



**PARENT HANDBOOK**  
**2016 / 2017**

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## PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Welcome to Options Academy, a place for education, growth, development and precious memories. Children are our top priority! All our efforts are put forward to help them develop their imagination, creativity, personality and skill set. We place a strong emphasis on education and extra-curricular activities, however, it is of utmost importance to us that children feel safe, secure, and comfortable while enjoying their time at Options Academy!

Children learn best by doing and by observing others. Repetition is key for developing strong neural pathways that remain stable over the child's lifetime. The development that a child experiences in motor abilities, sensation and perception in the younger years lays a strong foundation for the development of skills such as language, reading, writing and mathematics in the later years.

As a Speech Language Pathologist, I believe that effective communication is essential to success. Our programming focuses on all aspects of development including cognitive, sensory, motor and social abilities with a special emphasis on speech and language development. We strive for our children to communicate using clear speech and for them to have an advanced ability to understand language and to express their thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions.

At Options Academy, we stand by our name. We believe that children should be exposed to as many opportunities and Options as possible to discover their interests and their talents. Therefore, we complement our educational programming with Options such as art, music, sports, home economics, swimming and Jiu Jitsu to name a few. We also offer children the opportunity to expand on their learning by taking part in fun educational activities such as our e2 Young Engineers program.

We are undoubtedly bias...😊, but we believe your children will excel and enjoy their time with us at Options Academy.

I am very happy to welcome you to our program and I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,



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Famida Virani, MSLP, R-SLP

Registered Speech-Language Pathologist

## INTRODUCTION

Options Academy is an Early Childhood Education Program. We are a child-centered-program that believes in structured learning as well as learning through play. We offer a full day program with an enriched Montessori based curriculum for children between the ages of 12 months and six years, complimented by exciting Options to stimulate the child's mind.

We also provide out-of-school-care programing for children from Kindergarten to age 12. These children have a variety of Options to choose from including a swimming program, Jiu Jitsu, recreational sports or just some relaxation time in our library.

Our environment has been carefully designed with the Montessori principals in mind. We have created a warm, clean and appealing center to make the children feel welcomed and at home. Our early childhood development center has neutral colors, wooden furniture and wooden manipulatives. It is an environment that is spacious, organized and minimalistic.

Options Academy consists of 5 classrooms for our different age categories. Each classroom is designed specifically for children with low shelves, child sized furniture and an area for their personal belongings. Classrooms consist of a circle time area, a reading corner, a napping area, centers for math, science, culture, geography, practical life, sensory and motor activities and a literacy area. We also have a gym for motor activities and sports, a library for reading and exploring books in a quiet environment and an art room for creativity and imagination. In addition, we have an outdoor play space that is fenced off for safety where the children can improve their gross motor skills, let out their energy and enjoy the outdoors.

Our curriculum is based on the idea of learning through exploration. We believe that children learn best when they guide the learning process. The materials at our center are all designed with specific goals in mind. The children are welcome to work with the materials that they are drawn to. Children are provided with individual or group presentations on how to work with the material and are then encouraged to manipulate the material independently. Our manipulatives have isolated properties so that the child focuses on only one property at a time. They are designed to be worked on in a specific order from simple to more complex and they have a built in control of error so that the child can independently determine if they have completed the activity correctly.

Another aspect to our curriculum is our Options Program. The children learn, imagine, socialize and get active while exploring our music, art, yoga, sports and French as a second language programs.

Our staff is well trained in the area of early childhood education. The teachers at Options Academy act as guides or as facilitators. The primary role of the facilitator is to help your child develop to their confidence, model, observe, keep records and maintain good communication with the parents.

## PHILOSOPHY

Children	What We Do
<p>Options Academy aims to guide children to be well rounded individuals who are independent, confident, responsible and respectful in their day to day life. Our name is indicative of our belief that children should be exposed to many options and opportunities to help them grow and excel. At Options Academy children will develop their self-esteem, their world knowledge, their personality, their physical well-being and their spirit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We are a child-centered program</li> <li>✓ We focus on core subjects as well as options to help develop well rounded individuals</li> <li>✓ Our day begins with a warm welcome to make each individual student feel special and an integral part of the larger group</li> <li>✓ We encourage independence, celebrate accomplishments and promote a positive self-esteem</li> </ul>
Parents	What We Do
<p>At Options Academy we recognize that as parents, you are entrusting us with the care, education and well-being of your child. We take this responsibility seriously and as a team we are committed to exceeding your expectations. We welcome and value your input and ideas and encourage parents to visit our classrooms and volunteer with us at the center.</p> <p>We understand all families lead busy lives with numerous extra-curricular activities for children in the evenings. A key part of our curriculum is to provide extra-curricular options for children during working hours, allowing parents to enjoy more family time with their children in the evenings and weekends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We provide volunteering opportunities</li> <li>✓ We believe in open communication</li> <li>✓ We have an online portal to facilitate electronic communication and give you real time updates on your child at the center</li> <li>✓ We offer daytime extracurricular options to free up evenings for family time</li> <li>✓ We offer a welcoming and inviting environment for parents</li> </ul>

Staff	What We Do
<p>The staff at Options Academy take a child directed approach. We believe in following the child’s lead and act as facilitators as the child learns and explores. Our staff are friendly, cooperative and model positive values and attitudes for the children. Each staff brings their own strengths to the program. The staff share in the belief that the best interests of the child is of primary importance. Communication between the entire team at Options Academy is fundamental to the success of the program and confidentiality is maintained at all times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Options Academy employs a rigorous hiring and training process.</li> <li>✓ Every staff member receives training on teaching and on proper care and respect for children</li> <li>✓ Every staff member is required to continue their professional development on an on-going basis</li> <li>✓ Every staff member is valued and contributes to the success of the students</li> </ul>
Program	What We Do
<p>Options Academy believes that children learn through experience, curiosity, communication and repetition. In our <b>Baby Academy</b> and <b>Junior Academy</b> programs we focus on cognitive, sensory, motor and language development. We also place importance on practical life skills, socialization, music, art and movement. In our <b>Preschool Academy</b> and <b>Pre-Kinder Academy</b> programs, we focus on reading, writing, language, articulation, math, science, community, culture, geography, sensory and motor learning and practical life activities. These subject areas are complimented with <b>Options</b> such as art, music, sports, French, swimming and our e2 Young Engineers program. Physical education is incorporated into our daily routine to promote an active and healthy life style. We believe that children should be exposed to many opportunities and options to stimulate their minds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Our activities are fun and engaging</li> <li>✓ Our program is flexible and full of OPTIONS</li> <li>✓ Our program encourages critical thinking, problem solving and creativity</li> <li>✓ Our program gets the children moving, active and healthy</li> <li>✓ Our materials and our center are appealing, clean and well maintained</li> </ul>

## GENERAL INFORMATION:

### Contact Information

Options Academy  
Phone #: 780 988-9815  
Email: info@optionsacademy.ca

### School Times

Open	Formal Programing (Montessori & Options)	Lunch
7:00am – 6:00pm	8:40am – 3:30am	11:30am – 12:15pm

We welcome children to stay for the entire day at Options Academy. We also have the Option for parents to enroll for the morning Montessori Program only.

### Holidays

We are closed on all statutory holidays.

Once the ½ day Preschool Academy is transferred to its own room (initially it will be combined with the full day program), it will also be closed on all PD days and school holidays observed by the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB).

## DROP OFF AND PICK UP

- ✓ Please inform the Academy if your child will not be attending.
- ✓ Please drop off and pick up your children on time. \$5 will be charged for every 5 minutes the parent is late for pick up.
- ✓ Please inform the Academy ahead of time if someone other than you will be picking your child up from school. If the school is not informed, the child will not be sent home with the alternative person.

## MEDICAL

Medication will only be administered to a child where:

- ✓ A written consent is provided by the parent
- ✓ The medication is in its original labeled container
- ✓ The medication is administered as outlined on the labeled container

Health care will only be provided to a child if:

- ✓ A written consent is provided by the parent
- ✓ The health care provided is in the nature of first aid

Please inform the staff at Option Academy of your child's medical conditions or concerns, allergies or dietary concerns.

## **ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS**

In the case of an accident or a serious illness, Options Academy will ensure that

- ✓ The child's parents are notified immediately
- ✓ The child receives the required medical care

If your child is unwell, please keep him/her home from the school until they are symptom free for at least 24 hours as a courtesy to the students and the teachers at the center. We do not want other students or teachers falling ill as this will disrupt the learning experience for everyone.

## **NUTRITION**

At Options Academy we provide nutritious meals throughout the day. We have a wonderful Chef who can create appetizing meals for young children. We follow the Canadian Food Guide when choosing the meals we serve. We will be providing a morning and afternoon snack and a lunch. A monthly meal schedule will be provided to the parents along with our monthly newsletter.

We are a nut free environment! Please advise us of any allergies your child has.

## **UNIFORMS**

Once our children graduate from the Baby Academy to Junior Academy, they get the opportunity to wear a uniform! This is an exciting time for the children as they feel a sense of accomplishment and independence.

At Options Academy we believe that uniforms create a sense of

- ✓ Unity
- ✓ Pride
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Equality



- ✓ Belonging

Our uniforms are simple. We encourage children to wear:

- ✓ A white long or short sleeve golf shirt or button down shirt
- ✓ A pair of navy blue pants or shorts

In addition, girls are also welcome to wear:

- ✓ A navy blue skirt
- ✓ A navy blue dress
- ✓ A pair of black or navy blue tights or leggings

Uniforms can be purchased through Options Academy upon registration.

## COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

At Options Academy maintaining a positive tone with our children is crucial for success and positive behaviors. As facilitators we use the following strategies to achieve this goal:

**Active Listening:** We listen to what the child has to say, repeat their thoughts back to them and help them identify and name the feelings that they are experiencing in the moment.

**Positive Interaction:** We use simple statements to acknowledge the child and to let them know they have been noticed.

**Courtesy:** We treat each child with courtesy and respect and kindness. We believe in using soft, calm voices and take the time to understand the child's thoughts.

**Setting Expectations and Routines:** Children respond well to routines. They appreciate having expectations clearly explained and this consistency sets them up for success.

**Providing Responsibility:** We believe in giving children more responsibility to create a feeling of independence and trust.

**Gluing:** When a child is restless or disturbing, the teacher will keep the child close by for a while and then gently and calmly help the child choose a suitable activity.

**Giving Directed Choices:** We provide the children with opportunities to choose between two equally positive choices to give them practice in expressing preferences and instill independence.

**Slow Down:** As guides we match our rhythm to the child's rhythm so that the children do not feel overwhelmed.

**Speak and Listen with Respect:** When we communicate with the children we show them respect by listening without interruption, by inviting them rather than commanding them to an activity and by getting down to their level and being face to face during interactions.

**Use Non-Verbal Signals:** At Options we use non-verbal signals such as clapping twice to get the children's attention. We believe in using soft, calm voices and non-verbal signals when communicating with the children.

**At Options Academy we will NOT use the following**

- ⊗ Physical punishment
- ⊗ Verbal or emotional abuse
- ⊗ Emotional deprivation
- ⊗ Deny or threaten to deny any basic necessity
- ⊗ Physical restraint, confinement or isolation

## **RULES AND ROUTINES**

The rules and routines of the classroom are established with the children at the beginning of the year. The rules focus on safety, order and courtesy. These routines will be modeled for the younger children when appropriate. They will also be modeled and explained to the older children. Several rules will be presented daily in the first weeks of school.

### **Order:**

- ✓ Freezing in place immediately when a signal is given by the teacher
- ✓ Carrying trays without tipping the contents
- ✓ Returning activities to their place when finished
- ✓ If another child is using a material, wait until the child is done and has returned the material to the shelf before using it
- ✓ Rolling out and returning work mats
- ✓ Taking off and putting on outdoor clothing and hanging clothes on the hooks with the individual child's name
- ✓ Taking off outdoor shoes and putting on indoor shoes and placing the shoes that they are not using on their designated shelf
- ✓ Using an inside voice
- ✓ Opening and closing doors quietly

- ✓ Tucking chairs in after getting up from their table
- ✓ Raising hands to speak
- ✓ Taking one book at a time from the library

### **Safety:**

- ✓ Walking in the classroom
- ✓ Ask for permission before leaving the classroom
- ✓ Moving tables and chairs carefully
- ✓ Walking around other children if they are sitting on the floor working
- ✓ Washing hands after toileting and before eating or handling food

### **Courtesy:**

- ✓ Addressing classmates by name
- ✓ To get a classmate's attention, walk over to the classmate and speak to the classmate quietly
- ✓ To get the teacher's attention, place your hand gently on the teacher's shoulder or raise your hand. Do not interrupt the teacher. Wait until the teacher talks to you
- ✓ Using a tissue to blow their nose and then throwing it away in a wastebasket
- ✓ Being respectful with the materials in the center
- ✓ Treat everyone with kindness
- ✓ Do not touch someone else's work unless you have permission

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

The emergency procedures in case of a fire are posted on the doors of each classroom. Regular practice fire drills are standard practice at Options Academy. In the case of a fire alarm, students and staff will remain outside until the fire department has given the staff permission to return inside. Parents will be notified of the fire and may be asked to pick up their children. In the event that the group is not able to return into the building, the group will relocate to Brander Gardens School where they can wait for their parents to arrive.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

For safety and health reasons, children are not allowed to bring in treats for their birthday unless they are store bought, packaged and nut free. However, a special ceremony is completed to make each child feel special on their birthday.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS**

At Options Academy we have many special events and fieldtrips that occur throughout the year. We will celebrate numerous occasions and holidays and from time to time invite parents to join the celebrations.

Various in-school and external (for Pre-Kinder Academy) fieldtrips will be planned throughout the year that coincide with the themes that are covered in our curriculum. Parent volunteers are welcome to attend!

## **REGISTRATION / PAYMENT**

If you are interested in registering your child at Options Academy, please visit our website ([www.optionsacademy.ca/registraion](http://www.optionsacademy.ca/registraion)) and complete the registration form.

### **Waitlist:**

If you are interested in having your child attend our program, a registration form along with a \$200 non-refundable deposit should be submitted to Options Academy. The siblings of children who are already attending the program take priority when we have an opening, otherwise the waitlist is on a first come first serve basis.

When a space is available for your child, we will contact you to offer you an enrollment opportunity. Should you decline, the next child on the waitlist will take priority.

### **Withdrawal:**

Should you wish to withdraw from the program, a 30-day notice is required from the first of the month.

### **Monthly fees:**

Monthly school fees are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of each month and will be collected through an electronic funds transfer. Parents will be asked to complete a Pre-Authorized Debit form to authorize Options Academy to collect the school fees electronically each month.

## **OPTIONS FOR PARENTS**

Options Academy, we understand that parents lead busy lives and at times they just need a break. So, along with the options that we have for the children, we also have options for parents.

- ✓ Childcare available the last Saturday of each month for parents to get some much needed time off and enjoy a movie while their kids enjoy one for themselves at the center. [\$25 drop in fee applies]

## **PARENT CONFIRMATION**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the contents of the Parent Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature