

PARENTS SING THE PRAISES OF TEACHERS, PROGRAMS

By: Renee Olmo



Owner Anne Pope

Diana Stern had a big problem when she moved to Chesapeake in 2005. She loved her job as Director of Operations and Logistics for a small manufacturing company, but was unhappy with the choice of early education schools for her toddler son. “We moved from Raleigh, North Carolina, and tried to find a school similar to where we came from - more school than daycare,” she recalls. She was so frustrated that she was ready to give up her job and stay home to teach her son.

Fast forward to 2011: her son just finished the second grade at Norfolk Academy, and she credits much of his academic success to the early years he spent at The Goddard School® in Chesapeake located off Cedar Road. The Goddard School offers educational programs for children aged six weeks to six years, so when he completed the full-day kindergarten program at Goddard, his parents started fresh with their search for elementary schools. He ended up testing so well that he was accepted at three private schools: Norfolk Academy, Norfolk Collegiate and Cape Henry Collegiate.

“Goddard School was the best option for us. I didn’t want a babysitter; he needed more than that. I could have chosen a school closer to home, but we just felt really good about sending him to Goddard,” Diana says.

While he was a young student at the Goddard School, he learned Spanish and sign language. “He loved school so much,” she recalls. “So much, in fact, that even on the days when I was able to work from home, he would ask to be taken to school. He just didn’t want to miss anything. He loved the teachers and his friends.”

Owner Anne Pope and Director Katie Cornatzer have worked together since the school opened in March 2005, and have now seen several generations of Goddard School graduates make their way from full-day kindergarten into elementary school.

“Our kids definitely test higher than average on reading and are academically over the board in most areas,” Anne says.

All classes regardless of age group have teachers who are degreed in early childhood education or a related field.

“At the Goddard School,” Anne says, “we have a fundamental belief that from the moment our students walk in the door until the time that they leave, we have teachable moments to provide an optimum environment to share our play-based curriculum developed by early education experts.”

Four-year old Charleigh Harbison greets her parents with Spanish salutations and likes to count to 15 in Spanish. She also likes to share all the things that she has learned about the stars, the ocean, yoga exercises and healthy eating habits says her mother, Katey Harbison. “I can’t say enough good things about the school. She loves it there. The teachers are so engaging and interactive with the kids. They do a wonderful job in keeping the parents informed about the activities of each day.”

“What really amazes me is how much kids can learn in a really short amount of time. Our children are learning all throughout the day. We are definitely not a day care center.”

— Director Katie Cornatzer

Charleigh was on a brief waiting list before she started at the school as a two-year old in 2009. “My husband and I were amazed by what she learned in the first few months when she first started at the Goddard School,” Katey says.

"We have no concern about her well-being while she is at school. It's a safe, clean, professional and loving place for her to learn. The price is very reasonable and the curriculum and learning activities she's involved with on a daily basis are wonderful. She is happy at the school, so it's good for her and for us. We already decided to send her to their kindergarten. She will love it," she adds.

School Director Katie wears two hats at the school; she is both an educator and a parent. Her son started at the Goddard School when he was 15 months old and made her cry when he read his first full-book to her this year in Kindergarten "He started last year in pre-K with sight words and little spot words. This year, he started moving past early-reader books and is now reading fluently," she says proudly.

She knows the value of a full-day of education and is happy that her son seems to grasp math concepts easily and will be fully ready for the challenges of first grade. "He loves to solve math problems in his head. When we are driving, he always wants to play math games to see if I know the answers."

Before he attended the Goddard School, he was cared for with a family relative.

"He was with two other young children," Katie recalls. "But when he got to the school, he really just started to develop. He started talking more, even in complete sentences. He'd share all the sounds that he would learn that day. What really amazes me is how much kids can learn in a really short amount of time. Our children are learning all throughout the day. We are definitely not a day care center," she says emphatically.

The school is open year round, and offers extended day programs from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Goddard School FLEX™ Learning Program is the foundation of an AdvancED-accredited program for exceptional early childhood education. Its programs are designed and implemented to meet or exceed quality standards and support the emotional, social, behavioral and physical development of each child. The program encompasses creative, fun learning environments, child-centered teachable moments, child-focused lesson plans and developmental guidelines that are used to set the stage for individual achievement.

Every child is exposed to a wide variety of instruction and cultural pursuits, including a manners program, conflict resolution, computer lab, music prelude, American Sign Language, Spanish and health and fitness classes, such as Yoga.

Anne and her staff of 30 are proud that their Goddard School has been recognized as a Circle of Excellence winner for the past two years in a row. There are more than 370 Goddard Schools nationwide and a very small percentage of those schools receive such recognition for their exemplary achievement. The award demonstrates an unwavering belief in the Goddard philosophy, a commitment to the standard of Goddard Quality Assurance and dedication to exceptional quality customer service.

