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Children First

Home Child Care Provider

In 1990, Donna King, along with other parents and teachers, envisioned a space where children come first and would not only enrich the lives of the children, but also the parents and teachers. They founded the nonprofit, Children First School at Donna's home. Sarah Meyer works alongside Donna serving twelve children ages almost three to five years all working together.

"Our focus is to help the children grow into capable, confident, and strong individuals that are able to work together in community."

The learning at Children First is play and nature based, focusing on the children's interests. They create an open environment where children can choose from a selection of various learning activities. As they move through activities, they are exposed to a variety of nutritious foods and encouraged to try new foods. They often choose new selections from their garden and even if there is a food children do not care for they say, 'I don't like it *yet*' knowing that they can change their mind.

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Throughout the learning environment, the children practice life skills together. These skills include listening, sharing, and being an advocate for what they need. The teachers 'coach' the children to turn towards their peers and work out issues together in addition to using each other as resources. They grow confidence in their own ability to handle situations and learn the importance of their own voice and ideas.

Parents are encouraged to be active. They meet with the teachers three times a year to set goals for their children and conference about their children's portfolio of work. Parents share their expertise and hobbies with the children, take part in discussion groups, and attend two parent workdays to maintain the surroundings. With everyone working together, they have successfully created a culture of community and collaboration.

From Durham, NC, Children First has been a CACFP participant through Nutrition Plus since 1993.

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