



Elementary Student/Parent
Handbook and Student Code of
Conduct

2025-2026

This document is subject to updates and will be revised as needed.

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Commitments to Cogito Academy

STUDENT HANDBOOK

This Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct describes Cogito Academy current policies and practices concerning matters that most often affect our students and their parents. Policies and practices described in this handbook are provided for the information and guidance of students and their parents and do not constitute, nor should they be relied on, as contractual obligations of Cogito Academy to any person. Cogito Academy reserves the right to modify this handbook at any time. Its contents, as they now appear or as they may be amended in the future, apply to all students enrolled in Cogito Academy.

Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination

Cogito Academy intends to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations regarding equal opportunity and nondiscrimination. If any of the policies outlined in this Handbook are, or become, unlawful for any reason, the applicable law will be followed.

1. All employment decisions and actions, such as recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, transfer, layoff, recall, compensation and benefits, discipline, termination, educational, recreational, and social programs, are administered without regard to the race, color, sex, religion, national origin, citizenship, age, physical or mental disability of an otherwise qualified individual, or his or her membership or application for membership in a uniformed service.
2. No student will be denied acceptance into, or excluded from participation in, Cogito Academy's programs on the basis of sex, race, religion, disability, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law. For questions pertaining to Section 504 please contact schooldirector@cogitolancaster.education; for questions pertaining to Special Education please contact schooldirector@cogitolancaster.education; and for questions pertaining to Title IX please contact schooldirector@cogitolancaster.education

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Students Returning from Alternate Settings

Students may be immediately placed on a behavior contract if the student has returned to a regular school setting from an alternative learning environment (DJJ, Alternative School, Short-term Alternative Placement Homes, etc.) This policy will apply to students who have been in an alternative learning environment for up to 6 months prior to enrollment to Cogito Academy. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50(B)(7), prior to enrollment to Cogito, students who were assigned to an alternative learning environment must be eligible to return to their regular school setting.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act

According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, term "homeless children and youths"--

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes--

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;*

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Enrollment Process:

A child must be enrolled by the child's parent or legal guardian. Cogito Academy shall record the name, address, and date of birth of the person enrolling the child. Upon enrollment, students should be completely potty trained prior to entering into 4 and 5 year old Kindergarten.

Eligibility:

- Any student qualified to attend school in South Carolina in the appropriate grade will be eligible to attend, subject to space limitations.

Exceptions:

1. Disciplinary Actions:

- Students who are currently serving an expulsion or alternative school placement are not eligible for placement at Cogito Academy.
- Students with a gap in school enrollment are not eligible for placement at Cogito Academy.
 - i. What Constitutes a Gap in School Enrollment? A gap in school enrollment refers to any period during which a student was not enrolled in any educational institution. This can occur for various reasons, such as extended absences, dropping out, or transferring without re-enrolling promptly.

2. Priority Change for Student Withdrawing:

- If an applicant has previously withdrawn as a student from Cogito Academy, this applicant will no longer be eligible for priority status. The applicant may reapply to Cogito Academy but will not be granted priority status to allow other applicants an equal opportunity to attend. Should a family seek to withdraw their student(s) in order to pursue a unique life opportunity (such as study abroad, etc.) they may preserve their priority status by meeting with the School Director PRIOR to the withdrawal from school to fill out a request to do so. The signed request must be on file PRIOR to the student withdrawing from school in order to preserve the priority status.

3. Age Restrictions:

- Students aged 21 or older are not eligible to enroll.
- Students must be 4 years old before September 1st of the current school year to enroll in 4K.
- Students must be 5 years old before September 1st of the current school year to enroll in Kindergarten.
- Students must be 6 years old by September 1st of the current school year to enroll in 1st grade.

4. Retention Letters Requirements:

- Only K-12 retention letters from a public education entity will be honored for enrollment purposes.
- Only letters from public schools or school districts will be accepted. *As a public school we are not able to retain a newly enrolled student upon parental request.*

Classroom Placement Policy

At Cogito Academy, we are committed to creating the best learning environment for all students. To achieve this, our school carefully considers each student's needs when assigning classroom placements. While we understand that parents may have specific requests, we have established the following guidelines to ensure a fair and consistent placement process:

- 1. Classroom Placement Process:** *Our administrative team, in collaboration with teaching staff, will assign students to classrooms based on a variety of factors including academic needs, social dynamics, and overall balance. This process ensures that every student is placed in a setting that supports their educational growth.*
- 2. Parent Requests:** *We value parental input and appreciate your understanding of our commitment to creating balanced classrooms. However, specific teacher requests or preferences cannot be accommodated. This policy allows us to maintain fairness and consistency across all classrooms.*
- 3. Communication:** *If you have concerns about your child's placement or specific needs that should be considered, please contact the school administration. We will review your concerns and take them into account during the placement process, but final decisions will be made by our team based on what is best for the overall student population.*

Barring Enrollment of Students

In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. Sec. 59-63-217, in determining whether or not a student meets the standards of conduct necessary for first time enrollment, Cogito Academy may consider records as they relate to the adjudication of delinquency in any jurisdiction, within or without this State, of violations or activities which constitute violent crimes under Section 16-1-60, 4 adjudications for assault and battery of a high and aggravated nature, the unlawful use or possession of weapons, or the unlawful sale of drugs. Based on this consideration of the student's record, Cogito Academy may bar the student's enrollment for a maximum of one year.

Legal Surname

A student must be identified by the student's legal surname as it appears on the student's birth certificate, or other document suitable as proof of the student's identity, or in a court order changing the student's name.

Required Documentation

In order to be in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), one or more of the following types of documentation will be acceptable for purposes of consultation concerning educational programming, discipline, special education, emergency medical treatment, access to student records, and other matters relating to the student's educational process: 1. Power of Attorney;

2. Notarized letter or sworn affidavit from parent, guardian, or the adult responsible for the minor child;
3. Assignment letter from the Department of Social Services;
4. Juvenile Probation, or other agencies;
5. Death certificate of natural parent(s);
6. Proof of receipt of federal assistance; or
7. Other documentation deemed appropriate by the School Director or School Director's designee.

At the time of enrollment or registration, the parent or guardian must supply Cogito Academy with all of the following:

1. The child's birth certificate or another document suitable as proof of the child's identity.
2. A copy of the child's records from the school the child most recently attended if he or she was previously enrolled in a school in South Carolina or in another state; students shall not be denied enrollment or be removed solely because they fail to provide the required documentation in items 1 and 2 above.
3. A record showing that the child has the immunizations required by the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), proof that the child is not required to be immunized, or proof that the child is entitled to provisional admission.

Proof of Admission Eligibility

The school requires evidence that a prospective student resides in South Carolina to be eligible to attend Cogito Academy. Acceptable documents for verifying address include current SC issued driver's license, utility bills, and sale or lease agreements. If an incoming student is recommended for retention at the time of admission, an official transcript from the most recently attended school must be provided indicating retention and recommended grade for the upcoming school year. Parent preference or recommendation for retention will not be considered without official documentation from the previous educational institution. If proper documentation cannot be provided regarding retention, grade level admission will be based on age and school discretion.

Child in DSS Possession

Cogito Academy shall enroll a child without the required documentation if the Department of Social Services (DSS) has taken possession of the child. DSS shall ensure that the required documentation is provided to Cogito Academy in a timely manner.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Communicable Diseases

Communicable diseases are diseases that may be transmitted from person to person. Prevention and control of communicable diseases in the school setting is an essential part of ensuring a healthy, safe environment for students and faculty. To protect others from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to attend school while contagious. The parent/guardian of a student with a communicable or contagious disease should phone the nurse or principal so that other students who have been exposed to the disease can be alerted. These diseases may include:

Amebiasis Hepatitis, Viral (A, B, or C) Rubella (German Measles), Campylobacteriosis Impetigo (Strep Throat)

Chickenpox Infectious mononucleosis Salmonellosis

Common cold with fever Influenza Typhoid fever

Fifth disease Measles (Rubeola) Scabies

(Erythema Infectiosum) Meningitis, Bacterial Shigellosis

Gastroenteritis, Viral Mumps Streptococcal disease, invasive Giardiasis Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)

Tuberculosis, Pulmonary Head Lice (Pediculosis) Ringworm Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Allergy Information Requested Upon Enrollment

Parents are required to provide written notification of any known allergy. More information may be requested by the school nurse.

Health Services Policy on Head Lice

In review of the life cycle of head lice, research shows that the louse egg hatches every 7-10 days. The louse is able to survive 48-52 hours with no contact with a human host. Even after treatment with a pediculicide (Rid, Nix, Kwell, Pronto), remaining eggs in the hair are subject to hatch, causing re-infestation.

Therefore, the school policy is as follows:

1. Notification to parent/guardian of live lice or evidence of lice (nits). Parents will be required to pick up their student from school.
2. Exclusion of student, until proof of treatment with a pediculicide (receipt of purchase, prescription). Schools will also exclude students with lice eggs (nits) following the first treatment until eggs are removed. Parent/guardians also should wash all bedding, coats, hats, combs and brushes in hot water and treat carpets, sofas, etc.
3. Students may return to school after initial treatment, as long as nits are not present. You will need to bring the student into the nurse's office, with proof of treatment, and the student will need to be cleared by the school nurse before they can go to class.
4. It is recommended that students receive a second treatment after the initial treatment.
5. The school designee will send notification to parent/guardians to inspect their children at home when a case has been discovered in a grade level.
6. Notify school if there is a sibling at Cogito Academy, so that the child can be inspected by the school designee.

Emergency Medical Treatment

Parents or legal guardians are required to complete an emergency medical authorization form(s) for their student(s) each year. This form provides space for a telephone number where a parent/legal guardian may be reached during school hours in the event of a severe accident or illness. ***It is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school in writing whenever contact numbers have been changed.***

In the case of a serious incident the student's parent/legal guardian should be notified as soon as possible to discuss the transportation of the student to a medical care facility. If a parent/legal guardian cannot be reached, the instructions as outlined below are followed unless deemed inappropriate. Procedures for emergency medical care of the seriously ill or critically injured student are:

1. A faculty member or other responsible person will remain with the sick or injured student at all times.
2. The parent/guardian/emergency contact will be contacted.

3. In the event 911 must be called and the parent/guardian or designated family member cannot be located, the emergency medical authorization form will indicate the choice of health care provider and consent for transfer of student to receive medical attention.
4. A school faculty member will accompany the student to the hospital if emergency transportation is needed. The school faculty member will accompany the student and remain at the hospital with the student until a responsible family member arrives.

Health Services

School health services are provided to all students in accordance with the South Carolina Department of Education's rules established by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and other applicable laws. The following services are available to students:

1. Emergency/first aid for illness or injury
2. Health assessment and referrals
3. Evaluation and assessment of student illness and the need for medical referral
4. An effective communicable disease control program including immunization and protective measures
5. Administration of physician prescribed medication and special procedures with parent/guardian and physician permission
6. Early identification of health problems which may interfere with learning. Students in grades K, 1, 3, 5 receive vision, hearing, and other required screenings
7. Health education

Designated school personnel are skillful in emergency care, first aid techniques, and certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Students may receive counseling regarding identified or potential health problems. Teacher/school designee and parent conferences may occur to discuss health concerns or issues and suggestions for parents to follow up with their family doctor for medical advice.

Immunizations

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has designated immunization requirements for school-age children. The requirements as stipulated by DHEC can be found at www.scdhec.gov.

Medicine at School

Ideally, all medication should be given at home. Time schedules for prescription medications that some students receive often allow the medication to be taken at home either before or after school. The parent/legal guardian of a student who must take prescription medication during the school day must bring the medicine in its original container from the pharmacy labeled with the date, student's name, name of the medication, and times the medication should be administered. **Medications are not allowed to be transported in the child's backpack and will not be sent home with students.**

A signed parent/legal guardian statement accompanying the medication should request the medication be given and indicate the time the last dose was administered. Students may not carry or administer medications to themselves at school except in special cases, such as asthmatics whose licensed healthcare provider has individually evaluated the student's capability for self-administration and responsible behavior. The proper medication information must be filed in the office if a student needs to carry medication at school. When the duration of the medication or special procedure is long-term (greater than 10 days) a physician's order must accompany the parent's request and be on file in the school office. When the duration of the medication/special procedure is complete (or at the end of the school year), the parent/guardian shall be notified to pick up any unused portion of the medication or equipment. Any unclaimed medication will be disposed of at the end of the school year. Physician prescribed special health care procedures may be implemented only with approval of the school official. Neither the person administering the above medication nor Cogito Academy will be held responsible or liable for any effects or problems resulting from the given medication.

Please contact the school nurse directly to discuss the development of an IHP/Individual Health Care plan for any medically fragile students.

Psychological, Social, and Diagnostic Services

Psychological, Social and Diagnostic Services are provided for students who are experiencing significant social, emotional, or academic difficulties. The Special Education department is composed of educational diagnosticians and speech pathologists. These student-centered professionals provide assessment, prevention, and intervention for K - 12 students. The school will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without first obtaining the parent's written consent.

Outside Service Providers

Cogito Academy recognizes that parents may choose to independently contract additional services for their children from agencies outside the charter and outside the educational program. Cogito Academy does not allow outside service providers during the school day. It is recognized that these additional services provided for a student are outside of the student's educational program, are paid for by the parent, are not a requirement of FAPE (free and appropriate public education) and are the choice of the parents as an addition to the free and appropriate public education that the charter provides for students.

CHILD ABUSE

Any discovered or suspected child abuse will be immediately reported to the appropriate authorities. In order to ensure the safety of Cogito Academy students, all employees must pass a criminal background check and sex offender registry check. All students are encouraged to report any type of abuse, including verbal, sexual, and/or physical abuse, to a teacher, guidance counselor, school nurse, or administrator.

All employees are required to report any suspicion of child abuse to their immediate supervisor or the School Director. South Carolina law mandates that certain persons, including teachers, by virtue of their positions, report suspected child abuse or neglect to DSS or a law enforcement agency if "in the person's professional capacity the person received information that gives the person reason to believe that the child has been or may be abused or neglected."

STUDENT RECORDS

Address Changes/ Student Information Updates

Parents/legal guardians must keep phone numbers, addresses, custody and emergency information up-to-date with the registrar, any time it changes during the school year. Throughout the school year parents may be asked to update information. All information requested is for the safety of all children at Cogito Academy.

If there is a custody issue, the school office needs to have legal documentation within the student's file so that Cogito Academy can follow all court and legal orders. If the office is unaware of updated legal instructions, Cogito Academy will follow documentation that is currently housed in the student's file. Cogito Academy cannot rely on verbal rulings; all changes must be documented from a court or legal advisor. If parent contact is deemed necessary by the school, Cogito Academy is only responsible for contacting one of the listed parents/guardians.

Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

Under PPRA, schools must obtain written parental consent ("active" consent) before students are required to participate in any survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning any of the eight protected areas noted below.

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
3. Sex behavior and attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom the student or the student's family has a close family relationship;
6. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or belief of the student or student's parent; or
8. income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program),
9. without the prior consent of the student (if the student is an adult or emancipated minor), or in the case of an unemancipated minor, without the prior written consent of the parent.

Student Records/ FERPA

By law, biological parents have access to the records of a student who is under 18 or a dependent for tax purposes. A parent/legal guardian whose rights have been legally terminated will be denied access to the records if the school is given a copy of the court order terminating these rights. Records may be reviewed during regular school hours. Please contact the Registrar for information regarding student records.

Parents/legal guardians of a minor or of a student who is a dependent for tax purposes, the student (if 18 or older), and school officials with legitimate educational interests are the only persons who have general access to a student's records.

"School officials with legitimate educational interests" includes any employees, agents, trustees of the school, cooperatives of

which Cogito Academy is a member of, or facilities with which Cogito Academy contracts for the placement of students with disabilities, as well as their attorney and consultants, who are:

1. Working with the student;
2. Considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student's case, an Individual Education Program (IEP) for a student with disabilities under IDEA or an individually designed program for a student with disabilities under Section 504;
3. Compiling statistical data; or
4. Investigating or evaluating programs.

Certain officials from various governmental agencies may have limited access to the records.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

The parent's or student's right of access to and copies of student records does not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records include teachers' personal notes on a student that are shared only with select personnel, including but not limited to substitute teachers.

Parent/guardians may be denied copies of a student's record for the following reasons:

1. After the student reaches age 18 and is no longer a dependent for tax purposes;
2. When the student is attending an institution of post-secondary education;
3. If the parent/guardian fails to follow proper procedures and pay the copying charge of 10 cents per page;
4. When the school is given a copy of a court order terminating the parental rights.

If the student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals and the parent/guardians are unable to view the records during regular school hours, upon written request of the parent, one copy of the record will be provided at no charge.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age certain rights with respect to the student's education records. The office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4605

ATTENDANCE

School Start Time School End Time
7:30a.m. - 3:00p.m.

Elementary Attendance Guidelines (K-5th)

Any student who misses school must present a written excuse, signed by a parent/legal guardian, or a medical excuse. If this excuse is not turned in within three days after the student is back in school, this absence will be unlawful. The maximum number of days that will be recorded as lawful absences with parent notes will be five.

Students will be considered lawfully absent when:

1. They are ill and their attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others.
2. There is a death or serious illness in their immediate family - with proper documentation (bulletin, death notice, etc.).
3. There is a recognized religious holiday of their faith. Request must be made to the School Director in writing prior to the absence.
4. Activities pre-approved by the School Director.
5. The student is suspended from school.
6. There is a necessary medical or legal appointment that cannot be scheduled during non-school time.
7. Absences for students whose parents/guardians are experiencing a military deployment. The School Director may grant up to five days of excused absences provided that

- 1) the absence is preapproved,
- 2) the student is in good standing,
- 3) the student has a prior record of good attendance,
- 4) missed work is completed and turned in within the school's allotted time period.

Lawful absences allow students to make up missed work.

Students will be considered **unlawfully** absent when:

1. They are willfully absent from school without knowledge of their parent or guardian.
2. They are absent without acceptable cause with the knowledge of their parent or guardian.
3. They are out of town trips/vacations.

After three consecutive or a total of five unlawful absences, policy requires that school officials contact the parent/guardian for a conference. During this conference, interventions regarding student's attendance may be put into place.

The maximum number of days a student is allowed is 10 absences (lawful or unlawful) for year long classes and 5 absences for semester long classes. Attendance is an important factor used in promotion/retention decisions. More than 10 absences during a school year and/or excessive tardiness could result in a referral to Family Court and/or DSS.

Tardy Policy

It is imperative to the educational process for students to be punctual to school each day. Cogito Academy understands that on occasion, there are times when students need to arrive after the start of school. We ask that you keep these times to a minimum. In an effort to keep tardiness to a minimum, the following steps will be taken:

Elementary students are considered tardy when they arrive at school after 7:30a.m. without an excuse. **Every Three Tardies will be considered a full absence for the purposes of Truancy.**

Early Dismissal

It is imperative that students are in class the full day in order to not miss vital instruction. Cogito Academy understands that sometimes it is necessary for a student to leave early from school. Persons who come to pick up students should enter through the front office, and they will be required to show valid state issued identification. This person must be listed on the child's approved pick up list. **Three Early Dismissals will be considered a full absence for the purposes of Truancy.**

GRADING GUIDELINES

Academic Grading

All grade levels follow the South Carolina Department of Education's Uniform Grading Policy. Cogito Academy uses numerical grades, starting in first grade, for all courses. The numerical grade ranges are as follows:

D Below 60 = F

Late Work Policy

90-100 = A 80-89 = B 70-79 = C 60-69 =

1. Non-absent Students - 10 points off per day late; no work will be accepted after 3 days
2. Absent Students - Students have 5 days from the date of return to complete missing assignment(s) for work assigned during the absences. Previously issued assignment(s) will be due upon return. Extenuating circumstances may be appealed to the principal.

Numerical grades in all subjects will be reported to parent/guardian and students at the end of each nine-week period. Conferences will be scheduled with parent/guardian to discuss and develop plans for students when necessary. Parents/guardians may request a conference with teachers at any time throughout the year.

Student Grades Upon Withdrawal

Estimated grades to date of withdrawal are given by teachers on the withdrawal form when a student checks out of school. The date of withdrawal is shown on the permanent record. If a student transfers to another school, the grade to date of withdrawal is also sent with other records to the new school.

Cheating

Cheating is interpreted as a procedure that involves the unauthorized giving or receiving of help, offering or seeking aid, or the use of material prepared in advance for use on an assessment. Cheating also involves books, notes or technology in any form being used during an examination or assignment without the permission of the teacher; this includes plagiarism. The student will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment. Retesting will not be allowed in this situation.

Honor Roll

Elementary - Only core classes (Math, ELA, Science, and Social Studies) will count toward Principal's All "A" Honor Roll and All "A/B" Honor Roll.

Promotion Requirements

Parent/guardian conferences will be held prior to retaining a student.

Students who fail math or reading are required to attend Summer Enrichment in order to be promoted to the next grade level.

Students who fail two of their core academic classes are subject to retention. A grade placement committee can look at the state testing and other factors to determine the best course of action for the next year's grade placement. The grade placement committee will present their recommendation to the School Director. The School Director will have the final authority in promotion/retention decisions.

Cogito Academy shall ensure that each student, other than a student with disabilities whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) provides for alternative achievement standards, demonstrates mastery of the state standards. Promotion standards of grade level classification of special education students shall be determined by the IEP team.

MTSS

At Cogito Academy, a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework is in place. The MTSS framework uses data to make decisions and create continuous school improvement processes that support academic and behavioral achievement of all students to prepare them to be successful high school graduates. Individual student progress is monitored and results are used to make decisions about further instruction and intervention. The MTSS process is flexible and designed to meet the needs of all students.

Tier One support is provided by the classroom teacher, so students can be identified and provided Tier Two or Three services regardless of the instructional method chosen. Should a student need additional support, teachers will bring additional team members on board to provide the additional, more intensive support.

Families play a huge role in implementing the framework. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved and engaged in their children's education and to participate in all decisions regarding increasing supports, interventions and/or other related changes to their child's core curriculum to improve their academic and behavioral performance

GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

[Cafeteria Meal Policy](#)

Childcare and Afterschool Programs

Cogito Academy is proud of the partnership with Pleasant Dale Baptist Church that hosts an after school program within the community. However, Cogito Academy will not run an afterschool program for the 2025-2026 school year.

Emergency Procedures

Student safety is of most importance. Cogito Academy follows state laws and guidelines in the case of individual or school-wide emergencies. The school has a trained Crisis Response Team that will coordinate any emergency procedures. In case of an emergency, students should follow school procedures and the directions of their teachers. Telephones will not be available for student use during school emergency situations. In case of an emergency, parents will be notified as soon as possible.

Severe Weather/Tornado Warnings

When there is a threat of severe weather, Cogito Academy officials will monitor conditions and take the advice of the Emergency Broadcasting Center (EBC) to determine when emergency procedures need to be implemented. When dangerous conditions exist

and plans are implemented, we will use every means available to communicate this to our families. The safety of your children is our utmost concern and school may be the safest place for the children. When a tornado warning is issued, Cogito Academy will go into tornado safety mode. Students will not be released until the EBC has determined that the threat for severe weather has ended.

Emergency School Closing Information

In the event weather or other conditions make it necessary to close school, students and parents/guardians will be notified through announcements made on social media outlets and television stations. Cogito Academy will give notice to the local news

agencies regarding closings.

Release of Students

Students may only be released to a parent, legal guardian or the emergency contact listed on the child's enrollment or health card. In the event of an emergency or crisis in which a child is involved:

1. Parents will be notified as soon as possible.
2. The school must obtain parental permission to release a child to an unauthorized person.
3. School officials will refer to contacts listed in PowerSchool when releasing a student. Please make sure proper paperwork is on file.

Student-Initiated, Non-Curriculum Related Student Organizations

Cogito Academy may prevent the formation of any student club/organization where the purpose of the club/organization is unlawful, or where activities of the club/organization may materially or substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of educational activities within the school or where meetings of the club will present a substantial likelihood of danger to students or damage to school property.

School employees will not consistently promote, lead, or participate in the meetings of non-curriculum related, student-initiated clubs/organizations; however, a school employee will be present at the meetings for custodial purposes and general student supervision. School employees also may not influence the form or content of any prayer or other religious activity, nor require any person to participate in prayer or any other religious activity.

Students seeking to establish a student initiated, non-curriculum related club/organization must submit their request in writing to the School Director for approval. The request must state the name of the club/organization, the general purpose and mission of the club/organization, and the name of the faculty member who has agreed to act as the club monitor. The School Director will review the request and grant or deny the request of a club/organization to use school facilities for its meetings, consistent with the requirements of the EAA.

The School Director has the authority to designate reasonable times and places for student-initiated, non-curriculum related clubs/organizations to conduct their meetings. The School Director also has the authority to establish guidelines for the distribution on school grounds of club/organization literature and the posting of signs on school grounds notifying students of club/organization meetings. Such guidelines will be applied consistently to all non-curriculum related clubs/organizations.

Field Trips

Field trips, excursions, and outdoor education are a part of student education. Therefore, additional safeguards must be used for the protection of students. The Student Code of Conduct is in effect during all school-related trips. Conduct violations can be used to deny students the opportunity to participate in additional field trips.

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips will be required to ride in transportation provided by the school. Exceptions may be made if the student's parent or guardian presents a written request by completing the appropriate Liability Release Form to the building level principal, 48-hours prior to the scheduled trip. The school shall not be liable for any injuries that occur to students riding in vehicles that are not provided by the school. If a parent or guardian is attending the field trip as a chaperone and is assigned the duty of supervision of students, he or she will not be allowed to bring siblings. No parent is permitted to ride school provided transportation. In the event of student misconduct/sickness, parents may be contacted to pick up and transport their child at the discretion of the appropriate building level administrator. No parent/guardian will be able to attend any school-sponsored trips and events (ex. field day) without a cleared background check.

Students are under the Code of Conduct while they are using school transportation. Any student who violates the established rules of conduct while on school transportation will be disciplined according to the Code of Conduct.

Students must:

1. Remain seated at all times
2. Talk softly
3. Keep hands to self
4. Keep feet out of the aisle
5. Keep arms, hands, and head inside the bus

6. Not throw objects on or off the bus
7. Follow school rules as presented in the school handbook

School administration and transportation assistants may revoke a student's bus riding privileges if problems and rules are continuously broken.

Parent Volunteers

To become a volunteer, contact Cogito Academy. Fill out the volunteer application, consent to and pay for a criminal background check, and be approved. **The form must be completed and approved every year.**

Individual Student Birthdays and Celebrations

Families are invited to celebrate student birthdays at school with prior permission from the student's classroom teacher.

Please keep in mind the following things:

1. Parents may bring store bought cupcakes or cookies to be distributed for student birthdays with the timing of distribution at the discretion of the teacher and the School Director.
2. Floral arrangements, balloons, cookie grams, etc. are not considered appropriate during school hours. The school office staff will not deliver these items to the classroom.

Sexual Harassment/Abuse

Cogito Academy believes that every student has the right to attend schools and school related activities free from all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment/abuse. Further, Cogito Academy, as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and its regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs or activities. Title IX prohibits gender-based harassment, which may include acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Cogito Academy considers sexual harassment/abuse of students to be serious and will consider the full range of disciplinary options, up to and including recommendation for expulsion, according to the nature of the offense. Unwanted and unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, words, gestures, or any other sexual conduct, including requests for sexual favors, directed toward another student or employee is unacceptable. Cogito Academy encourages parental and student support in its efforts to address and prevent sexual harassment/abuse. Students and/or parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss their questions or concerns about the expectations in this area with a teacher, counselor, or administrator/designee.

Students must not engage in unwanted and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature directed toward another student or an employee. This prohibition applies to any and all inappropriate conduct. All students are expected to treat other students and employees with courtesy and respect; to avoid any behaviors known to be offensive; and to stop these behaviors when asked or told to stop.

Students who have actual knowledge of sexual harassment/abuse are encouraged to report such conduct to a teacher, administrator, or the Title IX coordinator. The Title IX coordinator will evaluate the complaint to determine if the conduct meets the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX. To the extent such conduct qualifies as sexual harassment under Title IX, the school shall conduct an investigation in accordance with the procedures required by Title IX. If the complaint does not meet the conditions of sexual harassment under Title IX, the complaint will be reported to an administrator for further investigation and action, as necessary. A founded complaint against a student will result in appropriate disciplinary action, according to the nature of the offense and the Student Code of Conduct and may lead to recommendation for expulsion.

Tobacco Products

Cogito Academy is a tobacco free campus. The use of tobacco products, including hemp and vaping products, is prohibited anywhere on campus, including car lines.

School Sponsored Activities

The rules of good conduct and grooming will be observed at school social events held outside the regular school day. Guests are expected to observe the same rules as students attending the event, and the person inviting the guest will share the responsibility for the conduct of the guest. Students attending social events may be asked to sign in and out for the event.

Telephone

Students will not be allowed to use the office or classroom phones without permission from the administration. Please also see cell phone policy on page 15.

Visitors

Cogito Academy welcomes all visitors to the campus. All visitors, upon arrival, must check in with a valid state issued I.D., and will be subject to a background check. The visitor's I.D. will be checked against the parent pick-up list to ensure the visitor has permission to visit. Visitors should dress appropriately when entering the school. Visitors are not allowed into the classrooms during instructional times without prior arrangements being made.

Textbooks and Other Instructional Materials

Teachers may assign textbooks to students. Each student and the student's parent or guardian is responsible for all instructional materials and technological equipment not returned in an acceptable condition. A student who fails to return all instructional materials and technological equipment in an acceptable condition is required to pay all applicable damage or replacement fees. The school shall allow the student to use instructional materials and technological equipment at school during each school day. Loss of books due to theft or other circumstances will not be accepted as reasons for nonpayment or for not doing class assignments.

School Authority and Jurisdiction

School rules and the authority of the school to administer discipline apply whenever the interest of the school is involved, on or off school grounds, in conjunction with or independent of classes and school-sponsored activities.

Cogito Academy's disciplinary authority over a student includes but is not limited to the following circumstances:

1. During the regular school day;
2. While the student is in attendance at any school-related activity, regardless of time or location;
3. When retaliation against a school employee or volunteer occurs or is threatened, regardless of time or location;
4. When criminal mischief is committed on or off school property or at a school-related event;
5. For certain offenses committed on school property as measured from any point on the school's real property boundary line;
6. When the student commits a felony, as provided by South Carolina code of law, section 16-1-10.
7. When the student is required to register as a sex offender.

Searches

The school has the right to conduct a reasonable search of such areas as lockers, backpacks, student's purses, cars, and any computer owned by the school or electronic devices brought on school property, at any time pursuant to applicable laws or regulations. Strip searches are prohibited. School administrators will report crimes as required by law and will call local law enforcement when an administrator suspects that a crime has been committed on campus.

STUDENT CONDUCT

Uniform Policy

Cogito Academy dress code is established to instill discipline, prevent disruption, avoid safety hazards, and teach respect. All students are expected to exemplify proper dress and grooming standards in a manner that portrays an appropriate image for the student and the school. Dress code standards will be distributed and discussed. Returning students and students new to Cogito Academy are expected to be uniform compliant the first day they attend school.

School leaders have the discretion to determine the appropriateness of attire and grooming, and make special exceptions, including those for religious or medical necessities. If it is determined that a student's attire is inappropriate or violates the

dress code, disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in all cases.

Attire

1. Cogito Academy polo (short or long sleeve)
2. Plain front khaki or navy pants, skorts, or shorts (no cargo shorts, pants, or joggers)
3. Closed toe and closed heel shoes
4. School approved jumper or skort (must be at least fingertip length all the way around)

Free Dress Days

On special occasions, students will be allowed Free Dress Days. All Free Dress Days will be announced. Students are free to wear clothing and shoes of their choosing in compliance with the following:

1. All shorts, skirts, and dresses should be past the middle fingertip of the student when the student's arms are by their side all the way around.
2. The straps of a student's top should be at least three flat fingers across.
3. Leggings do not substitute for pants. Tops worn with leggings must be past the middle fingertip of the student when the student's arms are by their side all the way around.

Outerwear

1. Students may only wear Cogito Academy outerwear in the building.
2. Students may also wear long sleeve solid white, red, or navy shirts under their short sleeve polos.
3. Girls may wear solid white, red, or navy leggings under their skorts or jumpers.
4. Students may wear any outerwear to and from school but must take it off by the beginning of their first class of the day.

Embroidery or Screen Printing of Clothing:

Parents and students may add monograms, first names, last names, and/or initials to the outside of Cogito Academy approved clothing. These should be added through embroidery or screen printing and should not be a disruption to the educational process. Administration has the right to ask students not to wear items that do not follow these guidelines.

Hairstyles

Hairstyles, in general, are expected to be clean, neat, natural shade or tone, and in good taste.

Body Adornments

Body piercings and art must maintain a professional image. Cogito Academy reserves the right to ask any student to cover or remove these at any time.

Head Attire

1. Hats, bandanas, caps, shower caps, sweatbands, etc. shall be worn with permission.
2. Headwraps are not allowed in the building without prior written approval.

Uniform Violations

K-2:

- 1st Offense: Warning and Parent Contact
- 2nd Offense: Warning and Parent Contact
- 3rd Offense: Parent Conference

3-5:

- 1st Offense: Warning and Parent Contact
- 2nd Offense: Parent Conference
- 3rd Offense: In School Suspension

Video Surveillance and Monitoring

Video cameras will be used in common areas for surveillance to ensure the security and safety of students, staff and patrons of

Cogito Academy throughout the entire campus. Disciplinary actions can be taken based on the information in the video surveillance. Discipline will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Due to privacy concerns, generally video surveillance footage will not be shared with parents or legal guardians unless instructed to do so with a court ordered subpoena.

While on Cogito Academy property or at school sponsored events, students may not record, whether audio or video, employees, other students, or parents or legal guardians, without first notifying the individual of the recording. This expectation does not apply to public events such as music performances, plays, athletic competitions, etc., where there is not an expectation of privacy.

Pledge of Allegiance

All staff and students are required to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance during the designated time at the beginning of each school day or during special assemblies. Students and staff who are physically unable to stand are exempt from this requirement but are encouraged to participate in a respectful manner to the extent that they are able. The school will provide education and resources to staff and students on the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance, the value of respecting diverse beliefs, and the significance of patriotic traditions.

Electronics Policy (Including Cell Phones)

Cogito Academy is not responsible for any misplaced, damaged, or stolen devices. Students may only use electronic devices/cell phones as directed by their teacher.

Students will be held to these standards in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Cogito Academy reserves the right to confiscate devices as deemed necessary, including but not limited to turning these devices over to proper authorities.

Cogito Academy Lancaster Policy: Possession/Use of Personal Electronic Devices or District-Owned Devices

Purpose: To establish the basic rules for the board's permission of personal electronic devices or school-owned devices on school grounds, in the school buildings, on buses, or during any other time they are under the direct administrative jurisdiction of the school, whether on or off the school grounds.

Personal Electronic Device

For purposes of this policy, "personal electronic device" includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, pagers, gaming devices, or other devices that emit an audible signal, vibrate, display a message, display or record an image, or otherwise summon or deliver a communication to the possessor. Personal electronic devices are not permitted to be on or visible during the school day and should be powered off and stored in backpacks at all times while on campus between student arrival and dismissal bell.

Unauthorized use of a personal electronic device may include, but is not limited to, taking pictures or recording without permission, cheating, harassment or bullying, use during any emergency drill, use during unauthorized times, or use for unlawful activities.

A student in possession of a personal electronic device in conflict with this policy will be subject to discipline as provided under school code of conduct policies.

Violations of this policy may result in the confiscation of the device and all its components. Students are not allowed to erase the history or remove the battery, SIM card or any other part of the device before giving it to the school official. Students will receive the phone at the end of the school day.

The school is not responsible for the loss or damage of any personal electronic device brought on school grounds, in the school buildings, on buses, or during any other time they are under the direct administrative jurisdiction of the school, whether on or off the school grounds.

School-Owned Device

The school may provide students with electronic devices including, but not limited to, tablets or laptop computers in an effort to enhance students' learning experience. The school will determine the device that best suits the needs of the students.

Students will have no expectation of privacy with respect to any information contained on these devices. School-owned devices may contain tracking software to recover lost or stolen devices. Students are not allowed to erase the history or remove the battery, SIM card, or any other part of the device. Students will abide by the school's acceptable use policy established for the use of technology resources. Students who violate the acceptable use policy or do not follow instructions for the proper use of the device on school grounds, in the school buildings, on buses, or during any other time they are under the direct administrative jurisdiction of the school, whether on or off the school grounds, will be subject to discipline according to school policy.

Students are responsible for the care of the school-owned device. Parents/Legal guardians will cover the cost of damage to or loss of the device. Students will return the device at the end of the school year or when directed by school leadership.

Legal References:

S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, as amended:

Section 59-63-280 - Requires board to adopt a policy on student use of electronic devices.

All Grades

Any electronic device used for picture taking, video recording, posting, or text messaging that results in students cheating or which causes major disruptions will result in additional discipline at the principal's discretion.

Technology disciplinary offenses may also result in restricted use of the personal mobile computing device. Restricted use may prohibit the student from taking the device off of school grounds.

The school administration reserves the right to handle any of the above actions or any other action determined to be a misuse of technology in the manner they feel is the most appropriate for all concerned. The school will take appropriate steps to safeguard personal electronic devices that are confiscated; however, the school will not be responsible if the devices are lost, stolen, or damaged.

For additional information on acceptable use of technology, please refer to the Cogito Academy Technology Acceptable Use policy.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Tier 1 Behaviors/Consequences:

Tier 1 behaviors can in most cases be taken care of through non-punitive interventions or consequences that are not to isolate the student. Tier 1 Behaviors include but are not limited to:

- classroom disruption
- cutting class
- mutual respect
- school/class attendance
- student dress code
- electronic devices
- illegally installing or transmitting copyrighted materials
- using unauthorized Internet or computer games ● downloading and/or accessing inappropriate applications, programs, or websites
- honor code
- giving out personal information, for any reason, over the Internet
- deleting school system applications and changing personal mobile computing device settings
- (exceptions include personal settings such as font size, brightness, etc.)
- Trespassing
- Inappropriate Language
- Defiance
- Disrespect
- Integrity
- horseplaying.

Consequences:

- The student will receive a warning depending on the severity of the offense.

Tier 2 Behaviors/Consequences:

Tier 2 behaviors entail more serious misconduct that could lead to disciplinary actions of multiple days in ISS or out of school suspension. Tier 2 Behaviors include but are not limited to - at times, due to the severity of Tier 1 behaviors, they can be considered Tier 2 behaviors for consequences:

- falsification or deceit
- inappropriate illustrations
- images, or other materials
- hacking and unauthorized computer access ● substantially disruptive or dangerous behavior ● school transportation disturbance
- false fire alarm or reported emergency ● fire setting/incendiary material
- property damage
- spamming (disruptive email/messages, including iMessages, peer-to-peer messaging, text messaging) ● gaining access to another student's accounts, files, and/or data
- repeated Level I infractions
- bypassing the Cogito Academy web filter
- Theft
- Extortion
- indecent exposure/sexual behavior ● report firearm or destructive device ● search and seizure
- aiding and abetting
- threatening*/false threat
- fighting/physical aggression
- harassment/bullying*
- weapons facsimile
- repeated/willful violations of Tier 1 rules

*Threatening is defined by as verbal, non-verbal, physical, or written threats of harm to self or others. Any threat made by a student will result in a mental health screening with a counselor or psychologist on campus.

*Bullying is defined by as a continuous and one-sided imbalance of power used to intimidate or harm others. Bullying can be physical and/or relational.

Consequences:

- The student will receive an in-school suspension depending upon the severity of the offense.

Tier 3 Behavior/Consequences:

Tier 3 behaviors are more severe in nature and may support a longer suspension than earlier mentioned offenses.

Tier 3 Behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Gang and Gang related Activity
- Narcotics, Alcoholic Beverages, Controlled substances, chemicals, and drug paraphernalia including e-cigarettes and vapes
- Weapons/Dangerous Instruments/Substances ● Assault on a student
- Assault on School personnel or Other
 - Assault involving weapon/dangerous instrument/substances
 - Bomb threats
 - Threats of mass violence
 - Sexual assault, sexual offense, and rape 18
- recording unauthorized audio or video images on school property or during extracurricular activities with school or personally owned devices
- sending, transmitting, accessing, uploading,

- Adult/Victimization
 - downloading, or distributing obscene, offensive, profane, threatening, pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit materials
- spamming (disruptive email/messages, including iMessages)
- using the school's Internet or email accounts for financial gain, commercial gain, or any illegal activity
- vandalizing/attempting to harm or destroy school owned property
 - transmitting or accessing obscene, offensive, or threatening materials or materials intended to harass or demean
 - repeated Level II infractions

Consequences:

- The student will receive in or out-of-school suspension with the number of days determined by the severity of the offense.

Any Subsequent Offense:

- The student will be assigned the appropriate disciplinary consequence based on his/her personal cumulative disciplinary history.

Any student issued out of school suspension will be required to meet with a parent/legal guardian and a member of school leadership before returning to class. Students will not be allowed to participate in school-related functions (clubs, sports, performances, etc.) when serving an In School Suspension or Out of School Suspension.

Lunch Detention (Can serve as a Tier 1 behavioral consequence) can be given by school leadership as a consequence to an office referral, but also may be issued by individual teachers as a classroom consequence.

Behavior Contracts will be implemented for a total of three minor infractions, regardless of type, and a parent/guardian meeting will be scheduled.

The School Director is authorized to recommend to the Board of Directors that students be expelled. It is understood by the administration and school board that some parts of the Student Code of Conduct may be reviewed and refined annually according to the unique needs of students, teachers and administrators of each building.

Notification

School leadership shall notify a student's parent by phone or in writing of any violation that may result in a detention outside of regular school hours, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or recommendation for expulsion.

Before being suspended, a student and his/her parent/guardian shall have an informal conference with school leadership who shall advise the student of the conduct of which he or she is accused and the length of the suspension. This conference shall

be set within three days of the first day of suspension.

Behavior Contracts:

By implementing behavior contracts, Cogito Academy aims to foster a supportive and disciplined environment conducive to academic success. Good behavior is critical to academic achievement. Our behavior contract is an agreement between the student, the school, and the family to improve student behavior.

1. When a behavior concern or violation is identified, a mandatory meeting is held with the student, their family, and school staff.
2. The behavior contract is drafted, discussed, and signed by all parties.
3. Progress is monitored regularly, and adjustments to the contract are made as necessary.

Behavior Contract Components:

1. Agreement:

- The contract is a formal agreement signed by the student, their family, and the school.

2. Goals and Expectations:

- Clear behavior goals and expectations are outlined in the contract.

3. Support and Resources:

- The school provides resources and support to help the student meet the behavior goals.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Regular monitoring and evaluation of the student's behavior progress.

5. Consequences:

- You must withdraw your child if you do not agree to the terms of the behavior contract.
- If the terms of the behavior contract are not followed removal from Cogito Academy is required.

Appeals

Questions from parents/guardians regarding disciplinary measures should be addressed to the teacher or campus administration, as appropriate. Consequences shall not be deferred pending the outcome of a grievance.

Removal from the Regular Educational Setting

In addition to other discipline management techniques, misconduct may result in removal from the regular educational setting in the form of a routine referral or a formal removal.

Returning Student to Classroom

When a student has been formally removed from class by a teacher for conduct against the teacher containing the elements of assault, aggravated assault, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, murder, capital murder, or criminal attempt to commit murder or capital murder, the student may not be returned to the teacher's class without the teacher's consent.

When a student has been formally removed by a teacher for any other conduct, the student may be returned to the teacher's class without the teacher's consent, if the administration determines that the teacher's class is the best or only alternative available.

Coursework Notice

The parent or guardian of a student suspended may request notice of the student's opportunity to complete coursework required for graduation.

Newly Enrolled Students

A student who enrolls in Cogito Academy before completing a disciplinary action from another school district must satisfy the current disciplinary action.

EXPULSION PROCESS

Expulsion

A student may be recommended for expulsion for the commission of any crime, gross immorality, gross misbehavior, persistent disobedience, or for violation of written rules and promulgated regulations established by Cogito Academy or when the presence of the student is detrimental to the best interest of the school. Cogito Academy's Board of Directors has the authority to order the expulsion of a student after a hearing.

A student may be recommended for expulsion for engaging in the following conduct no matter where it takes place:

1. Assault of a school employee or volunteer
2. Criminal mischief, if punishable as a felony
3. Aggravated assault
4. Sexual assault
5. Aggravated sexual assault
6. Murder
7. Capital murder
8. Criminal attempt to commit murder or capital murder
9. Aggravated robbery
10. Breach of computer security
11. Engaging in conduct relating to a false alarm or report (including a bomb threat) or a terroristic threat involving a public school

A student may be recommended for expulsion for engaging at School, Within 300 Feet, or at School Event:

1. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person, or possessing, using, or being under the influence of marijuana, a controlled substance, or a dangerous drug, if the conduct is not punishable as a felony.
2. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person, or possessing, using, or being under the influence of alcohol; or committing a serious act or offense while under the influence of alcohol, if the conduct is not punishable as a felony.
3. Engaging in conduct that contains the elements of an offense relating to abuse and/or volatile chemicals.
4. Engaging in conduct that contains the elements of assault against an employee or a volunteer.
5. Engaging in deadly conduct.
6. Aggravated assault, sexual assault, or aggravated sexual assault
7. Arson
8. Murder, capital murder, or criminal attempt to commit murder or capital murder
9. Indecency with a child, aggravated kidnapping, manslaughter, criminally negligent homicide, or aggravated robbery
10. Felony drug- or alcohol-related offense
11. Use, exhibition, or possession of a firearm (as defined by state law), an illegal knife, a club, or prohibited weapon, or possession of a firearm (as defined by federal law)

A student may be recommended for expulsion for engaging in documented serious misbehavior that violates Cogito Academy's Student Code of Conduct. For purposes of discretionary expulsion, serious misbehavior means:

1. Deliberate violent behavior that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
2. Extortion, meaning the gaining of money or other property by force or threat;
3. Conduct that constitutes coercion; or
4. Conduct that constitutes the offense of:
 - a. Public lewdness;
 - b. Indecent exposure;
 - c. Criminal mischief;
 - d. Personal hazing;
 - e. Harassment of a student or employee.

Mandatory Expulsion: Misconduct That Requires Expulsion

A student will be recommended for expulsion under federal or state law for any of the following offenses that occur on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property:

Bringing to school a firearm, as defined by federal law. "Firearm" under federal law includes:

1. Any weapon (including a starter gun or play gun) that will, is designed to, or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive.

2. The frame or receiver of any such weapon.
3. Any firearm muffler or firearm weapon.
4. Any destructive device, such as any explosive, incendiary or poison gas bomb, or grenade.
5. Using, exhibiting, or possessing the following, as defined by the South Carolina Penal Code:
 - a. A firearm (any device designed, made, or adapted to expel a projectile through a barrel by using the energy generated by an explosion or burning substance or any device readily convertible to that use), unless the use exhibition or possession of the firearm occurs at an off-campus approved target range facility while participating in or preparing for a school- sponsored shooting sports competition or a shooting sports educational activity that is sponsored or supported by the Parks and Wildlife Department or a shooting sports sanctioning organization working with the department. Any student who possesses, uses, or transfers a firearm on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity will be recommended for expulsion for one calendar year. On a case-by-case basis, the School Director may request that the Board modify the one calendar year expulsion.
 - b. An illegal knife, such as a knife with a blade over 5½ inches; hand instrument, designed to cut or stab another by being thrown; dagger, including but not limited to a dirk, stiletto, and poniard; bowie knife; sword; or spear.
 - c. A club such as an instrument specially designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting serious bodily injury or death by striking a person with the instrument, including a blackjack, nightstick, mace, and tomahawk. d. A prohibited weapon, such as an explosive weapon, a machine gun, a short-barrel firearm, a firearm silencer, a switchblade knife, knuckles, armor-piercing ammunition, a chemical dispensing device, a zip gun or a tire deflation device.
6. Behaving in a manner that contains elements of the following offenses under the South Carolina Penal Code:
 - a. Aggravated assault, sexual assault, or aggravated sexual assault
 - b. Arson
 - c. Murder, capital murder, or criminal attempt to commit murder or capital murder
 - d. Indecency with a child
 - e. Aggravated kidnapping
 - f. Aggravated robbery
 - g. Manslaughter
 - h. Criminally negligent homicide
7. Behavior punishable as a felony that involves selling, giving, or delivering to another person, or possessing, using, or being under the influence of marijuana, a controlled substance, a dangerous drug, or alcohol; or committing a serious act or offense while under the influence of alcohol.
8. Engaging in retaliation against a school employee or volunteer combined with one of the above- listed offenses.

Investigation and action taken by administration

If after school leadership investigates a report of student misbehavior, and he/she decides to recommend expulsion, the administrator should suspend the student and notify the student's parent/guardian of his/her right to meet with the administrator. If after meeting with the parent/guardian the administrator still intends to recommend expulsion, the matter will be referred directly to the School Director.

Notice of expulsion recommendation

By the end of the third school day following receipt of an expulsion recommendation, the Board Chair will notify the student and his/her parent/guardian, in writing, of the following:

- the rule(s) infraction alleged to have occurred;
- the right of the student to review his/her records, including the investigative documents and any other evidence the administration intends to present at the expulsion hearing;
- the right of the student to a hearing on the evidence;
- the date, time and place of the hearing, which must be held within fifteen (15) days of the date of written notification of the expulsion recommendation (unless the parent/legal guardian or his/her representative agree otherwise); and ● the procedure to be followed at the hearing, including the right to be represented by counsel.

A response form will be enclosed with the notice on which the parent/legal guardian is asked to advise the Board Chair whether he/she intends to appear, whether he/she will be represented by legal counsel, and whether he/she wishes to waive an evidentiary hearing and merely address the Board. If the response form is not signed and returned to the Board Chair within 48 hours of the scheduled date of the hearing, the hearing may proceed as scheduled whether or not the student, the parent/legal guardian or the student's representative is present, or the hearing may be postponed.

Hearing procedure

The Board shall schedule the hearing as soon as practical, but no more than fifteen (15) days following the notification to the student's parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of the expulsion recommendation, unless a later date is agreed to with the student's parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

The hearing shall be conducted in executive session and presided over by the Board. The administrator making the recommendation for expulsion may present information and witnesses in support of the recommendation. Following the administration's presentation, the student will be provided an opportunity to question the administrator and any witnesses called by the administrator. The student will then be given an opportunity to present his or her case and call witnesses. Following the student's presentation, the administrator will be provided an opportunity to question the student and any witnesses called by the student. At the conclusion of both sides' presentations, the Board may ask questions of either side. The Board will then deliberate and return to open session to issue a decision. No student names will be used in open session.

Action following the hearing

At the hearing, the Board will decide whether to uphold, reverse or alter the expulsion recommendation of the School Director. Within ten (10) days of the hearing, the Board will issue written confirmation of its decision to the parent(s)/legal guardian(s). If the recommendation for expulsion is reversed, all absences resulting from the suspension will be excused, the student's record will be cleared with respect to the recommendation, and the student will be allowed to make up all missed work. The Board's decision may be appealed to the proper court.

Withdrawal During Process

When a student has violated Cogito Academy's Student Code of Conduct in a way that requires or permits an expulsion recommendation from the school and the student withdraws from the school before the expulsion hearing takes place, the school may choose to suspend the expulsion hearing bringing all proceedings to an end. If the student then re-enrolls in the school during the same or subsequent school year, the school may enforce the expulsion order or restart expulsion hearings at that time.

Restrictions During Expulsion

Expelled students or students who are awaiting an expulsion hearing are prohibited from being on school grounds or attending school-sponsored or school-related activities during the period of expulsion.

Student Grievance Policy

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and efficient process for reviewing and resolving student grievances, which may be filed and pursued by a student's parent or guardian. Cogito Academy will keep all grievance proceedings confidential to the extent permitted by law.

The student grievance process may be used by students or their parents or guardians as follows:

1. To address an alleged violation of applicable law or regulations that directly affects the student.
2. To address an alleged violation of Board Policy that directly affects the student.
3. To address an alleged violation of charter compliance that directly affects the student.
4. To address alleged discrimination or harassment against the student.

A student who files a grievance has the right to be represented by legal counsel at the student's own expense.

If the timelines set forth herein are not met, the grievance may be deemed waived by the official(s) charged with investigating and deciding the grievance.

The official(s) charged with investigating and deciding grievances are entitled to extend the timelines herein for investigating and issuing decisions if necessary to conduct a thorough and complete investigation into a grievance or appeal.

Step One: Informal Discussion

Subject to the following paragraph, the aggrieved student must first initiate an informal discussion with the other person(s) involved in the incident giving rise to the grievance within ten (10) school days of the incident or when the aggrieved student learned of the incident for the purpose of attempting to resolve the grievance.

If the grievance includes allegations of discrimination or harassment against the student, the student is not required to initiate an informal discussion with the person(s) allegedly discriminating against or harassing the student, and the student may proceed

immediately to Step Two.

Step Two: Submit a Written Grievance to the School Director

If the informal discussion does not resolve the student's concerns, the student may within ten (10) school days after the informal discussion submit a written Grievance Form to the School Director. If the grievance includes allegations of discrimination or harassment, the student shall submit a written Grievance Form within ten (10) school days of the incident or when the student learned of the incident to the School Director, or to the Board of Directors pursuant to Step Three if such allegations are against the School Director.

The student must include in the Grievance Form a description of the grievance, the actions already taken by the student to attempt to resolve the grievance, and the relief requested. A Grievance Form that does not contain such information will be deemed incomplete and returned to the student to complete within the required timeline. Submission of an incomplete Grievance Form does not extend the required timeline. Only the issues set forth in the written Grievance Form shall be considered thereafter.

Upon receipt of a Grievance Form, within fifteen (15) school days the School Director shall schedule a conference with the student and any other individual(s) deemed necessary by the School Director to discuss the allegations. The School Director shall issue a written decision to the student within ten (10) school days of the conclusion of the conference(s).

Step Three: Final Appeal to the Board of Directors

If a student is not satisfied with the School Director's written decision, the student may submit a written appeal to the Board of Directors within ten (10) school days of receiving the School Director's written decision, which can be accomplished by submitting the written appeal to the Board Chair. The written appeal must include a copy of the original written Grievance Form, a copy of the School Director's written decision, and a written description of why the student was not satisfied with the School Director's written decision. An appeal that does not contain such information will be deemed incomplete and returned to the student to complete within the required timeline. Submission of an incomplete appeal does not extend the required timeline.

Within thirty (30) days of receipt of a written appeal (or the original Grievance Form if the grievance involves allegations of discrimination or harassment against the School Director and is filed directly with the Board), the Board of Directors will schedule a hearing date and provide the student with notice of the hearing date and the procedures for the hearing. All hearings conducted pursuant to this Grievance Policy are considered non-adversarial. After the hearing, the Board of Directors will issue a written decision within ten (10) business days, which will be final and binding. The Board of Directors is entitled to extend these timelines if necessary for the purpose of conducting a thorough and complete investigation.

Students with Disabilities

Cogito Academy follows the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and the procedural safeguards provided under IDEA and State law for students with disabilities. In disciplinary matters, this means that a student with disabilities may, based on the severity of the behavior, be moved to a temporary alternate placement determined by the IEP team or suspended for no more than 10 consecutive school days (a student may be moved by a temporary administrative decision if special circumstances such as drugs, weapons, or serious bodily injury apply).

A student does not have to have an IEP in place to receive IDEA discipline protections. Protections are available as long as the school had knowledge that the student may have a disability before the misconduct occurred.

Cogito Academy may suspend a student with a disability for up to 10 days without a duty to continue to provide services from the IEP. Suspending a student with disabilities for more than 10 cumulative days in a single school year (even for separate incidents), however, constitutes a change of placement. In those cases, the student must continue to receive all services required by the IEP. If a student's behavior warrants in-school suspension, Cogito Academy will provide services comparable to those in the student's IEP and that allow the student opportunities to participate in his or her general curriculum.

If a student with a disability is being considered for expulsion or a suspension that would result in more than 10 days (consecutive or cumulative of the school year), Cogito Academy will conduct a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) hearing. At this hearing a determination will be made regarding whether the behavior was caused by, or had a direct or substantial relationship to, the student's disability, or whether the conduct resulted from the school's failure to implement the IEP. Parents will be invited and notified at least 24 hours prior to an MDR.

If the MDR results in a finding that the behavior was not a manifestation of the disability, then Cogito Academy will take the same disciplinary action for the student with a disability that it would have for children without disabilities. As noted above, if a removal

constitutes more than 10 cumulative days during the school year, all required IEP services shall be provided. In addition, Cogito Academy may also perform a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and implement positive behavioral intervention services to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

If the MDR results in a finding that the behavior was a manifestation of the disability, or if the conduct was a direct result of Cogito Academy's failure to implement the IEP, then Cogito Academy will conduct an FBA or, following a review, modify any existing behavioral intervention plan as necessary. The student will be returned to the student's placement at the school (though the parents and the school may agree to a change of placement as part of modifications to the IEP or BIP).

Parents or the school may appeal an MDR determination. An appeal hearing must be held within 20 days of notice by the LEA representative. A decision shall be rendered within 10 days.

Disability services shall be provided during the appeal process. If the school believes continuing IEP services is substantially likely to result in serious bodily injury to the student or others, the school may appeal that decision.

School officials shall remove a student to an interim alternative setting for up to 45 school days, regardless of whether the conduct is a manifestation of the disability in the following three situations: a student is found to have used or possessed illegal drugs, possessed a firearm on school grounds, or committed aggravated assault or serious bodily injury.

In these cases, the student may be placed in an alternative education setting for up to 45 days. The Principal will notify parents of all matters related to the incident in writing and parents may bring an attorney or advocate to any related meetings.

Regardless of the determination following the MDR, the school will resume providing IEP services on the 11th day of suspension (if they were halted as part of the suspension).

Cogito Academy will consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change in placement, consistent with the other requirements of South Carolina Department of Education Board of Education Regulations, is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct. All parental notifications related to disciplinary actions will be made as required by state and federal regulations.

Dismissal

Purpose:

To ensure the safety and efficient dismissal of all students, Cogito Academy defines and enforces clear guidelines regarding when a student is considered a walker versus a car rider.

Definitions:

- Walker: A student is considered a "walker" if they walk directly from school to their home or a designated residence without the use of any vehicle. This means that the student must walk the entire route from school to home or another specified destination.
- Car Rider: A student is considered a "car rider" if they are picked up from school by a vehicle at any point during their journey from school to home. This includes students who are driven to a nearby location, such as a parking lot, for pick-up by a parent or guardian.

Protocol for Walkers:

1. Eligibility:

- Only students who live within a walkable distance and do not require vehicular assistance to reach their home are eligible to be designated as walkers.

2. Dismissal:

- Walkers will be dismissed at the designated dismissal time and must immediately begin their walk home. Walkers are expected to leave the school premises on foot and follow a direct route home.
- For safety reasons, walkers are not allowed to be picked up by a vehicle on or near the school grounds, including parking lots or adjacent properties.

Protocol for Car Riders:

1. Car Line Usage:

- All car riders must be picked up through the designated car line. Parents or guardians are required to remain in

their vehicles and follow the established car line procedures.

2. No Walking Pick-Up:

- Parents or guardians are not permitted to park and walk up to the school building to pick up their children. This ensures the safety of students as they exit the building and helps maintain the efficiency of the car line.

Special Circumstances:

- If a student's transportation needs change or if there are special circumstances that require a deviation from the established protocols, parents must communicate with the school administration in advance to discuss and approve any changes.

Enforcement:

Failure to adhere to these policies may result in a review of the student's dismissal designation and may require adjustments to ensure compliance with school safety protocols.

This policy is in place to prioritize the safety and well-being of all students during dismissal and to ensure that the process runs smoothly and efficiently for everyone involved.

Parent/Guardian Commitment to Cogito Academy

- We will send our student to school daily, ready to learn.
- We will send our student to school with all of his/her materials.
- We will make sure our student follows the dress code.
- We will check daily for communications from the teacher.
- We will encourage our student to read 20 minutes a night.
- We will keep the school informed of any change of address, guardianship or medical condition.
- We will make ourselves available to the administration and faculty to discuss the well-being of our student.

Student Commitment to Cogito Academy

- I will come to school prepared to learn every day.
- I will always work, think and behave to the best of my ability to be the best student I can be.
- I will take responsibility for my actions as a student at Cogito Academy.
- I will not violate the rights of others at Cogito Academy.

- I will respect the rights of other students to learn, think and act to be the best they can be.
- I will follow the code of conduct as stated in the student handbook.
- I will do my classwork and homework daily.
- I will ask my teacher when I don't understand.
- I will always share my concerns with my parents and teachers.
- I understand that the three non-negotiable requirements at Cogito Academy are; student ID, dress code and the three Rs (rights, respect and responsibility to others.)

Faculty Commitment to Cogito Academy

- I will be prepared daily to teach my students to become life-long learners.
- I will treat my students with respect.
- I will make myself available to help students when needed.
- I will model the three Rs (rights, respect and responsibility) as it relates to students, faculty, and parents.
- I will communicate with parents on a regular basis.
- I will notify the parents when there is a noticeable change in their student's class work or discipline.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____