

Clara George



GED Graduate – Brewster Technical Center
Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) – Learey Technical Center
Child Development Credential (CDA) – Learey Technical Center
Director of Family Literacy – Kimmins Family Learning Center

Clara George is a tiny woman with a big heart and an even bigger smile. She was a single mother with five children, when in 1991, she decided to go back to school and earn her high school diploma. A friend had mentioned the Adult Education High School on Central Avenue (now the site of Memorial Middle School), so she called the administrator, who talked her into coming in and working on her GED, and because of a wonderful new program being offered to parents who were seeking to complete their education, she also enrolled her youngest daughter in the Even Start program at the school. While Clara was in class, so was her daughter, which is how Clara met June Serralles, who was the Parenting Class instructor. According to Clara, Ms. Serralles was “an inspiration in my life. She was more than a teacher; she was a wonderful role model!” After little more than a year in Clara’s GED class, an instructor left the Even Start program, and Clara was asked to temporarily replace her. She subbed for seven months, and when that position was filled permanently, Clara’s administrator hired her for another position that was also with Even Start but included home visits and teaching parenting skills.

In 2000, the entire program moved from the Adult High School to Kimmins Family Learning Center, which is a partnership between the Kimmins Foundation, Hillsborough County Public Schools and a federal Even Start grant. Clara was still doing home visits, teaching in the classroom, and attending her GED classes at night. She earned her GED in 2001, and then went on to earn her Child Development Associate credential (CDA) in 2005. She then began working on her Director’s credential through Learey Technical Center and completed that in 2006 and was promoted to Director of Family Literacy at Kimmins. Clara said that “my teacher at Learey was awesome and she made the curriculum so much fun.” Clara loves her job, and is quick to say that “I am a people-person, and truly believe that you can make a difference for the kids!”

Clara faces obstacles in her job each and every day. The children she works with have often learned things at home that need to be changed, and getting parental support is sometimes a challenge. The program at Kimmins delivers a wide variety of services to the low-income, at-risk population that it serves. Ever mindful of her young charges, Clara keeps up-to-date with current family literacy developments, and she makes it a point to ensure that her youngsters are provided a safe, happy, comfortable environment. According to one of her district co-workers, “Clara is focused on providing the best early childhood experience for the children in the program. She welcomes the entire family and cares about the families functioning as a unit for the benefit of the children.”

When asked what career she would have chosen if she hadn’t gone into Early Childhood Education, Clara says she would have chosen social work. She also hopes to open a restaurant one day – she loves to cook (something that was apparently inherited by one of her daughters, who is completing her training in the culinary arts.) Clara raised her five children as a single mother – 3 boys and 2 girls. Each of them graduated from Hillsborough High School, and all are either working or going to school. She also has a close relationship with her four grandchildren, one of which is enrolled in the program at Kimmins. Clara feels strongly that family literacy is an important aspect of parenting, and her program transmits literacy into the home through home visits and activities, on-site parenting classes, and through Clara’s continuous emphasis on school readiness activities for her students. Clara says “I want to say thanks to my Heavenly Father for all my successes. I could not have accomplished any of this without Him. She adds, “My role in life is to work hard, and I am happy if I have touched a child’s life in some way.” In addition, she sums up her philosophy in one sentence, “If you can reach even a few of the kids, you have been successful.” She is a happy, positive role model for her students from infants to Pre-Kindergarten!