

GEORGIA PRE-K PROGRAM

Georgia's Pre-K Program has served more than 2 million students since it began in 1992.¹ This voluntary, free program is open to all four-year-olds in Georgia, regardless of parental income. The program continues to be nationally recognized for its success.

2024-2025 Participation



70,000 students²

3,785 classes³

Operating in 159 counties in 1,912 locations⁴

At the end of the year, 4,762 were on the waitlist⁵

45% were located in public school systems⁶

55% were located in private centers⁷

How is the program structured? ⁸



Maximum of 20 students per classroom

Full day program, 180 days per year



Lead and assistant teachers must meet credential requirements

Curriculum is based on the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards 

In 2022-2023, Georgia ranked 9th best in the nation for access to pre-k for four-year-olds.⁹

More than half of Georgia's Pre-K providers are Quality Rated, a voluntary, quality rating system for early and child care programs.¹⁰

HOW GEORGIA PRE-K IS IMPROVING OUTCOMES

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and the Frank Porter Graham Institute conducted a multi-year evaluation to understand the short- and long-term benefits of the Georgia Pre-K program. The study followed children from the program through fourth grade and found that children:¹¹

- ✓ **Are more prepared for kindergarten** compared to four-year-olds who did not attend any pre-k program.
- ✓ **Experienced larger than expected growth in their pre-k year in literacy, math, and social skills.** These gains were sustained during kindergarten and another period of higher than expected growth occurred in 4th grade.

Children in Georgia Pre-K showed significant growth across all learning domains, including:



Math skills



Language and literacy skills



Social-emotional skills

All students—regardless of gender or income—showed gains that lasted through kindergarten, with another boost in achievement appearing in 4th grade.

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HOW IS GEORGIA PRE-K FUNDED?

Georgia Pre-K is funded by the Georgia Lottery. **\$541,423,948** lottery dollars were allocated to the program for FY25.¹²

Research shows **low pay** is a significant factor in an early childhood teacher’s decision to leave the profession.¹³ **High turnover rates** have been linked to lower program quality and shown to negatively impact a child’s social and emotional development and relationships between teachers, children, and parents.¹⁴

Georgia’s Pre-K teachers are responsible for delivering high-quality educational and instructional services to children aged four and five. The school year consists of 180 days with at least 6.5 hours dedicated each day to direct classroom instruction. Base-level salaries for Fy26 are as follows:¹⁵



4-year degree
\$41,717

4-year degree
and certified
\$43,592

Master’s degree
and certified
\$48,706

Specialist degree
and certified
\$53,803

Doctorate degree
and certified
\$58,676



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- 1 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, professional communication, February 2025.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "Pre-K Program 2024-2025 School Year Pre-K Providers' Operating Guidelines." Accessed February 26, 2025. <http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/GuidelinesText.pdf>.
- 9 The National Institute for Early Education Research. "The State of Preschool 2023." Accessed February 26, 2025 from https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/2023_nieer_yearbook_8-9-24.pdf.
- 10 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, professional communication, July 2023.
- 11 Soliday Hong, S., Zadrozny, S., Walker, J., Love, E. N. G., Osborne, J. D., Owen, J. L., & Peinser-Feinberg, E. (2023). Longitudinal Study of Georgia's Pre-K Program: Final Report Pre-K Through 4th Grade Summary. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. Accessed February 26, 2025 from <https://fpg.unc.edu/publications/longitudinal-study-georgias-pre-k-program-final-report-pre-k-through-4th-grade-summary>.
- 12 Georgia General Assembly. Conference Committee Substitute FY2025 Budget. Accessed February 25, 2025 from https://www.legis.ga.gov/api/document/docs/default-source/house-budget-and-research-office-document-library/2025-fiscal-year/fy_2025_bill_conf_cmte_version_%28hb_916%29.pdf.
- 13 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. "High-Quality Early Learning Settings Depend on a High-Quality Workforce." Accessed February 26, 2025 from https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ece_low_compensation_undermines_quality_report_june_10_2016_508.pdf.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "2024-2025 Salary Schedule for Pre-K Lead Teachers" Accessed February 26, 2025. <https://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/LeadTeacherCredentialsandSalary.pdf>.