COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: August 10, 2018
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Free Online Courses for Virginia Preschool Initiative Teachers**

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is pleased to announce free, online non-credit courses being offered by the University of Virginia (UVA) in the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2019 for teachers teaching Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) students during the 2018-2019 school year. The Virginia Preschool Initiative teachers in school divisions that have not received federal VPI+ grant funds will have first priority for enrollment in these online courses. Both courses are closely aligned with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The 2018 Appropriation Act requires that all VPI classrooms have the quality of their teacher-child interactions assessed once every two years using the CLASS observational instrument, and that all VPI classrooms are observed by June 30, 2020. Additional information will be provided in future Superintendent Memos regarding the implementation of this new initiative and associated opportunities for training and professional development related to CLASS observations.

Course Descriptions

Course 1: Supporting Young Children's Social, Emotional, and Self-Regulatory Development throughout the Day

This course is focused on increasing early childhood teachers' knowledge about specific types of teacher-child interactions that promote the development of social-emotional and self-regulatory skills. Teachers will practice using these interactions in their VPI classroom with the goal of enhancing the supports they provide to children in their classrooms.

Course 2: Supporting Young Children's Thinking, Problem-Solving, and Language Skills throughout the Day

This course focuses on helping teachers build environments and teacher-child interactions that support the development of children's thinking, problem-solving, and language skills across content areas – including literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional development. Teachers will complete classroom-based assignments, apply learning in their VPI classrooms, and receive feedback ensuring they can enact the practices learned.

Course Delivery Details

Course Content: These online courses each consist of 16 weeks of online material and homework assignments (approximately 45 minutes to an hour per week). Homework assignments require teachers to film in their classrooms and upload examples of their practice, with written reflections, to share with a small group of fellow teachers as well as with instructors. In addition to written feedback on homework assignments, course instructors will provide four, 30-minute coaching sessions to each participating teacher who uploads videos. The courses will be open from October 15, 2018 through March 31, 2019.

Non-credit: The courses will be offered for professional development hours (28 contact hours – no credit awarded.)

Course Timeline: October 15, 2018 – March 31, 2019

Course Enrollment

Enrollment: VPI Coordinators are responsible for nominating teachers for the courses via the _VPI Coordinator Teacher Enrollment Form_ ➔. **Enrollment forms must include signatures (via initials) of the VPI coordinator. Incomplete enrollment forms will not be considered.**

Number of Teacher Slots: One teacher slot per VPI school division, excluding VPI+ school divisions, will be reserved in one of the courses during the priority enrollment period, September 4, 2018 through September 30, 2018.

In order for VPI teachers to be guaranteed a slot in one of the courses, teachers who are nominated by VPI Coordinators must be enrolled during the priority enrollment period. After the priority enrollment period has ended, reserved slots will be open to more than one VPI teacher per school division, to early childhood special education teachers, and VPI+ teachers listed by school divisions.

If you have questions regarding course content or enrollment, please contact the UVA Course Coordinator at UVAInteractionsCourse@teams.virginia.edu ✉. If you have questions about eligible school divisions and teachers for online courses, please contact Dr. Mark R. Allan, Early Childhood Education Project Manager, at Mark.Allan@doe.virginia.gov ✉ or (804) 225-3665.

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