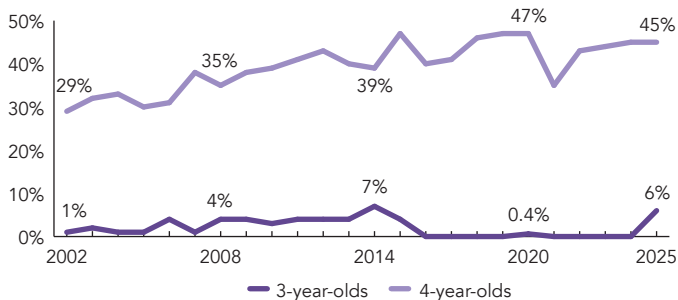
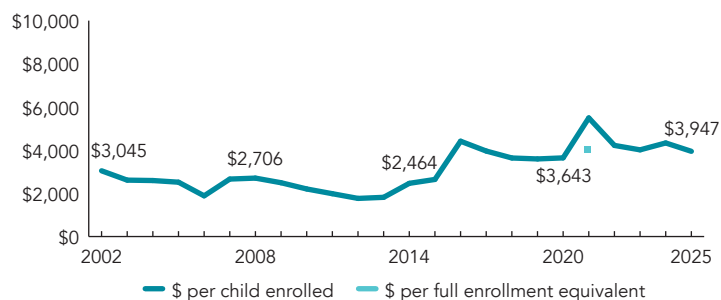


# South Carolina

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2025 DOLLARS)



## OVERVIEW

During the 2024-2025 school year, South Carolina preschool enrolled 30,586 children, an increase of 3,415 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$120,306,182 with an additional \$421,003 in federal recovery funds to support the program, up \$2,957,556 (3%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child (including federal recovery funds) equaled \$3,947 in 2024-2025, down \$387 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation. South Carolina met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

## WHAT'S NEW

In the 2024-2025 school year, all Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) teachers received training in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling Early Childhood (LETRS EC). All South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) Early Learning Specialists have taken LETRS EC and are trained as local facilitators. The Early Learning Team built coaching sessions and modules of learning around the science of reading during the 2024-2025 school year and provided coaching to CERDEP districts to build teacher capacity.

The ending of the federal ESSER funding resulted in the loss of First Steps 4K recruitment and retention stipends and support for intensive language and literacy implementation. In 2025-2026, First Steps 4K began conducting CLASS observations across all programs and rolled out an attendance campaign to support families in addressing school attendance.

## BACKGROUND

South Carolina funds two preschool programs: the Education Improvement Act Child Development Program (EIA 4K) and the public/private CERDEP. Both programs are delivered in public school settings by the Office of Early Learning & Literacy (OELL). CERDEP is co-administered in private preschool settings by South Carolina First Steps (First Steps 4K), the state's school readiness initiative.

EIA 4K began in 1984 and is funded as part of a one-cent sales tax supporting public education projects. Eligibility for EIA 4K is prioritized by law for children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) or Medicaid, and allows for consideration of children with documented developmental delays. EIA 4K districts may then set their own eligibility criteria from a state-specified list of risk factors. State funding is allocated to districts by OELL using a formula according to the number of kindergarten students who qualify for FRPL in each district. School districts now provide full-day programs, except for a few that continue to offer half-day programs.

CERDEP, originally called the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP), was created as a pilot program in 2006 in response to Abbeville County School District, et. al. v. South Carolina, a lawsuit initiated by rural school districts regarding school equity funding. The program was codified in 2014 along with the state's Read to Succeed legislation (Act 284). CERDEP provides full-day preschool to at-risk children.

To monitor quality, OELL conducts visits including an evaluation based on the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) used to provide feedback and support to ensure classrooms are language- and literacy-rich. Some programs receive additional monitoring, which includes a fidelity verification measuring curriculum implementation.

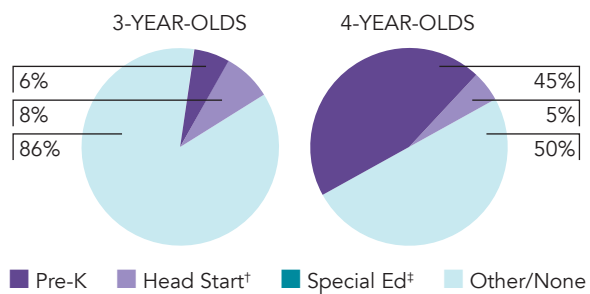
ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
15	22	38	42	7

# SOUTH CAROLINA CHILD EARLY READING DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAM (CERDEP)/ SOUTH CAROLINA EIA CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (EIA 4K)

## ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment .....	30,586
School districts that offer state program .....	100%
Income requirement .....	185% FPL
Minimum hours of operation..CERDEP: 6.5 hours/day, 5 days/week; EIA 4K: 4 hours/day, 5 days/week	
Operating schedule.....	School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .....	6,298
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .....	7,810
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	SC PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
Early learning & development standards	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	<b>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum supports	Approval process & supports	<b>Approval process &amp; supports</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree	BA (public); AA (nonpublic)	<b>BA</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training	ECE	<b>Specializing in pre-K</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	HSD	<b>CDA or equivalent</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	15 hours/year; PD plans; Coaching	<b>For teachers &amp; assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; Coaching</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	20 (4-year-olds)	<b>20 or lower</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	1:10 (4-year-olds)	<b>1:10 or better</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Screening & referral	Immunizations, developmental (CERDEP/EIA 4K); Vision, hearing, health & more (First Steps)	<b>Vision, hearing &amp; health screenings; &amp; referral</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement	<b>Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

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## RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending .....	\$120,727,185
Local match required? .....	No
State Head Start spending .....	\$0
State spending per child enrolled .....	\$3,947
All reported spending per child enrolled* .....	\$4,211

\* 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

