**WILSON COUNTY INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD**

**PILOT PROGRAM**

**PROPOSAL**

 To include children without disabilities into one early childhood education classroom.

Inclusion refers to the process of placing children with disabilities in the same classes or programs as their typically developing peers and providing them with the necessary services and supports. Inclusion may be provided in different types of placements such as full or part-time programs.

**PHILOSOPHY**

 The Inclusive Early Childhood Pilot Program (IECPP) is founded in the belief that young children, regardless of background or abilities, should be nurtured and challenged in an environment that encourages the expression of ideas, curiosity, spontaneity, enthusiasm, and the joy of learning. We believe that all children benefit when they are grouped heterogeneously, making it possible for children to learn from one another.

Our commitment as a staff is to create an environment for each child that will:

* foster increased confidence as a learner and a unique individual,
* encourage active participation in learning through exploration, movement, questioning, and problem solving,
* promote appreciation of the similarities and differences among others, and
* promote developmental progress.

**GOAL**

Our goal is to provide a well-rounded child-centered educational setting for all children. This will provide children with identified special needs the appropriate language, social, and play models of same age peers. Transitions to other school environments will be easier and generalization of learned skills will occur more readily. Each child will have opportunities to develop long term friendships. All individuals will benefit from a greater understanding of human diversity and its value to our society.

**RATIONALE**

Inclusion of children with disabilities into the early childhood classroom is responsive to legislation mandating that educational services to children with disabilities be delivered in the least restrictive environment and to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not experiencing disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). The heterogeneous nature of an inclusive class expands the opportunities for children with disabilities to observe and model age appropriate social, language, and play behaviors. When considering the effect of inclusion on participants who do not have a disability, educational research has demonstrated that typically developing children have shown only positive developmental and attitudinal outcomes from integrated experiences (Strain, 1998).

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

1. The overall educational program of children with disabilities will be enhanced by the involvement of same age peers.
2. Children with disabilities will attain age appropriate social, play, and language skills more rapidly.
3. There will be a smoother transition of children with disabilities into other educational settings.
4. There will be less reliance on special education support services for children with disabilities.
5. All participating children, parents, and staff will develop a greater sensitivity and appreciation of individual differences and diversity.
6. A home-school partnership supportive of parents’ needs and concerns will be developed.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Wilson County IECPP is designed to develop an effective inclusive model for preschool children ages 3-5. This program can be defined as an early childhood program that will meet the educational needs of young children with and without disabilities in the same classroom setting.

The IECPP will be in session **Wednesday** and **Thursday** beginning in November of the upcoming school year. Breakfast and lunch will be a part of the school day. Transportation to and from the classroom will be discussed on an individual basis.

The process for implementation of the IECPP includes expectations from the following:

**Wilson Early Childhood Team**

1. Form a planning team
2. Hold regular monthly meetings
3. Obtain staff and administrative support and commitments
4. Develop and implement an action plan
5. Evaluate the progress of the initiative

**Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) Team**

1. Assist the team to identify needs and choose a researched-based model
2. Plan for the implementation of the model
3. Assist in the evaluating the effectiveness of the model in the division/program
4. Attend monthly scheduled meetings

**Specific to the IECPP, TTAC will assist the Wilson team to:**

1. Develop policies and procedures related to the program
2. Develop an application process
3. Develop a selection process to identify children for the program
4. Assist in developing a process to disseminate information about the program
5. Develop criteria for the participation in the IECPP

**INTENSITY AND DURATION**

 The Inclusive Early Childhood Pilot Program will be in session two days a week (**Wednesday** and **Thursday**) from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The program will begin in November and end with the closure of the school year.

**MONITORING CHILDREN’S PROGRESS**

 Parent conferences will be scheduled by the early childhood special education teacher to review and update families on relevant information related to their child’s preschool education. A developmental checklist will be used to monitor skills for the children without disabilities within the classroom.

Should a concern arise about a child’s participation in the IECPP on the part of the parent or the teacher, the following steps will be taken:

1. A conference will be held and strategies developed to alleviate the concern. At that time a follow up conference will be scheduled to assess progress.
2. The follow up conference will focus on changes that have occurred since the first conference and whether the child should continue in the classroom.

**HOW TO APPLY**

 The application form is included in the attached brochure. To apply, fill out the application section and return to Jane Jones, P.O. Box 555, Wilson, Virginia 22000 prior to the application due date. An orientation meeting will be held to inform interested parents about the Inclusive Early Childhood Pilot Program.

If your child is selected to participate in the IECPP, it will be necessary for you to register your child at the Student Services office located in the Wilson County School Board building. You must present the following documents to the school in order to register your child:

1. A current immunization record
2. A proof of residency in the county of Wilson
3. Birth certificate
4. Social Security card
5. Completed USDA food application

If you have any additional questions, please contact Jane Jones at the Student Services office by phone at (800) 555-1212 or by e-mail at jjones@wilson.k12.va.us.