

# **Integrated Special Needs Preschool Mission Statement**

The focus of this program is to provide a high-quality, integrated educational experience for identified preschool aged special education children, along with an equal number of their typically developing non-disabled peers in an enriching, nurturing, friendly, and stimulating environment.

## **Summary of Need**

Child development research has established that learning and development is most rapid in the preschool years. Early childhood education programs, such as the Integrated Special Needs Preschool Program, seeks to enhance these formative years through developmentally appropriate materials, activities, and opportunities. Timing of intervention becomes particularly important when a child's disability increases their risk of missing opportunities to learn. We strive to help children develop to their potential through early identification and appropriate programming.

## **Program Location and Times**

The Integrated Special Needs Preschool program is located at Burr District Elementary School and serves both special education and typically developing preschool-age peers. The staff consists of 2 certified special education preschool teachers, who are supported by paraeducators, a speech language pathologist, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a school psychologist, the school principal, and the Director of Student Services.

The Integrated Special Needs Preschool Program utilizes the State of Connecticut Preschool Benchmarks to guide and facilitate classroom instruction. The program operates four full days and one half day per week (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning and afternoon sessions, Friday morning session only and Thursday is a full day for the afternoon students) and follows the RSD17 school year calendar. The morning session runs from 8:40– 11:30 a.m. and the afternoon session runs from 12:30-3:25 p.m. The morning session services primarily three-year-olds, whereas the afternoon session services four-year-olds. Students with special needs attend the program according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## **Eligibility Criteria for Special Needs Placement**

To determine a child's eligibility for special education in the Integrated Special Needs Preschool Program, there must be a significant delay or disability in the functional areas of a child's development. These areas include:

- Cognition
- Language
- Communication
- Self-Help Skills
- Social/Emotional
- Fine/Gross motor

For children between the ages of 3 and 6 years, such a delay or disability will be documented by the results of the individual evaluation, which includes, but is not limited to, information in all functional areas obtained from a structured observation of a student's performance and behavior, parental interview, and other individually administered assessment procedures.

A significant delay or disability to characterized by the following criteria:

- A twelve-month delay in one or more functional areas, as measured by comparing standardized test scores to those of their

same –age peers, or

- A score of 2.33 standard deviations below the mean in one functional area (which may be more than a twelve–month delay), or a score of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in each of two functional areas.

## **Eligibility Criteria for Typically-Developing Non-Disabled Peers**

The eligibility process begins in January of the school year prior to the program enrollment decision. At that time, the District advertises the existence of the program and the need to enroll typical peers. Through expressed parental interest, a teacher observation sessions of student candidates are arranged. From these sessions, a list of students that could be eligible for enrollment is developed. This list is then used in the lottery selection process, with consideration of ratio between boys and girls, the age of the children, and the equitable distribution between Killingworth and Haddam. Parents are informed of the enrollment decision in mid to late May time frame. Students need to be at least 3 by September 1<sup>st</sup> of that year. They also need to be potty trained to be considered for a “typical peer”.

The program operates four full days and one half day per week (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning and afternoon sessions, Friday morning session only and Thursday is a full day for the afternoon students). The morning session runs from 8:40– 11:30 a.m. and the afternoon session runs from 12:30-3:25 p.m. The morning session services primarily three-year-olds, whereas the afternoon session services four-year-olds. The “typical peer” children attend 4 mornings or afternoons a week.