



**Elmer S. Gish Cogito Parents  
Steering Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008

---

**Attendance:** Carolyn Hunter, Duncan Knoll, Michael Maxfield, Wanda Lai, Erin Steele, Marilyn Blacklock, Elena Bensusan, Tatiana Gartner

**1) Welcome and Introductions**

**2) Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved with the addition of – 8.a) Family Phone Directory

**3) Vacant Office – Secretary - Rotation**

Carolyn Hunter volunteered to take minutes of the meeting.

**4) Review and Approval of October 28, 2008 Minutes**

The minutes from Oct. 28, 2008 meeting were adopted as is.

**5) Principal's Report**

Mr. Knoll reported on the following items:

a) Staffing

Christmas holidays will mark the start of Mrs. Zawaduk's maternity leave. Ms Tetreau will be moving into Mrs. Zawaduk's position. Mrs. Werner will be returning in January from her maternity leave and will be taking over the grade 1 Cogito position. As you are likely aware, Mrs. Werner taught the grade 1 Cogito program for a number of years. We look forward to Mrs. Werner's return and wish Mrs. Zawaduk all the best.

b) Open Court Readers

Our Cogito department is further investigating the Open Court Reader Series for grade 1 & grade 2. The cost is significant at \$64 a book; however, the purchase of this resource will add further continuity to the program. The school will move ahead with this purchase.

c) District Report Card Committee

Mrs. Hunter has agreed to take over as Elmer S. Gish School representative on the District Report Card Committee. Mrs. Hunter will take over from Mrs. Zawaduk on the committee. Our administration felt strongly that it is important to have a Cogito voice on the committee. The committee is generating content for the web based report card that will be introduced in the 2009/10 school year. Mr. Steele noted that the district and province is moving away from representing student achievement in % and letter grades. However, the Cogito assessment using % and letter grades will be honoured and reflected in the new format.

d) Agenda and Minutes Reporting to Cogito Families

Mr. Maxfield suggested including Cogito Steering Committee meeting agendas and minutes in the Friday envelopes. Families are quite familiar with accessing the Friday envelopes for information and this will further communicate Cogito Steering Committee developments to our Cogito populations.

**6) Sub-Committee Reports**

**a) Program Development & Improvement**

i) Parent Handbook (Carolyn Hunter)

Cogito Staff began examining the current parent handbook and are working toward developing policies to assist in providing clarity and consistency of classroom practices such as homework, and late assignments. The goal is to create a document that is in a “parent friendly” format and reflects the program. Input from parents is necessary.

**Action:** A call for any Cogito parent interested in participating will go out via the Friday envelope. Meeting date for this would be Tuesday, Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. To assist with receiving substantial feedback, parents could use email, or written feedback handed into the office, if they are unable to attend the meeting in person.

ii) Parent Orientation (Wanda Lai)

It was brought to the attention of the Steering Committee that parents would like an orientation session at the beginning of the school. This could be a format similar to the presentations done in Kindergarten and in grade one, set for the specific grade level in question. A suggested time to conduct this orientation could be during the Family BBQ held at the beginning of the school year. It was noted that the materials from such an orientation could be beneficial to families that enter the program in mid-year. The following items could be included in the presentation:

- Volunteering opportunities
- Overview of school year (subjects/topics)
- Commitment forms
- Allergies
- Classroom routine
- Class and Homework expectations

**Action:** Carolyn Hunter will take this idea back to Cogito staff for discussion.

iii) Open discussion of ideas and objectives for the year (Carolyn Hunter)

A parent session titled “Homework Help” will be presented mid February for parents interested in tips and ideas to help with setting up homework routines, and general information about homework.

## **b) Communication & Marketing (Elena Bensusan)**

### i) open discussion of ideas and objectives for the year

The following ideas were presented and discussed with regards to promoting the Cogito Program:

- It may be advantageous to conduct visits to preschools by kindergarten parents and their children dressed in uniform to present what Cogito is about.
- Timely articles in the local paper
- Distribution of flyers or brochures by the Welcome Wagon, grocery stores, or drug stores.
- Cogito displays ready for an open house
- Kindergarten fair representation or presentations
- Presentation at the Gish Baby & Tots Items Sale. This would be a good opportunity to have Cogito parents and students available at a booth to answer questions

It was felt that there are three avenues of communication for the Cogito program:

1. Formal discussions or presentations
2. Casual discussions
3. Brochures/ Print literature

### ***Action:***

- A more current updated brochure is needed. Duncan suggested that Derek Harrison and Carolyn Hunter work on building a brochure with the inclusion of parent and student statements “What do they like about Cogito?”
- A parent survey/question will be sent home in the Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> Friday envelope to ask parents to forward their ideas. Cogito staff will be asked to have each child complete a similar question prior to the winter break.

### ii) other marketing topics

The topic of communication and promotion of higher grades was tabled, suggesting that some focus needs to be given on marketing the program beyond Kindergarten and Grade 1. Open discussion issued over the following areas:

- Does a strategy such as this address general student attrition in the higher grades?
- When students leave the program, should there be an “exit interview” process? Mr. Knoll indicated that presently this process is informal.

- There are misunderstandings amongst non-Cogito parents in the school and community regarding the program and a potential reluctance for parents to transfer their children into the program at the higher grades. It was felt that better and more consistent communication, with this in mind, will help alleviate this issue.

No actions came of this topic at this time.

### **c) Parent / Teacher Support**

#### i) Work Samples

It was discussed that as an aid to parents that a binder of work samples be available for each grade to parents to gauge work expectations.

### **7) Share and Ware Event**

Tabled

### **8) Other**

#### a) Phone List

The Cogito program recognizes the benefit of having a volunteer Cogito phone list available for parents. Mr. Knoll reported that it would be desirable to create a classroom directory rather than a school wide directory, which be voluntary for parents wishing to have their name included on such a list.

### **9) Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned.



**Elmer S. Gish Cogito Parents  
Steering Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009

---

**Attendance:** Duncan Knoll, Erin Steele, Carolyn Hunter, Kathleen Smith, Cathy Carew, Anna Wong, Elena Bensusan, Wanda Lai, Sherri Koziol, Kathy Eng, Michael Maxfield (Chair)

**1) Welcome and Introductions**

**2) Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was approved with the addition of 7a) Uniform Pants and 7b) Mufti Day.

**3) Vacant Office – Secretary – Rotation this meeting**

Michael Maxfield volunteered to take minutes of the meeting.

**4) Review and Approval of December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008 Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 meeting were adopted as is.

**5) Principal's Report**

**a) Cogito Kindergarten Brochures**

A thank goes out to Mr. Harrison and Mrs. Hunter for their efforts on the Cogito Kindergarten Brochure. The characteristics of the program are well highlighted and the brochure includes testimonials and photographs of students experiencing the program.

**b) Cogito Grade 1 and 2 Open Court Reading**

Open Court Readers for Grades 1 and 2 have arrived and have been introduced into the reading program. This now completes the set from Grades 1 through to Grade 6.

**c) Elementary Information Evening**

The E.S. Gish Elementary information session to be held on February 10<sup>th</sup>.

**d) Baby Tot Item Sale – Cogito Booth**

A Cogito booth will be setup at the Baby & Tot Items Sales held Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Harrison has agreed to organize the booth. This will further showcase the Cogito program as the Baby & Tot Items Sales generally draws upwards of 500 people.

## 6) Sub-Committee Updates

### a) Program Development & Improvement

#### i) Parent Handbook

The meeting to discuss improvements to the Cogito Parent Handbook, Chaired by Carolyn Hunter, was very productive. There were five attendees at the meeting.

Primary feedback was focused on a Handbook that was Parent friendly. The desire is to keep the current detailed handbook information but to include a handbook summary. Summary topics suggested in the meeting were:

- About Gish: School Motto, school hours, holiday dates, period schedule, supervision/drop off, lunch program, hot lunch, assemblies, school fees, names of staff members, etc.
- Communication: transportation (bikes, parking drop off with a map, bussing information), homework, recitations, literacy map, Friday envelopes, etc.
- Parent Involvement Opportunities: Volunteering, School Council, Cogito Steering Committee, etc.
- Behaviour expectations: Academics, uniform, Phys. Change out, Attendance, etc.
- Extra Curricular: Clubs, etc.

#### ii) Parent Orientation

A suggestion was tabled to hold a series of 15-minute (in classroom) class-orientation talks for Parents at the school start-of-year summer Barbeque.

- Two 15-minute pre-scheduled orientation talks for parents held per Grade in each classroom.
- Slated for the start-of-year summer Barbeque.
- Each teacher for each grade to conduct a prepared orientation presentation for Parents on the curriculum for the year, things of note that will help parents prepare for the coming school year, and answers to frequently asked questions.

*Tips for Parents to be added in the Parent Handbook Summary*

**Action:** *Sherri Koziol to gather ideas.*

Homework Session – Feb 17<sup>th</sup>. A suggestion to put information in the Friday envelopes.

An idea was tabled for an *After* school homework session. Duncan indicated that would require other supervisory resources. As such other ideas tabled included parent volunteers, or a small user fee to cover the cost of additional supervision. After some discussion it was generally agreed that such an activity should be limited to grades 4 to 6.

*Action: Duncan and Erin to look into the logistics and report back at the next steering committee meeting.*

**b) Communication & Marketing**

A suggestion was tabled to hold a Lemon-aid stand as part of the Cogito booth at the Gish Baby & Tot Items sale. Further, some Cogito students in uniform could run the stand. Since the Baby & Tot Items sale is quite long it would require students operation the stand in shifts.

*Action: Elena to contact the Baby & Tot Items Sale organizers.*

A suggestion was tabled to utilize community events calendars and promotion programs offered by local Radio Stations to promote Cogito and E.S. Gish. It was discussed that the APA may want to participate and make arrangements to also promote the multiple programs offered at the school.

*Action: Duncan will contact local Radio and TV stations regarding this and report back at the next Cogito Steering Committee meeting.*

**c) Parent/Teacher Support**

A Homework session for Parents is to be held February 17<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm at the school. It was discussed that same or similar activities should be considered to support parents throughout the school year.

**7) Other**

**a) Uniform Pants**

Concerns were raised over the degree of wear-and-tear on pants from the uniform supplier. Questions were raised on whether 'black' pants can be introduced into the uniform at the Elementary grade levels. A change to the E. S. Gish Cogito uniform requires a rigorous process. Rules of acceptability are in place. No further discussion was carried forward on this matter. Uniform supplier is to be tabled at the next Cogito Steering Committee Meeting.

*Action: Michael Maxfield to add Uniform Supplier to the next meeting agenda.*

**b) Mufti Day**

A suggestion was tabled to schedule a non-uniform (or Mufti) day in the school year. After much discussion and deliberation it was concluded that there are many days throughout the year that the school, as a whole, participates in that allows for non-uniform days.

*Action: Duncan to speak with the School Council and provide feedback at the next meeting.*

**8) Next Meeting**

Suggested agenda item for next meeting – Swap/Sale of Uniforms  
Next Meeting is Tuesday April 7<sup>th</sup> 7:00pm in the Library.

Meeting Adjourned.



**Elmer S. Gish Cogito Parents  
Steering Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009

---

**Attendance:** Duncan Knoll, Carolyn Hunter, Elena Bensusan, Wanda Lai, Anna Wong, Alisa Bolster, Marilyn Blacklock, Patty Dechenne, Tatiana Gartner Cheryl Joseph, Kathy Eng, Michael Maxfield (Chair)

**1) Welcome and Introductions**

**2) Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was approved as is.

**3) Vacant Office – Secretary – Rotation this meeting**

**4) Review and Approval of December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008 Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 meeting were adopted as is.

**5) Principal's Report**

**a) Cogito Kindergarten 2009/10**

To date, there are thirty-two (32) registrations for Cogito Kindergarten 2009/10. Duncan will continue to conduct introductory tours of the school throughout April and May. This represents the highest Cogito Kindergarten registration ever at E.S. Gish.

The increase in registration will see a morning and afternoon Kindergarten class. Presently the morning class is full. Given the increased interest in the Cogito program and consistent growth, consideration will be given in the future to advertise Cogito Kindergarten AM and PM classes.

As an F.Y.I. Duncan noted, Leo Nickerson Elementary is piloting a "full day" Kindergarten. This pilot will consist of alternating 2 and 3 full-day school weeks. E.S. Gish administration will observe the results of this pilot.

**b) Public Relations and Communication**

The St. Albert Gazette ran an article on Mrs. Drake's book – Sleepwalking Will. Elementary Open House and Fashion Show was held.

The St. Albert Gazette ran an article on the Hair Massacre event at Gish.

The Baby and Tot Item Sale was a big success. A Cogito information booth was setup. By Mr. Knoll's estimation five new families have expressed interest in the program from visiting this information booth that otherwise would not have known about the program.



Junior High open house scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup>, 7pm

Mr. Steele and Mr. Knoll will be visiting the Grade 6 class at Leo Nickerson Elementary, providing information on E.S. Gish Junior High. Questions were raised regarding this practice, asking if visits are planned in other Elementary schools in St. Albert. Duncan indicated that this activity is an informal practice and tends to be regional in nature: usually limited to local communities within St. Albert. It was raised that Cogito is not regional and therefore for the sake of information to St. Albert parents, consideration could be given to visiting other Elementary Schools.

The North-East fence bordering private property has been offered by the property owner to the school to paint a mural.

The week of April 27<sup>th</sup> will be Read-in Week.

**c) Upmarket Images**

There are new owners of Upmarket Images. Appointments for uniform sizing for the 2009/2010 school year will begin May 1<sup>st</sup>. Orders placed between May 1 and July 15 will qualify for a 10% discount.

The new booking phone number is 780 481-3242

**d) Uniform Swap/Share and Wear Event**

Cathy Carew has volunteered to coordinate the Uniform Swap/Share and Wear Event. The suggested time is during the Welcome Back BBQ, Thursday August 27<sup>th</sup>.

**6) Sub-Committee Updates**

**a) Program Development & Improvement**

i) Parent Handbook

Updates to the handbook will be presented to the school staff meeting May 6<sup>th</sup>. The expectation is to have a print ready copy for June.

ii) Parent Orientation

Parent orientation sessions are schedule for the Welcome Back BBQ – August 27<sup>th</sup>. (See Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Committee minutes for details on parent orientation sessions)

iii) Homework Survey Results

Findings:

- Time set aside / taken for homework varies greatly between 20 minutes and 3 hours.
- Homework time varies in accordance with grade level.
- Communication of the weeks homework assignments at the beginning of the week is well received by parents.
- No direct feedback was requested as part of this survey, however in the future feedback and suggestions will be requested.

Topics Mrs. Hunter will table at the next Cogito Staff meeting include:

- Homework expectations for each grade should be consistent.
- Discuss quality of homework versus quantity.
- Teachers to provide more feedback to students on homework completed.

**b) Communication & Marketing**

i) Feedback on Cogito Booth at Baby & Tot Items Sale

The booth did attract attention. Duncan indicated that five families have expressed interest in the program resulting from information provided by the booth.

A suggestion was made to move the table into the gym in amongst the vendor tables. It was noted that the Baby & Tot Items Sale is one of the major fund raisers for the school at that space in the gym is limited such that many potential vendors are turned away each year.

Another suggestion was made to use the lobby display cases to promote all the programs within the school and provide brochures. The lobby is a high traffic area for the Baby & Tot Items Sale. This would require moving the Baby & Tot Items Sale check-in / Cashier table to other side of the lobby next to the main office.

ii) Communication of school events through community events media

Duncan to contact CTV to feature E.S. Gish in a program vignette call "School Zone".

**c) Parent/Teacher Support**

No discussion.

**7) Uniforms**

Covered in Principal's report.

**8) Next Meeting**

Next Meeting is Tuesday May 19<sup>th</sup> 7:00pm in the Library.

Meeting Adjourned.



**Elmer S. Gish Cogito Parents  
Steering Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

---

**Attendance: Duncan Knoll, Erin Steele, Wanda Lai, Anna Wong, Patty Dechenne,  
Tatiana Gartner Cheryl Joseph, Michael Maxfield (Chair)**

**1) Welcome and Introductions**

**2) Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was approved as is.

**3) Vacant Office – Secretary – Rotation this meeting**

**4) Review and Approval of April 7, 2009 Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the April 7, 2009 meeting were adopted as is.

**5) UpMarket (Uniform Distributor) Images Presentation**

Representatives from UpMarket Images were on hand to discuss new business management and changes in uniform supplier.

- TopMarks™ the current supplier of pants is moving to a darker grey not consistent with current uniform colours. There have been many complaints from parents regarding the durability of these pants. RJ McCarthy™ has a replacement pant that is a closer match to the current uniform colour. The new pant fabric is more durable and basically the same price.
- The burgundy hoody colour is discontinued. There are no same or similar colours available. The Committee has agreed to change the hoody colour to black.
- UpMarket will provide a one-page communiqué to Mr. Knoll for Friday envelopes with information about the store's new location and times.

**6) Principal's Report**

**a) CTV School Zone**

Mr. Knoll has contacted CTV regarding a School Zone segment on the CTV News for Cogito.

**b) Cogito Enrolment**

Projected September 2009 Cogito enrolment count is 184 students. This includes 42 Cogito Kindergarten students; split into a morning and afternoon class. Next school year will see the first Cogito Grade 9 graduating class – 13 students.

The program has grown significantly from 53 students in 2003.

School tours still continue for interested families.

- c) **Grade 6 Graduation**  
June 4<sup>th</sup> set for the Grade 6 Cogito graduation.

**7) Sub-Committee Updates**

**a) Program Development & Improvement**

- i) Parent Handbook  
Any last minute changes or comments to be made to Mrs. Hunter. A final print ready copy is expected by mid June. At such time a copy of the shorter parent guide will be posted on the school website.

**b) Communication & Marketing**

- i) CTV "School Zone"  
As per the Principal's report.

**8) Year in Review**

The Committee Chair to prepare a short letter outlining the activities and achievements for the Program of the past school year.

**9) Next Meeting**

Next Meeting is Tuesday September 15<sup>th</sup> 7:00pm in the Library.

Meeting Adjourned.



## **Elmer S. Gish Cogito Steering Committee**

June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

---

### **Review of the 2008 / 2009 Year**

#### **Cogito Parents:**

The close of the school year is upon us and now is the time to reflect on the activities and progress made for the Cogito Program. The theme this year has been "*focus on continuous improvement*". The Program has come a long way over the past six years and this year saw us building on past success.

This year the steering committee setup three sub-committees addressing: Communication and Marketing; Program Development and Improvement; and Parent-Teacher Support. Communication and Marketing concentrated on new ideas to promote the program in the community. Program Development and Improvement addressed an improved parent handbook, start-of-year parent orientation, homework quality and general consistency throughout the program. Parent-Teacher support looked at parent aids such as homework samples and parent support sessions.

There were many positives for the past year. Some of the more notable include:

- More program consistency throughout the grades;
- Commitment to new and better learning resources;
- Continued emphasis on communication and promotion activities – looking at new ideas;
- Cogito teachers receiving timely information and feedback from the committee;
- Continued cooperation and involvement from school administration;
- Well trained and experienced Cogito teaching staff; and
- New uniform supplier.

Next year we hope to continue to build on this and continue to have a solid program. I encourage any parents interested in participating next year to attend the first 2009/2010 Cogito Steering Committee meeting tentatively scheduled for September 15<sup>th</sup>.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Mrs. Hunter, Mr. Knoll and Mr. Steele for their support and tireless efforts on the Cogito program.

Sincerely,

---

**Michael Maxfield**  
Chairperson, Cogito Steering Committee