

**EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

March 7, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Extension of the Cogito Program (Division IV)

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Peter Jonkman, Faye Parker, Stuart Wachowicz

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the extension of the Cogito Alternative Program to include Division IV programming beginning with Grade 10 in 2000 – 2001 be approved.

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The purpose of the above recommendation is to allow for the offering of a grade 10 class for 2000-2001, at Britannia School if registration numbers warrant (minimum probable registration of 25 students), and, depending on interest, to extend the program through grade 12 in succeeding years.

**Background**

The Cogito Alternative Program was first approved by board in April 1995, as a K-6 program at Mt. Pleasant School for the 1995-96 school year. The following year, the extension to Division III (Junior High) at Allendale School was approved. In the spring of 1999, a group of parents approached the administration with the request for a west end Cogito site. Much work has been done by these parents, and, at present, indications are that over 400 students will be enrolled in that program, to be housed at Elmwood and Britannia schools. A large percentage (about 65 per cent) of the aforementioned population is presently out of district, with a sizable number coming from private, charter and home schooling situations. The parents involved have indicated that a high school component to the Cogito program would be a very positive factor in confirming their decision to come to the district, and they have asked the administration to bring this request before the board.

**Rationale:**

The request for a high school component for the Cogito Alternative Program recognizes the need to provide students with a continuation of the unique instructional methodology associated with the program from K through grade 9. This would provide a continuity of the instruction in specific disciplines, and the practices of showing the interrelated nature of the disciplines through a structured and sequenced approach to lateral enrichment. The high

school Cogito component would allow for the continuity of the Cogito Foundational Principles (Appendix I), within a consistent learning environment. The Cogito Foundational Principles were originally appended to the 1995 report that established the Cogito program, and have been recently revised by the Cogito Advisory Board and the west end Cogito parent group.

Cogito is often described as a knowledge-based program, using direct instruction to deliver a core of essential information and skills. This is then utilized to permit the development of higher level thinking. The premise is that a solid and proven body of knowledge on which intelligence can operate is indispensable. The program systematically seeks to emphasize in all subject areas, the absolute importance of logical reasoning, from principles which have been deliberately taught and learned. The practice which begins in elementary school is intended to be carried through to high school graduation. In a Cogito high school program mathematics, physics and chemistry would be closely articulated, with the teaching structured to allow science to provide the applications for the math being learned. Cogito seeks to emphasize the historical and methodological connections between math and physics, which are such that it is not always possible to distinguish between them. The sense of interrelatedness of geometry and algebra, and history, geography and literature, are similarly articulated.

The current International Baccalaureate (IB) program does not meet the specific needs for a Cogito program for a number of reasons:

- Cogito is designed to offer ordinary students a challenging and balanced liberal education in the humanities, sciences, fine and practical arts. Cogito is not an academic challenge program, and it is not academically selective.
- The typical IB student is university bound, whereas Cogito students may enter the trades or university in relatively equal numbers
- Cogito provides a common core and a relatively narrow range of choice. It is a consistent and uniform package from grade 7 through 12, with strong interdisciplinary connections (Appendix II.
- French is mandated, as well as a background in history, geography and formal geometry.

Cogito is a different program from IB with a different approach. In the same way as IB is now a district program spanning the divisions, approval of the recommendation would create a K-12 articulation for Cogito. This is similar to what exists in the district's immersion and bilingual programs.

The addition of a high school component to the Cogito Alternative Program would also permit an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of this particular method. An authorization of the Division IV component of Cogito at this time will enable the implementation of this phase of the program, should numbers warrant in September 2000 or September 2001.

SW:dh

APPENDIX I: Foundational Principles for Defining Methods and Practices of a K-12 Cogito Alternative Program

APPENDIX II: Secondary Program Model: Cogito Alternative Program