

Cogito

Family Handbook

2025 – 2026

I behave as though this is the day

I will be remembered for.

iLearn

iDream

iLead

We succeed!



Elmer S. Gish Elementary Junior High School

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St. Albert, Alberta T8N 3A5

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Foundational Principles

Cogito is a highly structured learning environment with clearly defined standards of achievement. The Cogito Program is dedicated to helping students maximize their academic potential. *Cogito* (**kō gi tō**) is Latin for *I reason*.

The program is designed for students who are willing to work to achieve a high level of academic excellence, in a knowledge-based program, and in an atmosphere of structured and sequenced learning. Critical thinking is stressed. Students work in an environment that encourages self-discipline.

This set of foundational principles defines the parameters of the Cogito Alternative Program in St. Albert Public Schools.

In St. Albert Public Schools, the Cogito Alternative Program:

- Upholds academic rigour for all students. Standards of achievement are clearly and consistently identified for each grade level, forming a strong foundation for future learning.
- Fosters an environment focused on learning. Expectations are set for dress of students and staff, classroom organization, and communication to families.
- Provides a solid foundation for literacy and numeracy, as well as other fundamental academic skills, including learning French as an additional language.
- Challenges students to always produce their best work. Students complete regular homework that is meaningful and in measured amounts to reinforce the learning.
- Provides clear and timely reporting of students' learning in relation to the provincial curriculum, as well as the approved Cogito Alternative Program curriculum. Student achievement will be reported as letter grades or percentages at appropriate grade levels.
- Recognizes that work ethic and scholastic achievement generate confidence, motivation, and engagement in learning.
- Emphasizes whole group, teacher-directed instruction with gradual release of responsibility to the student (I do, we do, you do).
- Recognizes families as valuable partners in their child's education.

Academic Expectations

Students enrolled in Cogito strive to meet high standards, both academically and in building the Cogito environment, in which:

- Students are challenged and expected to produce their best work with accuracy and precision in oral and written work.
- Work habits and organizational skills are valued.
- An orderly, structured environment is followed.
- Student uniforms contribute to perceptions of success.
- Students become increasingly responsible for their learning.

Linking the Foundational Principles to Cogito Classrooms

	Description	Indicators
Academic Excellence	Cogito upholds academic excellence for all students, and encourages and expects their best possible work. Standards of achievement for each outcome are clearly described for each grade level as a foundation for future learning.	• academic excellence • students do their best work • achievement standards clearly defined for each grade level
Orderly Environment	Cogito fosters an environment focused on learning. Expectations are set for dress of students and staff, classroom organization and communication to families.	• orderly learning environment • standard of dress for students and staff (see Appendix C for uniform requirements) • classrooms organized with desks in rows • minimal disruptions to learning • group work is engaged and on-task
Emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy	Cogito provides a solid foundation for literacy and numeracy, as well as other fundamental academic skills,	• foundational literacy skills, with an emphasis on phonics • basic facts in math

	including French as an additional language.	French as an additional language beginning in Gr 1
Regular Homework	Cogito challenges students to produce their best work. Students complete regular homework that is meaningful and in measured amounts to reinforce learning.	- students challenged to consistently produce their best work - homework is meaningful and in measured amounts - students consistently complete homework; teachers assess and return homework in a timely manner
Timely Reporting of Student Progress	Cogito provides clear and timely reporting of students' learning in relation to the provincial curriculum, as well as the approved Cogito Alternative Program curriculum. Student marks are reported as letter grades or percentages at appropriate grade levels.	- reporting is a clear and timely representation of student achievement - students in Gr 1 and 2 receive letter grades; students in Gr 3 and beyond receive percentage grades - elementary students are also assessed on identified Key Learner Outcomes, using the district achievement scale
Time of Task and Engaged Learning	Cogito recognizes work ethic and scholastic achievement generate confidence, motivation, and engagement in learning.	- classroom environment is structured to promote students' working hard, spending time on task and engaged in their learning - build student self-esteem through diligence, effort and achievement - students and teachers are prepared for learning

**Whole Group
Direct
Instruction**

Cogito emphasizes whole group, teacher-directed instruction with gradual release of responsibility to the student (I do, we do, you do).

- whole group, teacher-directed instruction
- Lesson structure to promote learning, including:
 - o ongoing check for understanding
 - o steps provided as scaffolding, not memorization
 - o modelling and narrative demonstrations (think alouds)
 - o higher level questioning
 - o immediate corrective feedback
 - o teacher walking around room, monitoring student progress
 - o high expectations for student learning

**Families as
Valued
Partners**

Cogito recognizes families as valuable partners in their child's education.

- Families have an active stake and interest in their child's education
- Families act as valued partners in their child's education
- consistent communication is an essential component of engaging parents
- teachers and school administration foster the active involvement of parents and guardians.

Uniforms and Dress Code

Students in the elementary Cogito Program wear uniforms each school day.

In addition to the Cogito uniform, students are expected to wear

- close-toed white shoes (no heels, embellishments, sandals, crocs or boots)
- hair accessories and jewellery must be understated and coordinate with the Cogito colours
- Additional sweaters/hoodies without Gish Cogito logos should NOT be worn as regular, daily items.

The exceptions for the dress code are on

- Spirit Days – on selected days each month, the Student Leadership Team chooses a theme such as crazy hat day, jersey day or tacky sweater day. Students in the Cogito Program may choose to participate in the theme day and wear non-uniform attire or wear their uniform.
- Gishwear Days
- Oiler Play-off game days
- last two weeks in June

Junior High Dress Code Expectations

- All students are expected to wear clothing that meets/maintains the high standards of the Gish community.
- Collared shirts or tops and t-shirts are acceptable.
- Jeans and casual fitted pants are acceptable.
- No undergarments or midriff can be showing
- Logos and sayings must be respectful and school appropriate. School staff members have the final word.
- Hats may be permitted at the teacher's discretion but are expected to be removed during anthems, treaty acknowledgments, and moments of silence.

Physical Education Change Out

Students in all grades are expected to have running shoes for Physical Education classes. Starting in Gr 4, students are expected to have a change of clothes (t-shirt and shorts or track pants) for regular Physical Education classes. Shoes must be fitted properly. For example, runners must be kept tied up and laces not left loose.

Homework Expectations

Students are expected to complete regular homework that is meaningful and in measured amounts to reinforce the learning.

Division 1	Division 2	Division 3
15 – 40 minutes / day	30 – 60 minutes / day	45 – 90 minutes / day

- homework is assigned by Monday of each week and communicated to families
- homework expectations will be adjusted if it is a shortened week
- homework will not be assigned during Winter Break and Spring Break; and all homework ceases for the last two weeks of June
- if time permits, students may begin homework in the classroom
- homework will be reviewed and corrected at home, teachers check for completion not accuracy

Recitations

- Recitations are an important part of our program
- one recitation will be assigned each month, with the exception of December, March, and June.
- Recitations are not practiced during instructional time; therefore, it is the student's responsibility to prepare for each recitation on their own time.
- K-1 students who are not prepared on their scheduled day will be offered a one day extension.
- Grade 2-6 students who are not prepared on their scheduled day will be required to recite to the best of their ability on their scheduled day.

Family Involvement in Homework

Families are a valuable support for students in meeting homework expectations. Parents assist in creating the consistent expectations students produce their best work by providing:

- **time and place for homework**
 - Routines are established to support student success in homework
 - Feedback is provided to the teacher regarding limitations, success, and clarity
- **supervision and discussion**
 - Families discuss homework with the student
- **attention to home/school communication**
 - Tools such as agendas, Friday envelopes, newsletters, websites, and notes are used to ensure that families have information regarding assignments, expectations, and procedures
- **support for the school's practices and programs**
 - Consistency between expectations of the home and school are actively pursued by both the teacher and the family; questions for clarification are welcomed.

Late Assignment Policy

Student Work: Students are expected to work diligently while in class, and to complete homework daily. Work that has been done poorly, or does not meet the assignment expectations will need to be redone. All students are expected to read assigned material, think critically, and write effectively. Students are expected to use complete sentences, proper grammar, and correct spelling in every written performance.

Assignment Due Dates: All assignments are expected to be handed in on time. If an assignment is not completed or handed in on time, it is expected that students will stay in during break, lunch hour, and after school to complete the missing assignment.

Excusable lates for which students will receive an extension include illness, family emergencies, doctor/dentist appointments, or other extenuating circumstances. These situations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

In case of an absence from school, it is the student's responsibility to find out what they missed, and complete the required work within a reasonable time frame.

Transition Points

Penmanship

Penmanship is an important part of our program. Students focus on proper letter formation, consistency in size, spacing and overall neatness.

Cursive Writing

Cursive writing is introduced in Grade 3. In subsequent grades, students are expected to use cursive writing for class notes and submitted assignments.

Saxon Math (Grades 4 to 9)

The expectations for Math and the pace of learning changes significantly in Grade 4.

- students use a textbook instead of completing a Math page, and students record their answers on graph paper.
- a Math terminology component is added to student expectations
- parents should expect an increase in the quantity of homework assigned and the amount of time students will need to complete the work

The Saxon Math textbook is available for download. This will be available on the class website for students and parents to access on demand.

Cogito Compatibility Assessments

At E. S. Gish School, we recognize that every child is a unique individual with diverse areas of strength, as well as some areas where support is needed. Prospective Cogito students (including siblings of students currently enrolled in the program) will be asked to complete a “Compatibility Assessment” prior to being accepted into the Program. The intent is to observe and gather evidence that aligns the student with the foundational principles of the Cogito program. This assessment includes a written component to evaluate a student’s knowledge and skills in reading comprehension, writing, and mathematics. Preferences, styles, and interests pertaining to learning, as well as educational references, may be considered. Assessments are thoroughly reviewed by lead teachers, and results are shared with administration to determine if the student’s learning style aligns with the Cogito Program. Students are assessed a maximum of two times for the Compatibility assessment for entry into the Cogito Program. This approach supports students’ confidence in their learning style and abilities while still allowing families time to focus on practice and growth based on the feedback provided, as we are confident in our recommendations.

Cell Phone Policy (Personal Mobile Device Expectations)

Personal Mobile Device Expectations

At Elmer Gish, we strongly believe in helping students develop self-regulation by providing healthy, screen-free time to create an optimal learning environment. Our goal is to balance technology’s educational benefits with a distraction-free classroom where students can focus and thrive.

Definitions: Personal Mobile Device (PMD) – refers to any personal electronic devices that can be used to communicate or to access the internet, a cellular network, or other devices such as, but not limited to, a cell phone, computer,

tablet, gaming device, electronic toy or smart watch. This may also include devices capable of communicating with a PMD such as headphones, earbuds, or smart speakers.

General Expectations

While we recognize that cell phones are currently the most common device used by students, these rules apply to all PMDs unless an exception is granted.

- **Instructional Time:** Students may NOT use or access their PMDs during instructional time (including regular classes, Physical Education, options, and so forth).
- **Storage:** Students must store their phones in their lockers during instructional time (we are not responsible for lost or stolen devices).
- **Social Media:** Students are not permitted to access social media while using school-owned devices or when connected to the school's network.
- **Permitted Times:** Gr. 7-9 students may use their PMDs during the morning break and at lunch. Elementary students are not permitted to use their PMD's during the school day.

Kindergarten to Grade 6 - Additional Expectations

- Students in K-6 are strongly encouraged to leave their PMDs at home.
- If a K-6 student must bring a PMD to school, it must remain on silent and stored in their locker.

Approved Educational & Medical Uses

We recognize that technology has a valid place in education when it directly supports learning. A PMD may be used during school hours if it is required to:

- Enable students to achieve the learner outcomes outlined in the Alberta Programs of Study.

- Allow students to participate in specific learning activities chosen and directed by the teacher.
- Accommodate a diagnosed medical need.
- Accommodate an inclusive education need identified in a student's Individual Program Plan (IPP) or Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

Note: Any other limited exceptions must be determined and approved by the Principal.

If you need to speak with your child during the school day, please feel free to contact the front office **780-459-7766**.

Policy Enforcement

Elmer Gish School holds the authority to temporarily confiscate, restrict, or prohibit PMD usage while students are on school property or attending school-sponsored activities.

****This policy aligns with Alberta Ministerial Order # 014/2024 (Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media).***

Academic Integrity

Integrity is the foundation of good academic work. Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles – it means doing the right thing, all the time, even when no one is watching.

Academic integrity is "the ethical policy of academics. This includes avoidance of cheating or plagiarism; maintenance of academic standards; honesty and rigor in research and academic publishing." Academic integrity means two things:

1. All academic work should result from your own efforts
2. If you use someone else's work, you **MUST** acknowledge that the

work is not yours

Violations:

When people violate academic integrity, it typically falls into one of two main categories:

1. Cheating – Acting dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an advantage. Examples include:
 - Using unauthorized materials or methods (using a calculator when you aren't supposed to, or using a computerized translation program)
 - Receiving or giving unauthorized help (copying homework or a worksheet from another student, or looking at a textbook during a test)
 - working together without permission to do so
 - compromising the security of an exam (telling friends what was on the test before they write it)
2. Plagiarism – Taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as your own. For example:
 - copying something from the internet and pasting it into your own document
 - copying an assignment from a friend in another class
 - copying your own assignment from a previous or different class

To Avoid Academic Dishonesty:

1. Always give credit to the sources you use. It is better to err on the side of citing more than to take the risk of plagiarism.
2. Never copy from the internet, books, magazines, or other sources. It is so easy to select, copy, and paste when working on an assignment, but this shortcut can get you into a lot of trouble.
3. Use original thoughts.
4. Avoid "helping" others to cheat – if you assist someone else in committing a violation, you can be held responsible.
5. Do your own work. Every. Time.

Academic Integrity Policy

At Elmer S. Gish School, we place great importance on original and creative work. Anything less is disappointing and unacceptable. Your ideas are your intellectual property; the ideas of others are theirs. The work of any individual, including you, is protected by copyright laws and ethical standards.

It is expected that students complete their own work, to the best of their ability, without violating academic integrity standards.

Any student who is found to have violated the E. S. Gish academic integrity standards will receive a mark of zero for that assignment. In addition, the teacher may elect to do any or all of the following:

- notify parents
- notify coaches, club advisors, and administrators
- require an alternate assignment

Repeated offenses will result in administrative disciplinary action that may include suspensions.



St. Albert Cogito Uniform

Your uniform is to be worn to school every day of the week. You may be asked to bring a change of clothing to participate in Physical Education class.

This uniform code is effective the start of every school year until the end of that school year.
The only exceptions are Early Dismissal Theme Days, Gish Spirit Day, or as requested by the principal or teacher.



Acceptable



Cogito Cardigan

Cogito Vest

Cogito Pullover

Cogito Hoodie



Cogito Dress Shirt



Cogito Short Polo



Cogito Long Polo



Grey Dress Pants/
Elastic Waist Pants



Grey Dress Shorts



Grey Skort



Tunic (K-3)



Kilt (4-6)



Black or Grey Leggings



Black or Grey Tights



Black, Grey, or White Socks

Optional



Optional Button Tie or
Neck Tie

Not Acceptable



Jeans



Cargo Pants



Yoga Pants



Sweat Pants



Non-Uniform Sweaters
(colour or pattern)



Team Sport Shirts/Jerseys



Coloured/Patterned Tights



Coloured/Patterned Socks