**Kensington County Public Schools**

**Preschool Inclusion Pilot Program**

**PROPOSAL**

 To include children with 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 Preschool Inclusion Program (PIP) 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 grade levels 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 inclusive programming 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 inclusive 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. A more rapid attainment of age appropriate social, play, and language skills for children with disabilities is expected.
3. A smoother transition of children with disabilities into other grade levels.
4. 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 Kensington County PIP is designed to develop an effective inclusive model for preschool children ages 3-4. This inclusive 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 PIP will be in session **Monday** through **Thursday** beginning in January 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 PIP includes expectations from the following:

 **Kensington County Preschool Inclusion Program 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

**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 evaluating the effectiveness of the model in Kensington
4. Attend monthly scheduled meetings

 **Specific to the PIP, TTAC will assist the Kensington 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 reverse mainstreaming program
4. Assist in developing a process to disseminate information about the program
5. Develop criteria for the participation in the PIP

**PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

 An orientation will be offered to families of students enrolled in the PIP class prior to beginning the program. The PIP class will receive quality instruction and will be exposed to curriculum based on developmentally appropriate practices. A certified and experienced teacher will lead the classroom each day and a highly qualified paraprofessional will assist the teacher and children on a full time basis. All children enrolled in the class will have access to services provided by Kensington County Public Schools (fingerprinting, school pictures, etc.). The PIP class will have opportunities to participate in the following specials: library, art, guidance, music, and physical education on a weekly basis. Children will eat breakfast and lunch at school each day.

**INTENSITY AND DURATION**

 The Preschool Inclusion Program will be in session four days a week (**Monday** through **Thursday**) from 8:10 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. The Program will begin in January of the upcoming school year 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 PIP 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**

 To apply, complete the application and return to Blake Bridges, P.O. Box 100, Kensington, Virginia 20000 prior to the application due date.

 Upon completing the application, notices will be sent to determine a date and time for the child to visit a preschool class. The children will be observed during group play and during structured tasks. After school visits have been completed by all applicants, you will receive a letter by mail notifying you that your child has or has not been selected as a student for the pilot program.

If your child is selected to participate in the PIP class, it will be necessary for you to register your child in the main office at Kensington Primary School. 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 Kensington County
3. Original Birth Certificate
4. Social Security Card

If you have any additional questions, please contact Blake Bridges at Kensington Primary School by phone at (800) 555-1111 or by e-mail at bbridges@kcs.k12.va.us.