

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.

2022-2023 Participation

During the 2022-2023 school year, Georgia's Pre-K had:²

73,760 students in **3,732** classes operating in **159** counties in **1,844** locations

At the end of the year, **3,088 kids** were on the waitlist.³

Georgia's Pre-K programs are located in both **public school systems (52%)**⁴ and **private centers (48%)**.⁵

Program Structure⁶



Maximum of 22 kids per classroom



Full day program that runs 180 days per year



Lead and assistant teachers must meet credential requirements



Curriculum is based on the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)

Program Highlights



In 2020-2021, Georgia ranked **8th** best in the nation for access to pre-k for four-year-olds.⁷

More than half of Georgia's pre-k providers are *Quality Rated*, a voluntary, quality rating system for early and child care programs.⁸



How Georgia's Pre-K Program Improves Outcomes

From 2011 to 2015, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and the Frank Porter Graham Institute conducted a multi-year evaluation to understand the short- and long-term benefits of Georgia's Pre-K. The study followed children from Georgia's Pre-K through third grade and found children:²



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 and first grade.

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



Math
Skills



Language &
Literacy Skills



Social-emotional
Skills

These gains happened for all students, regardless of gender and income differences, and were shown to be sustained through the end of first grade.

Funding for Georgia's Pre-K Program



Georgia's Pre-K Program is funded by the Georgia Lottery. **\$401 million** lottery dollars were allocated to Georgia's Pre-K for FY23.¹⁰

Research shows **low pay** is a significant factor in an early childhood teacher's decision to leave the profession.¹¹ **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.¹²

In 2016, the Georgia General Assembly approved a \$34 million increase for pre-k salaries. Georgia's current pre-k salaries are as follows:

Assistant Teacher¹³

\$16,190.35

4-year degree,
Lead Teacher¹⁴

\$38,820.73

4-year degree &
certified, Lead Teacher¹⁵

\$38,820.73

Master's Degree,
Lead Teacher¹⁶

\$43,343.04

Sources for Georgia's Pre-K Program

- 1 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, professional communication, February 2023.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "Georgia's Pre-K Program 2020 - 2021 School Year Pre-K Providers' Operating Guidelines Revised 10.29.2020" Accessed July 14, 2022. <http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/GuidelinesText.pdf>.
- 7 The National Institute for Early Education Research. "The State of Preschool 2021." Accessed August 8, 2022. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/YB2021_Full_Report.pdf.
- 8 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, professional communication, July 2022.
- 9 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "Evaluation of Georgia's Pre-K". Accessed August 3, 2022. <https://www.decal.ga.gov/bfts/EvaluationGAPreKProgram.aspx>.
- 10 Georgia General Assembly. Conference Committee Substitute HB 911 FY 2023 Budget. Accessed August 3, 2022. https://www.legis.ga.gov/api/document/docs/default-source/house-budget-and-research-office-document-library/2023_fiscal_year/fy_2023_bill_conf_cmte_hb_911.pdf?sfvrsn=e05d7fb_2.
- 11 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 November 23, 2020. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/ece-low-compensation-undermines-quality-report-2016.pdf>.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, professional communication, July 2022.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.