of the existing alumni data for program planning.

What seems to be missing from GAHS's use of data is the demonstration of growth over time of student achievement and program quality. The team did not find an ongoing process in place to identify trends over time, which might tie overall program effectiveness to student achievement and career success. Survey results from parents, students, and teachers have been used to address specific changes. However, trend data from surveys showing impact and effectiveness over time is limited. Although stakeholder survey results were provided to the team, it was difficult to determine which questions within surveys showed positive trends and which areas were targeted by staff for future improvement. The team did not see an analysis of these data to determine growth and improvement over time. An example: the English book program is credited with improving student's English language acquisition, participation, and confidence, but the team did not see data analysis to support this.

As stated earlier, the psychologist, the counselor, the social worker, teachers, and their supervisors are monitoring the well-being of students and academic achievement through reports and SchoolBook. The team did not see a trend analysis to determine areas of need or improvement. The team encourages school leaders and staff to consistently gather and analyze trend data related to programs and student performance to determine which organizational practices demonstrate sustained growth and improvement to move students to the next level of national and international achievement.

GAHS consistently follows the requirements of local and national governing authorities to ensure policy adherence and establish curricular direction. GAHS follows the government curriculum and guidelines, which include using government assessments and following national procedure. Based on identified needs of students and/or recommendations of stakeholders, GAHS has taken steps to add courses and activities to its curriculum. These include an additional hour in the schedule to support students, including tutoring, excursions, research projects, a third foreign language, civics, an international program, and career planning. In interviews, parents confirmed that they are informed of curriculum changes (as per national expectations) and have an opportunity to provide input. The number of summative assessments defined by the national curriculum is exceeded by GAHS. Approved adaptations to reduce summative assessments have been made during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school has implemented an approved online English proficiency exam that provides data for students as they prepare for the exams. Staff report that this has increased student interest in learning English and supports a focus on the English curriculum. In 2021, the school introduced the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) to assist in quantifying student learning



and curriculum/instruction adaptations. Based on an increase in graduating student interest in attending international universities, GAHS became a test center for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International Benchmark Test (IBT), and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), The team suggests that the desired practice of policy adherence and establishing curricular direction becomes deeply ingrained and protected in the operations of the school.

Leaders prioritize the use of resources related to teacher quality, instructional effectiveness. and learning materials. Teachers shared that in addition to the textbooks given for each level and subject, additional supporting materials were provided as well as individually requested materials. The number of video lessons with supporting e-books have reportedly increased to enhance both online and virtual learning. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards and projectors. The school increased IT resources and equipment to support online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The technology coordinator stated that responding to individual teacher needs is a priority of the department. The librarian shared that over 1,000 books have been purchased upon request to support learning. The school schedule has been adapted to add time for additional courses of interest and time for student support. A bank of online learning resources has been created to facilitate teacher's professional learning. The teachers also have the opportunity to earn professional development hours through approved summer courses through the universities with whom the school has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). In addition, various clubs are implemented and supported with staff and resources (i.e., Civic Education Club, Literary Club, Music Club). Staff reported that resource requests to support these clubs are honored.

The human resource director stated that hiring an adequate number of quality teachers is a priority of the department and the school. Based on increasing instructional and extracurricular opportunities for students, the number of teachers increased 10%. In addition to support given for the professional development requirements of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, GHAS provides additional support for the professional development of their staff through their agreements with various universities. The school has allocated a professional development coordinator who plans and manages teacher development activities.

Two gymnasiums have been added to the campus with additional sports equipment to accommodate the physical education classes, sports events, various curriculum projects, and club activities. Science labs have been updated. The school also provides university courses and training through MOUs with various universities. Based on increased student interest in attending international universities, the international coordinator recommended the accreditation process for GAHS. Leadership supported the recommendation with additional resources of time, staff, and budget. The team suggests that leaders continue to prioritize the use of resources focused on the mission of the school.

The team thanks Georgian American High School for their engagement in the continuous improvement process and hopes stakeholders use the insights from this review as they move forward in their continuous improvement journey.



# **Next Steps**

Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report, the institution is encouraged to implement the following steps:

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the areas for improvement identified by the Engagement Review Team.
- Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the institution's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report.
- Continue the improvement journey.





# Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams are comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds and expertise. To provide knowledge and understanding of the Cognia tools and processes, all Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members are required to complete Cognia training. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography/Title
Rebecca J Dahl, M.Ed., Lead Evaluator	Rebecca Dahl has served individuals, education, and organizations from kindergarten through university and business institutions as an aide, teacher, counselor, grant writer/director, principal, curriculum/professional development director, university instructor, university student success program director, Accreditation Team member, consultant/trainer, and a member of national and international boards. She presents at national and international conferences and is currently a Fulbright Specialist World Learning and a Lead Evaluator for Cognia Accreditation Reviews.
Mohammed Khalaf Ismal Makhlouf, PH.D.	General Director of Academic Affairs, Abha International School
Dr. Reham El Haddad	Principal, American High School
Riham Ibrahim	School Coordinator, Sun of Glory International School
Arthur O'Keeffe	Principal, International American School of Warsaw



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