

BUSINESS PROFILE

The Goddard School Of Toms River Route 70

By Bob Vosseller

On Route 70 in Toms River, a premiere preschool specializing in early childhood development, The Goddard School offers programs and services for infants, toddlers, preschool, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, as well as before/after care and summer camp until age 12.

Led by on-site owners, Alisa Khaitan and Peter Larsson, alongside Educational Director Jackie Fiorentino and Operational Director Katie Rondinone, The Goddard School of Toms River Route 70 blends the highest standards in early childhood education and development with nurturing care in a family-like environment. "Our families place an enormous amount of trust in us to provide an exceptional childcare experience grounded in solid educational programming," Fiorentino said, "and we take that trust very seriously."

Indeed, open communication with parents is of the utmost importance at The Goddard School of Route 70. On a daily basis, teachers and parents collaborate with one another to ensure that each child's needs are met with great satisfaction. "Parents are always welcome to call during the day," Rondinone says. "When you pick up your child, you will receive a daily activity report that highlights what your child did that day. The teacher will record how long your child napped, how much lunch your child ate and how well your child is doing with potty training, milestone developments and more. Your child's teacher also makes sure to write a note about a special moment of your child's day." It's this level of commit-



The founders and staff of the Toms River Goddard School gather in front of the school and are ready to start a new school day.

ment to open and ongoing parent communication that Khaitan credits, in part, to the success of her school. "We do everything we can to involve our families and keep them informed and connected," Khaitan adds. "The cornerstone of our school is that we are extremely family-based. We place a strong emphasis on family involvement." On top of a welcoming "call us anytime of day" policy, the school sends out regular emails, school calendars and newsletters highlighting upcoming school events and activities. The school has even started hosting regular Parent Open Houses for enrolled families. "Every couple of months, we invite our families into the school after hours to visit the classrooms and chat with their child's teachers and front office staff," Khaitan says. "Parent Open Houses have become a much-anticipated quarterly

event for our families and teachers alike – we all look forward to them as a way to forge even stronger relationships with one another."

One feature that differentiates The Goddard School Route 70 from other local preschools is their unique and flexible learning environment, grounded in a philosophy that learning shouldn't be one-size-fits-all. "Child development is about more than just reaching milestones. It's about igniting your little one's curiosity and instilling a lifelong love of learning," Fiorentino said. "Whether it's learning about precipitation on a rainy day or counting the toes on a T-Rex with a child who loves dinosaurs, we give our youngest learners the chance to discover the world from the safety and comfort of their classroom."

In fact, health and safety has never been more important than it is now during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Since March 2020, we've worked tirelessly to implement additional policies and procedures to keep our children, faculty, and families as safe as possible," Khaitan says. Some of these policies include a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all staff members, which is stricter than the state mandate which allows for childcare workers to either be vaccinated or submit to weekly testing. "We only hire teachers who are fully vaccinated and boosted. Our children are too young to get vaccinated themselves, so we owe it to them to do everything in our power to keep them protected from this virus." Another COVID-19 policy is that parents of enrolled children are not allowed in the school for dropoff and pickup. Instead, a member of the front office staff meets all families at the door to take children's temperatures and screen for COVID-19 symptoms and

then personally walks the child down to their classroom. At the end of the day this process repeats in reverse and children are brought out to their parents who wait just outside the front door, with plenty of space for social distancing. "These enhanced dropoff and pickup procedures help us mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 within our school," says Fiorentino. "That being said, we very much look forward to the day when we can safely welcome parents back into our school on a daily basis."

Although the program at The Goddard School Route 70 is for children ages 6 weeks to 6 years, they also provide services for older children with their hugely popular before and aftercare program. Students from Manchester Township Public Schools and Joseph A. Citta Elementary School in Toms River can be bussed to

and from their elementary schools directly from Goddard Route 70. Parents are able to drop their school age children off at Goddard Route 70 as early as 6:30 am for their before-care program and pick them up as late as 6:00 pm from the after-care program, affording working parents greater flexibility in their daily schedules. Children who attend the program are given an afternoon snack as well as outdoor/recess time on the school playground with ample space to run around on the grass, draw with sidewalk chalk, or play with hula hoops, bean bag tosses, and other gross motor equipment. Teachers are available and willing to assist aftercare students with homework, play board games, or a lively round of Four Corners. "Being a working parent can be incredibly challenging, so we're thrilled that we can offer local families greater flexibility in their daily schedules with our before and aftercare program," Fiorentino said.

The Goddard School located in Toms River is located at 255 Route 70, near Whitesville Road by the Manchester border. For more information on enrollment options available at The Goddard School, or to schedule a tour, please call 732-363-5530 or visit goddardschool.com/nj-ny/toms-river-route-70-nj.



Staff members of the Toms River Goddard School provide instruction and communicate with students who are enjoying their day in class.