

Georgia's 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.

2023-2024 Participation



71,526 students²

3,682 classes³

Operating in **159** counties in **1,827** locations⁴

At the end of the year, **3,155 kids** were on the waitlist⁵

45% were located in public school systems⁶

55% were located in private centers⁷

Program Structure and Highlights



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** **GELDS**

*DECAL conducted a pilot during the 2023-2024 school year for reducing the pre-k class size from 22 to 20 students. This is being implemented throughout the state. The recommended class size is 1:10.¹¹

In 2022-2023, Georgia ranked **9th best** in the nation for access to pre-k for four-year-olds.²

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's Pre-K Program Improves 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:¹²

- ✓ **Are more prepared for kindergarten** compared to four-year-olds who did not attend a Georgia Pre-K program.
- ✓ **Sustain gains made in pre-k** through kindergarten. The greatest gains were observed during the pre-k and 4th grade years.

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



Math skills



Language and literacy skills



Social-emotional skills

Gains happened for all students, regardless of gender in income differences, and were shown to be sustained through the end of kindergarten, with another period of higher than expected gains occurring in 4th grade.

Funding for Georgia's Pre-K Program

Georgia's Pre-K Program is funded by the Georgia Lottery. **\$432,860,649** lottery dollars were allocated to the program for FY24.¹³

Research shows **low pay** is a significant factor in an early childhood teacher's decision to leave the profession.¹⁴ **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.¹⁵

In 2016, the Georgia General Assembly approved a \$34 million increase for pre-k salaries. Salaries for the 2023-2024 school year are as follows:



Assistant Teacher¹⁶
\$25,741.35

4-year degree,
Lead Teacher¹⁷
\$36,815.60

4-year degree/certified,
Lead Teacher¹⁸
\$45,320.73

Master's degree,
Lead Teacher¹⁹
\$49,843.04



References for Georgia's Pre-K Program

Suggested citation: Voices for Georgia's Children. (2024). Fact Sheet: Georgia's Pre-K Program. Voices for Georgia's Children. <https://adobe.ly/47xRwqw>.

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- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "Pre-K Program 2023-2024 School Year Pre-K Providers' Operating Guidelines." Accessed July 17, 2023. <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/GuidelinesText.pdf>.
- 9 The National Institute for Early Education Research. "The State of Preschool 2023." Accessed August 9, 2024. https://nieer.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/2023_nieer_yearbook_4.24.24-compressed.pdf.
- 10 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, professional communication, July 2023.
- 11 National Association for the Education of Young Children. "Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size." Accessed August 4, 2023. https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/accreditation/early-learning/staff_child_ratio_0.pdf.
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- 14 Georgia General Assembly. Conference Committee Substitute FY2024 Budget. Accessed July 17, 2023. [https://www.legis.ga.gov/api/document/docs/default-source/house-budget-and-research-office-document-library/2024_fiscal_year/fy_2024_conference_committee_bill_\(hb_19\).pdf?sfvrsn=a6423ac9_2](https://www.legis.ga.gov/api/document/docs/default-source/house-budget-and-research-office-document-library/2024_fiscal_year/fy_2024_conference_committee_bill_(hb_19).pdf?sfvrsn=a6423ac9_2).
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- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "2023-2024 Salary Schedule for Pre-K Lead Teachers" Accessed July 17, 2023. <https://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/2024TeacherSchedule.pdf>.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.