



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

**Brian P. Kemp**  
Governor

**Amy M. Jacobs**  
Commissioner

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact: Reg Griffin  
404-656-0239  
[reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov)



## **Georgia's Pre-K Program Prepares for 2024-2025 School Year**

*This Year Marks the 32<sup>nd</sup> Year of Pre-K in Georgia*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (July 25, 2024)** – School bells are ringing for the state's youngest learners as Georgia's Pre-K Program begins its 32<sup>nd</sup> year. The first day of Georgia's Pre-K Program will vary based on school system and child care provider. It starts as early as July 26 in Chattooga County and as late as the week of September 3 in Murray and Webster counties. Most Georgia school systems begin classes during the first two weeks of August.

“Research shows that the early education of children from birth to age five is critical to their success in kindergarten and elementary school,” said Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the state agency that administers the program. “We believe laying a solid foundation for academic and social emotional success in our youngest learners is also important for the long-term economic growth of Georgia by helping to build a competent and qualified workforce.”

“Starting school is an exciting time for children and families and is also a time when learning and education become more formalized,” said Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. “Starting school is a big step, and we are honored to provide the first quality formal education experience for many children in Georgia.”

Last year statewide Pre-K enrollment was around 73,000 students. Thanks to increased funding from the Georgia Lottery, class sizes will be reduced this year from a maximum of 22 to 20 students.

For families enrolling their children in Georgia's Pre-K Program, Adams offered the following helpful tips to make the first day go smoother:

- Attend Pre-K orientation at the school where your child will be attending. Visit the classroom so your child is familiar with the new surroundings and will be able to meet their teachers.
- Practice your morning routine days before the actual first day of school.
- Pick out your child's outfit the night before, have everything you will need ready to go!
- Send your child to school in clothes they can manage independently in the bathroom.
- Make sure your child's shoes are comfortable and safe for playtime, close-toed shoes are a good choice.
- Tell your child's teacher about any fears she/he may have.
- Discuss any special dietary needs or allergies your child may have with the teacher and ask her/him to explain program policies relating to children's allergies.
- Complete necessary forms or releases your Pre-K provider may require for dispensing medication during the school day.
- Locate the bathroom with your child and determine special bathroom routines the school observes.
- Allow extra time for the first day of school once you arrive. Make sure you have time to say good-bye.
- Ask if your child can bring a familiar blanket for rest time: Can they bring a favorite stuffed animal?
- Send a family photo in your child's backpack in case they get lonely.

Georgia's Pre-K Program began in 1992 as a pilot program serving 750 at-risk four year olds at 20 locations. Because of the success of the Georgia Lottery, in 1995 the Pre-K program was opened to all four-year-old children regardless of family income. The program has been consistently ranked one of the top state programs in the nation by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) based on quality standards, teacher qualifications and enrollment.

**About DECAL**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program; licenses child care centers and home-based child care; administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program and federal nutrition programs; and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's community-powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.al.ga.gov](http://www.dec.al.ga.gov).