**North Carolina Preschool Inclusion Initiative**

**Assurances 2014-2015**

The North Carolina Preschool Inclusion Initiative is a cross-agency collaborative planning process that assists communities in increasing inclusive opportunities for young children with special needs, ages three through five years. High quality preschool programs include: Head Start, North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K), Title 1 Preschool, Exceptional Children Preschool, developmental day programs, and child care. The new federal definitions for educational settings and performance expectations now set a high bar for programs to provide special education services to preschoolers with special needs in settings in which they work and play with typically developing peers.

Without a universal preschool program in North Carolina, the process of blending and integrating programs requires collaboration, commitment, and planning from community early childhood program partners and all administrators, teachers and families, and to ensure that teachers have the skills necessary to facilitate high child outcomes for all children. The approximate two-year cross-sector planning process assists in the development of a three to five year plan for increasing and sustaining inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities.

Research suggests that high quality inclusive preschool programs within communities that work together to make the long term commitment to support and make available inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities will likely increase positive outcomes for all children and families.

The Inclusion Initiative is supported by the North Carolina Preschool Exceptional Children’s Program.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Vivian James [--vivian.james@nc.dpi.gov](mailto:--vivian.james@nc.dpi.gov) or Dr. Robin Rooney—robin.rooney@unc.edu . Please review this document and provide signatures to confirm your LEA’s participation and support for this initiative. Return to Dr. Robin Rooney, NC Early Learning Network: [robin.rooney@unc.edu](mailto:robin.rooney@unc.edu).

INCLUSION INITIATIVE GOALS, ACTIVITIES & ASSURANCES 2014-15

| LONG TERM OUTCOME:  To increase inclusive LRE opportunities for children with disabilities ages 3-5 through community-wide commitment, planning and implementation of an agreed upon improvement plan addressing the key points of inclusion: access, participation and supports. | |
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| GOALS | 1. Form a community stakeholder team representing agencies and programs that serve children with and without disabilities and their families, to engage in a cross agency collaborative process to create a structure for decision making, management of planning tasks and activities. Form a leadership team of key members and subcommittees as needed to address and facilitate the work of the stakeholder team. 2. Adopt a shared definition of inclusion and develop a community vision for inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities. 3. Assess the current status, capacity and supports within the community for inclusive opportunities. Identify community strengths and barriers. 4. Develop and implement a community wide plan to support and sustain increased inclusive opportunities. |
| LEA ASSURANCES | Please check items to ensure agreement of implementation criteria:   * Identify key contacts to work with facilitator * Ensure a 2-5 year commitment to developing and sustaining a plan for increasing inclusive opportunities * Ensure key leaders within LEA are available to participate * Ensure LEA staff work with the team to complete community assessment and program profiles, using existing data and gathering additional data as needed * Develop and implement a 3-5 year plan * Complete and submit, as requested:   + Classroom profiles & action plan, including a method for measuring the growth of inclusive opportunities   + Pre & post Inclusion Initiative community assessment   + Pre & post Inclusion Initiative classroom configuration data   + End of year evaluations of process, annually. |
| STATE  ASSURANCES | 1. State guidance, facilitation and direct support for up to 2 years to assist in developing the plan, with continued support as needed to implement the plan 2. Reimbursement for registration and travel related expenses to attend the National Inclusion Institute in Chapel Hill. |

*The signatures below assure that the LEA administration agrees to accept the terms of this agreement and will fulfill the responsibilities and activities described above.*

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Signature of the Superintendent or Designee Date

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Signature of the Exceptional Children Director Date

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Signature of the Preschool Coordinator(s) Date