



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
**Early Childhood  
Education**

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**



Dear Friends,

I am proud to serve as Alabama's 54<sup>th</sup> Governor and lead our great state. Extensive research consistently tells us that 90% of brain development takes place by the age of 5, making the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education programs and initiatives a wise investment in the future of our state.

This annual report serves as a testament to the dedication and progress we have achieved in early childhood education across Alabama. We have seen great strides in community engagement, educational excellence, and opportunities for parents as their child's first teacher.

Alabama remains a national leader in early childhood education meeting all 10 National Institute for Early Education Research benchmarks for quality standards for the seventeenth consecutive year. We continued to focus on our commitment to children by upholding high quality and standards for our youngest learners.

Last year we implemented the statewide expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Alabama led by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. No matter what a child grows up to be, reading proficiently is simply critical. Parents are our first teachers, and it is important that parents start reading to our children when they're just babies. We must encourage our children to open books during their earliest developmental stages, and through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library we have made it possible to put books directly in the hands of parents and children.

The return on investment in early childhood education is immeasurable. Providing children with a strong foundation in their early years sets them on a path toward success in school, in their careers, and as responsible, well-rounded citizens. Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to delivering excellence in early childhood education, responding to challenges with innovation, and ensuring that these programs continue to benefit our youngest citizens, community, and the great state of Alabama.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kay Ivey  
Governor



I am delighted to present our annual report, reflecting the amazing achievements of the past year at the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. I am honored to share the impactful strides our department has made in the lives of children across the state.

Our department is proud to be a partner in providing learning and development opportunities for our state's young children, helping parents as their child's first teacher, and supporting the workforce that is needed to sustain the great work. Through our partnerships, we are serving children and families through home visiting, childcare quality measurement and enhancement, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership supports, behavioral and mental health supports, Head Start collaboration, pre-k, and many other innovative programs.

We continue to grow our services to meet the growing demands for high-quality early learning and development opportunities. Over the past few months and in response to the need to ensure children have access to books in their homes, Governor Kay Ivey launched the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, a powerful tool to provide books to children and their families throughout Alabama. This great program provides a book each month to children from birth to five years, free of charge! The Governor asked our agency to take the lead for the Imagination Library, and we are committed to working with local partners throughout the state to sign up as many children as possible. This is yet another tool our state is supporting to help children have a strong start in life and develop a love of reading and learning.

Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our mission to elevate early childhood education, continuously seeking new avenues for improvement and growth. I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff, partners, and supporters for their unwavering commitment to the well-being and future success of our youngest learners.

Together, we are shaping a brighter future for the next generation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jan C. Hume".

Jan C. Hume, Ph.D.  
Acting Secretary





*Mission Statement:*

The mission of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education is to innovate, support, and deliver cohesive, equitable systems of high-quality care and education so that Alabama children and families thrive and learn.

# About Us



The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE) is a state agency with the primary responsibility of providing young children throughout the state high-quality early care and education. The ADECE employs approximately 250 people and utilizes federal and state funds for the establishment, operation, and administration of its programs.

The ADECE serves children from birth to age 8 through various programs and is home to the nationally recognized Alabama First Class Pre-K program. First Class Pre-K has been awarded the highest quality rating by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) each year since 2006. The Office of School Readiness within the ADECE is divided into eight geographical regions, with the central office located in Montgomery.

The Department operates many other programs that provide support and education to children and families, including the Alabama Pre-K-3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning (P-3), First Teacher Home Visiting, and the Children’s Policy Councils. The Department also administers the Children First Trust Fund.

## DEPARTMENT SERVICES



◆ \$218,172,945

TOTAL BUDGET

◆ \$4,000,000

STRONG START  
STRONG FINISH

◆ \$173,745,222

OFFICE OF  
SCHOOL READINESS

◆ \$1,511,714

SUMMER/AFTER  
SCHOOL PROGRAMS

◆ \$5,000,000

FIRST TEACHER  
HOME VISITING





*Dream More, Learn More,  
Care More, Be More*



# IMAGINATION LIBRARY COVERAGE ACROSS ALABAMA

During her 2023 Inaugural Address Governor Kay Ivey announced Alabama’s participation in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. She followed through on that promise with Executive Order 729 establishing a statewide Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library network for the purpose of developing, implementing, promoting, and fostering a statewide initiative dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting free books each month to children birth to age 5.

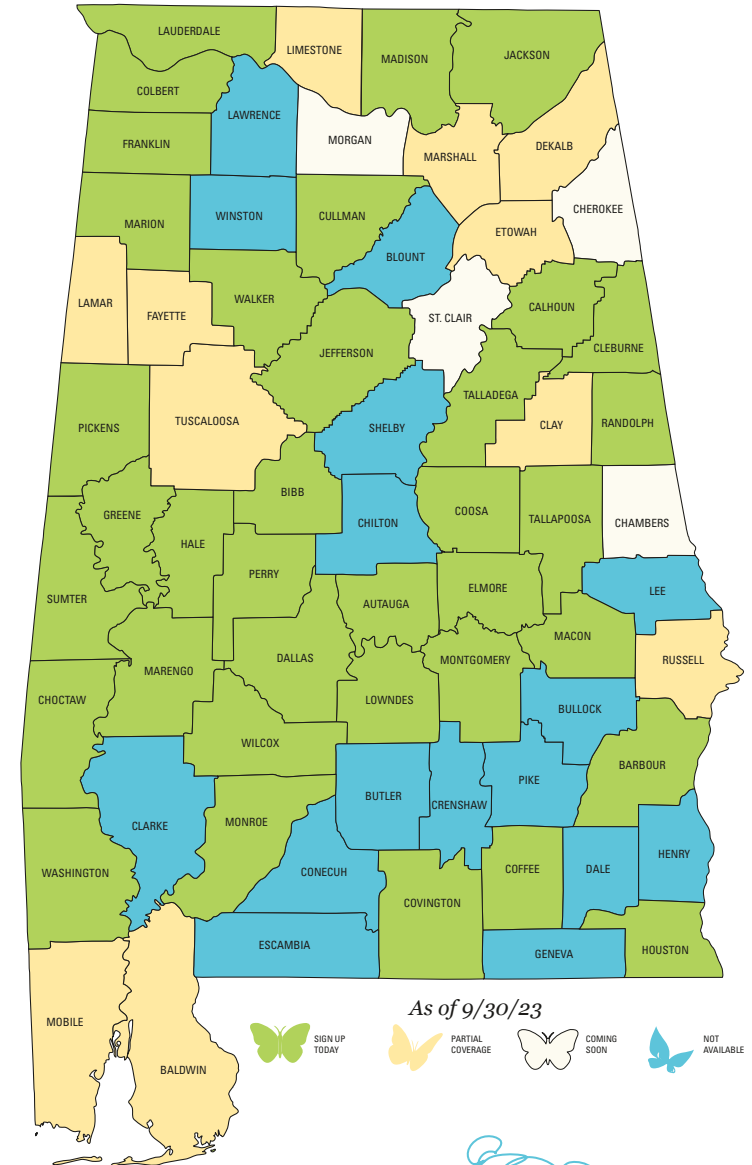
In August, Governor Ivey and the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education officially launched the statewide expansion of the book gifting program. As a statewide program, the goal is to establish local programs to provide coverage in all 67 counties.

As of September, Alabama’s program has grown to more than 50 local program partners covering portions of 51 counties across the state. More than 40,000 eligible children across Alabama are currently receiving free, high-quality books.

To check availability in your area, visit <https://imaginationlibrary.com/check-availability/> or scan the QR code.



Check availability in your area.



As of 9/30/23









# Office of Early Childhood Development



The Office of Early Childhood Development serves Alabama children from birth to age 5 by providing programs geared toward the earliest years.

Four key areas of impact are:

**First Teacher Home Visiting** – Recognizing that parents are a child’s first teacher, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education provides grant funding for voluntary First Teacher programs that focus on school readiness, child and family health and well-being, as well as helping families access resources in their communities.

◆ **3,861 children and 3,380 adults participated in the program**

◆ **All 67 counties in Alabama were served**

**Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership** – This office helps to ensure a unified early care and education system that supports low-income families through the federal Head Start program.

◆ **736 children served**

◆ **78 sites available across the state**



**Alabama Quality Stars** – This system awards STAR levels to early childhood care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards which are comprised of standardized, research-based criteria. The program’s specialists work with licensed childcare programs in dual contexts, as assessors and technical assistance providers.



Alabama Quality Stars provided technical assistance and support for quality improvement to at least 156 childcare providers across the state.

◆ **125 first-time participant childcare locations were awarded at least a 2 star rating by the STARS program**

◆ **Worked with providers with the capacity to serve more than 19,000 children**

**Challenging Behaviors Project** – This interagency agreement assists with prevention and intervention as needed for Challenging Behaviors as early as possible. This is done by building resilience in children and adults.

◆ **Provided support for 60 childcare sites from birth to 5 years of age every 6 months for a total of 120 sites per year**

◆ **Offered more than 1300 hours of technical assistance both in person and virtually**



*First Class Pre-K has been awarded the highest quality rating by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) each year since 2006.*



# First Class Pre-K



Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education oversees Alabama’s diverse delivery, voluntary, high-quality First Class Pre-K program. Classrooms are funded through a grant process in which classrooms must meet specific quality assurances and abide by rigorous operating guidelines.

According to the ADECE external research team, investments in First Class Pre-K have had long-term impacts, including closing gaps in math and reading scores, and reductions in retention in grade and special education placements. The Alabama First Class Pre-K program has expanded substantially from serving just over 5,000 Alabama 4-year-olds in 2013 to more than 23,300 in 2023, yet incremental growth and strong infrastructure have allowed for quality to be maintained and monitored. The Alabama First Class Pre-K program supports quality, accountability, and student outcomes that extend well beyond kindergarten entry.

## First Class Pre-K by the numbers in 2023:

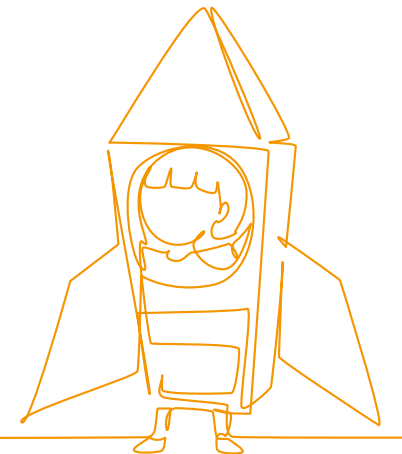
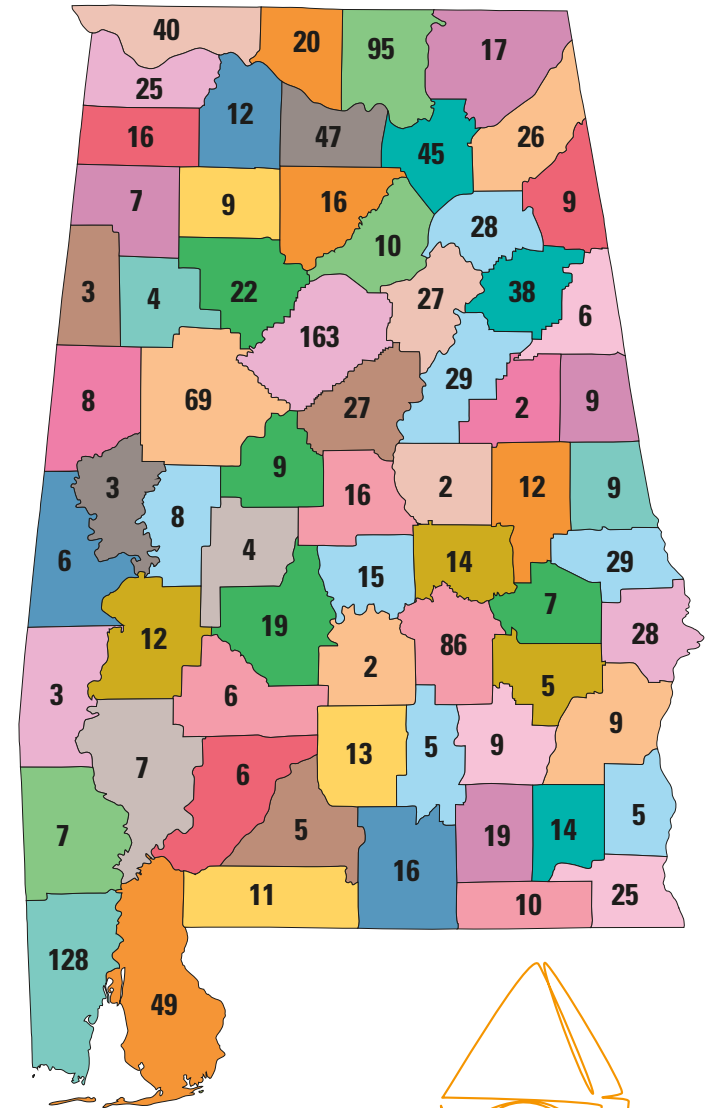
◆ **1,484**  
CLASSROOMS

◆ **41%**  
OF THE STATE’S  
4-YEAR-OLDS WERE  
ENROLLED IN A  
FCPK CLASSROOM

◆ **23,388**  
STUDENTS ENROLLED

◆ **61%**  
OF THESE STUDENTS  
LIVE BELOW THE  
POVERTY LEVEL

First Class Pre-K Classrooms by County 2022–23





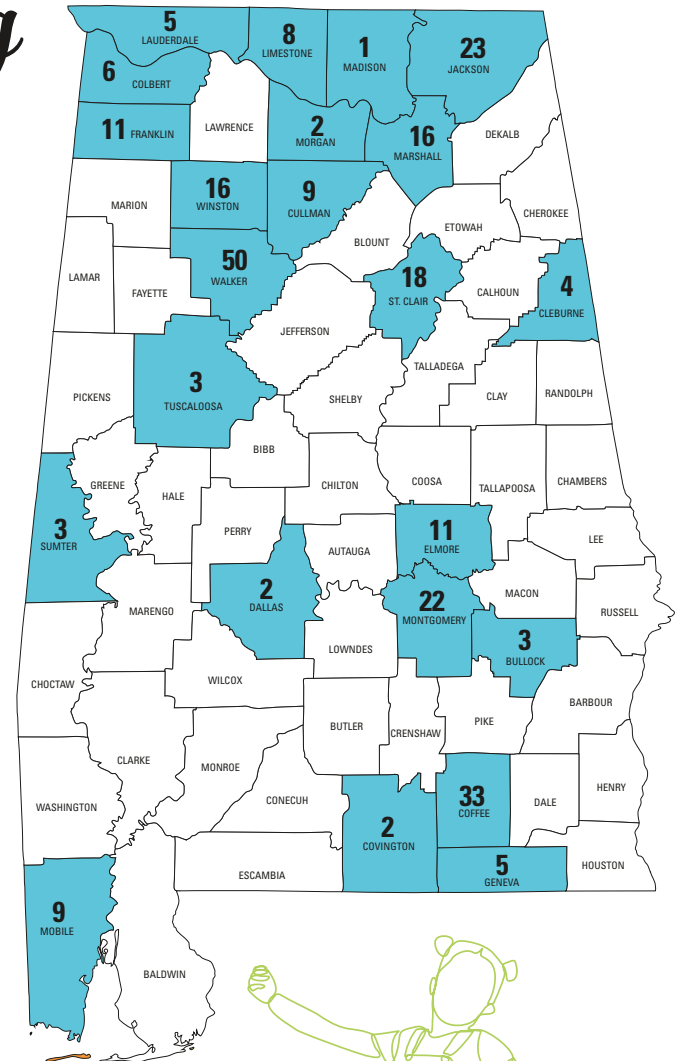


# Strong Start Strong Finish: Pre-K - 3rd Grade Early Learning



The Alabama Pre-K–3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning builds upon student success and narrows the achievement gap by expanding access to Alabama’s high-quality pre-k model. It takes the most successful parts of early learning initiatives to establish a strong foundation of early learning experience that promotes student achievement and success.

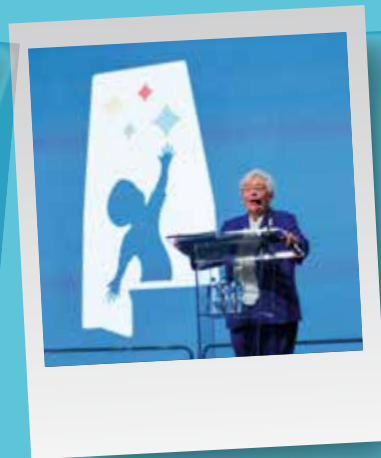
The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education works in collaboration with the Alabama State Department of Education and local education agencies to establish a strong early learning foundation for the children of Alabama. This will be accomplished through a comprehensive, systematic approach to high-quality learning opportunities using the pre-k-3rd framework and early learning continuum. This collaborative partnership will develop and implement a strong teaching and learning continuum unique to the needs and expectations of Alabama children and families.



◆ 23 COUNTIES      ◆ 51 SCHOOLS      ◆ 264 CLASSROOMS

◆ 184 KINDERGARTEN      ◆ 47 FIRST GRADE      ◆ 25 SECOND GRADE      ◆ 8 THIRD GRADE







# 2023 Alabama Early Childhood Education Conference

◆ 3,851  
ALABAMA  
EDUCATORS

◆ 200  
ADECE STAFF  
MEMBERS

◆ 100  
PRESENTERS

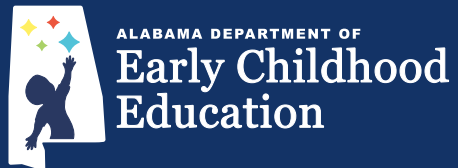
◆ MORE THAN  
60  
VENDOR STAFF

In the fall of 2023, the Alabama Department of Early Education hosted a two-and-a-half-day conference in Mobile for educators working in birth through 3rd-grade classrooms. Teachers engaged in various self-selected professional development topics from local, state, and national experts. This experience allowed teachers to be face-to-face with other professionals, networking, and learning from other's experiences and perspectives. Many participated in hands-on sessions which were both fun and informative. The conference also featured nationally known speakers and social media celebrities Gerry Brooks and Willie Spears. Governor Ivey served as the closing speaker. She encouraged and pledged her support to the greatest profession – teaching!

◆ 4,221  
ATTENDEES

*Committed to Children*





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