

Jefferson County Schools, Alabama

Data-Driven Improvement

Diagnostic Reviews Continue to Accelerate Progress

Jefferson County Schools, a large, diverse district located in Birmingham, Alabama, has engaged in Cognia's continuous improvement-driven accreditation process for more than fifteen years. The district expanded improvement initiatives by providing intensive school support through Cognia Diagnostic Reviews, enrolling 5 schools each year until all district schools participate. In 2024, we highlighted successes at several schools that underwent diagnostic reviews in 2022 and 2023.

This report summarizes how two additional elementary schools —Lipscomb and U.W. Clemon—experienced gains after undergoing a Cognia Diagnostic Review and how Minor Community maintained and improved its progress. Engaging in Cognia's process helped school leaders identify areas for improvement and implement clear, data-informed strategies.

Data-driven Improvement

At Lipscomb Elementary, the state report card score rose from 81(B) to 90 (A). ELA achievement jumped from 34 points to over 60 points, on a 100-point scale. Principal Kirsten Logan-Marshall used the review to build a culture of data ownership, requiring teachers to lead weekly meetings and adjust instruction based on student performance.

U.W. Clemon Elementary, facing major staffing shortages, also made strong gains. Principal Derrick Burney used the review as a blueprint to train staff, including seventeen new hires. Data meetings and focused coaching improved classroom practice and student outcomes.

At Minor Community School, ELA scores increased and chronic absenteeism declined. Principal Mark Nixon, Ph.D., introduced daily intervention blocks and expanded family outreach. He credits the review with helping uncover and address parental concerns that affected attendance.

Systems for Success

Dr. Kenya Hall, a School Improvement Specialist for the district, emphasized that positive results stemmed from putting the right systems in place. Schools now protect time for intervention, hold regular data reviews, and offer targeted coaching. This structure, born of the diagnostic review, has become a model for improvement across the district.

The Jefferson County Schools experience shows how clear processes, consistent data use, and focused leadership can drive real gains in academic achievement and academic growth, as well as meaningful reductions in chronic absenteeism.

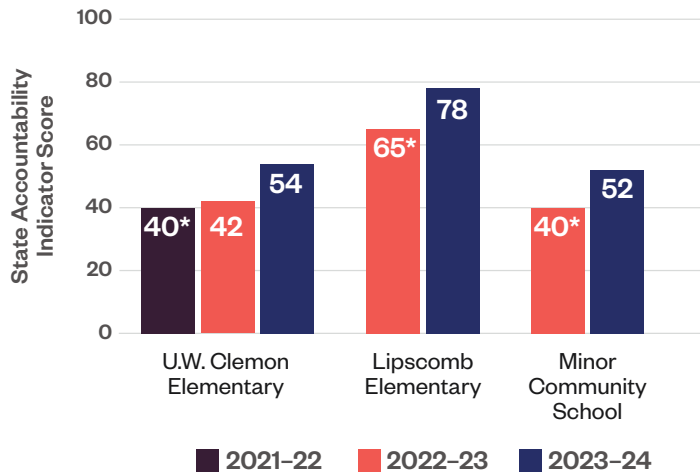
Dive into the results on the reverse side.

“

[The Diagnostic Review] made us really look at ourselves and look at ourselves realistically... we put in place non-negotiables.”

—Kirsten Logan-Marshall
Lipscomb Elementary School

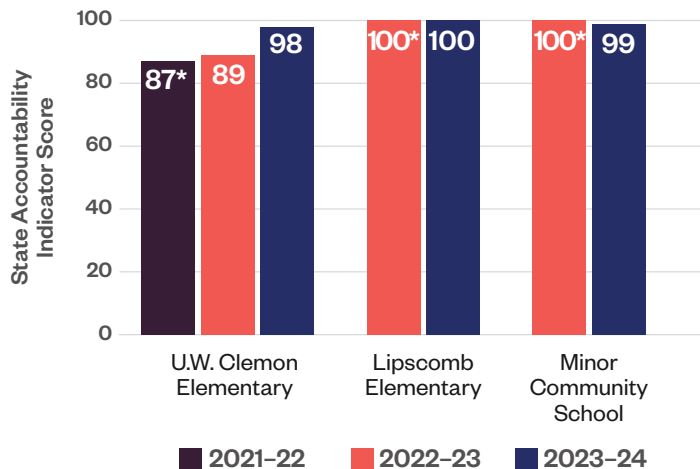
Academic Achievement Alabama State Report Card



State-issued academic achievement scores increased after each school began implementing improvement plans resulting from its Cognia Diagnostic Review. On Alabama's 100-point scale, all three schools made 12- to 13-point gains.

*Denotes year of diagnostic review.

Academic Growth Alabama State Report Card



These 3 elementary schools demonstrated growth scores of 98 points (out of 100) or better in the last reporting year.

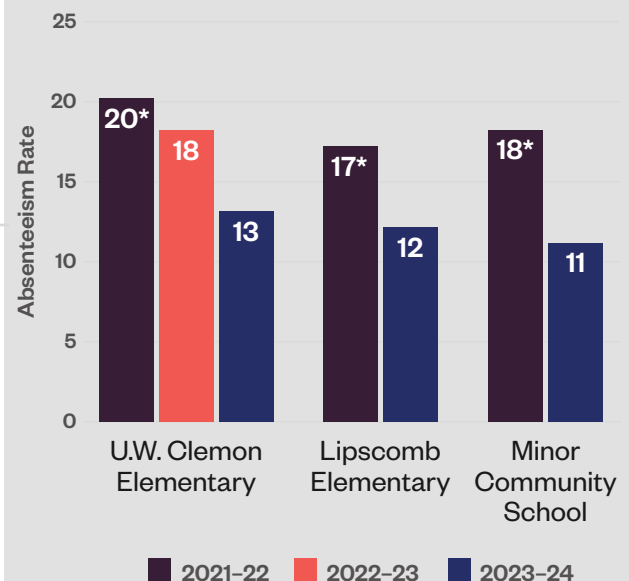
*Denotes year of diagnostic review.

See the highlights from from our first report at cognia.org/jefferson-report1.

The Roots of Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism dropped across all three schools, in some cases falling below pre-pandemic levels. Leaders tackled root causes like transportation and scheduling issues, and even recruited bus drivers, increased bus supervision, and improved family communication.

Chronic Absenteeism following the diagnostic review Alabama State Report Card



Following the diagnostic review, all three schools experienced significant improvement in their chronic absenteeism rates, resulting in seventy-seven more children attending school regularly.

*Denotes year of diagnostic review.