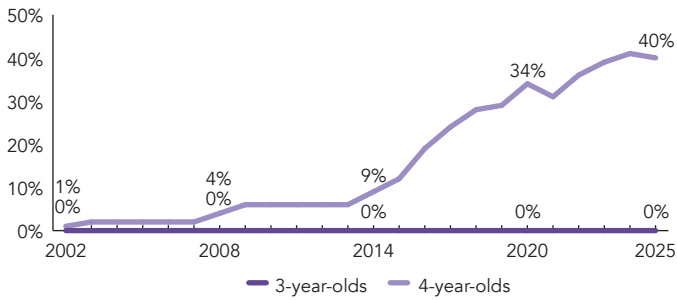
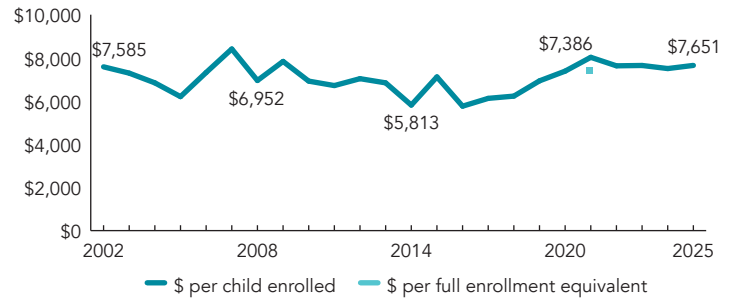


Alabama

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2025 DOLLARS)



OVERVIEW

During the 2024-2025 school year, Alabama preschool enrolled 24,238 children, a slight decrease of 402 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$185,448,382, up \$528,976 (0.3%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled \$7,651 in 2024-2025, up \$146 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation. Alabama met 10 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW

In December 2025, Alabama was awarded a federal PDG B-5 Systems Building Grant totaling \$3,877,350. This grant supports eight interrelated systems-building projects designed to address priority needs identified in the state's most recent needs assessment and strategic plan. The initiative focuses on strengthening workforce capacity, improving program quality and alignment across the mixed-delivery system, expanding meaningful family engagement, and enhancing cross-agency data integration.

Through coordinated implementation, these projects will expand professional learning and career pathway supports, strengthen governance and cross-sector collaboration, advance Alabama's early childhood data and analytic capacity, and elevate family voice in program design and decision-making. Together, these efforts will promote a more coordinated early childhood system serving children birth through age five across all settings, with particular attention to rural communities and historically underserved populations.

BACKGROUND

First Class Pre-K (FCPK) is a grant program administered by the Office of School Readiness within the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE), which is part of the Governor's Cabinet. The program funds full-day preschool education for 4-year-old children in every county through a mixed-delivery model that includes public schools, private child care centers, Head Start programs, community organizations, faith-based centers, colleges and universities, and military agencies. Through a multi-pronged approach, ADECE ensures that all children enrolled in FCPK have access to high-quality early learning classrooms in their communities. FCPK remains a voluntary, universal program available to all 4-year-olds in Alabama, regardless of setting or geographic location.

To better reflect differences in community context and operating conditions across the state, FCPK recently implemented a data-informed, six-tier funding adjustment. All classrooms continue to receive the same base award; however, classrooms are placed into one of six tiers using three years of FCPK student data and community-level economic and access indicators drawn from census tracts within a 10-minute drive of each site. Classrooms in higher tiers receive additional funding to help address local economic and access barriers. This approach supports transparent and consistent funding decisions while preserving FCPK's universal access model and maintaining the same eligibility requirements, standards, and expectations statewide.

Funding for FCPK is distributed through the Alabama Education Trust Fund Budget using a competitive grant structure that includes awards to support program quality, primary classroom operations, and the start-up of new classrooms. All classrooms receive a base level of funding, and the six-tier context-based adjustment provides additional support where local conditions warrant it. Applications for funding must meet threshold eligibility requirements that include regulatory compliance and alignment with FCPK standards, they are evaluated using a structured rubric that considers organizational capacity, classroom readiness, program quality, community need, family engagement, and fiscal responsibility. The tier adjustment applies only to funding levels and does not affect eligibility, enrollment policies, or the high-quality standards required of all FCPK classrooms.

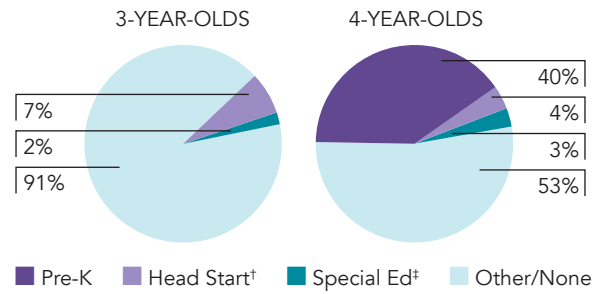
ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
18	None Served	18	17	10

ALABAMA FIRST CLASS PRE-K PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment	24,238
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	4,389
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	8,261
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	0

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE



† 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.

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY	AL PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
Early learning & development standards	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum supports	Approval process & supports	Approval process & supports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree	BA	BA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training	ECE, CD, ECE SpEd	Specializing in pre-K	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	CDA or 9 ECE/CD credits	CDA or equivalent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	30 hours/year (teachers); 20 hours/year (assistants); PD plans; Coaching	For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; Coaching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	20 (4-year-olds)	20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	1:10 (4-year-olds)	1:10 or better	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Screening & referral	Vision, hearing, health & more	Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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



RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending	\$185,448,382
Local match required?	Yes
State Head Start spending	\$5,492,533
State spending per child enrolled	\$7,651
All reported spending per child enrolled*	\$10,741

* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.

† Head Start per-child spending includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds.

‡ K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

