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Preschool Inclusive Experiences Program Guidelines

# Richmond Public Schools

## Collaboration between Richmond Public School’s Virginia Preschool Initiative, Exceptional Education and Early Head Start/Head Start Program

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## Introduction and Purpose

**Philosophy**

The Preschool Inclusive Experiences (PIE) program is founded in the belief that young children have a right, regardless of their background and ability, to 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 have full access to learning environments with peers and are given appropriate support to fully participate in shared experiences with one another.

**Mission:** The Richmond Public School Regional Preschool Learning Centers will provide an environment where developmentally appropriate practices are implemented to enhance all young learners’ development and facilitate learning.

**Vision**: Richmond Public Schools is committed to providing a world-class education for preschool-age children to ensure they are equipped with the academic foundation needed for a successful K-12 experience.

**History of our work**

In October, 2014, the RPS, Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) program contacted the Virginia Department of Education’s Training and Technical Assistance Center at Virginia Commonwealth University (T/TAC at VCU) and shared they would like some technical assistance with expanding their current preschool inclusive placements. At that time there were several classrooms where young children with disabilities were included and supports were provided through the early childhood special education team. However, the VPI program was dedicated to forming a more sustainable partnership with the special education department to ensure access for young children with identified disabilities. An administrative division level team was formed which included administrators from VPI, preschool center administrators and representatives from the Exceptional Education Department.

The need was identified for a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the two departments and the agreement was developed which indicated the details of this partnership. Specifically at each of the three preschool centers in existence at this time (Mary Scott, Maymont and Blackwell) eight children with disabilities at each center would be enrolled in two VPI classes (4 children with disabilities in each class), and an Early Childhood Special Education Teacher (ECSE) and an ECSE Instructional Assistant (IA) would work between the two classes to plan for and provide services to all children enrolled in the classroom and oversee the goals of the Individual Educational Program (IEP). The next year the program expanded to Head Start and the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between these two programs was updated to indicate that 2 co-taught Head Start classes would enroll up to eight children with disabilities within two classes. Each classroom would be co-taught by the Head Start teacher, ECSE teacher and the Head Start IA. The following year, a co-taught class was added in a VPI Plus classroom. This class was co-taught by a VPI Plus teacher, an IA and an ECSE teacher. All co-taught classes enrolled 8 children with disabilities and 10 children who were at risk. Since the original PIE classes began, each year the PIE Leadership team, consisting of RPS Early Childhood administrators, considered the zoning and needs of children with disabilities to determine where the PIE classes would be located.

**Law**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA)[[1]](#footnote-1), is the federal legislation which directs states to provide each eligible child a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and related services. Furthermore, section 612 (a)(5) of IDEA[[2]](#footnote-2) mandates that individuals receive their education and related services with appropriate aids and supports, in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The least restrictive environment for young children is in a “regular class” with their typically developing peers. Since the LRE provision does not distinguish between school age and preschool age children, this requirement is extended to children ages three through five, served under Part B of IDEA. In Virginia, families have the option of transitioning from Part C to B when their eligible child is two and half years old.

Richmond Public Schools is the local education agency (LEA) responsible for providing FAPE to eligible children, and must consider the full continuum of options in order to meet the unique needs of each child. In accordance with the legislation, placement decisions should be made by a group of individuals familiar with the child, informed by evaluation data, and based on the annual goals identified in the Individual Education Program (IEP). Additionally, the IEP should include a statement of explanation to the extent in which the child is not participating in a program with their nondisabled peers. Before more restrictive settings can be considered, the IEP team must consider any supplementary supports or aids that could be provided in the regular education setting to ensure satisfactory progress.

Research

* Grisham-Brown, J., Hemmeter, M.L., & Pretti-Frontczak, K. (2005). *Blended practices for teaching young children in inclusive settings*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
* Gupta, S., Henninger, W., Vinh, M. (2014). First *steps to preschool inclusion: How to jumpstart your program-wide plan.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.Pretti-Frontczak, K., Grisham-Brown, J., & Sullivan, L. (Eds.). (2014*).*
* *Blending practices for all children.* (Young Exceptional Children Monograph Series No. 16). Los Angeles: Division for Early Childhood of the Council of Exceptional Children.

## Placement in a PIE Classroom

### Children currently receiving services in a ECSE self-contained classroom:

In order to help children transition from a self-contained setting to a general education setting, they will visit the preschool classroom prior to the beginning of the school year. There should be at least 3 visits to a preschool classroom which will allow children to interact with their peers in a variety of routines (i.e., centers, large and small group activities). While visiting, the collaborative team can observe strengths and needs of the child in order to plan for and provide the level of support needed to assist the child in accessing the curriculum and participate with the teachers, materials and peers. The current teaching team will use the Level of Support Matrix to determine the approximate dosage of supports a student will need across their development to successfully access and participate in all aspects of the general education classroom. The Level of Support Matrix should be completed in the early Spring of the year prior to when the child will be considered for a PIE classroom.

See Appendix A: Timeline for Transition to PIE Classroom and

Form C: Level of Support Matrix

### Children going through initial eligibility (intake)

Children who are found eligible for early childhood special education services through IDEA and the IEP team has determined their LRE is with their peers without disabilities, must complete the registration requirements of either VPI or Head Start. These processes include meeting enrollment criteria including age (child must be 3 ( Head Start) or 4 ( Head Start and VPI) by September 30th of the current year), residency and income requirements.

The intake team will convene an IEP team and decide if the goals and objectives that are written in the IEP can be best met in an inclusive environment. If so, the IEP team will provide the family with information about the registration process for VPI or Head Start. The intake team will inform the VPI or Head Start administrator that the family will be contacting them to begin the registration process for VPI or Head Start programs. If admissions criteria are not met, then additional placement options to comply with the IEP will be considered by the IEP team and the Exceptional Education Administrators of RPS.

### Children with disabilities identified for services through VPI/VPI Plus and Head Start.

If any of the children without IEPs who are enrolled via VPI criteria in the PIE classes or the children without IEPs enrolled in the Head Start co-taught class are found eligible during the course of the year for Exceptional Education services, the IEP team will determine the LRE for the child. If the IEP team determines that the current placement meets the the child’s needs, they may remain in the VPI/VPI Plus/Head Start classroom. The case management will be handled by the ECSE teacher. If the LRE of the child who is found eligible for ECSE services is NOT the current placement, then the IEP team will determine what placement is appropriate.

## Inclusive Model Descriptions:

**Collaboration with Head Start**

**Children identified for services through Head Start**

Richmond Public Schools Early Head Start/Head Start program enrolls children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age.

Early Head Start is funded for 56 children and families in the City of Richmond.

Head Start is funded for 731 children and families in the City of Richmond and counties of Powhatan and Goochland.

Petersburg Public Schools is a delegate agency of Richmond City Public Schools and serves 136 children and families who reside in Petersburg City.

The Health and Human Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines are used to determine income eligibility for participation in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

In addition to the HHS Poverty Guidelines, families must also meet the age and residency requirements of the Early Head Start/Head Start program.

Children from homeless families and families receiving public assistance such as  Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are automatically eligible.

Foster children are eligible regardless of their foster families’ income.

To a reasonable extent, but not to exceed 10 percent, Richmond Public Schools Early Head Start/Head Start program may enroll families who do not meet the income requirements but meet the age and residency requirements providing that the program ensures that they are meeting the needs of eligible children and families that are below the poverty guidelines first.

At least 10% of the enrollment must be children with a disability, unless a waiver has been granted.

Children and families receive early childhood comprehensive services in the following areas:

* Family & Community Engagement
* Education and Early Childhood Development
* Mental Health & Disabilities
* Health & Nutrition

There are no fees to participate in the Early Head Start/Head Start Programs

**Inclusive Practices Program Procedures**

* As described above, Richmond Public Schools Early Head Start/Head Start program must ensure that at least 10% of its total funded enrollment is filled by children with an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individual Education Program). Families above the poverty guidelines **may be** considered. The program must ensure that children with disabilities who fall below the poverty guidelines are given first priority.
* The program must include specific efforts to actively locate and recruit children with disabilities.
* Annually, the program must establish a selection criterion that evaluates the prioritization of participants, which includes children with disabilities.
* Two of the preschool centers have launched a new inclusion co-taught model. The classroom enrolls 17 children, which includes up to 8 children with an IEP. It is staffed with a Head Start teacher, an Early Childhood Special Educator and a Head Start Instructional Assistant.
* Itinerant special education services are also provided to children with IEPs on an individual basis.

**Partnership with Head Start and Exceptional Education (ECSE)**

See MOU HS Collaboration Agreement

**Planning and Management**

Weekly Planning is a requirement but there is not a designated daily time this should occur. The teaching staff must develop lesson plans together.

Classroom Management is viewed as an educational process. All EHS/HS Staff assist and teach children how to develop self-control, self-regulation and self-direction skills needed to thrive in group situations. The goal is to provide a “safe, nurturing classroom environment where all children are viewed equally.”

Lesson Plans

RPS Head Start uses *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* as its early childhood curriculum which includes a lesson planning component. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* is used as the assessment monitoring tool. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* data is used to individualize instruction for each child. *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* uses studies to guide children’s learning. Lesson plans must include the following components:

* Interest Areas
* Large Group (no more than 20 minutes)
* Read Aloud
* Small Group (no more than 15 minutes)
* Al’s Pals (1-2x/week-15 min)
* Outdoor experiences (30 minutes with at least 15 minutes of teacher directed activity)
* Family Partnership
* WOW Experiences (part of the Creative Curriculum)
* Individualization
* Lesson Plan templates are set up in a Block Template Format which must include the following Learning Areas: *Blocks; Fine Motor Toys & Games; Dramatic Play; Creative Arts; Language/Literacy; Outdoor; Music & Movement; Sand & Water; and Special Activities*.
* Weekly, teachers are to plan for small group activities in the areas of Language and Literacy; Math; and Science and Cooking.
* Individual planning and specially designed instruction (SDI) is to be used for ALL children and must be used for children with disabilities.
* Co-planning is required between the ECSE and Head Start teacher

(information taken from *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool).*

Daily Schedule

* Each classroom must post their daily schedule on the parent board.
* Daily schedule must have a balance of child initiated and adult-directed activities.

1. Balance of quiet and active play
2. Group activity (individual, small/large group)
3. Child initiated activities (e.g., choice time, discovery time)
4. Individual and small group activities, routines and transitions
5. Interactive play
6. Activities for children with special needs

* Daily schedule must be consistent but flexible to allow changes to be made based upon the needs and interests of the children, changes in weather and/or other circumstances.
* Daily schedule must allow adequate time for a smooth transitions between activities.
* Daily schedule must contain words and pictures, when possible, and at the child’s eye level.

IEP Case Management

The student’s IEP is to be maintained by the ECSE (case manager). If there is a Head Start student who is suspected of a delay and has not previously been identified, the teacher can follow the process for initiating a pre-referral. All pre-referrals would go to the Head Start IEPStudent Support and Intervention Coordinator (Disability Coordinator).

Progress Monitoring and Assessment

* The following assessment/screening tools are utilized by Head Start:

| * **Program Tools** | **Who** | **When** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Brigance*** | All Head Start students *–except those with IEPs* | Within 30 days of enrollment |
| ***Brigance Re-screening*** | **Only** student scoring below the Cut Off on initial screen; or requested by the Child Study team | 6 weeks after 1st screening |
| ***Brigance Social Emotional and Self Help Scale*** | All Head Start Students **(completed by parent)** | During intake with Family Services Staff |
| ***ASQ and ASQ-SE*** | All EHS students | Within 30 days of enrollment |
| ***TS Gold*** | Both EHS & HS | 3 times per year |
| ***Pre K PALS*** | Rising Kindergarten students only | Fall, mid-Year, Spring |

***Steps for proceeding with a pre-referral if the student falls below the CUT-OFF scores.***

1. The teacher must share the results with the parent. Develop strategies that can be implemented in class and at home to address any weakness(es) identified in the initial screening.
2. Inform the parent that the student will be rescreened in six (6) weeks. (Give time to implement the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goal(s) based on Brigance results).
3. Child Plus Entry: Enter the Screening date and results (below cut off).
   1. Write a brief summary of the feedback/outcome of the discussion with the parent and the Individualization plan.
   2. Note the target date for the rescreening (in six (6) weeks)
4. Implement the Individualized Learning Plan at school and send activities for the parent to support the skill at home. Best practice---communicate with parent at least once regarding student’s performance and ask parent for their feedback.
5. Rescreen the student within the first six (6) weeks after the initial screening. ***Check chronological age prior to administering the rescreening to determine which screening must be used.***
6. Share the rescreening results with the parent.
7. Enter the rescreening scores in the Brigance online management system and Child Plus (Screening date and results (pass or below cut off)).
   1. If the student scores above cut off---the screening is complete.

***If the results of the rescreen are below cut of:***

1. If the rescreening score remains below the cut off, discuss results with the parent to determine the next step for the child.
   1. Develop an individualized learning plan to address any areas of weakness at home and at school.
   2. Discuss with parent the pre-referralprocess and obtain written consent. Make a plan to informally re-evaluate student performance based on additional individualization and communicate with the parent in four (4) weeks.

1. Staff must document in writing on the Child Plus data-based system if a pre**-**referral is being submitted:
   * + submit the pre**-**referral data online and
     + forward the pre-referral to the Student Support and Intervention Coordinator (Disability Coordinator).
2. Staff must also document in writing in the Child Plus data based system if a referral is not being submitted after the re-screening results are shared with the parent.

***Teaching Strategies GOLD* (the online assessment component that accompanies the Creative Curriculum)**

Teachers are required to:

1. Enter at least **three** anecdotal notes addressing each students’ learning goal per week.
2. Upload photo of student’s work with brief note to document learning goals.
3. Anecdotal notes must be entered and scored on the computer at least once a week. Priorities for observations and assessment should be in all areas that support the child’s Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and Individual Education Program (IEP) if applicable.
4. Complete the ongoing assessment, Teaching Strategies Gold for each child, three times a year (preschool classrooms) using the computerized assessment tool.
5. Print the Head Start Progress Report to share with parents during home visits and conferences per program directive.
6. Ask parent to select at least one learning goal that can be further developed at home and school to develop an Individualized Learning Goal for the Student.
7. Individualization based on assessment results must be documented on the weekly plan.

**Curriculum**

*The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 6th Edition*

6 Teaching Guides

* The Foundation: classroom environment, daily schedule, weekly and daily planning forms. Everything is integrated through studies (not themes).
* Interest Areas
* Literacy
* Mathematics
* Science and Technology, Social Studies & the Arts
* Objectives for Development & Learning (assessment component, online TSG)

Based on 38 learning objectives, *The Creative Curriculum for Preschooler* is comprehensive collection of knowledge-building and daily practice resources that explains the “what,” “why,” and “how” of teaching. “What” and “why” are explained in the five curriculum volumes that comprise The Foundation of the curriculum. They contain everything you need to know to build and implement a high-quality preschool program. “How” is provided by way of step-by-step guidance found in the Daily Resources. These include Teaching Guides and additional instructional tools that provide a wealth of ideas and detailed plans for filling every day with meaningful and engaging experiences designed for all children. Special support helps teachers individualize for English- and dual-language learners in the classroom.

**Learning Environment**

Physical environment**:**

Head Start program staff will use the *Inclusive Classroom Profile, Research Edition* (2016), to monitor the quality of PIE classrooms on an ongoing basis. It is suggested that this tool be used by teachers as a self-reflection tool to ensure appropriate supports are being provided for children.

Social Competence:

Head Start’s learning environment builds upon a strong foundation of social-emotional developmental, as well as developmentally-appropriate learning principles.

1. Lesson Plans must provide opportunities for children to actively participate in consistent daily routine, practice social engagement with peers and instructional staff and explore classroom materials (Active Learning) that focuses on following the Social & Emotional Developmental Domains. The adapted lesson plan must be used the first 6 weeks to plan the Social /Emotional Development Unit: Building Our Classroom Community
2. Conduct lessons and activities throughout the day that promote social relationships, self-regulation and self-efficacy/self-concept (taken from RPS EHS/HS Program Procedures, pg. 25)
3. *Al’s Pals* curriculum is used as a supplemental social-emotional curriculum to help children to identify and understand their feelings, respect others, make healthy choices and to solve interpersonal conflict nonviolently.

Classroom management

Classroom management is very important. The program recommends the following:

* Organize your classroom strategically, for example, place noisy areas away from quiet areas (the block area is not close to the reading area)
* Plan for Transitions - the more transitions are planned, the less “down time” the children have to become “bored”
* Use Al’s Pals to assist with Social Emotional Skills
* Label your classroom
* Utilize your daily schedule and help the children learn the schedule to know what to expect daily. Be consistent
* Balance high energy level and low energy level activities (do not plan all of your most physical activities back-to-back). This will assist with behavior and keeping the children engaged
* Have a plan for behavior management. Some children will need time to calm down and take a break. Have a nice space available (Al’s Corner), bubbles, fidget stools, etc.
* Utilize staff when needed. Coaches, education staff and social workers are available to assist with support, strategies and referrals

**Family Involvement-Head Start**

Each family enrolled in RPS EHS/Head Start has a Family Service Advocate/Worker. whose role is to provide case management services to families. Case management services might include assessment, goal setting, and also linking to community resources and referrals. Family Partnership Agreements (FPA) are developed to help families achieve their goals (i.e., going back to school, employment, housing, parent education).

**Family Communication-Head Start**

The Family Service Team (FST) informs parents about upcoming meetings and trainings that families can be a part of or can participate in such as parent meetings, policy council meetings, and advisory committee meetings. Parents also have an opportunity to serve as officers on the Policy Council which is made up of 51% parents and 49% community representatives.

Parent newsletters and flyers are sent home to communicate with parents about program activities. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year.

Home visits are made twice a year (in the Fall and in the Spring).

## Collaboration with Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) Program

The Virginia Preschool Initiative Program (VPI) and Exceptional Education jointly implement a collaborative inclusion model. The Preschool Inclusive Experiences (PIE) classrooms are staffed with both a licensed Pre-Kindergarten and Early Childhood Special Education teacher (ECSE), along with an instructional assistant from each program. Children with IEPs enrolled through VPI receive their Exceptional Education services through ECSE. These students are identified as having a delay in one or more areas of development (i.e., cognitive, social/emotional, language, adaptive, fine and gross motor) and require specially designed instruction (SDI) and supports to successfully access and participate in the general education classroom.

Fourteen students without an IEP are enrolled under the VPI program criteria and four children with an IEP are enrolled in VPI and receive their IEP services through the Exceptional Education Department. The total enrollment should not exceed 18 children ensuring a student to adult ratio of 6 to 1.

In the co-taught model, 10 children without IEPs are enrolled under the VPI program criteria and 8 children with IEPs are enrolled in VPI and receive their IEP services through the Exceptional Education Department. The total enrollment should not exceed 18 children ensuring a student to adult ratio of 6 to 1.

### Planning and Management

#### Lesson Plans

Lesson planning is an ongoing and collaborative activity necessary to support the implementation of the preschool curriculum. It requires input and feedback from all members of the classroom team. Each week, co-teachers, collaborative teaching teams and related service providers are expected to set aside time to jointly plan key experiences based on the interests of the group and supports for children with IEPs.

Planning time can occur before school, during naptime or after school. In addition to formal planning times, informal conversations between classroom staff should occur as needed. These brief check ins should not take the place of a designated time for classroom teams to plan for key learning experiences and discuss the needs of individual students.

If students receive related services such as speech, occupational therapy, or physical therapy, it is suggested that therapist(s) join classroom planning meetings to discuss performance and growth and identify strategies and supports for individual children. If they are unable to participate, there should be a method for them to access information related to the children on their caseloads (i.e., email meeting notes and/or lesson plans, shared google drive folder). When possible related services goals and objectives should be implemented within VPI classroom within the daily routines of the students.

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* Interest Areas
* Large Group (no more than 20 minutes)
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* Small Group (no more than 15 minutes)
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* Family Partnership
* WOW Experiences (part of *The Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers*)
* Individualization
* Lesson Plan templates are set up in a Block Template Format which must include the following Learning Areas: *Blocks; Fine Motor Toys & Games; Dramatic Play; Creative Arts; Language/Literacy; Outdoor; Music & Movement; Sand & Water; and Special Activities*.
* Weekly, teachers are to plan for Small group activities in the areas of Language and Literacy; Math; and Science and Cooking.
* Individual planning and specially designed instruction (SDI) is to be used for ALL children and must be used for children with disabilities.
* Co-planning is required between the ECSE and Head Start teacher

(information taken from *The Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers)*

Daily Schedule

* Each classroom must post their daily schedule on the parent board.
* Daily schedule must have a balance of child initiated and adult-directed activities

including the following:

1. Balance of quiet and active play
2. Group activity (individual, small/large group)
3. Child initiated activities (e.g., choice time, discovery time)
4. Individual and small group activities, routines and transitions
5. Interactive play
6. Activities for children with special needs

* Daily schedule must be consistent but flexible to allow changes to be made based upon the needs and interests of the children, changes in weather and/or other circumstances.
* Daily schedule must allow adequate time for a smooth transitions between activities.
* Daily schedule must contain words and pictures, when possible, and at the child’s eye level.

#### IEP Case Management

All classroom staff should share duties to deliver responsive instruction, monitor child growth and performance, communicate with families, and care for the individual needs of children (i.e., toileting and feeding). Additional shared responsibilities of the teaching team related to a student's IEPs include, collection of formal and informal assessment information, participation in IEP meetings, embedding instruction, and reporting information to families.

Progress Monitoring and Assessment

It is the responsibility of each member of the classroom staff to actively monitor the growth and performance of all students using a variety of methods. During the school year, every student will participate in health screening and educational assessments administered through the VPI program (i.e., vision, hearing, VPI Screening, Pre-K PALS).

It is the responsibility of teaching teams to use high quality instructional practices to individualize support for young children with disabilities to increase their access and participation to the general education setting. The ECSE teacher’s role is to use assessment information to identify outcomes (what to teach) based on the child’s developmental level and plan curricular activities based on their needs, abilities, and interests. A combination of child focused intervention strategies should match the child’s tier or level. Through ongoing monitoring and data collection of children’s performance, consideration should be given to the stages of learning (i.e., acquisition, fluency, maintenance, and generalization) so that adjustments can be made to the intensity and frequency of supports.

### Curriculum

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* Objectives for Development & Learning (assessment component, online TSG)

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Teachers are required to

1. Enter at least **three** anecdotal notes addressing each students’ learning goal per week.
2. Upload photo of student’s work with brief note to document learning goals.
3. Anecdotal notes must be entered and scored on the computer at least once a week. Priorities for observations and assessment should be in all areas that support the child’s Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and Individual Education Program (IEP) if applicable.
4. Complete the ongoing assessment, *Teaching Strategies Gold* for each child, three times a year (preschool classrooms) using the computerized assessment tool.
5. Print the Head Start Progress Report to share with parents during home visits and conferences per program directive.
6. Ask parent to select at least one learning goal that can be further developed at home and school to develop an Individualized Learning Goal for the Student.
7. Individualization based on assessment results must be documented on the weekly plan.

### 

### Learning Environment

Physical Environment

The learning environment should be set up and organized to ensure children have access to the physical space, materials, and equipment. Throughout the day, teachers and instructional assistants intentionally make adaptations to the space, materials and supports to increase the independence of young children with disabilities. To support accessibility and independence, areas of the classroom are labeled with pictures (e.g., learning areas, containers and shelves), visual instructions (i.e., steps to wash hands) and signs. The sensory needs of children should be considered with regard to the amount of display, lighting and sound.

VPI program staff will use the *Inclusive Classroom Profile, Research edition* (2016), to monitor the quality of PIE classrooms on an ongoing basis. It is suggested that this tool be used by teachers as a self-reflection tool to ensure appropriate supports are being provided for children.

Social Competence

VPI’s learning environment builds upon a strong foundation of social-emotional developmental, as well as developmentally-appropriate learning principles.

1. Lesson Plans must provide opportunities for children to actively participate in consistent daily routine, practice social engagement with peers and instructional staff and explore classroom materials (Active Learning) that focuses on the Social & Emotional Developmental Domains. The adapted lesson plan must be used the first 6 weeks to plan the Social /Emotional Development Unit: Building Our Classroom Community
2. Conduct lessons and activities throughout the day that promote social relationships, self-regulation and self-efficacy/self-concept (taken from RPS EHS/HS Program Procedures, pg. 25)
3. Al’s Pals curriculum is used as a supplemental social-emotional curriculum to help children to identify and understand their feelings, respect others, make healthy choices and to solve interpersonal conflict nonviolently.

Classroom management

Classroom management is very important. The program recommends the following:

* Organize your classroom strategically, for example, place noisy areas away from quiet areas (the block area is not close to the reading area).
* Plan for Transitions - the more transitions are planned, the less “down time” the children have to become “bored”.
* Use Al’s Pals to assist with Social Emotional Skills.
* Label your classroom.
* Utilize your daily schedule and help the children learn the schedule to know what to expect daily. Be consistent.
* Balance high energy level and low energy level activities (do not plan all of your most physical activities back-to-back) which will assist with behavior and keeping the children engaged.
* Have a plan for behavior management. Some children will need time to calm down and take a break. Have a nice space available (Al’s Corner), bubbles, fidget stools, etc.
* Utilize staff when needed. Coaches, education staff and social workers are available to assist with support, strategies, and referrals.

**Family Involvement - VPI**

The program has a Family Services Advocate and a Family Engagement Specialist who work together to provide services to program families. Parent Committee Meetings are held monthly to give families an opportunity to discuss concerns, suggestions and create activities to engage all families in the program. Resources are provided to families based on self-reported needs from each family.

**Family Communication-VPI**

Families receive communication regarding upcoming meetings, events and trainings through a program calendar, flyers, and quarterly newsletters from the Family Engagement Staff. Teachers always send home a monthly newsletter. Parents have an opportunity to participate on the Parent Committee and bring information from their specific classrooms/centers to the other parents. Parent-teacher conferences are twice a year and home visits are made once a year.

## Rotation of Teaching Staff

### Process for entry and exit

Teachers assigned to PIE classrooms will remain for at least 2 school years but no more than 5 unless administrators determine otherwise. At the end of each school year, program administrators will encourage teachers and instructional assistants to discuss what is working well, address any concerns and identify any supports needed to continue or discuss other teaching options. For a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the teaching staff, see Appendix C: Roles and Responsibilities of Classroom Staff.

## Communication

* Co-taught and collaborative teams will develop a system for communication with administration, parents, and staff (i.e. newsletter, in-service, meeting notes, informational packets, presentation to Staff, School Board, Special Education Advisory, etc.).
* Suggestion box will be available to all building staff for ideas, concerns and questions.
* Photographs will be taken of introductory presentation during information sessions and an article will be written for the school newspaper.
* Co-taught collaborative teams will maintain individual mailboxes and email addresses.

## Professional Development

**Coaching**

Coaches from Head Start, VPI and ECSE will provide ongoing support to PIE classroom staff related to inclusive practices. *Since all RPS Coaches in VPI and Head Start use the model of Practice-Based Coaching (PBC), this model will be used within the PIE classrooms as well.*

1. Complete the Inclusive Classes Profile (ICP) in each PIE classroom within the second month of school (end of October)

2. Write a summary of findings using the ICP Debrief Form.

3. Review the overall “scores” and refer to the handout ***Practice-Based Coaching Level of Support Form***to determine frequency of coaching needed.

4. Set up a meeting with PIE classroom staff, to review the results of the evaluation and mutually determine what areas of the ICP to target during the year.

5. Coaches will develop an action plan based on the targeted areas with teachers and determine best technical assistance strategies to address the targeted goals/activities. The action plan will include action steps and a timeline in which to complete the goal.

6. RPS Coach will review the action plan, and strategies determined mutually by coach and teachers from the ICP debrief form. RPS Coaches will determine level of confidence that best matches the needed inclusive practices instructional strategies. RPS coach will acquire skills around the instructional practice in order to coach the PIE classroom staff (modeling, reading, viewing videos with samples….).

7. RPS coaches will determine additional areas, not on the ICP that the PIE class staff may need assistance with which may include collaborative teaming, conflict resolution, determining roles and responsibilities, etc.

8. RPS coaches will determine, based on level of need (both with ICP action/strategies and collaborative teaming), the format and intensity of the coaching that will occur in the PIE classrooms. Refer to the Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) Level of Support/PIE for Richmond Public Schools.

9. RPS coaches will determine to what degree T/TAC support is needed either in the classroom or in offering PD such as trainings, book studies etc.

*\*\* The coaching strategies related to the ICP strategies should be embedded in the current action plans/coaching that RPS coaches are currently using within either the VPI/VPI + or Head Start classes. They should not be a separate action plan based on the needs determined from the ICP, Pre K CLASS or the ECERS observations.*

**RPS Coaches Expectations Related to Monthly PIE Building Level Team Meetings**

PIE building levels teams are to meet on a monthly basis for at least one hour. The purpose of these meetings is to have all PIE direct service staffs who are implementing within the Preschool Center Building meet to celebrate accomplishments, gather information from the coaches, share information related to concerns that arise in the PIE classrooms, and determine solutions to the concerns. The PIE building level team meeting times are determined at the beginning of the school year.

RPS coaches are expected to attend the monthly meetings at the preschool centers where the PIE classrooms are located that they support. A structured team meeting should be utilized, with roles including facilitator, timekeeper and recorder assigned.

#### Planning Meetings

Each preschool center PIE Team will meet on a monthly basis to discuss what is working well, address concerns, and identify needed supports. The core team can include the program coaches, a program administrator, VPI, HS, and Exceptional Education teaching staff, a community representative and a parent. T/TAC staff will continue to support the teams as necessar**y.**

**PIE Leadership Team**

A Leadership team, consisting of Head Start, VPI and ECSE administrators, will meet on a regular basis (every other month). During these meetings, the team will plan for and address issues that impact the PIE program and classrooms. Some of these issues may include: composition of classroom rosters, the yearly projection list, enrollment, eligibility, curriculum, service delivery, professional development, teaming and collaboration. A designated team member from each of the school based PIE teams are to submit their agenda items for discussion to the ECSE administrator for discussion prior to the PIE Leadership team meetings. The schedule for PIE Leadership meetings will be provided to all PIE team building teams at the beginning of the school year. The PIE team who brought the agenda item to the PIE Leadership team will receive feedback on the discussion/decision reached.

**Professional Development**

PIE teaching staff will attend joint professional development on topics such as collaborative teaming, strategies for co-teaching and joint planning, embedding IEP goals and instruction into daily routines, setting up the classroom environment, encouraging friendships, fostering self-regulation, assessing children within daily routines, assistive technology, progress monitoring and tiered instruction.

PIE teaching staff will have the opportunity to attend the National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute held annually in Chapel Hill, North Carolina during the month of May before their first year of implementing inclusion, and for returning staff as often as possible. All teachers and paraprofessionals in the PIE classrooms will be kept abreast of professional development opportunities that will benefit them.

**Professional Development-Head Start**

The Head Start Act requires all teaching staffto complete a minimumof fifteen (15) hours of training each year. Certificates are provided by the Head Start Child Development Specialist and/or EHS Specialist.

All instructional staff (teachers, instructional assistants) must develop an annual professional goal. Curriculum Fidelity and providing ongoing support for teacher quality and child outcomes is the goal determined by the RPS EHS/HS program. All professional development goals will be developed based on the needs assessment, prior CLASS scores and the Curriculum Fidelity assessment that will be conducted after the first six (6) weeks of school.

1. See Department of education and Health and Human Services Policy Letter on the Inclusion of Preschool Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (September 14, 2015) retrived at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Department of education and Health and Human Services Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool LRE (January 9, 2017), available at<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)