OVERVIEW

WHAT'S NEW
Georgia’s Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) was awarded a renewal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five award in 2019 for $3.7 million to continue the work that began in 2018. In addition, Georgia’s Early Learning and Development Standards were updated in 2018-2019. Looking ahead, Governor Kemp budgeted a $3,000 salary increase for teachers in the FY 2020 state budget. This included Pre-K Lead teachers in both public and private settings. Additionally, Pre-K assistant teachers received a 2% salary increase.

BACKGROUND
Georgia’s Pre-K Program launched in 1992 as a small pilot program and expanded in 1995 to become the nation’s first state-funded universal preschool program for 4-year-olds. State lottery revenues generate funding for the program, which is provided in a variety of settings including public schools, private child-care centers, faith-based organizations, Head Start agencies, state colleges and universities, and military facilities. The program also received funding to serve 3,388 children in Summer Transition programs during the 2018-2019 school year.

An evaluation of the program, launched in 2011 by the Georgia General Assembly, is underway. Researchers from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have released data on the first two phases of the study following children who attended Georgia’s Preschool Program through kindergarten and first grade, finding demonstrated significant gains for children participating in the program across all domains of learning. Researchers are continuing to follow the representative sample of children through fifth grade. In addition, the DECAL has commissioned studies related to professional development for teachers and the summer transition program.

Budgetary constraints during the 2011-2012 school year prompted the state to adopt a higher student-teacher ratio of 11:1, with maximum class size growing to 22 students, still in effect.
GEORGIA’S PRE-K PROGRAM

ACCESS
Total state pre-K enrollment ........................................ 80,493
School districts that offer state program ....................... 100% (counties)
Income requirement .................................................. No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation .............................. 6.5 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule ............................................. School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ................. 9,670
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ........ 19,842
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ........... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY                              GA PRE-K REQUIREMENT               BENCHMARK                               REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
Early learning & development standards Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive ✓
Curriculum supports Approval process & supports Approval process & supports ✓
Teacher degree BA BA ✓
Teacher specialized training ECE, CD, ECE SpEd Specializing in pre-K ✓
Assistant teacher degree CDA CDA or equivalent ✓
Staff professional development 15 hours/school year; PD plans; Coaching For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching ✓
Maximum class size 22 (4-year-olds) 20 or lower □
Staff-child ratio 1:11 (4-year-olds) 1:10 or better □
Screening & referral Vision, hearing, health & more Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral ✓
Continuous quality improvement system Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement ✓

For more information about the benchmarks, see the Executive Summary and Roadmap to State Profile Pages.

RESOURCES
Total state pre-K spending ...................................... $365,326,541
Local match required? ........................................... No
State Head Start spending ...................................... $0
State spending per child enrolled .............................. $4,539
All reported spending per child enrolled* ...................... $4,539

For more information about the benchmarks, see the Executive Summary and Roadmap to State Profile Pages.

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE

3-YEAR-OLD
9%
2%
89%

4-YEAR-OLD
60%
3%
35%

Pre-K Head Start† Special Ed†† Other/None

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

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

PRE-K* $4,539
HDST** $8,985
K-12*** $11,238

State contributions Federal contributions Local contributions TANF spending

Data are for the 2018-2019 school year, unless otherwise noted.