



THE GRANT ACADEMY

Grades 1-5 • S.T.E.M. School



The Grant Academy
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The Grant Academy
Elementary School

Where the Students are the Stars

Private School for Students with Disabilities to Open in Fall

Melissa Wright has spent 17 years teaching special education in a range of environments, including public schools and high-end private academies. Her husband David, whose background is in business, has learned a lot through the years as he's experienced the highs and lows of helping special needs students through Melissa's successes and frustrations. They've taken a shared vision for helping special needs students reach their full potential and are opening The Grant Academy in Woodstock, the first private school for special needs children in Cherokee County. The name was chosen to honor Melissa's parents, Ron and Ellen Grant, who passed away in 2014.

"Our philosophy is that every child is capable of learning. Each child just learns differently. We will have our teachers look at each child as an individual and teach to the student—not the curriculum," said David, the school's business director.



Melissa & David Wright

The academy will be a STEM school (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and will serve students with mild to moderate cognitive and intellectual disabilities that can include dyslexia, ADHD, ADD, autism, Asperger's and developmental disabilities. The goal is to help each child reach his or her potential, which is the inspiration behind

the school's logo that pictures students reaching for the stars and inspiration for the motto: Where Dreams and Potential Become Reality. The logo is also the inspiration for the school's mascot, The Stars. The academy will open with grades one through five and a grade will be added each year.

The Grant Academy is unique because class sizes are small, planned for six to 10 students depending on diagnosis and abilities. Students will have physical education, social studies, science, language arts, reading, math and integrated social skills courses daily, with art and music offered every other day. Speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling will be offered as needed and incorporated into the classes. Students will also participate in monthly academic field trips. All classes will be based on the needs of the students.

The students will change classes and teachers will instruct only one subject. Teachers are certified and trained in special education and the subject area to ensure they are experts in what they teach. The school's curriculum uses programs such as Orton-Gillingham and Touch Math which utilize a whole-brain

approach and have proven results for struggling learners.

Melissa has a bachelor of arts degree in psychology and criminal justice from the University of Alabama and a master's of education degree in special education from the University of West Georgia with a reading endorsement. She's certified to teach pre-K through grade 12 in all subjects and will be the academy's education director. David earned a bachelor of arts degree in psychology and bachelor of science degree in criminology from Auburn University, and has worked in sales and marketing management for more than 20 years.

Years of experience have taught Melissa what works and what doesn't. She remembers a special needs student who left high school with only a certificate of attendance. His parents cried out, "Where does he go now? What can he do?" He had no job skills. She wants to help students like him succeed. "My passion is special education and I want to make sure that our students get as much as they can out of their education. We're going to have some kids who, with help, can go on a college path. Yet others may never go to college, but we can help them develop skills that will take them on a career path and enable them to be productive and happy," she said.

Students will be tested before starting at The Grant Academy. These results will be used to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which will be reviewed each grading period with the teacher, parent and student instead of once a year. Changes can be made, if needed, to benefit the student. The IEP then guides the teachers' lesson plans, ensuring that the students' needs are always being met.

Students who have IEPs can get tuition reimbursement through the state-funded Special Needs Scholarship Program. Tuition will include monthly field trips, a monogrammed backpack and school supplies. The school is on Highway 92, one mile east of I-575.



Hayleigh Wright modeling The Grant Academy's uniform

Photos by Kim Bates

To learn more about The Grant Academy, visit the school's open house noon-4 p.m. April 11 or call 770-926-STAR (7824).