

GODDARD SCHOOL OWNERS REFLECT ON OPENING

Mina and Neelam Patel own the Arnold preschool where their children are students.

By D. Frank Smith • December 5, 2011



Mina Patel shows off some of the new technology, like Smart Boards, in the classrooms of The Goddard School. Credit D. Frank Smith

A new preschool opened this year in Arnold, owned by two parents hoping to give their own children the best possible education.

Mina and Neelam Patel are both owners of the Goddard School's newest franchise school in Arnold, located at 1 E. Joyce Lane off Ritchie Highway. They're new to the education world, both previously had jobs in the health care industry, but they've learned the ropes very quickly.

Their own children are students at the school, so they're personally invested in the daily activities.

As on-site owners, the Patels are required to both be at the school each day to oversee its activities. That puts them in the classrooms working alongside teachers, and in the office helping with the business side of running a small school.

"We're here watching over everything and at the same time making sure the parents are happy," said Neelam Patel. "When they have questions or concerns, we're ready to answer them because we're here at the school every day."

Since it opened in October, the school has gathered 52 full-time students, all between the ages of 6 weeks and 6 years old. While at the school, the students learn everything that will bring them up to speed before kindergarten.

The school was forced to open a month later than expected due to delays in getting state inspections completed. Mina Patel said Tropical Storm Irene also played a role in the opening's delay. As a result, they didn't hit their goal number of students in their first year. But she has high hopes for the future.

"We're pretty confident that by next September, we'll be at maximum capacity," Mina Patel said.

The Patels both boasted of the higher curriculum and standards they hold their teachers to since Goddard's teachers are required to have attained a college degree in addition to the hours of training necessary for all preschool teachers. Furthermore, outside of what the state requires, Goddard has their own quality assurance program. Many other schools do not, Mina Patel said.

Within each classroom are designated areas for different types of learning, all happening simultaneously. The segmentation allows for smaller groups of students to be moved from one task or lesson to the next. If one student is behind, they can get individualized instruction without disrupting the flow of the other students.

Each classroom has a Smart Board and a touch-screen computer, both of which help draw the students further into the lessons.

"These are very important years," Neelam Patel said. "What they pick up in preschool helps determine the kinds of students they'll be."

If you would like to learn more about the school's new Arnold location, they are hosting an open house from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Dec. 10.