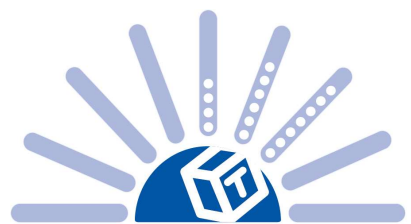


# PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Revised 2/1/24



**T.E.A.C.H.** Early  
Childhood®

**Arkansas**

A Program of  
Arkansas Early Childhood Association

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## Welcome and Introduction

### Dear T.E.A.C.H. Scholars and Sponsors:

Congratulations on participating in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ARKANSAS scholarship program. You have embarked on a great journey, and I hope you are proud of your decision to continue your education. Educated and knowledgeable teachers are a key component to a high-quality early childhood program that will benefit children and families served. If you are an employer of a T.E.A.C.H. scholar, you are investing in the future quality of your program. The fact your program is making this investment demonstrates your commitment to children and families.

Whether you are a scholar or sponsor, the purpose of this handbook is to orient you to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® program. It is important to have a clear understanding of T.E.A.C.H. to maximize scholarship benefits and get the most from your experience. Please read it carefully. A T.E.A.C.H. Counseling Specialist will be assigned to approved applicants. The Counselor will review the parts of scholarship and allow scholars the opportunity to ask questions before a contract is signed. Throughout the scholarship, Counseling Specialists will serve as a resource and guide to recipients and sponsors. Feel free to discuss any issues related to the scholarship with them.

If there are any questions or concerns, our team is available. Our job is to serve and support both recipients and sponsors as we all partner in this process for the benefit of Arkansas children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Lazenby", written in a cursive style.

Paul Lazenby  
Executive Director & T.E.A.C.H. State Manager  
Arkansas Early Childhood Association

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# 1 – Overview of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship

## A. History

The T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Project was created by Child Care Services Association in North Carolina in 1990 with the purpose of increasing the level of education of teachers working with children age birth to five, while making college education affordable, decreasing turnover, and increasing wages. Since its beginning, the program has received national attention due to linking teacher education and compensation. The Project has expanded to over twenty states. In 2019, AECA was chosen to be the administrative home of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ARKANSAS. There are now a variety of models available to help the early care and education workforce reach their goal of early childhood certificates, degrees, teacher licenses or coursework to meet a program’s staff qualification requirements.

## B. Administering Agency

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ARKANSAS is administered by the Arkansas Early Childhood Association. AECA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to representing the Arkansas early childhood workforce and serving their needs. AECA has worked for more than 60 years to promote quality care and education for the children of Arkansas including an annual conference offering the highest quality professional development for our teachers working with children from birth to age eight.

## C. Role of the Counseling Specialist

Having access to a scholarship counselor is one of the most unique and beneficial advantages of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship. T.E.A.C.H. Counseling Specialists hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or a related field. Counselors come to our program having had a variety of experiences in the early care and education field. The job of a Counseling Specialist is to provide college and scholarship guidance to T.E.A.C.H. participants and sponsoring programs. They process scholarship paperwork and regularly communicate with participating colleges and universities.

Counselors are available to assist you if there are questions regarding the scholarship, if you need help contacting your college, selecting courses or just need guidance on balancing work, school, and personal responsibilities. Keeping in regular contact with your counselor will help ensure you are always on the right path with your education plan.

## **D. Role of the Employer-Sponsor**

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship is not just a partnership with the recipient. The sponsoring employer plays a key role in supporting the scholar as they journey through the education program. Having the financial and moral support of the program is a critical key to success for T.E.A.C.H. recipients. While the recipient is in school, the employer-sponsor will:

- Pay for percentage of tuition and books for participant which will vary by contract.
- Provide release time (reimbursed by T.E.A.C.H.) which varies by number of credits being taken.
- Provide an annual incentive in the form of a stipend or permanent pay increase after the recipient successfully completes a contract and commitment period.

## **E. Confidentiality**

AECA shall respect and maintain the confidentiality of all personal information from (i.e., wage information, ID numbers, HIPAA-protected information, etc.). All information is maintained electronically on an encrypted drive with secure passwords. We will not sell your personal information. The status of a scholar's employment, scholarship and academic progress will only be shared with your employer and college officials.

## **F. Funding**

The financial support of our partners is imperative for the continuation of our program to improve the education of our early childhood workforce. We are appreciative of the confidence our partners have in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® program. Currently, funding comes through the Arkansas Department of Education-Office of Early Childhood as a subgrant using federal funding from the Child Care Development Block Grant.

## **G. Definitions**

“Applicant,” “Scholar,” and “Recipient” refer to the early childhood employee who is going to college to obtain a degree in early childhood with help from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship.

“Sponsor” and “Employer” refer to the child care center program or family child care home program where the T.E.A.C.H. scholar is employed at least 30 hours per week.

## 2 – Eligibility for the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship

### A. Applicants

To be eligible for a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship, an applicant must:

- have a GED or a diploma from a regionally accredited high school.
- work at least 30 hours per week in an Arkansas licensed child care center or family child care program as a teacher, assistant teacher, or director with children from birth to age five.
- be admitted to an approved Arkansas college to complete early childhood coursework, degree, certificate, or endorsement.
- be able to financially assist in payment of tuition, fees, and books.
- have the support and sponsorship of the child care employer.
- earn no more than the maximum hourly wage, if applicable.

Center-based applicants must document employment of at least 90 days with the sponsoring employer.

Family child care applicants must document that the sponsoring licensed family child care home has been operating in good standing for at least six months.

Other documentation will be required once the application is submitted.

### B. Employer-Sponsors

For an employer to sponsor a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship, a program must:

- Possess a regular license in good standing with Arkansas Child Care Licensing as a child care center or family child care home.
- Agree to provide release time to scholars (reimbursed by T.E.A.C.H.).
- Agree to pay annual stipends or provide permanent pay raises for completed contracts and commitment periods.
- Be able to financially assist in paying co-pays for tuition, tuition-related fees, and books.

While not required for initial participation, a three-star level of Arkansas Better Beginnings quality accreditation (or higher) is encouraged. Participation in the quality accreditation system may be used to determine priority on any waiting list or a maximum number of scholars allowed at a specific site.

## C. Professionalism

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® staff shall maintain high standards of professionalism in all interactions and communications. Likewise, T.E.A.C.H. scholars and sponsors are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner with T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® staff, college advisors and instructors. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ARKANSAS will not tolerate harassment, threats, or profanity from anyone and reserves the right to discontinue working with a recipient or sponsor at any time.



### 3 – Applying for a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® offers a variety of scholarship models to help finance coursework that leads to college credit in an early childhood related area. Those interested can find all application materials and support tools at our website: [www.arkansasearlychildhood.org/teach](http://www.arkansasearlychildhood.org/teach).

#### A. Applications

To apply for a scholarship, prospective scholars will submit a complete application to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ARKANSAS office. The office will notify applicants if a paper application or an online portal will be used to complete the application process. A complete application will consist of:

1. Completed application forms from scholar and employer.
2. Valid email address
3. Copy of paystub dated within last 30 days or Family Child Care Income Form
4. The college you wish to attend. Visit the ECE Education Directory for options.
5. Child Care License Facility number of the program where you are employed.
6. Most scholarship models require your employer to sponsor you and verify employment. Speak to your employer about T.E.A.C.H. before you apply. If the online portal is used, sponsoring employers must create and utilize a business account on the portal to provide this necessary information.

After the application has been submitted, additional documentation will be required including a copy of applicant’s Arkansas PDR (registry) transcript dated within last 90 days, proof of previous education and admissions letter from the selected college or university.

Approved applicants will receive written confirmation of their scholarship, including a welcome letter, instructions, and forms. An initial phone call or online meeting with a T.E.A.C.H. Counselor must also be completed to accept the scholarship. After accepting, a T.E.A.C.H. contract will be sent which must be signed by the applicant and employer. After graduation, a new application will be required if the recipient wishes to continue in another degree program. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood processes applications on a rolling basis. Applications are approved if the applicant meets all qualifications and funding is available. There are application deadlines for each semester:

**Fall: July 1**

**Spring: November 1**

**Summer: April 1**

Applications received after these deadlines will be processed only if time allows.

## **B. Deferrals**

Circumstances often arise that prevent approved scholars from starting classes in the semester they originally planned. In such cases, the scholar must inform the Counseling Specialist before the payment deadline of the upcoming semester. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ARKANSAS will allow scholars to defer their start date by one semester. Scholarships may only be deferred for one semester. If the scholar does not enroll the following semester, the contract will be dropped, and the scholar must reapply. Scholarship awards are always subject to availability of funds.

## 4 – Contract Requirements

### A. Overview

Approved applicants will receive a T.E.A.C.H. contract (Form A) which must be signed by the applicant, the employer, and the State T.E.A.C.H. Manager. By signing, the parties indicate they have read, understood, and agreed to the terms of the contract and Participant Handbook.

1. As part of the contract, applicants must also sign the Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA).
2. Recipients and employers are responsible for paying a percentage of tuition and books each semester.
3. Contracts run for 12 months and are renewed annually until the education goal is completed if the scholar continues to meet eligibility and academic requirements.
4. Recipients agree to complete at least nine (9) credit hours each contract period with the minimum required grades for credit towards the degree or certificate. \*
5. Recipients must maintain employment with their current employer for at least one year after the contract is completed.

*\*New scholars will be limited in the number of approved courses for the first semester.*

If a scholar is unable to complete nine (9) credits in the contract year, a Counseling Specialist will meet with them to discuss options on a case-by-case basis. Academic progress will be reviewed each semester.

If adequate progress is not being made or if the student is placed on academic probation by the school, the scholar and Counseling Specialist must meet to design an improvement plan to help the student be successful going forward. If the scholar does not agree to the improvement plan, the T.E.A.C.H. contract will be terminated. If the scholar does not consistently complete contract requirements, the scholarship may be terminated.

### B. Contract Renewal and Feedback

If adequate progress is being made and contract requirements are fulfilled, T.E.A.C.H. contracts will be renewed annually until the education goal is completed. See Section 6 for steps on renewal. Recipients will also receive an online survey each year from T.E.A.C.H. We appreciate the feedback.

### **C. Contract Extensions/Graduation**

At the discretion of the State Manager, a contract may be extended if emergency circumstances prevent the recipient from completing course requirements within the contract period. Extensions will be approved on a case-by-case basis, and only a one-semester extension may be granted.

For those scholars who are graduating in one semester, contracts will be extended to coincide with the date of graduation. If the graduation date is two semesters away, a renewal contract will be issued.

### **D. Changes in Information**

Scholars and employers must report all changes to our office within five (5) business days. This includes contact information, employment status, school admission and enrollment and any other factor pertinent to the scholarship. If changes are not reported timely, repayment will be required for any monetary loss sustained by the T.E.A.C.H. program as a result.

## 5 – Applying to a College or University

### A. Choosing a College

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship applicants must select a college that has been approved by T.E.A.C.H. To be approved, a college must be an Arkansas-based institution that is regionally accredited, offer an Early Childhood program for college credit and agree to bill T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® directly for recipient tuition and fees.

Applicants may visit the ECE Education directory of participating colleges and universities. Applicants must follow the admission and enrollment process for the selected school. A T.E.A.C.H. Counseling Specialist is available to help scholars decide which program might be best. They can also connect potential scholars with contacts at a participating college to answer questions. Most colleges have websites to apply online. When applying and enrolling, applicants must make sure they select an approved early childhood program. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® cannot pay for elementary education (K-6) or general education degrees.

Taking placement tests is part of the admissions process at many Arkansas colleges. Applicants should allow time to complete these when applying. Apply early to get your preferred entry date. If an applicant has previous college coursework, the college will require official transcripts from all colleges attended. Advisors and coordinators can also review transcripts to see which credits from previous colleges might transfer. Always get transfer decisions in writing from a school official. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® is unable to pay college application fees, transcript fees or past due balances at previous colleges.

Recipients must meet the college's requirements for admission and graduation. T.E.A.C.H. will terminate a contract for failure to meet admissions requirements or not following the approved degree plan set by the college. Recipients may not transfer to another institution if they fail to meet graduation requirements.

### B. Selecting a Degree Pathway

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships are awarded only to eligible applicants admitted to approved colleges and enrolled in an early childhood related program.

Recipients starting with a high school diploma should begin their college experience with the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Early Childhood Education. Many participating in-state colleges offer this degree in various formats. This degree will give students over 30 hours of concentrated early childhood development knowledge as well as quality field experience opportunities. Counseling Specialists can visit with recipients about which programs are most convenient. Students beginning with an associate degree

program must complete that degree before moving on to another program. If recipients prefer an intermediate step on the path to an associate degree, a Certificate of Proficiency (which leads to the Child Development Associate credential), or the Technical Certificate in Early Childhood is available at many colleges. A Certificate of Proficiency may be earned while completing the AAS.

It is the responsibility of applicants to provide documentation showing they meet all admission requirements of the program applied for.

Some degree programs require an early childhood concentration or emphasis to be eligible for the scholarship. Applicants should visit with their college advisor to verify the requirements of their degree. Should the scholar elect to not complete the required concentration or emphasis, the scholarship will be terminated, and repayment may be required depending on how far into the program the scholar is.

### **C. Other Financial Aid**

Scholars are allowed to apply for additional financial aid in the form of grants and other scholarships. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® does not require the FAFSA. However, if the recipient plans to apply for additional aid, a FAFSA must be submitted to the college's financial aid office before the deadline. Students can go to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to apply.

1. **PELL Grants:** Students who apply and qualify for PELL grants may use this assistance to pay T.E.A.C.H. co-pays and books. Any amount not applied to a student account balance after T.E.A.C.H. pays for tuition and fees will usually be refunded to the student. Be aware PELL has a lifetime maximum which can be awarded per student. Students are encouraged to use this additional financial aid only if necessary.
2. **Student Loans:** The goal of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® is to help scholars obtain a debt-free education. Terms of student loan repayment often include exorbitant interest rates and monthly payments that extend for decades. Even minimum loan payments can make it difficult, if not impossible, for early childhood professionals to achieve financial security. For this reason, we strongly discourage recipients from accepting student loans. For most models, T.E.A.C.H. pays the school in full for tuition and fees then bills recipients and sponsors for co-pays. Loans should be unnecessary for most Arkansas public colleges. Seek guidance before agreeing to any financial aid package. If you believe you need a loan for your expenses while in school, talk to your Counselor first to explain why. **T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® ARKANSAS reserves the right to reduce or eliminate tuition, fees, and book awards if student loans are accepted which might cover any part of the student account balance. In cases where loans cover tuition and fees, the T.E.A.C.H.**

**scholarship will not be awarded for those items. The only exception would be for private college tuition.** T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® funds cannot be used to repay student loan balances.

#### **D. General Education Requirements**

If a student must take transferrable general education requirements that are less expensive to complete at a community college, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® will usually require completion of those courses at the lower-cost institutions as credits will transfer.

#### **E. Negotiated Tuition Rates**

If negotiated tuition rates have been set with a particular college or university, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® will only pay those rates. The recipient will be responsible for any tuition that is higher than the negotiated rate.

## 6 – Overview of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Process

### A. After being accepted to college:

- 1) Recipients will be assigned an advisor to help them plan and register for courses. Recipients must make sure they are enrolled in the correct program.
- 2) Recipients are strongly encouraged to enroll in early childhood coursework FIRST to gain confidence in academic skills before registering for more difficult general education courses (for example, math and psychology).

### B. Steps to Complete Each Semester:

- *Plan courses.*
  - 1) Meet with your college advisor every semester to plan and register for next semester's courses.
  - 2) For recipients new to the scholarship or those without an established college record, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® limits approved courses to seven (7) credit hours per semester in the first 1-2 semesters.
  - 3) For the summer semester, recipients who are working will be limited to one course per summer term (usually **two** courses per semester). If a recipient is not working during the summer, they may enroll in up to two classes per summer term (**four** classes total). The State Manager reserves the right to require a recipient to complete contract requirements within the fall and spring semesters only.
  - 4) If a recipient is not working during the summer, employers must approve ALL schedules since they will not provide release time to offset co-pay amounts.
  - 5) Once scholars establish a record of satisfactory grades or have college hours with acceptable grades, they may be approved to take more hours. Approval is needed from T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®, the college advisor and employer-sponsor to take more than seven (7) credits per semester.
  - 6) For students on academic probation, the number of approved courses each semester may be limited by the college or T.E.A.C.H.
  - 7) Scholars who elect to go over the number of approved courses will need to arrange payment for those courses directly with the college.
- *Gather the required items for T.E.A.C.H.*

**ALL SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY T.E.A.C.H. AS WELL AS EMPLOYER APPROVAL.**



- 1) Students should be able to print these items from the college's online student portal. Scholars will obtain a copy of their official schedule and estimated tuition statement and then will enter the scheduled courses into the **Course Authorization Form (Form D)**.
  - 2) The items listed above are due immediately after registration but **MUST** be submitted at least five (5) days before the college's payment deadline for the next semester. It is the recipient's responsibility to know payment deadlines.
  - 3) After the paperwork is received and the schedule approved by T.E.A.C.H., we will send an email approval to the college giving them authorization to bill T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® for tuition and tuition-related fees.
  - 4) T.E.A.C.H. is not responsible for the cancellation of registration if paperwork is not received in our office by the deadline.
- *Submit the required items.*
    - 1) Form D, a copy of the official schedule and tuition statement must be submitted using the approved method.
    - 2) Counseling Specialist will review course selections. Approval is contingent on grades, funding availability and other factors.
    - 3) Scholars must let us know immediately if they change classes after registration. We will also need an updated copy of all documents.
    - 4) Scholars will be notified of any unapproved coursework. They will be 100% responsible for tuition and fees associated with an unauthorized course.
    - 5) If scholars plan to take more than seven (7) credit hours, they must seek approval from T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® as well as their employer.
  - *Claim reimbursement for books.*
    - 1) Once books are purchased, complete **Form B**, and submit along with copies of detailed receipts that show the book title and how items were paid for.
    - 2) Form B and receipts may be sent immediately after purchase but no later than January 15 (Fall), June 15 (Spring) or September 15 (Summer).
    - 3) We can reimburse sales tax and shipping if they are included on the receipt.
    - 4) Scholars may choose to buy or rent books. Books may be new or used if they meet course requirements. We encourage recipients to keep books that would be useful for a personal library.
    - 5) We will reimburse for eBooks/subscription cards but not reader software.
    - 6) Other than required calculators for math courses, supply items will not be reimbursed.

- 7) The tuition section of Form B does not need to be completed unless the scholar has paid tuition out of pocket and is requesting reimbursement.
  - 8) Students receiving PELL grants may have their books covered by that financial aid. You must still submit your receipts and Form B indicating books were covered by PELL. If the college deducts the amount from your PELL grant, we will reimburse you.
  - 9) Under no circumstances can books be charged to T.E.A.C.H.
- *Claim release time. (Employers may do this.)*
    - 1) Scholars and/or employers will log release time through the semester.
    - 2) The Release Time Reimbursement Claim form (Form C) will then be completed and submitted. Employer and recipient must approve before sending.
    - 3) Release Time claims may be submitted monthly or at the end of the semester.
  - *Send Grade Report.*
    - 1) At the end of the semester, scholars must send a copy of their grade report showing final letter grades.
    - 2) Grades may be needed before approval of the following semester's schedule.

### **C. Steps to Complete at the End of a Contract (Renewal)**

- When a contract is complete and up for renewal, the T.E.A.C.H. Counseling Specialist will send notice that the Information Update Form (Form E) is now due.
- Recipients will complete Form E; employers will verify and submit the form.
- A current paystub must also be submitted.
- Be sure to indicate your intention and education goal going forward.
- Once T.E.A.C.H. receives Form E/paystub then verifies grades and credit hours, any financial incentive which is due will be paid. We will also notify employer-sponsor about their portion of any incentive that is due. (All contract terms including commitment must be met for full payment to be issued.)
- For those continuing with the scholarship, a new contract will be created for scholar and employer's signature.
- Optional: If you are applying for additional financial aid, be sure to submit a new FAFSA each year. You may apply starting on October 1. The earlier, the better.
- Upon graduation, recipients must send us a copy of their diploma or transcript listing the degree and date awarded before any final incentive can be paid or a new scholarship approved.

## D. Other Fees

There may be additional costs and fees associated with college enrollment which are eligible for partial reimbursement by T.E.A.C.H.

<b>MAY BE REIMBURSABLE</b>	<b>NOT REIMBURSABLE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Praxis testing fees (if degree includes teacher licensure or endorsement)</li> <li>• CDA assessment fee (requires prior approval and additional contract)</li> <li>• Laptop (contingent on available funding and subject to dollar limits)</li> <li>• Graduation fees</li> <li>• Exemption testing fees for required courses</li> <li>• Testing center fees associated with proctoring distance learning students (if required by course instructor)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School supplies (other than required calculator for math course)</li> <li>• Application fees</li> <li>• Transcript Request fees</li> <li>• Past due balances associated with enrollment prior to T.E.A.C.H. participation</li> <li>• Student loan payments</li> <li>• School fees not related to tuition or course enrollment (parking, dining, etc.)</li> <li>• Student account interest charges</li> </ul>

For reimbursable fees, the scholar will submit Form B and a copy of their paid receipt.

## E. Reimbursement and Claim Form Deadlines

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Final Date to Submit Forms</b>
Spring	June 15
Summer	September 15
Fall	January 15

## 7 – Release Time

For each credit hour of approved enrollment, scholars are eligible for 16 clock hours of paid release time up to a maximum of 96 hours. Release time is available when classes are in session. The time may be used to attend class, study, complete homework, meet with instructors/advisors and even do personal errands that cannot be completed outside of working hours and class. Recipients may also use release time for mentor visits which cannot be completed outside of work hours. Recipients should work with their directors to find the best times for release.

If classes cover a shorter period than a normal 16-week semester, T.E.A.C.H. does not require that your program provide all release time hours but could allow they could give you as many of the eligible hours as they are able. Release time hours can be spread throughout an entire semester, even if a class is only 8 weeks.

Recipients are paid for release time through their normal payroll process. Sponsoring programs are reimbursed directly for a portion of the cost for release time at a published hourly rate after submitting the Release Time Claim Reimbursement Form (Form C). Programs may use release time reimbursements to cover a portion of the release time wages or substitute pay while the teacher is out of the classroom. Sponsor co-pays for tuition, fees and books will be deducted from release time reimbursements. If the reimbursement does not cover co-pays, the sponsoring program will be billed for the balance which must be paid prior to the beginning of the next semester. When recipients and directors approve and submit the Form C, they confirm the information is accurate.

If you have any issues with release time, talk with a counselor. While there are often challenges with release time, we hope scholars and employers can work together. Employers who will not or cannot provide release time should not sponsor a contract.

Creative suggestions for taking/providing Release Time include:

- Allow the teacher to come in late/leave early during the week while ratios are lower.
- Pay for lunch breaks that are normally unpaid.
- Use release time instead of personal/sick leave.
- Pay for holidays that are normally unpaid.
- Give small increments of time throughout the week rather than large chunks.
- A substitute could be hired specifically to cover T.E.A.C.H. recipients. This usually works best for programs that sponsor T.E.A.C.H. contracts for several employees.

Release time is an option for a director or family child care scholarship. Family child care providers are encouraged to use release time with their scholarship if they have staff available to cover their program.

## **8 – Academic Issues**

### **A. Grades**

Recipients must submit a copy of their final grades each semester. The grade report must list final letter grades and have the recipient's name. Charge approvals will be withheld, and contracts may be terminated for a recipient who does not submit grades by the end of the next semester. Grades may be required sooner if needed to approve a schedule.

If your program requires a C or better in a course, a grade of D will be treated like an F for purposes of the T.E.A.C.H. contract. A withdrawal grade does not count toward fulfillment of the nine (9) minimum credit hours. If a student receives a grade of incomplete, we may extend the contract up to 12 months to allow time to record the final letter grade once the course is completed.

### **B. Unsatisfactory Grades/Repeated Coursework**

If a scholar does not pass a required course with the minimum grade needed for degree or certificate credit, the scholar must meet with the college advisor and T.E.A.C.H. Counselor to design an improvement plan for successfully completing the course. This plan may include reducing course loads or participating in various supports such as academic coaches or applying for accommodations for diagnosed disabilities. If the counselor and advisor are satisfied the recipient is motivated and has a sufficient plan, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® will pay for the course a second time. If the same course is failed two times, the scholar will be required to pay for the course themselves the next time.

If a class must be retaken and the college allows it, the new grade may replace the initial grade, and the credits can be used toward contract completion.

### **C. Adding, Dropping or Withdrawing from a Class**

Recipients must notify their Counseling Specialist before adding, dropping, or withdrawing from a class. Students who need to drop a class must do so within the 100% refund period to avoid a requirement to repay. (This period is usually the first week of classes.) It is the students' responsibility to know the dates of critical deadlines on the college calendar.

If you do not drop or withdraw from a class before tuition is charged, you have two options:

1. Retake the class at your own expense as soon as the class is offered again.
2. Work out a repayment plan with T.E.A.C.H. to reimburse the cost of the class.

## **D. Field Experience/Practicum Courses**

Most early childhood education programs require some type of practicum, field experience or both. Recipients should speak directly to your college advisor or department coordinator to find out what the college's rules are about field experience coursework.

If recipients are required to complete practicum or field experience coursework outside of the program where they are employed, they can still retain their T.E.A.C.H. contract (even though they may temporarily drop below the minimum required working hours at the sponsoring program). In these cases, we will need an email or written statement signed by your employer that states you will remain employed at the sponsoring program and will be able to return following your field experience/practicum teaching so you can fulfill your contract year, plus the following commitment year.

## **E. CDA Credential Procedures**

Scholars **MUST** indicate to us that they plan to seek the CDA credential through a Certificate of Proficiency program. To earn the credential through T.E.A.C.H., a CDA candidate must:

1. Complete the Early Childhood Certificate of Proficiency coursework.
2. Obtain 480 hours of fieldwork.
3. Complete the Professional Portfolio.
4. Complete the family questionnaire.
5. Complete the Verification Visit conducted by a CDA PD Specialist.

Upon paying the CDA Assessment fee, the recipient or the program may submit their payment receipt to T.E.A.C.H. We will reimburse a portion of the fee to whoever paid for the assessment (minus any co-pays owing). T.E.A.C.H. will only reimburse an assessment fee one time.

For candidates who are denied the credential, the participant has two options:

- Reapply for the CDA, at your own expense, within 12 months.
- Pay T.E.A.C.H. for the cost of the initial assessment fee. Once this is paid, T.E.A.C.H. could cover the cost of reapplying at a future date.

## **F. Praxis Exams**

For T.E.A.C.H. scholarship models which include teacher licensure or endorsement, we will reimburse a portion of Praxis testing fees. Once registered for the exam, recipients may submit their receipts to T.E.A.C.H. for reimbursement (minus any co-pays due).

## 9 – Finances

### A. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of recipients and sponsors to pay tuition and book co-pays each semester. Co-pays will be deducted from reimbursements for books, travel, and release time. However, if there is a balance owing on the account, the balance must be cleared prior to the beginning of the following semester. Invoices will be sent out for any balance owing over \$25. When agreeing to sponsor a scholar, employers must ensure they have the financial resources for co-pays and stipend payments, especially if they have multiple recipients. Please talk with us if you ever have any concerns about the financial aspects of the scholarship.

### B. Payment of Tuition and Fees

Once a contract is signed, paperwork is received (See Section 6) and the recipient's schedule is approved, the T.E.A.C.H. office will send the college a charge approval via email which authorizes the college to bill T.E.A.C.H. for tuition and tuition-related fees. Following the drop/add period, the college will send T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood an invoice for the amount owed for tuition and tuition-related fees and we will pay at that time. Recipients should not need to pay the school directly except for any unauthorized coursework or fees not covered by the scholarship (supplies, food, parking, housing, interest charges).

The charge approval does not “pay” your bill. It merely authorizes the college to bill us. (You may still have a balance showing on your account until T.E.A.C.H. pays, but the charge approval will protect your registration from being cancelled we receive an invoice from the college.) Approvals will only given for courses required as part of the contracted degree or coursework. Tuition and tuition-related fees for any other courses are the responsibility of the scholar. If the scholar makes changes to their course schedule without the approval of T.E.A.C.H., the scholar may be required to repay T.E.A.C.H. if that course is not part of an approved degree plan *even if college personnel advised the scholar to change courses*. Recipients should ALWAYS involve their Counseling Specialist in such decisions.

The T.E.A.C.H. database automatically calculates the co-pays that are due each semester from the recipient and employer for tuition, fees, and books. Co-pays will be deducted from reimbursements and payments sent to recipients and employer-sponsors. If the reimbursement is insufficient to cover the amount of the co-pay, recipients and sponsor-employers will be invoiced for any remaining amount. Invoices must be paid prior to charge approvals being sent to the college for the next semester. Additional financial aid sent to the student may be used to cover co-pays.

Charge approvals will be withheld, and scholarships may be terminated if co-pays are not paid, or payment arrangements have not been made by the end of the semester. For outstanding balances, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® may deduct amounts from future scholarship payments and/or withhold payments from other AECA-administered programs.

## **C. Books**

You are responsible for purchasing or renting your own books then T.E.A.C.H. will reimburse you for our percentage. Scholars may choose to purchase books online (Amazon, etc.) or at a bookstore. We cannot reimburse you for books purchased from a friend or classmate. Submitted receipts must be from a bookstore or from an official website and include the title and price of each book.

To request reimbursement, send T.E.A.C.H. a completed Tuition/Book Reimbursement Form (Form B) with your copies of itemized book receipts/cash register receipts as soon as you can during the first half of the semester or term. Put your name on your copies of the book receipts and attach them to your Form B. Forms can be submitted through email or mail.

You may choose to purchase new or used books. And you may also choose to rent a book if the book cannot be used as a future reference. If the book will be a good reference in your future Early Childhood Education work or future class work, we encourage you to consider keeping it.

We will reimburse tax and standard shipping, as long as the charges are included on your receipt. We cannot reimburse any supplies except the cost of the required calculator for a math class if it is a required part of your degree program.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® will also reimburse for eBook purchases or a textbook subscription card like Cengage Unlimited; although, we will not reimburse for the cost of renting or purchasing the eBook readers (such as Kindle, Nook, etc.).

PELL Grant Students: If you are receiving a PELL grant, some schools will allow you to use the grant to cover textbooks. If this is the case, you must still submit a Form B with your receipt showing the books were charged to financial aid. On Form B, mark that your books are covered by PELL. If the school deducts the amount from your PELL, we will reimburse you. Under no circumstance can T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® be billed directly. If we receive a bill for books, we will inform the school that the student needs to be charged and claim reimbursement.



## D. Travel/Access Stipend

Recipients are eligible for a travel/access stipend each semester they are registered for classes. Once we receive the Form D, schedule, and tuition bill, T.E.A.C.H. will automatically process the stipend. If recipients withdraw prior to attending class, they are responsible for the repayment of any stipends or reimbursements received. Co-pays for tuition and books will be deducted from stipend and reimbursement payments.

## E. Incentive and Stipend Payments

Upon successful completion of a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® contract, recipients are eligible for an incentive payment from T.E.A.C.H. and a stipend from the employer. These awards are paid according to the following schedule:

EVENT	AMOUNT PAID
Verification of nine credit hours with the minimum required grades at the end of the contract period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 50% of the T.E.A.C.H. incentive</li></ul>
Within 90 days following successful completion of contract coursework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 50% of the employer stipend or permanent wage increase</li></ul>
Completion of the commitment period (12 months after contract ends)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remaining 50% of T.E.A.C.H. incentive</li><li>• Remaining 50% of employer stipend or permanent wage increase</li></ul>

The employer must submit a copy of the paystub showing payment of incentives or documentation of the pay increase. Recipients who voluntarily leave employment for any reason before completing the commitment period forfeit all unpaid portions of incentives.

## F. Shortened Terms

If a college has shortened terms and/or multiple terms (for example, Fall 1 and Fall 2), we will combine incentives/stipends and release time balances for those terms. We will not pay additional incentives or release time for intersessions.

## G. Tax Information

Scholars and programs are responsible for reporting all taxable income to the IRS. Regulations do not allow the T.E.A.C.H. office to withhold taxes. A 1099 form is sent each January to all participants receiving more than \$600 in taxable income for the previous year. The 1099 should be included when filing tax returns. *This information does not constitute tax advice.* Participants should consult their tax advisor for guidance.

## 10 – Commitment

By signing the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® contract, a recipient commits to remaining employed with their current child care program during the contract period plus an additional year thereafter. Recipients must work at least the same number of weekly hours during the commitment year as the contract year and must notify T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® if there are changes in the work schedule.

### A. Voluntary Quit

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® contract is an agreement that should not be entered into without thoughtful consideration. The scholar is receiving an education that is mostly paid for, and the employer is getting the benefit of a teacher with formal education in early childhood. If a recipient is considering quitting their current employer, the Counseling Specialist should be consulted FIRST before giving notice so the scholar can fully understand the consequences to the scholarship.

When a scholar voluntarily quits their sponsoring program before fulfilling their contract and commitment period, the scholarship is terminated, and the sponsoring employer is released from any further obligation to the contract. T.E.A.C.H. may require repayment of stipends. If current semester classes have been paid for, the employee will be allowed to finish the semester but will be responsible for the total amount of ALL co-pays owed. If recipients drop or withdraw after classes have been paid for, they will be liable for repayment. If classes have not been paid for, T.E.A.C.H. will advise the school that the charge approval is being withdrawn, and T.E.A.C.H. will not be responsible for payment of the semester's tuition and fees.

**The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship is NOT transferrable to another employer.**

Only in the rare case where it is documented that an employer did not fulfill contract obligations even after a reminder from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® office would we consider allowing a recipient who voluntarily quits to immediately enter a new T.E.A.C.H. contract with a different employer. Such documentation must be clear and convincing, and the sponsoring employer must first be given the opportunity to fulfill contract obligations and pay any back-owed incentives or other compensation. **Otherwise, recipients who voluntarily leave an employer will be prohibited from reapplying for the scholarship for a period of at least one year from the date they quit.** Exceptions to this policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis and only for circumstances beyond the scholar's control. Employers may have repayment requirements, but those are not part of the T.E.A.C.H. contract.

## **B. Taking a Break from College**

We understand it is often necessary to take a semester off from school. If you need to take a break, you should first visit with your Counseling Specialist to get approval. T.E.A.C.H. scholars must complete a minimum of nine (9) credit hours for the contract period. It is the recipient's responsibility to keep track of their completed hours. If a scholar can complete the contract hours and still take a semester off, then nothing is affected with the scholarship. If a recipient needs to take a break but will not fulfill their contract hours, the Counseling Specialist will discuss that with the scholar on a case-by-case basis. If more than a one-semester break is needed, the scholar will have to reapply for the scholarship unless prior approval is obtained.

## **C. Layoffs and Terminations**

Recipients laid off through no fault of their own will not be required to repay T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®, but we will not be able to continue the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship without a sponsor. Recipients will be allowed to finish the current semester but will need to be employed in another child care program that is willing to sign a T.E.A.C.H. contract to continue with our support the following semester. If a recipient with an active contract is involuntarily terminated, those situations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine what options, if any, may be available.

## **D. Employer Changes**

If ownership or management of the employer changes (for example, the program is acquired by another agency), contact us immediately. The new employer will need to agree to the terms of the original contract and sign a contract. If the employer does not agree to a contract, the recipient will be dropped from T.E.A.C.H. at the end of the current semester, but no repayment will be required. Depending on the exact circumstances, T.E.A.C.H. may approve a new contract for the recipient with a different child care employer.

## **E. Switching Degree Plans**

In most cases, recipients must complete the initial education program they are contracted for before being approved for another program.

If a scholar plans to continue their education in another program after graduation, a new application will be required. If additional prerequisites are required prior to starting a new program, recipients must use a lower cost community college to take those prerequisites (as long as the courses will transfer to the four-year school).

## 11 – Telling Your Story

We want to know your stories that would make an impact on others interested in knowing why T.E.A.C.H. exists and what we are accomplishing. Please take any opportunity to share how T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® has helped you and the children in your care. You may send us stories, photos, videos, and we will share them with our early childhood community.

## 12 – Contact Information

**Arkansas Early Childhood Association**  
**P. O. Box 4291 ♦ Fayetteville, AR 72702**  
**[www.arkansasearlychildhood.org](http://www.arkansasearlychildhood.org)**  
**[teach@arkansasearlychildhood.org](mailto:teach@arkansasearlychildhood.org)**  
**501-680-1930**



Contact us if you have any questions about your scholarship.

### ***We need to hear from you if you:***

- have any changes to your contact information.
- have had a change in any personal circumstances.
- are having trouble in or failing a class.
- are considering dropping or withdrawing from a class.
- have a personal emergency that prevents you from attending school or work for an extended period.
- number of hours worked or the age group you work with changes.
- are considering changing jobs or are no longer employed in your program.
- are considering changing colleges.
- your employer achieved national accreditation or received a new level in Better Beginnings
- have graduated or earned a credential, degree, or endorsement.
- have received an academic award or honor.