

Given Vermont's new licensing regulations in effect and the full implementation of Act 166 Public Pre-K, providers are reporting that Vermont is facing a serious shortage of available, qualified early childhood educators.

The TEACH Vermont Pilot Program addresses that shortage by providing scholarships, incentive bonuses, and support to non-traditional students seeking early education degrees. TEACH focuses on workforce professional development and increasing retention rates.

Since TEACH Vermont's inception with the launch of the pilot Associates program in March 2014:

- 60 have entered the Associates degree program, of which 17 have already graduated.
- Students have taken an average of 12 credits per year with an average 3.61 GPA.
- There have been 28 sponsoring center-based programs and 19 family-based programs.
- Currently, TEACH Vermont has 50 AA students with more than 15 on the wait list.

TEACH Vermont's Licensure program began in December 2015:

- Funding 50 teachers who were using the Peer Review or Transcript Review path to attain their teaching license in early education or early special education. These students are done in June 2017.
- TEACH Vermont hopes to secure funding to support 20 students per year in the future.

Fortunately, the federal Early Learning Challenge Race to the Top Grant has allowed us to create a tight and successful model for this program, and test it with the first wave of educators. We hope to build on that success by transitioning the pilot effort into a permanent program. The funding for the pilot program runs through 2017.

The TEACH Vermont Pilot Program has been so successful and is in such high demand that we are now looking to expand it to support Bachelor's degree students, so that teachers have a full continuum from Associate's to Bachelor's to licensure. The cost for providing 50 AA scholarships, 50 BA scholarships and 20 licensure scholarships per year is \$926,000. To assure quality and affordability of Vermont's early care and education system, it is important that Vermont invest in its workforce. Without TEACH Vermont, most of these students would have no affordable pathway to getting their degree.

The Blue Ribbon Commission report supports investment in workforce development and professional development for the early care and education field. By highlighting the need, the report brings more attention to the urgency and importance of the issue. With the added attention and the ending of funding for the pilot program less than a year away, now is the time to act.