



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

September 15th, 2009

Attendance: Duncan Knoll (Chair), Anna Wong, Cathy Carew, Carolyn Hunter, Melanie Johnson, Cynthia Kaufmann, Marilyn Blackcock, Daniela Djogovic-Steele, Kathleen Smith, Shelley Metera, Noella Paton, Kim Langford, Alisa Bolster, Christine Kendrick, Cheryl Joseph, Michael Maxfield,

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as is.

3) Election of Officers

Committee Executive

- a) Chairperson : Michael Maxfield
- b) Vice Chairperson : Cathy Carew
- c) Secretary : Noella Paton

Sub-Committee Leads

A brief synopsis of the sub-committee roles were provided:

Communication & Marketing Lead: *This role is focused on leadership and organization of approved marketing and promotion events; communication of program and program support activities within the school and community; and gathering and tabling ideas on communication improvements, program marketing and promotion of Cogito activities.*

Program Development & Improvement Lead: *This role is focused on leadership and organization of approved Cogito program improvement activities; and gathering and tabling of ideas on program performance and general improvement.*

Parent/Teacher Support Lead: *This role is focused on leadership and organization of approved activities and ideas that benefit and support both teachers and parents; and gathering and tabling ideas on ways to aid parents in their child's education and assist teachers where needed.*

- a) Communication & Marketing : Kim Langford
- b) Program Development : Cheryl Joseph
- c) Parent / Teacher Support : *Vacant*

4) Review and Approval of May 19, 2009 Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the May 19, 2009 meeting were adopted as is.

5) Principal's Report

a) Edmonton Public has updated and rewritten the Cogito Curriculum to fit the new Alberta Curriculum. Our school has committed to purchasing the Social Studies portion this year. Cost \$4000 for the updated K-9 Social Studies Curriculum.

b) Enrollment for 2009/10 year - total 188

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| K - 42 | Gr.5 - 22 |
| Gr.1 - 25 | Gr.6 - 7 |
| Gr.2 - 19 | Gr.7 - 12 |
| Gr.3 - 23 | Gr.8 - 10 |
| Gr.4 - 14 | Gr.9 - 15 |

c) Lead Cogito Teacher is Mrs. Hunter

d) Teaching Staff:

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| K - Mr. Harrison | Gr.5/6 - Mrs. Hunter |
| Gr.1 - Mrs. Werner | Gr.7/8 - Ms Miskey - Mr. Kondruk |
| Gr.2 - Mrs. Wright | Gr.9 - Miss Rusk / Mrs. Plummer |
| Gr.3 - Mr. Drake | |
| Gr.4 - Mrs. Rizzato - Mrs. Zawadac | |
| French - Mrs. Reidy, Miss Downing | |

e) Artist In Resident - Spyder Yardley Jones hopefully coming for 3 weeks in November to share his love of art and work with our students regarding utilizing various art techniques.

Awaiting Confirmation - early October

f) Governor General Award Winning Author / Illustrator Wallace Edwards spoke to the grade 5 class on Thursday September 17

6) Committee Objectives for the coming Year

An open discussion was tabled on defining the objectives for the committee for the coming year. Some topics where discussed, however it was decided to re-table this item for the next meeting and look to garner broader input from parents prior to the meeting in October.

Topics raised at this meeting included:

- a) Promote general community awareness of the Cogito Program at E.S.Gish
- b) Focus on Program continuous improvement
- c) Planning for future over-enrolment
- d) Clarification of School District Recognition Criteria

Further to this agenda item meeting logistics where covered:

- a) Target of 6 meetings for the year
- b) Consistent time and location – 7:00pm, School Library

7) Other Topics

a) Literacy Map – Mrs. Hunter

- i) Possibly more sessions throughout the year – depending upon parent interest.
- ii) More Homework sessions for Parents planned for January/February.
- iii) Consideration to be given for other parent support programs/activities. Ideas to be tabled at next meeting.

b) Cogito @ Gish Newsletter

- i) The sustainment of the Cogito @ Gish article posted in the Gish Newsletter was discussed. It was determined that the article is a good idea and should continue.
- ii) Cogito parents are asked to submit ideas for Cogito news articles, to be tabled at the next meeting.
- iii) It was suggested that Junior High students could participate in the writing articles.

c) Combination Classes

The concern of combination (multiple programs in one classroom) was raised. For example Grade 4 French class is a combined Cogito and Global class as is Grade 9 Social Studies.

- i) Duncan outlined the challenges with the student class numbers with regards to setting combined program classes. There is limited funding and the enrolment numbers work such that splitting classes would require funds the school does not have.
- ii) Concerns were raised over the communication of this situation as many parents learned about combined program classes after school had started. Duncan will commit to communication of such situations to parents of all programs.

Action: Further it was suggested the Duncan craft a communiqué (format at his discretion) to parents outlining this situation to alleviate any concerns.

- iii) Further discussion ensued on concerns over variances in combined program class dynamics – For example, instruction delivery, expectations and work load. How will this be managed effectively in such situations? This topic will be tabled at the next meeting.

d) Change-room Supervision

- i) Concerns over change-room supervision were tabled. Duncan will look into this.

e) **Grade 9 Graduation**

This will be the first year for Cogito Grade 9 Graduation. Discussion on this topic yielded the following:

- i) Grade 9 Graduation at Gish will see multiple programs graduating at the same time.
- ii) The recommendation is to form a Gr.9 Graduation Parent Working Group, consisting of representatives of all programs. The Cogito Program Development Sub-Committee Lead has been suggested as representative for this Working Group.

Action: The Cogito Steering Committee is looking for volunteers to participate in this. This topic is to be tabled at the next meeting.

f) **School Awards Review**

- i) It was suggested that the school awards needs to be revamped to align better with the multi-program nature of the school.
- ii) This topic is to be tabled at the School Council Meeting.

Action: Duncan to provide feedback at the next Steering Committee meeting.

g) **Uniform Clarity for Kindergarten and New students**

- i) Topic raised to ensure that new students entering the program have sufficient access to information on uniform criteria.

h) **Mr. Harrison's Kindergarten website**

- i) The web site has been very well received.
- ii) Parents are reminded that the site is secured with a password.

i) **Accountability Survey**

- i) Duncan provided an overview of the Alberta Education Accountability Pillar Survey Summary Report.

- ii) Synopsis of scored results for applicable items as follows:

Safe & Caring School – Very High (# score is above Provincial average)

Program of Studies – High (# score is at the Provincial average)

Education Quality – Very High (# score is above the Provincial average)

Low Drop Out Rate – Very High (# score is above the Provincial average)

P.A.T. Acceptability – High (# score is above the Provincial average)

P.A.T. Excellence – High (# score is above the Provincial average)

Work Preparation – High (# score is above the Provincial average)

Citizenship – Very High (# score is above the Provincial average)

Parental Involvement – Very High (# score is above the Provincial average)

School Improvement – High (# score is above the Provincial average)

Parents are asked to contact Duncan for detail information or a copy of the summary report.

j) Asset Development

- i) Duncan provided to parents as resource material a copy of the 40 student development assets.

k) Uniform Swap Feedback

- i) The uniform swap was a success.
- ii) Further refinement for this activity will be made.

8) Next Meeting

Next Meeting is Tuesday October 20th 7:00pm in the Library.

Meeting Adjourned.



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

December 1st, 2009

Attendance: Christine Kendrick, Kerri Merriam, Cathy Carew, Kathleen Smith, Francis Eng, Noella Paton, Casey Boyd, Shelley Metera, Carolyn Hunter, Duncan Knoll, Michael Maxfield (Chair)

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as is with additional topics.

3) Review and Approval of October 20th 2009 Minutes

Minutes approved as is.

4) UpMarket Images – Uniform Supplier

Item dropped from agenda as representative was absent.

5) Principal's Report

a) Social Studies Curriculum

The school has purchased a new Social Studies curriculum from Edmonton Public at a price of \$4,200. The curriculum covers kindergarten through to Grade 9. Parts of the curriculum will be used by teaching staff this year with a full implementation planned for the 2010/2011 school year.

b) New Report Card Feedback

The rollout of the new outcomes based report card format was on November 23rd for grades 1 through 6. Parents are encouraged to comment on the new report cards using the district supplied feedback forms – located outside the main office.

Term 2, spring of 2010 will see a more formal feedback process for parents.

Note, Cogito grades 2 through 6 students are the only program grades that also receive percentage grades on the new report card.

c) Discipline Committee

School staff have struck up a committee (8 members) to examine ways to improve discipline at Gish. The committee will meet prior to the Christmas break and throughout term 2. Parent input is welcome and valued. Please e-mail Mr. Knoll

(Duncan.Knoll@spschools.org) with suggestions.

d) Cogito Recruitment

The District Kindergarten Fair is scheduled for Saturday January 23rd 9:00am to Noon at Bellerose High School. In addition to this event Gish will be sending out advertisements inviting Cogito registrations from grades 7 to 9. Supplemental ads for all programs will occur in the spring generated by the District Office.

In addition to these events an “advertisement” will be posted in the Gazette and Saint City News newspapers to promote available spots in Grades 7 through 9.

e) **Additional building**

An additional detached building is planned for the school for the 2010/2011 year. The occupying grade is to be determined.

6) Adoption of Committee Objectives for the Year

Objectives agreed upon, as follows.

a) Promote general community awareness of the Cogito Program.

1) Ensure a consistent message about Cogito.

One of the challenges the program is faced with is the answer to the question “What is Cogito?”. The committee will work on revisiting the message of Cogito and strive for a consistent core message that parents can consistently speak to.

2) Increase public awareness of the Cogito Program in and outside St. Albert.

b) Focus on Cogito Program continuous improvement

1) Continue the efforts from last year on program improvement.

2) Establish more parent/teacher support activities.

3) Consistency between grades.

c) Future enrolment

1) Planning for future over-enrolment.

2) Enrolment focus? – K to 3, 4 to 6, Jr. High.

d) Communication / Marketing Jr. High Cogito

1) Cogito Jr. High as an option.

It is customary for Elementary schools to only communicate (“advertise”) to Jr. High schools in their neighbourhood. As Cogito is not a neighbourhood program but rather citywide this poses challenges for conveying Cogito as a Jr. High option outside of E.S.Gish. The committee will work to conveying Cogito Jr. High as an option to students outside of E.S. Gish at the same time respecting neighbourhood Jr. High Schools.

e) Consistency with other Cogito Programs

- 1) Connect with other Cogito schools in the greater Edmonton area.
- 2) Establish continuous information sharing and collaboration with other Cogito schools.
- 3) Leverage and share best practices.

7) **Subcommittee Updates**

In lieu of individual updates a discussion on actions/task planner was conducted with respect to the agreed upon objectives.

Action: Mr. Maxfield will consolidate discussion and actions and forward to subcommittee and volunteer members.

8) **Reports Cards**

a) Review of new format

The learning outcomes based report cards show some, but not all of the learning outcomes for each subject with the addition of percentage grade marks for most other subjects.

It was noted that there were inconsistencies as some report cards did not contain percentages where expected and learning outcome evaluation marks were missing in other situations. The format and process is new and some bugs are still being worked out. The staff hopes to have all issues ironed out for term 2 reporting.

Many parents expressed confusion over the learning outcome evaluation criteria and the meaning of the learning outcomes themselves. Mr. Knoll indicated that for each grade subject there are many learning outcomes and that only a select subset will appear on the report card, some reflective of term based outcomes and others for more recent learning outcomes at the time of reporting.

b) Feedback from parents

Dialog from parents on this topic was plentiful. It is apparent that further discussion and feedback is required. **Parents are encouraged to attend the next Cogito Steering Committee meeting as this topic will be covered once more.**

Action: Mr. Knoll to collect feedback from Parents and review at the next meeting.

A summary of feedback discussed at this meeting is as follows:

- The information provided in the new report card is confusing and difficult to correlate back to results that parents have witness from their children throughout the term.
- For parents, not understanding what each learning outcome means in context of all other learning outcomes for the year make it difficult to effectively interpret the results. As such, information gleaned from parent / teacher interviews is required to resolve this confusion. This in turn may not be the best use of the brief interview time as some parents may have other topics to discuss

- The three level evaluation criteria of “Exceeds Expectations”, “Meets Expectations”, and “Has Yet to Meet Expectations” in many cases communicate a conflicting message from that of the percentage grade. This left parents concerned about their child’s performance.
- The three level evaluation criteria of learning outcomes is somewhat in contrast to the principles of the Cogito program and as such does not provide an accurate measure of student performance.
- The combination of quantitative and qualitative measures of performance is difficult to reconcile and in many cases, as a combination, is ineffective as a means of evaluation. The most effective and accurate method of performance measurement involves four components – a target, benchmark, threshold and consistent frequent measurements. The simple evaluation criteria of the learning outcomes measures offers non of these components and is in direct contrast to student work performed and grades taken (by way of assignments, quizzes and tests) throughout the term. The percentage grades provided on the report card along with the term assignment and testing grades and the learning outcome evaluation information, requires teachers to correlate the messages to ensure a consistent evaluation between quantitative and qualitative information. This is a difficult task that is prone to confusion more often than not. The end result along with other deficiencies is a poor evaluation message – one that can only be reconciled by a face-to-face discussion with the teacher.

9) Web Page

Mr. Harrison provided a walk-through of the interactive website used by the Cogito Kindergarten class. The site has many features and is an excellent communication tool for Parents, Mr. Harrison and students. Setup of the site is easy and in-expensive. Parents who attended were enthusiastic about the site and encouraged expansion of this tool to other grades within the program. Maintaining communication consistency between grades was discussed. Mr. Knoll will be looking into options going forward. Parents of all Cogito grades who haven’t seen the site are encouraged to speak with Mr. Harrison.

10) Other Topics

The question was raised as to why the wearing of uniforms stop at Grade 6 and are not in the higher grades. Comments were made regarding establishing consistent philosophies between Elementary and Jr. High and variations of uniform styles.

Further discussion covered the background of this decision. Concerns were raised over the decision to forgo uniforms in Jr. High and in part the process upon which the decision was conducted.

Time limitations did not allow for adequate discussion time. This topic will be tabled for the next Steering Committee meeting.

11) Next Meeting Date

Next Meeting is Tuesday February 2nd 7:00pm in the Library.

Meeting Adjourned.



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

February 2nd, 2010
7:00pm – 10:00pm

Attendance: Phebe Eglauer, Christine Kendrick, Kim Langford, L.D. Unsworth, Kathy Eng, Jordan Dunlop, Daniela Djogovic-Steele, Cathy Carew, Melissa Zawaduk, Carolyn Hunter, Duncan Knoll, Michael Maxfield (Chair)

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as is with additional topics.

3) Review and Approval of December 1st, 2009 Minutes

Minutes approved with a minor change – Section 5) Principal's Report, sub-section b) third paragraph should read "*Note, Cogito grades 3 through 6 students are the only program grades that also receive percentage grades on the new report card*".

4) UpMarket Images – Uniform Supplier Demonstration

Jillian Hunsley from Upmarket Images provided a short presentation of the Gish Cogito uniform options.

- UpMarket inquired about the sweater as, according to UpMarket, was discontinued as a desired item by the Gish Cogito program. No member of the committee could recall this decision and it was assumed to be a miscommunication possibly resulting from the change over of UpMarket ownership. As it stands it was agreed upon that the sweater will be re-introduced as a uniform clothing option.
- UpMarket has introduced a "kids will be kids" policy whereby an item that has been accidentally damaged can be returned to UpMarket for a 10% discount towards a replacement item. Please see the UpMarket website for more details.
- A question was raised by the committee: "Can UpMarket provide uniform samples to the school during the Spring months (e.g. May & June) for new parents to look at, get ideas of choices and prices?" Answer: Yes, arrangements can be made. UpMarket is happy to oblige.
- A question was raised by the committee: "Is it possible to arrange for fitting days at the school?" Answer: Yes, arrangements can be made. **Note:** details for this will need to be worked out by school Administration and the Cogito Parent Steering Committee. Please see section 8.0 of these minutes for more information on this and related topics.

- A question was raised by the committee: “Is there home delivery?” Answer: Yes, arrangements can be made for home delivery. Contact UpMarket directly for more details.

www.upmarketimages.com/
Phone 780.481.5436

#113, 10411 122 St.
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 4C2

Email: upmarketimageschooluniforms@shaw.ca

Store hours from October 2009 to February 2010
Monday & Wednesday 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Sunday Closed

5) Principal’s Report

a) Cogito Registration

Following the January 23rd Kindergarten Fair Cogito Kindergarten registrations are picking up. Twelve students have already pre-registered with the expectation there will be two Kindergarten classes for the next school year. Many school tours have been conducted by Mr. Knoll and Mrs. Hunter with a most recent tour for grades 3, 4 and 6 Cogito placement for September. Many interested families will be attending the February 11th Open House – which includes the Cogito Fashion Show.

b) Junior High Cogito Ads

For late February there will be two newspaper ads specifically targeting Junior High Cogito students in St. Albert. The objective is, by recruiting grade 7, 8 and 9 students, split classes in Junior High Cogito can be eliminated. Volunteers were recruited to help with crafting the advertisement. Jordan Dunlop and Michael Maxfield volunteered to assist Mr. Knoll with this.

A question was raised: “What are the requirements for entry into the Program?” Mr. Knoll indicated that no restrictive requirements exist for entry into the Cogito program. Benchmarks and expectations for Cogito are conveyed to perspective parents. The decision to enroll in the program remains with the parents with some counseling from school administration.

c) Report Card Feedback

The majority of feedback received from Cogito parents regarding the new report card was not favorable. Issues with percentages not directly linking to the learner outcomes and the report card appearing less quantitative were raised.

The following is an anecdotal list of comments from parents:

“I didn’t have a problem with it.”

“I hated it.”

“It didn’t tell you anything.”
“My husband understood it because it was similar to performance reviews in the military.”
“The old ones were better.”
“The reporting was too subjective.”
“There is a need to have defined marking regarding percentages.”
“The percentages on the report card did not directly relate to the statements in the report cards.”
“Too vague.”
“More in-depth information is needed.”
“Giving out grade guidelines prior to the report card was beneficial.”

6) Report Cards

a) Parent Feedback Received to Date

The majority of the feedback was provided in the Principal’s report – see section 5 of these minutes. Further commentary supported the general frustration level with the new report card.

Mrs. Zawaduk provided a brief update on the piloting of the new report card.

- Parent feedback on the new report card is encouraged by the District office.
- There will be no major changes to the report card for the coming school year. The District office has received a wide range of comments and it would be premature to make radical changes at this time.
- Minor changes to aesthetics will be made to make the report card easier to read. These changes are slated for the March report cards.
- Teachers throughout the District were surveyed about the report cards. Fifty (50%) percent responded to the survey. The participation numbers appear low – the timing of the survey was poor as it was issued just prior to Christmas break. Results are pending.

b) Open Discussion

- Mrs. Zawaduk will be meeting the District regarding the new report card. It was discussed by the committee that actions are needed to help garner and organize feedback from Parents for Mrs. Zawaduk to present to the District office.

Action Item: *A notice will appear in the Friday Envelops requesting volunteers to head-up and participate in gathering and organizing feedback on the new report cards, for presentation to the District office. Mr. Maxfield will put together the notice.*

7) Review of Committee Objectives Task Planner - Progress

Due to the length of other topic areas this agenda item was passed over and will be the primary focus of the next meeting. The following task planner was tabled and will be discussed at the next meeting.

- a) Review of each objective's items, actions and identification of accomplishments to date.
- b) Discussion on new tasks and volunteers.

| Objective: Promote general community awareness of the Cogito Program | | |
|--|--|--------------|
| Item | Actions | |
| a) Ensure a consistent message about Cogito "What is Cogito?" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft phrasing on the answer to "What is Cogito?" for steering committee discussion. • Propose ideas to steering committee on the ways to convey information to parents | Kim Langford |
| b) Increase public awareness of the Cogito Program in and outside St. Albert | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD – Open Discussion at Steering Committee | Kim Langford |

| Objective: Focus on Cogito Program Continuous Improvement | | |
|--|---|----------------|
| Item | Actions | |
| a) Continue the efforts from last year on program improvement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Cheryl Joseph |
| b) Establish more parent/teacher support activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Carolyn Hunter |
| c) Consistency between grades | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Carolyn Hunter |

| Objective: Future Enrolment | | |
|--|---|--------------|
| Item | Actions | |
| a) Planning for future over-enrolment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Duncan Knoll |
| b) Enrolment Focus? K to 3, 4 to 6, Jr. High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | TBD |

| Objective: Communication / Marketing Jr. High Cogito | | |
|--|---|--------------|
| Item | Actions | |
| a) Cogito Jr. High as an option | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Kim Langford |

| Objective: Consistency with other Cogito Programs | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Item | Actions | |
| a) Connect with other Cogito schools in the greater Edmonton area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Duncan Knoll / Michael Maxfield |
| b) Establish continuous information sharing and collaboration with other Cogito schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Duncan Knoll / Michael Maxfield |
| c) Leverage and share best practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose / table ideas to steering committee for discussion. | Duncan Knoll / Carolyn Hunter |

8) Uniforms

a) Philosophies and Policies for Cogito at Gish

One of the key philosophies for the Cogito uniform is “dress for success”. The current policy is for uniforms in the Elementary grades and no uniforms in the Jr. High grades.

b) Review of the history of decisions on Uniform Policies

The decision to forgo uniforms in the Jr. High grades was made in the Spring of 2007. Details on this decision are found in the Cogito Parents Steering Committee Meeting Minutes, dated May 22nd, 2007. They are as follows:

Duncan reported that a survey was conducted of the existing grade 6 students and their parents. The survey, designed to collect feedback on the topic of uniforms for our new junior high class, was done in response to questions and concerns raised by the affected families in recent months. Duncan informed the committee that the results of the survey supported a move to a non-uniformed class. The topic was opened for discussion at this Steering Committee meeting in order to collect further feedback. The attendees discussed their opinions, concerns and visions. Some were opposed to a non-uniformed junior high while others were in favour of the change. Some attendees preferred a uniformed class, but thought that the concerns expressed warranted response.

Following the discussion, Duncan determined that the 2007/2008 Junior High Cogito class would be deemed non-uniformed, however would be expected to uphold a predetermined Standard of Dress or Dress Code. This decision is based on the small number of students (8) moving into grade 7 in the fall and is in response to concerns raised by those affected. As such, Duncan stated that this decision will be revisited next year to determine if the decision will stand for the following 2008/2009 school year. Attendees at the meeting had mixed opinions as to the practical ability of the school to re-introduce uniforms at a later date. Some thought that it was a definite possibility considering the sizes of the upcoming classes and the evidence provided by other schools having reported successful changeovers, while others thought that a reintroduction of uniforms was unrealistic and unlikely.

The committee reviewed a listing of dress code items that was compiled by Diane Orr as a result of her research into the topic. Duncan stated that the intention is to pull together a few people as a sub-committee to further work the Standard of Dress/Dress Code and fine tune it to our school needs. There was a general agreement among the attendees that any dress code would need to be enforced, with consequences clearly defined and adhered to. Discussion at the table included ponderings about the Logos Program and whether or not they may entertain the idea of uniforms. Also, the thought was raised that perhaps a Standard of Dress or Dress Code for the entire school may be an interesting idea to consider.

Serious concerns were raised over the process used to make this decision. It was felt that decisions of this magnitude that affect the program as a whole or decisions on foundational aspects of the program should follow a more formalized process that involves all parents, rather than, as one parent put it “based on whoever shows up to the meeting that evening.”

c) Open Forum Discussion

A synopsis of the open discussion included:

- “Image is important. This is an aspect of the Cogito Program at Gish.”
- “The uniform is a defining characteristic of the program.”
- “Historically, Cogito schools that have dropped the uniform have seen a drop in enrolment.”
- “The uniform is important both as a fundamental component of the program and a drawing card for future parents.”
- “The uniform is a tactile reminder of the commitment to academic success.”
- “The decision making process on key Cogito Program aspects needs to be more formalized and ensure fair and comprehensive representation of parents, teachers and administration.”
- “Should teachers wear uniforms?”
- “How can we expect students to adopt the dress for success philosophy when some teachers dress is far too casual? Is this setting a good example?”
- “Can we have more options in the uniform?”
- “If the decision to forgo uniforms in Jr. High is partly due to mixed/combined classes and the range of class options, what happens when Cogito Jr. High expands and this issue no longer is there?”

Action Item: A Cogito Uniform Sub-Committee will be established, lead by Phebe Eglauer. A notice will be issued to Cogito Parents wishing to participate in the sub-committee to cover, in more depth the topics raised in the February 2nd 2010 meeting.

Action Item: Mr. Knoll and Mr. Maxfield will put together a draft list of key Cogito Program Aspects that will be tabled at the next steering committee meeting. In addition for the next meeting discussion on a formal process to manage change for these key aspects will be tabled.

9) Other Topics

a) PAT Results

- i) Mr. Steele took the time to collate the Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) results specific to Cogito at Gish for Grades 3 and 6, Math and Language Arts. The results were very favourable providing the % achievement levels of Gish Cogito students against the Provincial average. (Thank you Mr. Steele).
- ii) All Cogito students for Grades 3 and 6, for Math and Language Arts achieved *Acceptable* level test scores – this, on average, exceeded the Provincial Average by more than 16%. The number of Cogito students (Grades 3 and 6) for Math and Language Arts that achieved *Standard of Excellence* level test scores was high and, on average, more than 35% above the Provincial Average.

b) Gym Usage

- i) The question was raised – “Is there an opportunity to expand the school space via a new school building in available land space in Akinsdale?” Further discussion around this topic centred on other means to expand usage space in the school, such as a second gymnasium. The rationale being that many Junior High schools in St. Albert have more than one gym whereas Gish, as an Elementary & Junior High only has one.
- ii) Mr. Knoll indicated that the school district office calculates maximum student body head count by square footage of the entire school. Based on that formula Gish has room for 100 more students. The criteria is flawed as the square footage takes into account non-instructional spaces taken up by items such as lockers. Regardless this poses challenges for school administration when requesting expansion funds based on the actual student head count versus the district’s formula for maximum student head count.

c) Homework Distribution

- i) A discussion on the timing and communication of weekly homework expectations was raised. Concerns sited focused on ensuring meaningful and manageable weekly homework that is communicated with more lead time than is done presently.
- ii) Challenges raised by some, involved juggling many extra curricular child activities (e.g. sports, clubs, etc.) and homework throughout the week. For some families this left the weekends to effectively complete homework assignments. The request made was for more lead time on communication of weekly homework responsibilities – issued presently on Mondays, suggested to be issued on Fridays.
- iii) Mrs. Hunter will look into this topic in more depth and discuss with other Cogito teachers.

d) Grade 1 Class size

- i) The question was raised regarding the likelihood of two Grade One classes next year. Mr. Knoll confirmed that the likelihood is high and that these classes will be staffed accordingly.

e) Class Website Feedback

- i) Mrs. Hunter provided a demonstration of the Grade 5/6 and Grade 3/4 class websites. Both were similar in concept to the Cogito Kindergarten website used by Mr. Harrison.
- ii) Feedback was favourable. Comments focused on ensuring some basic consistency of information structure (menus and topics) and consistent Cogito branding on the sites.
- iii) Additional information such as class calendars was also raised as a potential communication tool for work activities, field trips and homework assignments.

10) Next Meeting

Next Meeting is Tuesday March 2nd 7:00pm in the Library.

Meeting Adjourned.



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

March 2nd, 2010
7:00pm –9:00pm

Draft – not for publication

Attendance: Cynthia Kaufmann, Kathy Eng, Lysha Ursulak, Cathy Carew, Jordan Dunlop, Phebe Eglauer, Melissa Zawaduk, Carolyn Hunter, Duncan Knoll, Michael Maxfield (Chair)

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as is with additional topics.

3) Review and Approval of February 2nd 2010 Minutes

4) Principal's Report

a) Nomination of Mr. Harrison for Canadian Family Magazine Teacher of the Year.

Mr. Knoll offered a thank you to all the parents who nominated Mr. Harrison for this award. We all await the results.

b) Cogito Marketing Sub-Committee

Mr. Knoll met with the sub-committee to discuss advertising parameters and possible content for Cogito Ads. A full page add will appear in the Saint City News the third week of March. In addition Lee Nickerson has granted permission to Gish Administration to speak directly with Leo Nickerson grade 6 students about Jr. High at Gish. These students will receive individual invitations to attend the Gish Junior High Open House.

Action Item: All parents are encouraged to pass on to friends and family, with Jr. High age kids, the benefits of Cogito Jr. High and invite them to see for themselves at the Gish Jr. High Open House – Wednesday, April 7th at 7:00pm

c) Cogito Kindergarten Registrations

Based on data to date, the program is on pace for two Kindergarten Cogito classes this coming school year. Registrations have exceeded one class already with many school tours planned for prospective parents and students.

5) Review of Committee Objectives

a) Promote general community awareness of the Cogito Program

Four ideas were discussed by the group around ways to build awareness and understanding of the Cogito program in the greater St. Albert community.

- 1) Devise a message about the program that differentiates it from other education programs and work towards a message that is consistent, in both understanding and delivery, by parents.

***Action Item:** Jordan Dunlop to garner and consolidate a message draft responding to – “What is Cogito?”. Jordan will provide a series of single message options for the Steering Committee to review. Parents will see a note in a Friday envelop with instructions to provide input into this process.*

- 2) Implement a Cogito website that offers among other things, a forum to convey Program information on a regular basis and act as a single point of contact communication tool.

***Action Item:** Mr. Knoll will look into the possible logistical constraints around administration of a Cogito website.*

***Action Item:** Jordan Dunlop to draft a mock-up for discussion at the next Steering Committee meeting.*

- 3) In addition to the points above, several other marketing suggestions were raised:
 - Change the marketing message from “Please attend” to “Do you think you’ve got what it takes to realize the Cogito advantage?”
 - Create marketing materials that are specific to program levels – Kindergarten, Elementary Grades, Junior High.
 - Invitations to other district Elementary schools for Jr. High Open House
 - Generate targeted marketing campaigns.
- 4) Many parents “shop” for a school based on marks and school performance – such as the information provided by the Fraser Institute. If this is one of criteria used by prospective parents then advertising and communication literature should include this information.

b) Focus on Cogito Program Continuous Improvement

- 1) The idea was raised to possibly introduce other language options, most likely in the Jr. High grades. Further discussion is required.
- 2) Re-institute class room representatives. The concept of a single-point-of-contact parent representative for each class room was suggested. It was noted that in the earlier years of the program this mechanism proved beneficial. No attendees at the meeting could recall the reasons for discontinuing this practice.

The class parent representative would be a designated parent volunteer who would act as the primary contact and communicator between the teachers and parents of students in that class. The purpose **is not** to put a barrier between parents and teachers. Parent are still encourage to speak directly with the teacher on matters specific to your child’s education. The objective of the class-rep **is** to

manage common messages and streamline information between the teacher and parents.

***Action Item:** Mrs. Hunter will speak with the staff to organize canvassing for class reps. Information will be forth coming in a Friday envelop.*

- 3) Better communication between teachers. It was noted that in some cases, especially in higher grades, that students receive unbalanced workloads across multiple subjects – in some cases having a large home load one week and a very light load the other. The objective is improved communication between teachers with regards to projects, homework assignments and tests.

***Action Item:** Mrs. Hunter will speak with the staff regarding this topic.*

c) Consistency with other Cogito Programs.

- 1) The topic of site visits to other Cogito schools in the Edmonton area was discussed. Mr. Knoll mentioned that the administration has visited other schools before. The committee expressed that cooperative visits between Gish Cogito and other Cogito schools would provide valuable insight into best practices and shared key learning, benefit all parties. The ask is, for future visits that Gish teachers and administrators report back to the Steering Committee what they have learned as it relates to overall program improvement and general consistency.

***Action Item:** Mr. Knoll will look into the next possible Cogito school site visit.*

- 2) Further to the topic above, it was recommended by the committee that an information exchange between similar steering bodies from other Cogito schools would be beneficial. An invitation to Steering Committee officers from another Cogito school to attend the Gish meeting and visa versa could expand dialog and promote improvement and program consistency across schools.

***Action Item:** Mrs. Hunter will look into the logistics of this with other Cogito schools and report back possibilities.*

d) Future Enrolment.

- 1) Over enrolment. Question: Will there be room at Gish when all programs grow to full capacity K to 9? Mr. Knoll, answer = Yes.

e) Communication and Marketing Cogito Jr. High

Topic was covered with the Principal's Report agenda item.

6) Cogito Change Management

Mrs. Hunter outlined the school's foundational aspects set by school trustees. The school can set or change principles that support these foundational aspects, but not anything set by school trustees.

The concept of a formal change process for key Cogito foundational aspects was discussed. The purpose of such a process would be to ensure that major decisions that affect the Cogito program at Gish in perpetuity have been vetted with a degree of rigor that is reflective of the change.

Mr. Knoll reminded the Steering Committee that the Cogito Parent Steering Committee plays an Advisory role to school administration and that the decision on changes to Cogito Program aspects at Gish rest with school administration.

It was agreed that the idea of ensuring diligence on major decisions is important, even in an advisory role.

For future decisions that affect major components of the program the following should be considered:

- 1) General consensus of parents is required, yet the number of participants in consensus must be considered in relation to the magnitude of the topic.
- 2) Program wide decision discussions must be clearly identified in the Steering Committee Agenda and the agenda issued to all parents in ample time prior to the meeting. For example,

PROGRAM TOPIC: <<description of topic>> RECOMMENDATION MAY FOLLOW DISCUSSION

- 3) When warranted issue a separate notice to parents canvassing for participation.
- 4) Ample time to be given to ensure parents have provided input prior to a recommendation being made.

Action Item: *Mr. Maxfield will include contact information in all meeting minutes for parents to communicate possible Steering Committee meeting agenda topics.*

7) Other Topics

a) Uniform Sub-Committee

- i) The Uniform Sub-Committee will meet March 7th and report back information and findings to the Steering Committee at the next meeting.
- ii) The discussion topics of the committee are wide open. Initial agenda topics considered range from:
 - a) Expanded Uniform Choices
 - b) Information on UpMarket Images supplier
 - c) Uniform Polices at Gish
 - d) Uniform Swaps / Sales

8) Next Meeting

Next Meeting is Tuesday May 4th 7:00pm in the Library.

Suggestions for agenda items can be sent to Michael Maxfield – mmaxfield@xcura.com

Meeting Adjourned.



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

May 4th, 2010
7:00pm –9:00pm

Attendance: Cynthia Kaufmann, Cathy Carew, Phebe Eglauer, Melissa Zawaduk, Carolyn Hunter, Duncan Knoll, Michael Maxfield (Chair)

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as is with additional topics.

3) Review and Approval of March 4th 2010 Minutes

Minutes approved as is.

4) Principal's Report

a) Cogito Program Enrolment

Total registrations in the Cogito program from last year (2009-10) have increased by 27 students. Registrations numbers from last year to next year are as follows. Note, Kindergarten students count as a 0.5 head-count. Numbers include 4 international students.

| Grades | 2009-10 Registrations | 2010-11 Registrations (as of May 4 th) | Movement (09/10 class to 10/11 class) |
|--------|-----------------------|---|--|
| Kdn. | 41 / 2 = 20.5 | 29 / 2 = 14.5 | - |
| 1 | 25 | 46 | +5 |
| 2 | 19 | 26 | +1 |
| 3 | 23 | 20 | +1 |
| 4 | 14 | 23 | - |
| 5 | 18 | 14 | - |
| 6 | 6 | 19 | +1 |
| 7 | 12 | 7 | +1 |
| 8 | 10 | 9 | -3 |
| 9 | 14 | 12 | +2 |
| | 161.5 | 188.5 | +8 |

Numbers for 2010/11 Kindergarten are enough for a morning and afternoon, albeit just.

A combined grade 5 and 6 class numbering 33 students is large. Consideration is being given to split into separate grade classes. This is somewhat dependent upon whether grade 5 and/or 6 enrolment increases.

b) Math Curriculum Purchase

A new Cogito Math Curriculum is being purchased from Edmonton Public Schools in June. This expanded curriculum will be implemented by Cogito teachers in the 2010/11 school year. Note this is the curriculum "Scope and Sequence". Current Math course materials, such as Saxon Math text books will be used under this curriculum.

Additional resources may be needed to fill any curriculum gaps. The acquisition of this curriculum further aligns E.S. Gish Cogito with other Cogito schools.

c) Staffing

The Cogito program requires two grade 1 teachers and possibly a grade 5 or 6 teacher (see minute item 4a).

The initial phase of the staffing process has begun whereby positions are advertised by the District. Transfers and district staff are placed first. The second phase of the process involves competitions to be posted outside of the district. The schools goal is to identify the best teachers available to serve the Cogito Program.

d) Read-in Week

The Read-in Week (April 25th – 30th) was highlighted by visits from Mayor Crouse, Board Trustee Judy Huisman, and two Edmonton Eskimos – Patrick Kabongo and Graham Bell. A great time was had by all in the name of literacy and the joy of reading.

e) Dr. Marwaha Vist

Dr. Seama Marwaha was a guest speaker for the grade 8 and 9 classes, Friday April 30th. Dr. Marwaha was a student at E.S. Gish and spoke to the students about her experiences over the 10 years at the school, her path through Paul Kane High School and the University of Alberta. Dr. Marwaha is currently studying internal medicine in Toronto. At the end of her presentation, Dr. Marwaha answered student questions. Students found the experience both interesting and inspiring.

5) Community Awareness

a) "What is Cogito"

Item deferred to next meeting as speaker was unable to attend.

b) Cogito Website

The idea of a website dedicated to the E.S. Cogito Program was discussed. The discussion focused on the needs, viability and logistics regarding a site.

- 1) Website could be housed on free standing domain, Example www.GishCogito.com.
- 2) Some of the benefits would include a central communication medium for Cogito parents, program advertising and a parent/teacher resource centre, including links to classroom websites.
- 3) The school would own the domain and be responsible for domain and site management.

- 4) Website content would be managed collaboratively between Gish School Administration and the Cogito Parents Steering Committee.
- 5) Questions were raised regarding policies, procedures, standards on the part of the District office. As per the March 2nd meeting minutes, Mr. Knoll will investigate.

***Action Item:** Mr. Maxfield to table the topic at the next meeting for further discussion and action items.*

6) Classroom Representative

Mrs. Hunter canvassed the staff regarding the re-establishment of classroom reps. It was determined that class reps were no longer necessary since there are other communication tools such as weekly classroom newsletters and class websites.

An alternative to the classroom reps to aid teachers, are parent class reps on the Cogito Parent Steering Committee.

***Action Item:** Mr. Maxfield to table the topic at the next meeting for further discussion, planning and action items.*

***Action Item:** Mrs. Hunter to coordinate the communication and canvassing of Steering Committee Class Reps, for the beginning of school year orientation.*

7) Uniform Sub-Committee

Two Uniform Sub-Committee meetings were held. Topics included:

- 1) Expanded Uniform Choice.
- 2) Gish Cogito Uniform Days at UpMarket
Information to be distributed to Parents.
- 3) Uniform Policies at Gish

Mrs. Hunter provided and updated draft of the Cogito Uniform Policies.

***Action Item:** Mr. Maxfield to table the topic at the next meeting for further discussion and adoption of these updated policies.*

- 4) Uniform Selection Chart

A uniform selection chart was tabled as a helpful tool for student, parents and uniform supplier regarding uniform options in accordance with policies. An updated and final version of the chart will be reviewed at the next meeting.

- 5) Uniform Swap/Sale

A version of the uniform “Swap”, uniform “Sale” was tabled for discussion. The concept is similar to that of the Gish Baby Items Sale, only specific to Cogito uniforms whereby parents can at a designated location and time sell used uniforms and accessories. The question remains who would organize the Swap/Sale. Volunteers needed.

More details can be found in the Uniform Sub-Committee meeting minutes.

8) Other Topics

- a) Vitalized 2010 – Volunteer Conference June 10, 11 and 12 – Shaw Conference Centre.

The GPA has arranged to pay for a table of 8 to 10 participants (2 members from each committee) to attend the conference.

- b) Advertising

Other advertising ideas for the program could include things like, vehicle decals, fridge magnets, etc. Mr. Knoll is looking into costs and availability.

- c) Education Week

Several large school ads were run in the St. Albert Gazette during Education week. The question was raised with regards to Gish and Cogito not being amongst many schools advertising during Education week. Mr. Knoll indicated that the budget for school advertising is limited and that other choices were made on how to spend the advertising money.

A further comment was made that the Progressive Academy, a uniform based school in Edmonton, advertised in the St. Albert Gazette during Education Week.

Next year more open communication will be made to the Parent Steering Committee on advertising decisions. Consideration will be given to advertise during Education Week.

9) Next Meeting

Next Meeting is Tuesday June 1st 7:00pm in the Library.

Note, this will be the last meeting of the 2009/10 school year.

Meeting Adjourned.



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

June 1st, 2010
7:00pm –9:00pm

Attendance: Phebe Eglauer, Daniela Djogovic-Steele, Carolyn Hunter, Erin Steele, Michael Maxfield (Chair)

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as is with no additional topics.

3) Review and Approval of May 4th 2010 Minutes

Minutes adopted with no changes.

4) Principal's Report

a) Grade 5 and 6 Cogito

For the first time, Cogito grades 5 and 6 enrolment numbers are large enough to warrant two separate core classes. The 2010/11 grade 5 class is presently at 16 students. The 2010/11 grade 6 class is presently at 20 students. The total Cogito registration, Kindergarten through to grade 9 is presently at 212 students. Over the past few years there has been consistent and steady growth in program enrolment.

b) Saxon Math Purchase

The Cogito Program will be receiving over \$14,000 in Saxon math resources for September 2010. This supports the program's commitment to use Saxon Math from grade 1 through to grade 9. The Saxon math program provides the best match for the Cogito expanded curriculum, from elementary through junior high school. Further to this acquisition, inquiries and negotiations are underway with the publisher to provide on-line e-book versions in addition to the hardcopy text books.

c) Cogito Website

The option of a free-standing website domain for Gish Cogito is possible. The district is moving away from in-house server hosting, towards an outsourced Software as a Service model with Google. This may or may not be factor with regards to a possible Gish Cogito Website.

5) Community Awareness

a) “What is Cogito”

There was some discussion on this topic, yet this is expected to be deferred to the new school year’s steering committee. For consideration some input to help succinctly define “What is Cogito?” was tabled.

Cogito is an alternative program for children who are hard working and desire to reach their full potential; participating in an education environment supported by parent involvement.

b) Cogito Website

The logistics around a Cogito website do not pose an opposition. Several ideas regarding domain names were tabled, including:

- www.stalbertcogito.com / .ca
- www.gishcogito.com

It was discussed that the District office may want to be involved in the domain name decision. In addition concern was raised over how the District office would interpret a website dedicate solely to Cogito. The objective of the website is not Marketing but to provide a dedicated communication resource tool and promote better awareness of the program to parents.

Action Item: Mr. Maxfield will provide a brief write-up on what the Cogito website is for and domain name options, and provide to Gish Administration for presentation to the District.

6) Classroom Representative

The idea to canvass for parent grade representatives within the Cogito Steering Committee has been agreed upon. At the start of the new school year, as part of class orientation sessions for parents, information will be provided to canvass for grade reps on the Cogito Steering Committee.

During this past year on a number of occasions, parent involvement in committee meetings covered a wide spectrum of parents of students from various grades. This provided a great perspective on program issues and topics.

Action Item: Mrs. Hunter will coordinate the communication and canvassing of Steering Committee Class Reps, for the beginning of school year orientation.

7) Uniform Sub-Committee

a) Uniform Policy Update & Endorsement

Modifications to bring the uniform policy up to date were reviewed and endorsed. The Cogito Parent Guide and Handbook will be updated accordingly. It was noted that the version of these documents on the Gish website are outdated. The updated versions will be posted.

b) Sub-Committee Update

- A uniform selection chart has been created by the Uniform Sub-Committee. It is a handy tool for parents and students to understand uniform options for formal and casual days. Attached to these minutes are copies of these charts.
- Investigation was conducted to find a quality yet inexpensive rolling backpack that will fit into a locker. No luck, as rolling backpacks that are large enough to carry books are too big to fit into a standard locker.
- Issues were raised regarding the high waist girls kilt. Some students would wear them too low around the waist and thus having the hem hang low. UpMarket indicated that a version with an elastic is being considered for the 2012/13 school year.
- The “Gish Week” at UpMarket was a marginal success as most parents commented that their expectations was to have only Cogito uniforms and accessories on display at the UpMarket store – which was not the case. Recommendations were tabled to encourage “UpMarket Gish Week” to be held on site at the school.
- A black micro-fiber crest vest is to be added to the list of uniform options.
- In an effort to allow for and support the end-of-year Cogito uniform Sale/Swap, the last uniform day will be Monday June 21st (Formal Day). The uniform Sale/Swap is tentatively scheduled for June 24th 3:30pm to 7:00pm. Detail information will be provided to parents in up coming Friday envelopes.

8) Committee Recap of the 2009/2010 School Year

The Cogito Parents Steering Committee has been very successful this past school year, particularly in the planning, organization and support of:

- Further program consistency between grades
- Better communication between parents and administration; and between the steering committee and Cogito teachers
- Community awareness of the program, especially Jr. High
- Promotion of Jr. High to Leo Nickerson Elementary
- Re-introduction of the Uniform Sub-Committee
- Revised Uniform Policy
- New education resources
- Class-room websites

The following are recommendations for inclusion to Steering Committee topics for the up coming school year:

- Establish a written policy for conducting major program decisions.
- Connecting with other Cogito Schools in an information exchange
- Look at a standard of dress for Cogito Jr. High students.

9) Next Meeting

Next Meeting is Tuesday September 21st 7:00pm in the Library.
Meeting Adjourned.