

School Readiness and Georgia's Summer Transition Program



Children entering Kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need to succeed are more likely than their peers to **experience later academic achievement** and attain **higher levels of education**. The lack of school readiness skills can lead to even greater disparities later in life.

Georgia's innovative Summer Transition Program for **rising Kindergarteners** and **Rising Pre-K** students helps children find success through early transitions.

What is School Readiness?

A child's school readiness is influenced by his or her own development, family, community, schools, and the services the child receives. A child's readiness for school includes:



Detection and appropriate care for potential physical or mental disabilities



Emerging social and interpersonal skills



Evident early literacy and language skills



Possession of a general knowledge about the world

Children who come from low income or non-English speaking families are less likely to have early readiness skills. Multiple studies of pre-kindergarten programs, including Georgia's Pre-K, show that participation in pre-k can greatly improve school readiness skills, particularly in high-risk populations. However, many children do not participate in pre-k or need additional supports in addition to pre-k.

Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Program

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has offered the Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Program since 2010. It is a **six-week, intensive summer program** which helps children prepare to enter Kindergarten. A child is eligible if he or she either:

Did not participate in Georgia's Pre-K Program or Head Start during the school year



Need additional help in preparing for Kindergarten

The child's family must also be eligible for Childcare and Parent Services, often referred to as CAPS (which sets family eligibility at or below 85% of the state median income).

In summer 2017, the Rising K Summer Transition Program will serve up to



2,352 children



119 locations



48 counties

which operate

147 classes

Approximately



34% are located in a public school system



66% are located in private centers



While the Rising K Summer Transition Program has grown in recent years, demand is still high. More than **4,600 children were on the waitlist for Georgia's Pre-K Program** at the end of the 2017 school year. Many more started Georgia's Pre-K at some point during the school year **missing the opportunity** to reap the full benefits of Georgia's Pre-K.

Components of the Rising K Program



Maximum of 16 kids per classroom



A lead and assistant teacher per class



Full day program operating for six weeks



Provides or coordinates care before and after school as needed through CAPS

Impact on School Readiness

A multi-year study indicates that children participating in the Rising K Summer Transition Program **improve their language and literacy skills** during the program. This is striking, considering that some students had no previous schooling and that the program lasts only six weeks.

Transition Coach

A notable difference between Georgia's regular Pre-K Program and the Summer Transition Program is the requirement of a half-time transition coach for every class. The transition coach is responsible for:



Actively seeking out students who would benefit from the program and meet the enrollment priorities



Working with families to collect eligibility documentation



Facilitating at least one family or parent engagement activity per week based on parent feedback



Connecting families with community resources



Planning kindergarten transition activities

The Need to Support Young Dual Language Learners (DLLs)

An estimated

17%

of Georgia's

3 & 4 year olds

are DLLs, with the vast majority speaking Spanish.

Spanish-speaking DLLs are substantially less likely than their peers to demonstrate school readiness skills, particularly in literacy.

High-quality early education has been shown to support DLLs' early literacy, math, and English language development, but additional support is often needed. Evaluations of Georgia's Pre-K Program showed that Spanish-speaking DLLs made substantial strides during the school year, but were **still exiting Georgia's Pre-K with a similar achievement gap**. In addition, DLLs are **less likely to enroll in early care than their peers**, underscoring the importance of the Pre-K Summer Transition Program.

Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program

In 2013, DECAL began the Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program to support children registered to enter Georgia's Pre-K Program or Head Start in the fall. To participate, families must be eligible for CAPS and **primarily speak Spanish at home**. The six-week, intensive program **addresses the specific needs of dual language families and children**.

In summer 2017, the Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program will serve up to



Approximately



27% are located in a public school system



73% are located in private centers



Although similar to the Rising K program in many ways, the Rising Pre-K Program differs in the following ways:



Maximum of 14 children per classroom



Either the lead teacher or assistant teacher AND the transition coach must be fluent in Spanish



Additional teacher training in working with DLLs



Both English and Spanish are used for instruction and behavior management

Impact on Pre-K Readiness

Research indicates that **both the English and Spanish language skills of participating children increased during the program**. Interviews with teachers indicate that the program also helps children **become more comfortable with school routines** and **overcome their shyness and dependence**.

Combined, the Rising K and Pre-K Summer Transition Program are offering a total of:

202 classes at 137 program sites

in summer 2017

The total budget for the 2017 Summer Transition Program is:

\$5.2 MILLION

with about **\$1,670**



being spent **PER CHILD**



For more information about Voices for Georgia's Children, go to www.georgiavoices.org/earlyed. For more information about the Summer Transition Program, go to www.decal.ga.gov/Prek/SummerTransitionProgram.aspx.