



# LEARNING TO LAST A LIFETIME AT WESLEY CHAPEL ACADEMY

BY JAN MARINO

Wesley Chapel Academy is an educational academy specializing in preschool. Now in its fifth year, WCA is owned and operated by three former elementary school teachers, and offers students a chance to build a strong foundation necessary for success throughout their academic lives.

Recently, we were able to chat with two of the Directors/Owners of Wesley Chapel Academy, Christel Phelps, the CFO, and Dawn Bender, one of the VPK teachers. After teaching in the Pasco County school system for over ten years, they became frustrated with the emphasis on testing. They witnessed first-hand that this increases a child's

anxiety, reduces instructional time, and stifles the student's love of learning. With a third partner, Amber Burgess, the trio decided to leave the public school system to open a different kind of school that emphasizes fundamental skills that are so important, including phonics, number sense, and basic science concepts. Most of all, they strive to instill a love of learning to last a lifetime.

Everyone at WCA treats the children with respect and teaches them to love themselves and others in an educational environment that is fun while being safe and beneficial to each student. Games are used as teaching tools; a recent pumpkin decorating contest and making other holidays entertaining is part of their fun-loving environment. They believe that exploration and curiosity are the best and most exciting paths to knowledge. Christel remarked, "We operate a developmentally appropriate program that provides each child with many experiences in a large group, small group, and individual settings in order to aid in their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development." Dawn stressed that children "learn best by doing while having fun."

Christel, Dawn, and Amber had faith in Wesley Chapel Academy even before their doors opened. In fact, working without a net and no Plan B, they received their license just the day before the doors swung open for the very first time. And since that day, there has been no looking back. WCA employs seven classrooms – four VPK classes, one two-year-old classroom, and two three-year-old classrooms.

Watching the children grow and develop gives Christel joy and satisfaction. Spending time and being with the children is what she enjoys most, but when asked if she had a favorite class or age group, Christel said with a smile, "It's like asking which of your children is your favorite. You love them in different ways." Dawn has always had a love of both education and children, so becoming a preschool teacher was a natural path for her. Dawn always loved going to school and her goal is to instill that same love of learning in the lives of the children she teaches. She is herself a lifelong learner and attends courses to learn better ways to make students successful and new teaching strategies.

Christel raised two children who are now adults. Her daughter works at WCA alongside Mom, and her son works with Dad, making for a very close family even though neither child still lives at home. Dawn has four children, ages 20, 17, 13, and 9, which keep her very busy as the Mom of a large household.

Wesley Chapel Academy teaches students using a standards-based curriculum with the goal of preparing the children for kindergarten. Parents and teachers work closely together, communicate with each other, and reinforce learning at home to help each child reach his/her highest potential. For more information about the educators and programs at Wesley Chapel Academy, reach out to them at 813-782-2457 or visit their website at [wesleychapelacademy.com](http://wesleychapelacademy.com) today!



**WESLEY CHAPEL ACADEMY**

*Building a Strong Foundation*

**Preschool**  
**2-3 Year Old & VPK**  
**813-782-2457**  
**33945 SR 54,**  
**WESLEY CHAPEL, FL**  
**[wesleychapelacademy.com](http://wesleychapelacademy.com)**