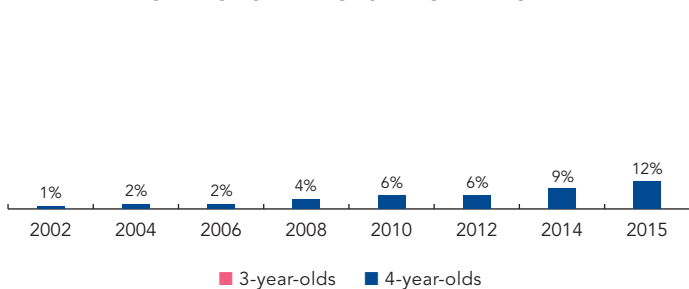


# Alabama

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED\*



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED\* (2015 DOLLARS)



Since 2000, the state of Alabama has funded preschool education programs for 4-year-olds through First Class: the Alabama Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program. All state residents who meet the age criteria are automatically eligible for the program. Enrollment has stayed relatively low due to limited resources. Increased funding in 2007-2008 led to increased access, along with technical support and scholarships for teachers working toward finishing their degrees. During the 2011-2012 school year, enrollment and appropriations grew slightly, following flat funding and no growth in access for several years before that. In 2013-2014, Alabama met its goal of having at least one pre-K classroom in each of its 67 counties.

First Class classrooms are housed in many different locations, including Head Start programs, private child-care centers, community organizations, faith-based centers, colleges and universities, military agencies and public schools. A competitive grant process determines the program locales, with grant amounts varying by location. Grantees must locally match the award, and sliding-scale fees can be included in the matching funds.

Teacher certification standards were revised in 2005-2006 to ensure that newly employed pre-K educators have specialized training in early childhood education. All 10 NIEER quality benchmarks were met for the first time with these revisions, and the program has maintained all benchmarks. In 2008-2009, the First Class program was assessed for program impact, child outcomes, and process quality. An aligned set of standards for pre-K children, the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children, was instituted in 2012 by the Office of School Readiness and the state Department of Education's Special Education services.

Although there is currently no kindergarten entry assessment required by the Alabama Department of Education, the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs is working with local school systems to implement Teaching Strategies GOLD as a kindergarten entry assessment. This is voluntary and in the pilot phase.

Alabama's business community has extended significant support to preschool since 2009-2010, when business leaders recommended the state legislature increase funding for preschool education. The Business Council of Alabama collaborated with the Alabama School Readiness Alliance to create a task force, which set out to develop policy recommendations for increasing access to high-quality prekindergarten throughout the state. In 2013-2014, the budget was increased by \$10M, adding 120 new state-funded pre-K classrooms. A new coaching and mentoring system was put into place to ensure quality standards were met. Each grantee signs assurances prior to receiving grant funding to acknowledge their understanding of the quality requirements.

The Office of School Readiness in the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs has partnered with a team of researchers to document the effects of the state's voluntary, public pre-K program. In 2014, Alabama was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$17.5 million to expand pre-K access across the state in high-risk areas. Another request for an increase in state funds by Governor Bentley was made this year, with the anticipated support of the state legislature.

ACCESS RANKINGS	
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS
29	None Served

RESOURCES RANKINGS	
STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING
17	15

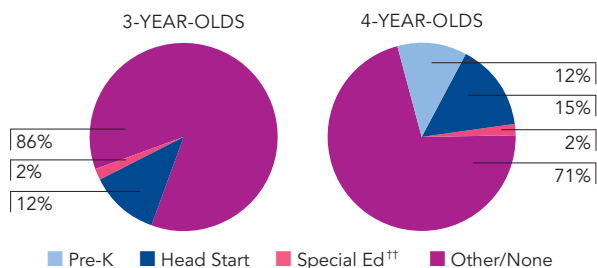
POLICIES TO SUPPORT	
DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS	WORKFORCE
—	✓

# FIRST CLASS PRE-K: ALABAMA'S VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

## ACCESS

Total state program enrollment .....	7,243
School districts that offer state program .....	100% (counties/parishes)
Income requirement .....	No income requirement
Hours of operation .....	6.5 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule .....	School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .....	3,695
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .....	15,592
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .....	1,893

STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



†† Estimates children in special education not also enrolled in state pre-K or Head Start.

## QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY	STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?
Early learning standards .....	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree .....	BA	BA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training .....	ECE (public); CD (nonpublic)	Specializing in pre-K	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree .....	CDA or 9 hours of approved coursework in Child Development	CDA or equivalent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher in-service .....	30 clock hours/year	At least 15 hours/year	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size .....		20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3-year-olds .....	NA		
4-year-olds .....	18		
Staff-child ratio .....		1:10 or better	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3-year-olds .....	NA		
4-year-olds .....	1:10		
Screening/referral .....	Vision; hearing; immunizations; psychosocial/behavioral; dental; full physical exam; and support services	Vision, hearing, health; and at least 1 support service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Meals .....	Lunch; snack	At least 1/day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring .....	Site visits and other monitoring	Site visits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET**

10

## RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending .....	\$38,624,146
Local match required? .....	Yes
State Head Start spending .....	\$4,824,900
State spending per child enrolled .....	\$5,333
All reported spending per child enrolled* .....	\$6,666

\* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.  
 \*\* Head Start per-child spending for the 2014-2015 year includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds served. Past years' figures have unintentionally included funds for Early Head Start.  
 \*\*\* K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures. Data are for the '14-'15 school year, unless otherwise noted.

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

