



Paramount Academy  
Parent Handbook  
*Updated March 2022*

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## Mission Statement

To build a community that fosters rich, experiential outdoor learning, age-appropriate ecological literacy, and promotes healthy living by connecting children to nature through the use of a farm and forest model.



## Vision

Our vision is to provide as many children as possible with frequent opportunities to play and learn on an agricultural property; and to experience the environment with educators who understand the power of play and child-directed learning. Paramount Academy hopes that children in our camps will develop a strong sense of self, a healthy connection to the land and community, and will become an eager part of the next generation of environmental stewards who can contribute to a more sustainable world.



## 1. What is forest school?

The Forest School approach to learning originated in Scandinavia in the late 1950s and has been widely adopted around the world. Paramount Academy applies many of the guiding principles of Forest School Canada to promote learning and connect children and their families to the natural world through experiential learning. We acknowledge our presence on First Nations' land and aim to build relationships with indigenous teachers who wish to visit, share and connect with the children in the program.



In our forest and farm camp programs, children spend anywhere from a half day to a full day in greenhouse, forest, farm and natural spaces. Forest School programming fosters children's development through child-based learning, outdoor play, collaborative & independent inquiry and exploration in a farm and natural setting.



Being outside in a natural environment has been shown to relieve stress by reducing the stress hormone, cortisol, in the brain. Children are increasingly surrounded by stressful situations and environments such as media, busy urban environments, academic testing, screen time etc. and being able to learn outside gives them the time needed to relax, enjoy

themselves and be stress free. In addition, learning outside helps children to build a personal connection with nature. Ideally, this personal connection with nature will allow our future generations to understand and value the natural world.



Having time to regularly visit and learn in the same growing space/forested/ravine/farmland is an excellent chance for children to connect with nature, themselves and to build healthy relationships with their peers. The Paramount Academy program helps to build children's self-awareness and confidence, communication skills, critical and creative thought, physical and social skills, and the ability to navigate risk.





## 2. Welcome to Paramount Academy!

Paramount Academy offers day camps that provide children a unique urban farm and wild space to connect to the land and to each other. While involved in child-directed, emergent and educational play, children gain confidence to face new challenges.

The leased land that Paramount Academy operates on is privately-owned property located along 101<sup>st</sup> St. SW and near Artist's View Drive in Springbank. Depending on the site, we may have access to a large commercial greenhouse, a heated / powered ATCO building, a barn, horse paddocks, and a heated cabin. Children can experience and interact with small domesticated farm animals such as goats, chickens and rabbits, and over 15 acres of field, ravine, and coniferous / deciduous forest lands.



### 2.1 Available programs

Our programs are offered to children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old through enthusiastic Outdoor Education guides. Programs typically operate on Saturdays and/or Sundays for full and half days, as well as on select weekdays for summer camps. Program availability may vary season to season depending on demand. Paramount Academy camps are intended as an extra-curricular activity designed to supplement/compliment to a child's home or school based academic learning. We also offer a full-day forest and farm kindergarten program in partnership with Aspen Hill Montessori for the 2022-2023 season for children turning 5 before Dec. 31, please inquire via [admissions@aspenhillmontessori.ca](mailto:admissions@aspenhillmontessori.ca) to learn more.

#### ***Explorers: Ages 5 – 7***

Explorers are new to outdoor adventure but are eager and independent learners who show the readiness to be part of a group away from home. Children in Explorers should be ready to be outdoors in all types of weather. This age group focuses on building physical and mental

stamina through hikes in the woods, climbing and free building activities, and basic outdoor knowledge. This group will also enjoy crafts based on nature materials as well as time getting to know the animals, and playing wilderness group games.

### ***Adventurers: Ages 8 - 10***

Adventurers are eager explorers who are ready to tackle challenges independently in a natural environment. Children may participate in building shelters, doing pond studies, learning about care and keeping of farm animals, track and observe wild animals, and help to grow and care for plants and vegetables. Adventurers will begin to work with basic tools with support to pursue their explorations and activities. This group will enjoy more advanced outdoor crafts / nature loose parts and skill-building challenge games.

### ***Trekkers: Ages 10 - 12+***

Trekkers are accomplished outdoor children who are ready for the challenge of being fully involved in farm and forest experiences. Children will work with basic tools, actively participate in creating their own learning, build fires to warm themselves, track and learn more about wild animals, study birds, and be responsible for engaging in their learning. Adventurers help to garden in the summer, build snow forts in the winter, and construct windbreaks from wood. Trekkers learn more about environmental stewardship, leave no trace principles, and winter / backcountry camping.



Paramount programs run almost exclusively outdoors and use the natural environment for exploratory play, no matter what the weather might be. Our educators help to prepare children for the weather conditions, and the children's safety and enjoyment is the number one priority. We believe that learning and playing actively, in an outdoor environment, will help future generations feel more comfortable in, and be more connected to the natural world. Children are expected to arrive dressed for the weather each day (see section on Clothing).

## 2.2 What happens on an 'average' day at Paramount Academy?

The day's activities are free-flowing and dynamic, as they depend on the ever-changing natural environment in which the program takes place (changing seasons, evidence of animals, fresh fallen snow, emergence of new flowers, insect activity, effects of weather on the land etc.) and on the interpersonal relationships formed between the children and educators in the group. We also are fortunate to have access to urban farm animals at the site, such as chickens, rabbits, and goats.

Educators start the day with a kit of activities as well as an overall theme to explore, then add to the day's learning by introducing provocations such as simple tools and loose parts used for building and creating. Our educators focusing the discussions around the theme of the day, as well as allowing for independent play as well as collaboration to do real tasks on and around the farm space. We may watch animals, help with farm chores, water and trim plants, build forest structures, explore pond life, take hikes, and more! We open and close each day in the gathering space where we may incorporate literacy activities such as stories, poems, songs, plays, sharing, artwork and music-making to expand on the children's learning and discoveries. On an average day we spend most of our time outdoors, rain or shine!



## 2.3 Program Location

Paramount acknowledges that we walk, learn and play on the traditional land of Treaty 7 territory, the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Nations, including Siksika, Piikani, Kainai, the Tsuut'ina Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nations. We acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries. We are dedicated to honouring the enduring Indigenous presence on this land and we are committed to teaching children the spirit of reconciliation and respect.

Paramount Academy operates out of private land along 101<sup>st</sup> St. SW and Artist's View Drive, close to the intersection of Old Banff Coach Road. The exact address and GPS coordinates are provided to registered families.





Groups check in at the gated entrance; a team member will meet your child's group with a large wagon. Groups access the land on the property on foot, using a prepared learning space in the site buildings for indoor activities. Portapotties on site allow for bathrooming, and portable hand wash stations and sanitizing stations are set up at various access points.

The properties back onto 15 acres of ravine and forest, which is a vast area with a shallow pond and other woodland features that make it fantastic for forest school learning.

#### 2.4 Registration

Registration is done via PDF forms / e-mail on a first come, first served basis. Families will be reached by email to confirm their registration and will be requested to make payment in full within 5 business days of registering.

Returning families will be given at least 1 weeks' notice to re-register for the next session, prior to opening registration to the public.

Children are placed in age-appropriate cohorts based on age, experience and other factors determined by the Paramount Academy programming team. If there is a child you want your child to attend with, please mention them in your registration form.

#### 2.5 Payment and Refund Policy

Payment is required within 5 business days of registration acceptance. At this time we only accept payments made by e-transfer. These can be sent to [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) using 'paramounttyc' as the password. Please do not set your own password.

Please ensure you enclose a note with the following: Child's Name and Program Dates.

As our program staff are committed to based on registered children, we do not offer refunds for our programming. However, if you or a member of your family have illness symptoms prior to the program starting (including anything related to COVID-19), we are happy to

transfer 50% of your fees with at least 24 hours' notice from the start date of the program to a future program within 3 months' time for the same child.

Refunds or transfers of fees for programming once the date of the program has arrived, regardless of reason, are not provided.

Please note that the initial registration fees for our program (one-time, \$50 fee per child per calendar year) are non-refundable nor transferable.

We do not offer refunds for severe weather cancellations.

### 3. Programming Approach

Our programming is topic and inquiry based and driven partially by the theme for the day, as well as by the children's interests and needs. This creates an atmosphere of relevant and meaningful learning for the children. Educators extend this child led learning by providing provocations based on seasonal cycles, what children have discovered or are curious/have questions about.

Planning and theme-based learning takes into account weather, site conditions and social dynamics. Educators observe the children's interactions and activities throughout the day and when appropriate, document activities mentally or with photos. With this information, educators meet at the end of the day to reflect on the day noting areas of concern, interests, growth and use this information to plan future activities.

#### 3.1 Program management

Children may adventure to the forest in smaller groups or as one large group. This decision is made by Lead Educators at the beginning of each day or session and the decision is based on a number of factors: environmental impact, group management, social dynamics, programming needs etc. Paramount Academy may choose to organize this on a more permanent basis or will do this as needed depending upon the specific group needs. Adventure groups or animal groups are formed by Lead Educators with Educator input and while Paramount Academy appreciates feedback from parents, ultimately this decision lies in the hands of Paramount Academy staff.

Cohort sizes will adhere to all current Alberta Health Services regulations for COVID-19.

#### 3.2 Peaceful play and gentle discipline

As a community, educators will help the children to work together, to respect one another and to value the ideas of others. As a group, educators and children alike will work through any challenges that arise, ensuring that children's concerns are heard and their feelings are validated. Paramount Academy promotes peaceful play whereby the children are encouraged to speak to one another with kindness, compassion and empathy, building leadership skills and a sense of self-worth.

Paramount Academy educators prioritize gentle discipline practices, working with the principles of redirection, validation of the children's feelings and work to create an empathetic environment. Whenever possible, educators encourage discussion of any differences, so that the children can work on communicating their needs to each other and/or to an educator or volunteer.

Paramount Academy educators make every effort to do the following when challenging interactions occur:

- Be proactive and observant. Take note of the social interactions between the children.

- Remain physically close to a child or children if concerned about a social or safety situation.
- Remind the children to use kind and respectful words to ask for what they need.
- Remind the children that hands are for working and playing, not hitting.
- Redirect the children to different activities or have them speak with an educator or volunteer who will help them calm down.
- When the children are calm, discuss the situation with the children involved.
- Encourage discussion of any differences so that the children can work on communicating their needs to each other.
- Acknowledge children's feelings and encourage them to express their feelings about a situation using "I statements".
- Encourage the child(ren) to consider alternative actions that they could take in the future and provide immediate positive feedback when they choose these alternative actions on their own.

### 3.3 Behaviour expectations and suitability for program approach

Children in our programs must be able and willing to accept instruction and direction from adults willingly, communicate their needs effectively, to remain with the group with little direction, and to be eager to participate in outdoor learning. Participants must be toileting independently and be able to traverse confidently on uneven terrain, snow, and mud.

If your child may have difficulty being outdoors independently / with these skills in mind, we encourage you to connect with Timbernook Forest Schools (<https://www.timbernook.com/>). Their programs are led by educators who are trained in supporting children who need extra time in a less structured environment. If you are unsure if our programming is a good fit for your child, please get in touch via [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) ! We'd be happy to chat about options.

To ensure safety, we don't permit the following:

- Running from the instructor / not being able to return when called
- Challenging authority (not listening when asked to stop climbing, throwing, etc.)
- Physical aggression (hitting, pushing, throwing objects at people)
- Swearing / name calling
- Unresolvable emotional outbursts (tantrums) based around not wanting to do activities

In general, if an unexpected behaviour does take place any and/or all of the following steps will be taken:

1. Child will be taken aside from the group and spoken to about their behaviour and the educator and the child will create a plan to understand and modify the behaviour. Parents will be notified.



2. If the ubehaviour continues, parents will be called to collect the child immediately from the program. Refunds are not provided if early pickup is required.
3. A ZOOM or phone meeting will be booked between a Paramount Academy representative and the parents to develop a plan before the child attends again.

In extreme cases where a child's behaviour is highly inappropriate or unsafe for the child or for others, Paramount Academy reserves the right to request that a support person attend with the child, or to restrict future registrations for that child.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all children will find their place in our community.

### 3.4 Balance of risky play and safety

With hopes that each child will learn how to navigate risk, the Paramount Academy goal is not to keep children from all risky situations, but is instead to teach children how to safely navigate the risks that they encounter in the forest. In order to do this, it is required that children are able to respond to educators' voices (or animal calls!) at all times. If a child has consistent difficulty listening, and it is posing a safety concern, the behaviour guidelines listed above will apply.

Paramount Academy works to create an environment that is as safe as possible by being proactive and by using sensible, simple guidelines that the children (and adults) can remember.

Our safety principles include:

- Constantly assess risk as conditions change (dynamic risk assessment) and conduct regular risk/benefits assessments of site and activities. This is done daily and dynamically as the environment changes both with and without the children.
- Set up a safe space with boundaries and safety guidelines. Children respond to a crow call to stay within view of the educators at all times. Children are made aware of safety guidelines regularly.
- Carefully observe the children's interactions with each other and with nature.
- Spot the children during more challenging physical activity ex. climbing.
- Gently guide the children to safer activities if required.

If Paramount Academy educators observe that the children's play is becoming dangerous and/or not following the Paramount Academy safety guidelines, the children will be redirected and reminded of the safety guidelines established as a group.

The following guidelines and phrases are examples that educators will use with the children as they are guided toward safe choices in our natural playground:

Hiking: When we walk through the forest, we are in a sandwich. One educator will be in the front and an educator or volunteer will be in the back. The children

may not need to be in a line, but they do need to be inside the sandwich.

**Boundaries:** When we play in the forest we stay where we can see a teacher. When needed, boundaries are established with the input of the children. Educators watch to ensure that the children do not move beyond the boundaries. Educators remain in close proximity to the children at all times. If groups are working in different areas, there is an educator available for each small group. A child is within the “boundaries” if they can easily see an educator and an educator can see them.

**Sticks:** Sticks are for building, digging, and imaginative play. They are not for hitting. When we run, we put the sticks down. We are aware of other’s space. We keep sticks away from others’ faces. Children are taught to keep sticks down low when in a group and how to create a “safety bubble” when on their own.

**Rocks:** When we are near the water, we may throw rocks. When we throw rocks, we look around and check to make sure that no one is close to us, in our safety bubble (the area a few meters around our body). We may throw rocks that are as large as the palms of our hands. We throw rocks only where they won’t disturb others (animals, birds, people). Children love to throw natural objects and they will be given the safety parameters on how to do this.

**Climbing:** We may climb as high as we are tall. We only climb as high as we can climb on our own. We only climb when an adult can safely spot us (watch us and keep us safe). Educators are present only to spot a child and will not physically assist them to climb higher. If an educator can’t be present or cannot safely spot the child, the child will not be able to climb.

**Water:** If you don’t know, don’t go! Groups primarily access shallow, slow-moving water bodies. Before a group visits a body of water, educators engage in a conversation with the children about safety consideration while around the water. If a child cannot determine the depth of the water to be below their boot height, they generally will not access that water.

## 4. Inclusivity/Accessibility

Paramount Academy strives to create a program which is accessible to a wide range of participants, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, physical ability, or socioeconomic status. We are LGBTQ2AS+ friendly and supportive. Paramount Academy aims to create a community that is safe, inclusive and welcoming to all participants.

We strive to promote an environment that is accessible for all participants. However, the property is wild and trails are not always available. If your child has mobility concerns, please connect with us in advance of registration to see if our program is a good fit for your family. Children with vision or auditory concerns are recommended to have a support person attend with them.

We may be able to assist with 'loaner' outdoor clothing to ensure that participation in Paramount Academy is not limited by lack of access to appropriate gear. Please ask if access to clothing is a concern.

All children and their families are welcome in the Paramount Academy community where everyone is respected and appreciated as valued members. We encourage feedback to learn how we can improve our programs by working towards removing barriers and ensuring a safe and welcoming place in the forest.



## 5. Environmental Considerations

At Paramount Academy, educators aim to teach the children how to be stewards of the land. The belief is that our youth will play a vital role in the protection of our Earth and its resources in future years. The first step in this important learning process is for youth to be given the opportunity to spend time in nature and to build their own relationship with the natural world. During daily programs, the children will learn about and practice environmental ethics in the forest, respecting the land they use and travel through.

Paramount Academy uses and teaches the LNT principles to guide our time spent in the forest whenever possible:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

*“If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, we must allow them to fall in love with the earth before we ask them to save her.” (David Sobel)*





## 6. Policies

### 6.1 COVID-19 / Illness

We follow all mandates and best practices around health and COVID-19 safety.

#### **Symptom restriction**

If any symptoms of illness appear, no matter how minor, DO NOT send your child to Paramount Academy. Please advise us through [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) .

If a child or Educator arrives with symptoms or appearing unwell, staff will refuse admittance and send them home with the transportation person that brought them. We reserve the right to call the parent / guardian back for pick up if any illness symptoms are noticed shortly after drop-off. Our environment is demanding – if your child did not sleep well or is ‘off’ or ‘cranky’ we recommend not attending.

If your child becomes ill while at program, we will notify you promptly so that arrangements can be made within a 30 minute window to take him/her home. If we are unable to reach you or you are unable to make plans to arrive within 30 minutes, we reserve the right to call your emergency contact person on your child's records to collect the child. (Please make sure that all numbers and information are kept up to date, and that your emergency contact understands we may reach out to them). During this period, your child will be isolated with adult supervision, using physical distancing parameters, to ensure the safety of our staff.

They are welcome to join a future session of our program when they are well.

#### **Exposure restriction**

If you or your children attending the program have had close contact (face-to-face contact within 2 meters/6 feet) with someone who is ill with cough and/or fever; OR, if you or anyone in your household been in contact in the last 14 days from the date of your attendance with someone that is being investigated or confirmed to be a case of COVID-19; DO NOT send your child to the program. Please advise us through [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) .

#### **COVID-19 positive cases**

If a positive test is confirmed while your child is home ill, families are requested to advise in confidence through [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) . If we are notified of a positive case in the group your child was in, we will notify you by e-mail.

#### **Health protocols**

Paramount Academy may be required to follow enhanced sanitization procedures, screening procedures, and entry / exit protocols as established by Alberta Health Services. These may change over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate your assistance to keep our Leaders and campers healthy. Please refer to <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/covid-19-information-guidance-for-day-camps> for current restrictions.

1. All adults dropping off and picking up are requested to wear a non-medical mask
2. All children are recommended to bring a non-medical mask with them in their gear, for wearing when physical distancing is not possible
3. All participants must sanitize on arrival and departure
4. Frequent hand washing and / or hand sanitizing will be performed throughout the day
5. Non-natural materials (i.e. hand tools) will be sanitized between cohorts

We will follow and enforce all quarantine, closure and isolation requirements / recommendations made by our regulating authorities in managing and preventing the spread of identified pandemic and endemic illnesses that may affect our city.

In the event of a sudden closure, notice will be sent to families via e-mail .

### **Refunds related to COVID-19**

All families who choose programming with Paramount Academy for the 2022-2023 season recognize that COVID-19 is a current reality. Refunds related to COVID-19 health orders for partial or complete closure will not be provided, but fees will be transferred forward to future programming if services cannot be legally provided.

If a family chooses to keep their child home due to discomfort with the current COVID-19 situation, and if in person programming is able to be provided (i.e. we have not been mandated to close for in-person services), no refunds or transfers are provided.

If a child or member of the child's family contracts a confirmed case of COVID-19 through Alberta Health Services testing, and results are shared with Paramount Academy; or we are not permitted to operate for in-person services by Provincial Order due to COVID-19; we will work with affected families on a solution to ensure that value is received for funds paid on a case-by-case basis.

### **6.2 Privacy**

Personal data shared with us will be processed strictly in accordance with privacy legislation, and will be used only for the purposes that you have consented to. We will not share details with third parties without consent, except where we are legally or obligated to do so.

Upon registration you will be asked to sign a media release consent form. Photos will only be shared with this given consent and for the purposes agreed upon (ie. social media updates, website pages, program promotion).

### **6.3 Pre-existing conditions**

Children who have pre-existing medical conditions must be identified at the time of registration. Examples include epilepsy, asthma, etc. The family will be asked to complete a Medication Authorization Form (if medication exists) and an Emergency Plan, as well as provide instructions on symptoms to the program leaders.

If your child has a food allergy, ensure that you include the details of this on your registration form. If prescribed to them, children with EpiPens will carry it in their backpack at all times. Children under 5 may have their EpiPen carried with the Educator.

Other medications will be placed in Ziplock bags on arrival, with a copy of the emergency plan and administration guidelines appropriate for that child. The group leader will maintain the medications in a common backpack for the day, and return the medications to the family at pick up.

#### 6.4 Food

All children are required to bring their own food and water to the Paramount Academy program. There is a strict policy that children do not share food due to hygiene and allergies in groups. Food is to be kept in reusable containers which can be easily stored in a child's backpack or pockets as groups have snacks while out in the forest. In an effort to generate minimal waste, please make an attempt to provide a snack for your child that does not contain any packaging or garbage, all garbage will be sent home in your child's lunch containers. If your child's snack requires a utensil, please ensure that this is sent as educators do not have utensils available while out in the forest. Children should bring healthy snacks that will give them the energy needed for the program.



Please note that Paramount Academy is a nut-free community. Please avoid sending nuts or nut products in your child's snack/lunch at all times.

Please touch base with your child regularly about their snacks and how they are working out for them. Too much/too little; too messy; too squishy are all concerns that you might run into with snacks in the outdoor environment. Example: Please do not send unpeeled oranges with your child if they are unable to peel them independently.

Please ensure your child has a full water bottle each time we meet. Please ensure this water bottle is leak-proof and has a large enough capacity to keep your child hydrated (Paramount Academy recommends 500ml for all children attending a full day), though is going to be light enough to carry in their backpack. We have a refill station for water within the property.

There are children in Paramount Academy programs who have significant allergies, not all life threatening. For this reason, educators teach the children to eat while being mindful of their peers. If your child has an allergy that can be impacted by crumbs, touching others who have eaten a specific food, or by smell, please be certain to inform Paramount Academy of this on your child's registration form. Educators will make every effort possible to ensure their safety.

On occasion groups will do some campfire cooking. Children with food allergies or intolerances may be provided with ingredients in advance so they can bring their own substitutions. All food provided to work with for cooking will be handed out by a leader.

#### 6.5 Toileting and Handwashing

Paramount Academy requires that all participants are toileting independently (able to take outdoor clothes down, use the toilet, wipe and re-dress completely independently) prior to starting programs. We recommend that children are at least 6 months or more since their last toileting accident to be successful and comfortable in our programs.



Children must be comfortable using a portapotty (outhouse) with minimal “coaching” from an educator, and must be able to use facilities at designated times. All educators will carry appropriate toileting and hand washing tools such as toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitizer, water and soap.

If your child has an unexpected accident, educators will call for early pickup from a parent / emergency contact. Unfortunately we do not have the facilities or licensing to assist children with toileting.



Educators will provide children with hand washing opportunities before snacks/meals and after washroom breaks. The educators will carry water and hand soap and hand sanitizer at all times. Please send your child with a small hand towel for drying their hands, to be kept in their backpack each day.

#### 6.6 Participant: Staff Ratios

Paramount Academy will maintain a ratio of 8-10 children per Educator depending on the age and experience of the groups. If either the parents or educators feel that a child requires additional support, they may request a meeting with parents to prepare an appropriate plan, noting that Paramount Academy does not provide one on one support for children.

A secondary educator/administrator will always be on-site to assist with check in, check out, bathrooming, First Aid and more, and is accessible to all groups on site via two-way radio.



In the case that the ratios cannot be maintained for an unanticipated reason (illness, first aid emergency etc.) the group will remain at or near the greenhouse learning space until the ratios have returned to normal.

#### 6.7 Risk Management

Some of the risks inherent to Forest School and outdoor play in general include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground in the forest (twisted ankles or knees)
- Slivers, scrapes, bruises, blisters
- Injuries resulting from matches or fire
- The presence of wild animals and ticks
- Broken/cracked/fractured bones from tripping / falling
- Concussions from falling or bumping into trees or branches
- Eye injuries from bits of wood, dust, etc.

Paramount Academy Educators will aim to balance children's desire to experience and navigate risk in the natural environment with a concrete safety plan that has clear boundaries, emergency procedures and by maintaining the above-mentioned child to adult ratio. Being able to recognize risk, experience risk and learn how to manage risk is an important part of healthy child development. In many instances, Paramount Academy educators will strive to co-assess risk with the students and work together to formulate a plan to manage it.

Generally, children do not go in water deeper than the top of their boots and do not climb higher than they can reach from the ground.

#### 6.8 Emergency Procedures and First Aid

Paramount Academy has written emergency plans and procedures in place. All educators are familiar with the plans and review them on a regular basis.

Each group carries an emergency bag at all times. The emergency bag contains an emergency contact list and a stocked first aid kit. Each of the Paramount Academy educators carry appropriate communication devices (cell phone, walkie-talkie) and a whistle.

Each parent must ensure that Paramount Academy has current emergency contact information. Educators carry this information with them at all times. Campers on-site will be provided with a cell phone number of the lead Educator for that day for emergency purposes only, in case a child needs to be picked up early.

In the case of a significant incident (e.g. eye scratch/particles in eye, wounds, bleeding, potential fracture, suspected head injury), parents will be contacted before EMS and asked if they would like Paramount Academy to call or if they would like to take their child to the hospital themselves.

In case of a severe incident (major trauma and the child cannot be moved), emergency protocol will be followed. EMS will be contacted and parents will be notified as well of the situation.

Parents must ensure that the Emergency Contact information given to Paramount Academy remains current at all times. If a change occurs, please email [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) with the subject: Contact Information Change.

#### 6.9 Paramount Academy Responsibilities

- Paramount Academy will ensure the physical and emotional safety of all participants, volunteers and staff by co-assessing and co-managing risk, on an ongoing basis, so that all participants feel comfortable and can learn effectively in their surroundings.
- Paramount Academy educators will model care and respect for others, our shared community, and for the natural world.

- Paramount Academy educators will aim to connect with each student in order to understand their questions and interests and will provide regular and repeated access to a natural outdoor space, so that they may build strong relationships with themselves, each other and the land.
- Paramount Academy will ensure parents are aware of any changes or adaptations to programming or policies and will update all families on a regular basis with such changes.
- Paramount Academy will ensure all educators, supply teachers and volunteers have a recent Vulnerable Sector Criminal Reference Check and Standard First Aid/CPR current certification on file.

The educator's role varies from a traditional classroom teacher in that Paramount Academy educators are not the "experts", but simply a guide for the child's learning. They seek to learn alongside the children by prompting with questions and deepening conversation about the natural world. Paramount Academy educators help students construct knowledge about themselves and their world by introducing tools or supplies that can modify the learning environment and bring forth growth in the learner. Both themed curriculum presentations through natural props and explorations and unstructured free play are primary vehicles for learning. Forest School is a place where play and "doing" can help children make meaning in their environment. For example, a child at Forest School may use objects found in nature to take the place of a conventional toy, find challenge in moving fallen tree branches to build a structure or discover patterns in the way water moves. Paramount Academy educators will help a child to see these possibilities and then let their play and imaginations take off!

Paramount Academy educators will all maintain the following certifications (at a minimum):

- Current Criminal Record Check with a vulnerable sector check
- Current Standard First Aid/CPR or greater (ie. Wilderness First Aid)

Many of our educators will have early childhood, wilderness / outdoors, or teacher training at various levels.

#### 6.10 Volunteer/ Accompanying Adult Responsibilities

We welcome and value the support of volunteers at Paramount Academy who are training in outdoor programs, education, or early childhood education in post-secondary environments (depending on current COVID-19 restrictions). Volunteers will need to hold a current Criminal Record Check with a vulnerable sector check before helping out. We encourage volunteers to become familiar with the Forest School Program and the role of Educators in guiding learning. Volunteers will be responsible for helping to monitor and will be available to support children during the program.

#### 6.11 Parent Responsibilities

By registering your child for programs at Paramount Academy you agree to the following responsibilities:

1. Submit all forms and applicable fees prior to your child's session of camp. If forms are not received, children will not be permitted to attend until which time they have been filled out and reviewed by Paramount Academy.
2. Ensure your child is equipped with proper clothing, outerwear, food and other supplies suitable for the season and duration of the day (please see Clothing and Equipment). Groups are outside for the majority of their programming time, in all types of weather. If a child does not come properly prepared for a day of programming they will be asked to return home and change and arrange to meet the group later.
3. Communicate openly with educators and provide us with any information that will assist us in meeting your child's needs. Share any changes pertaining to contact information, health or wellness needs ASAP.
4. Follow all policies and guidelines outlined.
5. Ensure all items sent to programming are clearly labelled.

### 6.12 Clothing and equipment

All children are required to have appropriate gear to participate in Paramount Academy programs. Please read carefully and ask questions as needed.

#### Sunscreen and Bug Spray

Please send labelled sunscreen and bug spray with your child during the spring, summer and fall. If you do not wish for your child to use sunscreen we will require that they wear a long sleeve shirt while in full sun. Bug head nets or jackets are recommended when bug spray is not used, especially during the spring season when black flies and mosquitos can be quite numerous in the forest!

#### Clothing and Equipment

All gear sent to Paramount Academy **MUST** be clearly labelled! We are not responsible for lost or missing gear and will place all found gear into the Lost and Found bin at the check in gate, which will be emptied and donated where possible seasonally. Please check regularly.



Each child, regardless of season will require a small, well-fitting backpack. Children will

carry this pack with them on walks into the forest. They will carry their water, snack, a small hand towel, dry socks and/or mittens and any layers that they remove or put on as we go. Please ensure that this pack fits your child properly and that they can carry it with ease. It is suggested that you do a trial walk with their pack to ensure that they are comfortable.

Children **MUST** have a full water bottle in their backpacks each morning.

During the Spring and Fall, Paramount Academy requires that children wear **WATERPROOF** rain gear as we will be accessing shallow bodies of water (such as the creek). Waterproof gear is equipped with heat taped seams to prevent water absorption. Nylon material is not waterproof and while it is quick drying, this will not keep their base and/or mid layers dry. Please check with the Lead Educators if you are uncertain if your child's gear is waterproof.

Children will need a change of socks and an extra layer of pants / hoodie to be brought to Forest School each day. This does not need to be carried in their pack, but is left with our supplies at the check in. Please ensure that the change of clothing is suitable for the season and is kept in a bag marked clearly with their name. These clothes are used if your child is cold or gets wet.

The following are the Paramount Academy recommendations of how to dress your child for the elements. As the weather often changes throughout the day and as it is often cooler and damper in the forest than in town, please use the layering system described. If sourcing appropriate gear is an issue, please do not hesitate to let Paramount Academy know as we often know of great deals, ideal choices and used options.

Remember that it is often a few degrees cooler in the shade of the forest than it may be at your home. Please dress with this in mind!





**Winter Clothing:**

Base layer: Wool or synthetic long john shirt & pants; wool or thermal socks  
Mid layer: Wool or fleece sweater and pants; fleece or wool neckwarmer  
Outer Layer: Warm, waterproof, windproof and breathable snow suit; warm toque; waterproof insulated mittens; warm waterproof boots to -30 degrees (Sorel or similar, no fashion / character boots!)  
Extra layers: 1-2 pairs of wool or thermal socks depending on preference; warm toque; mid layer, 1-2 pairs of insulated mittens  
Optional: Extra boots, hand-warmers, extra snowsuit

**Cool Rainy Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):**

Base Layer: Synthetic or wool long john shirt and pants; wool socks  
Mid Layer: Fleece or wool sweater and pants  
Outer Layer: Durable, WATERPROOF raincoat and rain-pants; warm toque; waterproof, insulated mittens; waterproof boots (Bogs, Kamik or similar)  
Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks, 1-2 pairs of waterproof insulated mittens; warm toque; mid layer as indicated above; underwear.  
Optional: Extra boots

**Cool Dry Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):**

Base Layer: Synthetic or wool long john shirt and pants; wool socks  
Mid Layer: Lightweight fleece or wool pants and sweater  
Outer Layer: Warm jacket; durable rain-pants, waterproof boots, waterproof mittens; warm toque  
Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks, 1 pair of waterproof insulated mittens; mid layer as indicated above; underwear.

**Warm Rainy Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):**

Base Layer: Lightweight, synthetic material t-shirt and long sleeve; lightweight, synthetic material pants (quick-dry material is ideal); wool socks  
Outer Layer: Durable, WATERPROOF raincoat and rain-pants; waterproof boots  
Extra Layers: Fleece Sweater; wool socks, toque  
Optional: Extra boots

**Warm Dry Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):**

Base Layer: Lightweight, long pants that can easily be rolled up; t-shirt; lightweight synthetic socks  
Outer Layer: Fleece sweater or jacket; closed toe running shoes or hiking boots; sun hat  
Extra Layers: Extra socks; base layer  
Optional: Bug jacket/headnet (Spring)

### 6.13 No Items From Home

Do not bring any non-essential personal items, including toys. If, however, a child has a tool they would like to bring that is useful to their explorations this may be accommodated. Ex: compass, magnifying glass, bug collection jar, etc.

### 6.14 Inclement Weather/Closure Policy

Paramount Academy will consider the City of Calgary snow routes criteria. If the buses are cancelled for school the day before our programming, there is a good chance that our programming will not run that day. That said, the Director will e-mail to all families prior to 7:30 am on the day of programming, to notify of our closure for the day. In these circumstances, the closure is likely due to the road conditions around our property, or due to extreme cold.

In very rare situations Paramount Academy may opt to close due to severe cold as running programming outdoors in such weather may pose a risk to the safety of both children and staff. In the event that Paramount Academy is required, due to severe weather, to close early for the day, our decision will be communicated to families via the number that we have on record to reach you during our programming.

Please note that there are NO REFUNDS available for Paramount Academy closure due to weather.

### 6.15 Extreme Weather Policy

The educators at Paramount Academy pay close attention to the weather forecast and include weather considerations in our safety assessment throughout the day. There are days where groups will stay close to shelter due to high chances of thunder/lightning or high winds. This close proximity will allow the group to quickly take shelter.

Outside temperatures that include extreme cold, -25C or below, or extreme heat, 30C or above, will prompt educators to employ measures to ensure the children's safety. Educators will limit the children's length of exposure based on age and outerwear, and will constantly assess the group's comfort and safety, watching for both cold and heat related conditions. Paramount Academy will use indoor facilities when required in these instances.

When significant weather warrants that Paramount Academy runs programming indoors or under shelter, educators will continually assess the outdoor environment for safety and return only once they are certain the inclement weather has passed.

### 6.16 Program pickup and drop off

If your child is going to be absent or late, please e-mail [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) BEFORE 8:30am. Knowing the number of children expected each day is essential.

Morning programs commence at 9:30am each morning at the entrance to the property. Please drop your child off between 9:15-9:30am to ensure that all children are on site at the

start of the program. Please do not come any earlier than 9:15AM as we will be busy with our preparations for the day.

Afternoon programs begin at 1PM; please arrive between 12:45 and 1PM to ensure that children benefit from their full program. Please do not come earlier than 12:45PM as we will be away from the check in point having lunch until then.

Please plan to be here on time for your child's pickup time (12:00pm for half day and 3:30pm for afternoons or full day).

#### Late Pick Ups

Please make every effort to be on time each day. Paramount Academy does not provide after-hours care. Educators meet daily after programming to reflect and plan for the next week. While a child will never be left unattended, late pickups and drop offs are both stressful for the children and difficult for program operations.

If extenuating circumstances arise and you are going to be late, please ensure that you have notified an Paramount Academy Lead Educator via text or phone call to the emergency number provided at the start of the day. Educators reserve the right to call your guaranteed emergency contact 10 minutes past pickup time if a parent has not arrived.

The programming team reserves the right to terminate program registration without refund if more than one late pickup occurs, regardless of notice given by parents.

#### 6.17 Staying in touch

Paramount Academy maintains the belief that communication with families is of vital importance and benefits the children best. Please refer to our e-mails home for current information about what the children have been experiencing at our programs, and how you can deepen/support their experiences at home.

Our Educators may be available to give a brief overview of your child's day at pick up, upon request.

Paramount Academy welcomes your questions! If you ever have a question or concern about your child's learning, their experiences or their place in the Paramount Academy community, please email [paramountacademyyc@gmail.com](mailto:paramountacademyyc@gmail.com) . All questions will be answered in a timely manner, within 24-72 hours. If your inquiry is more urgent, please say URGENT in the subject heading and we will respond ASAP. If you would like us to respond by phone, please let her know the best number to reach you at.

If you would like to meet with us to discuss your child's needs, this can be arranged by sending an e-mail indicating your availability.