

**Project Enlightenment
Office of Early Learning**

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Demonstration Preschool Overview

The Demonstration Preschool (DPS) at Project Enlightenment is an inclusive therapeutic program designed for four-year-old children who are not yet kindergarten eligible. The goal is to help each child appreciate and maximize his/her capabilities while promoting appropriate social, emotional, cognitive, language and motor skills. The professional staff consists of a preschool coordinator, teacher, and teacher's assistant. University interns also participate in the program to learn about working with young children. The classroom currently serves fifteen children.

Approximately half of the children are "referred" and need therapeutic support to be successful in a classroom. These children have been identified as having needs in social-emotional and/or behavioral skill development and may experience difficulties in other areas such as speech/language, motor or learning abilities. The other half of the children are "non-referred" and are typically developing with no indication of a special need. Parents indicate which classification is applicable to their child on the application form and provide supporting documentation as needed. Children who are eligible for kindergarten cannot be considered for DPS placement. If a child is receiving services through the Wake County Public School System Preschool Services and has a current Individualized Education Program (IEP), the services can continue with a DPS placement. However, the DPS is not an appropriate placement if a half-day or full-day special education classroom is recommended in the IEP.

The DPS program emphasizes that children "learn by doing." The instructional focus is based on early learning standards for North Carolina preschoolers, adopted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The classroom is organized into centers such as: the construction center, pretend play, a creation station, music, a discovery center and a literacy center. The schedule typically includes a morning meeting to begin the day, free play time, clean-up, snack, outdoor play time and a literacy circle time. Small group activities are provided for movement education and Discovery Time.

A strong parent-teacher partnership is an integral aspect of the DPS program. The classroom has an observation booth and parents are encouraged to participate in regularly scheduled observations of the classroom, followed by a discussion. Monthly workshops are available for a nominal fee through the Project Enlightenment Parent Workshop series. Parents are also encouraged to volunteer in the classroom and attend parent-teacher conferences.

In addition to helping children and their families, the DPS is designed to demonstrate effective research based best practices and activities. Teachers, early childhood educators, care providers and others interested in young children can schedule a guided observation of the classroom and of the teachers at work. An observation booth is available for this purpose.

- ◆ The DPS is part of the Wake County Public School System but is also supported by tuition fees and additional funds from a variety of sources.
- ◆ Monthly tuition fee is \$250. Tuition assistance is available. Please indicate on the application if this is needed.
- ◆ Hours are currently 9:00-12:00 Monday through Friday.
- ◆ **Children must be four years old on or before August 31st of the year they are entering.**
- ◆ Applications are accepted beginning in December for the following school year. Open Houses are scheduled for January so parents can observe and learn more about the program.
- ◆ Enrollment decisions are made by the end of February.