

Early Educator Fast Track Initiative

The Early Educator Fast Track Initiative works with early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs to welcome NEW talent into the early education workforce by addressing teacher recruitment, compensation, introductory training, retention and ongoing professional development.

- Fast Track includes 4 weeks of full-time, paid, online and on-the-job training, transforming regular folks into confident and competent early educators ready to work in the classroom.
- Training stipend (40 hours/week for 4 weeks at a pre-determined competitive hourly rate) is paid by VECF. Training participants receive a laptop to use for online training and a teacher book set to keep.
- During training, the participant spends 16 hours per week completing **Introduction to Early Childhood** online training and up to 24 hours in the classroom observing, applying new skills, practicing high-quality interactions and potentially serving as a substitute assistant teacher.
- After 4 weeks of training, facilitated by a local college instructor, the new educator continues to work full-time at the child care program.
- To incentivize retention, the new educator receives \$1,500 in bonuses in the first year of employment, paid by VECF.

FIRST: Recruitment, Background Checks & Hiring

- Employer child care programs commit to:
 - 1) Hire one or more Fast Track candidates
 - 2) Provide onboarding and mentoring to promote employee development and retention
 - 3) Provide training stipend and bonuses to Fast Track trainees (paid by VECF)
- VECF launches a recruitment campaign for new assistant teachers. Interested individuals complete a quick interest form. VECF screens candidates and schedules interviews at participating child care programs. If it's a great match, the program and candidate submit required background checks.
- Once successful background check results are received, the candidate may be hired by the child care program at the predetermined competitive rate and can begin paid work prior to Fast Track Training.

SECOND: Training, Applied Learning & Mentorship

- Online training focuses on child development, learning environments, responsive interactions and family partnerships via videos, reading, activities, discussion and more.
- During the training period, the new educator completes onboarding at the ECCE program, including review of the employee handbook, program policies, scheduling procedures and their role/responsibilities. An experienced mentor is assigned to assist.
- New educators are encouraged to participate in [Project Pathfinders](#) college scholarships for ongoing professional development toward ECCE certificates and degrees.

THIRD: Compensation, Retention & Continued Education

- VECF provides retention bonuses for Fast Track educators—\$500 at 6 months and \$1,000 at one year of employment.
- Graduates may apply credit earned to the Early Childhood Development stackable certificate/degree program via Virginia's Community College System and participating universities, with costs covered by Project Pathfinders.
- The new educator receives ongoing mentorship and continues to learn and grow.
- The child care program is able to open closed classrooms, reduce waiting lists and serve additional families.

Fast Track is administered by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation in collaboration with Ready Regions and the Virginia Department of Education.