The Georgia Prekindergarten Program was the first preschool program in the country to offer enrollment to all 4-year-olds. This lottery-funded program began operating in 1993, and opened for unrestricted voluntary enrollment in 1995. Despite universal eligibility, the program served just over half of the state’s 4-year-olds in 2001–2002, with an additional 9 percent enrolled in the federal Head Start program. Georgia’s prekindergarten program is offered in each of the state’s 159 school districts through a combination of public and private providers. Some providers offer additional services to at-risk families through a resource coordination grant. In 2001–2002, the Office of School Readiness awarded more than 300 such grants, totaling $18,400,000.

The reimbursement rate structure of Georgia’s prekindergarten program provides an incentive for programs to employ teachers with higher qualifications. In 2003–2004, a private prekindergarten program in a metropolitan area is reimbursed $2,963 per pupil if the teacher has a vocational degree, $3,177 per pupil if the teacher has a four-year degree, and $3,566 per pupil if the teacher is certified. As of 2001–2002, 80 percent of teachers in the program had at least a BA. Reimbursement rates also depend on the location and type of program. Private programs located in metropolitan areas are reimbursed at a higher rate than those in non-metropolitan areas, and all private programs are reimbursed at a higher rate than public school programs.

In 2002–2003, there were 65,900 4-year-olds in the Georgia Prekindergarten Program, which was funded at $252,000,000.