

The Learning Cove provides top-notch preschool education

By BROOKE CONRAD

When looking for a preschool or daycare, parents generally want a place that is safe and fun, and that will prepare their children for kindergarten. The Learning Cove Preschool is all of that and more, being one of only a handful of schools in the nation to employ teachers with college degrees.

"Our field is ripe with people hired off the street a lot of times and paid at minimum wage, which means a lot of times you have daycares with staff coming and going," said owner Ed Cwieka. "But we found a way to find a higher-caliber teacher."

Ed and Jeanee Cwieka opened Daphne's The Learning Cove Preschool in December of 2016 as an addition to their growing chain of preschools, the first of which opened a few years ago in Palm City, Florida. They plan to host a Fall Term Open House for the

Want to know more?

The Learning Cove Preschool
Fall Term Open House: Aug. 10
28848 N. Main St., Daphne
For more information, call 621-8811.

Daphne school on August 10th.

The Cwiekas have done much to improve the school, formerly known as The Kings Kid's Daycare, since they arrived in Daphne. In addition to renovating the physical environment with new floors, tables and chairs, the owners have adopted a research-based curriculum, and they require that all lead teachers have college degrees in education or child education, with a minimum of a bachelor's degree for the 3- and 4-year-old classes.

"The school in Daphne has been open at least 20 years, and

it changed hands several times," Cwieka said. "Like the school in Florida, it was on the verge of closing down again. That's why the owner called us and told us to take it, clean it up, and turn it. We're really, really proud of how far we've come here in the last four to five months."

One of the school's lead teachers, Ashley Floyd, who received her associate's degree from Pensacola State College and now teaches one of the 2-year-old classes, said she feels it is important to have college-educated teachers at preschools because they tend to know how to care for the children best.

"You have to find what works for every child," she said. "Some children in my class right now are very visual and like to see everything you're talking about. Another student is all about being repetitive and has to hear it several times to be able to absorb the information and be able to keep it. Some I have to talk to

in different ways and some on a more emotional level."

Amanda Hartgrove, who has two children at The Learning Cove Preschool, said that she has seen noticeable improvements in the school over the past few months.

"I can definitely tell my daughter is learning more now that it is a preschool, and I've definitely seen steps of improvement in things," she said.

Another parent, Alicia Davison, said she appreciates the people at the school and said that the owners are very helpful.

"We've had nothing but a great experience there," she said.

Before opening their first preschool, the Cwiekas owned Summit Learning Services, a tutoring center franchisor that required tutors to be state-licensed teachers. Summit has been recognized by several leading national entrepreneurial publications and was named one

of the top 500 fastest-growing private companies in 2012.

Given his own background in business and his wife's background in education, Cwieka said that the two of them work together very well.

"I've got the business marketing experience, and she knows the product, so she fills the gaps I don't, and I fill the gaps she doesn't," Cwieka said. "That's the core reason why we've done well."

Cwieka said that since 85 percent of brain growth occurs during the preschool years, it is critical that children begin learning and reading at a young age. That is why his school focuses on reading and preparing children for kindergarten.

"Parents are beginning to see that this is a very critical time of a child's life," Cwieka said. "Their kids might have gotten fed or read to or played outside before, but now it's developing into a school."