

Lakeside Living  
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Peas In A Pod: Inspired to Educate  
By Rachel Colburn

When we last heard about Peas in a Pod, Debbie Clark and Kelly Smith had just completed their first full year at the new preschool and Kindergarten, finishing with 16 students in three classes. Now, a year later, there are 26 students in four classes and growing, with the addition of two more teachers. Tours and registrations are ongoing. After a successful summer camp, Debbie and Kelly are gearing up for the 2023-2024 school year.

Peas in a Pod Preschool and Kindergarten is designed to educate students in a loving and patient environment, embracing diversity and allowing them to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Learning through play and hands-on activities is encouraged and supported by a developmentally appropriate curriculum for each age group. Peas in a Pod offers diversified opportunities to meet individual needs and encourage children to value their uniqueness and that of others. Christian values are also core to the school and are reflected in the daily interactions and activities.

“We are so excited about the start of our new school year. We’re looking forward to welcoming back our families from last year as well as seeing new faces! Meeting these new kids and their families is such a blessing and we feel so fortunate to have them share their children with us,” says Debbie. Some of the fun things planned for this year include expanding the school garden and playing with the new water wall on the playground. Also, plans are in the works for adding yoga and soccer to the program.

Says parent Ruth McKenney, “Miss Debbie and Miss Kelly have been a part of our lives for 7 years now. They (and the entire Peas in a Pod family) have created a space where our boys have flourished emotionally and academically. Each aspect of the day is intentional and child-centered, whether during summer camp or preschool. We’re thankful that they’ve walked beside our family these past years. It’s been an invaluable launch into education for our boys.”

Founders and owners, Debbie Clark and Kelly Smith have been teaching for a combined 40+ years. They were already friends when Kelly started working at the same preschool and Kindergarten where Debbie taught. Fourteen years later Covid hit. Their school, like many others, did not reopen in the fall of 2020, so they created a learning pod, starting with 12 students and taught out of their homes, alternating week to week between houses. In October 2020, Debbie and Kelly found Congregational United Church of Christ (CUCC), and moved their learning pod to the new location. When the preschool at CUCC also did not re-open after Covid, Debbie and Kelly made it “official” by incorporating with the intention of growing their little pod into a school. Peas in a Pod was officially born, with the name referring to their original learning pod that was such a necessity in many students’ lives.

When asked about the start of Peas in a Pod, Debbie shares, “Our students and families were the inspiration. They trusted us with their children in uncertain times (COVID), to encourage their social development and keep them on track academically. Their steadfast support and encouragement enabled us to become ‘Peas in a Pod.’” Their passion for teaching young children is evident in their story and the authenticity of their love for them is seen in Debbie and

Kelly. "We absolutely love what we do and feel blessed every day to come to school and spend time with our sweet, adorable children!" says Kelly.

Kelly graduated from Clemson University with a Secondary Education in English degree. After graduation, she realized that her heart was in Early Childhood Education. Kelly started teaching at her daughters' preschool and fell in love with the children and the experience. Kelly is married to Kevin and has two daughters. Jordan is 27 and in school at Boston University getting her Ph.D. in Biology. Ashlee is 23 and following in her mother's footsteps, teaching second grade here in Greensboro. Kelly enjoys playing tennis, pickleball, and the guitar.

After getting a BA in Journalism from ECU, Debbie realized she really wanted to teach and got her M.Ed. in Elementary Education. She worked for GCS for 7 years and later moved to the private preschool/Kindergarten setting where she taught and was assistant director for 15 years. Debbie is married to Jon and they have two children, Jonathan, 23, is a financial analyst in NYC, and Maddie, 22, newly graduated from ASU, will teach in Spain this fall. Debbie loves to garden, read, take walks, and spend time with family and friends.

If you are looking for a loving and nurturing educational environment for your young learners, please contact Debbie at [debbie@peaspreschool.com](mailto:debbie@peaspreschool.com) or 336-317-7775; or Kelly Smith at [kelly@peaspreschool.com](mailto:kelly@peaspreschool.com) or 336-253-6012. Peas in a Pod is waiting for you!





