



# Parent Handbook



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# **Foundational Principles of Cogito Academy**

## [Cogito Academy's Guiding Principles](#)

Elk Island Catholic Schools' Cogito Academy is designed to foster academic excellence and success for all students in a structured, disciplined setting. It delivers the Alberta Education curriculum at a structured, sequential pace, offering enhanced learning opportunities. With a clear, direct teaching approach, the program emphasizes consistency and high expectations, helping students to reach their full academic potential and building a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Each child is created in the image and likeness of God and has distinct gifts and strengths. Guided by the school division's commitment to Mark 1 of Excellent Catholic Schools, we honour and nurture the God-given potential within every student.

### **Academic Excellence**

Cogito Academy offers a faith-based curriculum that weaves Catholic values throughout its academic program. The program establishes clear achievement standards for each grade, creating a strong foundation. Students are encouraged to achieve their best and supported with the resources and guidance needed to reach their full potential. The program emphasizes academic rigour, focusing on a solid knowledge base, critical thinking, and transferable skills.

### **Orderly Environment**

This academy cultivates a focused learning environment through structured routines, clear academic and behavioural expectations, and minimal disruptions. Learning remains the priority, with group work designed to be purposeful, collaborative, and productive. The academy promotes an orderly, disciplined, inclusive environment for all students.

### **Emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy**

In literacy, our sequential approach includes phonics instruction to develop decoding skills, grammar and language development to strengthen communication, and reading comprehension strategies to foster a deep understanding of texts. Writing skills focus on emphasizing clarity and creativity.

In numeracy, students gain fluency with foundational math skills like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, while also developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. As students progress, they build a deeper understanding of more complex mathematical concepts, including algebra, geometry, and data analysis. This approach ensures mastery of essential skills while fostering a love for learning.

## **Learning Extensions**

Learning extensions are offered to help boost student confidence and ability. These include focused practice in printing and cursive writing and strengthening handwriting to enhance reading and writing skills. These skills enhance cognitive development, academic success, personal expression, and focus, while also connecting students to important historical and cultural traditions. Students also engage in recitations to develop memory and presentation abilities. Beginning in Grade 1, students have the opportunity to learn French, promoting both linguistic and cognitive growth.

## **Timely Reporting of Student Progress**

Excellence is promoted through balancing formative and summative assessments, enabling teachers to adjust instruction and students to refine their skills. Progress is communicated through multiple channels, including two "Evidence of Learning" sessions, three-way conferences in November and March, and formal report cards in February and June. All assessments align with Alberta Education Learner Outcomes and follow Elk Island Catholic Schools' achievement scale. Regular testing days occur on Fridays.

## **Maximizing Learning Time and Student Engagement**

Student attendance, strong work ethic, and academic success build confidence, motivation, and engagement. Its structured classrooms promote active participation, effort, and achievement to boost self-esteem. Cogito Academy fosters a focused learning environment where students stay engaged, work hard on tasks, and maximize learning time with minimal disruptions.

## **Whole Group Direct Instruction**

Whole-group, teacher-directed instruction, is prioritized through a "**I do, we do, you do**" approach to empower students. High expectations are upheld, keeping group work focused and productive. Teachers provide scaffolding through clear steps, demonstrations, and think-alouds. Critical thinking is encouraged through higher-level questioning, and timely feedback keeps students on track.

## **Technology**

Handwritten work is emphasized, encouraging students to use pen or pencil on paper to enhance cognitive processing, retention, and creativity. Technology is integrated thoughtfully and aligned with curricular outcomes, ensuring it supports rather than replaces the handwritten experience. By balancing these methods, Cogito Academy prepares students in traditional and modern communication formats.

## **Regular Attendance**

Regular attendance is crucial for student success. To support students in doing their best, we strongly encourage consistent attendance. Since the program is built on sequential learning, extended absences can make it difficult for students to catch up and stay on track.

COGITO (**kō gi tō**) from the Latin word meaning "I think" or "I reason"

## **Homework Expectations**

### **Regular Homework**

Cogito Academy challenges students to consistently produce their best work through homework assignments reinforcing classroom concepts. Students are expected to complete these assignments regularly, with clear communication and a structured format for understanding and accountability. Daily homework is a key expectation.

**Homework Expectations:** Students are expected to complete meaningful homework in measured amounts to reinforce their learning. Homework is assigned weekly and communicated to families, with adjustments made for shortened weeks. **Homework may include: exercise, reading, and projects.**

**Guidelines** (not demands):

- Division 1 (K-Grade 3): 10-30 minutes per night.
- Division 2 (Grades 4-6): 40-60 minutes per night.
- Division 3 (Grades 7-8): 60-80 minutes per night.

No homework will be assigned during extended Christmas holidays, Fall and Spring Break. If time permits, students may begin their homework in class. Some teachers may offer a weekly homework packet or assign daily tasks.

**Recitations** are a significant component of Cogito Academy. One recitation is assigned each month, except for December and June. Students are responsible for preparing their recitations outside of instructional time. Students may be assigned prayers or poems to recitation work.

**Assignment Due Date Policy:** All assignments at Cogito Academy are expected to be submitted on time. If an assignment is not completed or handed in by the due date, students should address the issue with their teacher.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Students are expected to work diligently in class and complete homework daily. Extensions for late submissions may be granted for valid reasons, such as illness, family emergencies, or medical appointments, evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Assignments that do not meet expectations must be redone. All students are required to read assigned material, think critically, and write effectively, using complete sentences, proper grammar, and correct spelling in their written work.

## **Uniforms and Dress Code**

The manner in which we dress can have an influence on how we behave. School needs to be approached in an orderly, disciplined manner if we are to be successful. Students are required to dress in a manner that reflects school as a place of learning. While at school, it is expected that students will dress neatly and modestly.

Part of Cogito Academy is a dress code that fosters respect, focus, and unity. A dress code with emphasis on a uniform promotes program spirit, creating a sense of belonging and pride. By reducing distractions and emphasizing equality, it supports students' character formation, faith, and academic success.

Uniform expectations and exceptions will be communicated from each unique school to its learning community.

## **Sourcing and Concerns**

- The school will provide parents with information on purchasing Cogito Academy branded uniform elements. Parents may purchase non-branded royal blue equivalents at any time.
- The school will contact you if there are any concerns with your child's mode of dress.

## **Physical Education**

Students in all grades are expected to have non-marking, close-toed laced running shoes for Physical Education classes.

## **Cogito Compatibility Appraisals & Learning Profile**

Prospective Cogito Academy students (including siblings of students currently enrolled in the program) are asked to complete a compatibility appraisal prior to being recommended for the program. The intent is to observe and gather evidence that aligns the student with the foundational principles of Cogito Academy. This compatibility appraisal will include the following exercises and considerations: a written component to assess a student's knowledge and skills in reading comprehension, oral production, writing, and mathematics. A student's preferences, temperament, learning style, and interests pertaining to learning, as well as educational references may be considered. These compatibility exercises are thoroughly reviewed by lead teachers and the results are shared with administration to determine if the student's learning style aligns with Cogito Academy. Compatibility appraisals may also include previous progress reports.

## **Kindergarten Student Profile**

Cogito Academy offers a structured classroom environment tailored to support the learning needs of the average student. The Kindergarten program is of greatest benefit to a student who can work well in a teacher-directed, whole-group instructional setting, and who is developmentally able to complete the following tasks:

- Dress independently.
- Tend to self in the washroom.
- Follow two consecutive oral directions correctly (e.g., choose a crayon and place it on the teacher's desk).
- Focus on a sit-down task for 15 minutes at a time.
- Recognize and name the letters of the alphabet (both lower and upper case).
- Recognize and name the basic colours ( i.e., the colours usually found in an eight-pack of crayons).
- Recognize their own name in print.
- Print their name legibly.
- Demonstrate pre-reading skills (e.g., knowledge of story sequence - beginning, middle, end).
- Count orally from 1-10; show 1:1 correspondence.
- Draw a recognizable familiar object.

## **Student Profile**

We have found through experience that this program best serves students who thrive in a teacher-directed, whole-group learning environment, and who:

- Aim for excellence in every task
- Value high academic achievement
- Can sit quietly and stay focused on tasks for extended periods
- Are committed to completing nightly homework, with support from parents/guardians as needed
- Show perseverance, curiosity, initiative, and a strong desire to learn
- Can listen and follow oral directions independently
- Receive strong parental support for the program
- Display respect for themselves, others, and their environment
- Respond positively to challenges and are resilient in the face of constructive feedback
- Take pride in improving organizational and personal management skills
- Show a willingness to work and play cooperatively with their peers

## **Parents as Valued Partners**

Parents and guardians are valued as active, supportive partners in their child's education. Teachers and administration prioritize consistent communication to keep families informed and engaged. Ongoing updates on student progress, learning, and conduct are maintained to strengthen this partnership.

Parents can assist by creating an environment conducive to academic success through the following:

- **Establishing Time and Place:** Parents provide a designated time and space for homework to assist with consistent routines to support student success.
- **Offering Feedback:** Parents communicate with teachers regarding any limitations, successes, or clarifications related to homework assignments.
- **Supervision and Discussion:** Parents engage with their children by discussing homework, promoting understanding and assisting in the preparation for monthly recitations, including memorizing and performing assigned poems.
- **Attention to Home/School Communication:** Kanga pouches, agendas, digital newsletters, and notes ensure parents stay informed about assignments, expectations, and procedures. The method of communication may change from grade to grade. Parents are encouraged to regularly review information sent home and to sign any communication sent home for review.
- **Supporting School Practices and Programs:** Parents and teachers actively pursue consistency between home and school expectations. Questions for clarification are always welcomed, reinforcing the partnership in education.

Upon entry into the program, students and parents will review and sign the program [commitment declaration](#) that reaffirms many of the details mentioned above.