The Early Childhood Outcomes Center

Outcomes for Children Served Through IDEA's Early Childhood Programs: 2010–11

In 2010–11, children with delays or disabilities who received services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) showed greater than expected developmental progress. Many children exited the program functioning within age expectations, and most made progress.

State Part C and Part B preschool programs report data annually on three outcomes:

1. Social relationships, which include getting along with other children and relating well with adults;
2. Use of knowledge and skills, which refers to thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, and early literacy and math skills; and
3. Taking action to meet needs, which includes feeding, dressing, self-care, and following rules related to health and safety.

In 2010–11, for Part C (birth through age 2),

- The percentage of children who showed greater than expected growth was between 68% and 73% across the three outcomes. These children were acquiring skills at a faster rate when they left the program than when they began it.
- The percentage of children who exited the program functioning within age expectations ranged from 55% for knowledge and skills to 61% for social relationships.

In 2010–11, for Part B Preschool (ages 3 through 5),

- 81% of children showed greater than expected growth for each outcome area.
- The percentage of preschool children who exited within age expectations ranged from 53% for knowledge and skills to 66% for taking action to meet needs.

2010–11: Part C—Early Intervention (birth through age 2)

	Showed greater than expected growth	Exited the program within age expectations
Social relationships	68%	61%
Knowledge and skills	73%	55%
Action to meet needs	73%	59%

2010–11: Part B—Preschool (ages 3 through 5)

	Showed greater than expected growth	Exited the program within age expectations
Social relationships	81%	60%
Knowledge and skills	81%	53%
Action to meet needs	81%	66%

Note: Data for Part C are based on 39 states weighted to represent the nation. Data for Part B Preschool are based on 36 states weighted to represent the nation.

IDEA-funded programs serve young children with the full range of delays and disabilities, including children with severe disabilities and degenerative conditions. Individualized goals are established for each child. For children with severe disabilities, skill acquisition will proceed slowly; some children may even lose skills. For other children, the interventions help them catch up with other children their age. Until these data were collected, it was not known that such a high percentage of children in both programs were showing greater than expected growth during their time in the program and that a substantial percentage were within age expectations when they left it. Additional data reported by states showed that nearly all children acquired new skills during their time in the programs (nearly all children made developmental gains—98% for all outcomes for both programs). As states move to use these data to plan activities to improve these programs, we can expect even better results in the future.

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IDEAs that Work
Office of Special Education Programs
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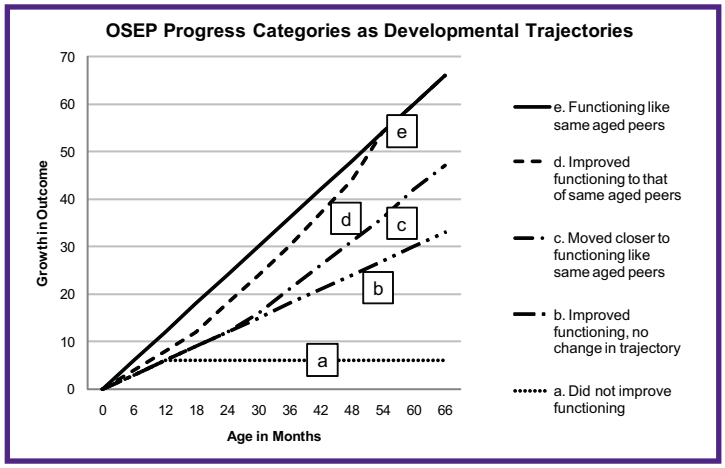
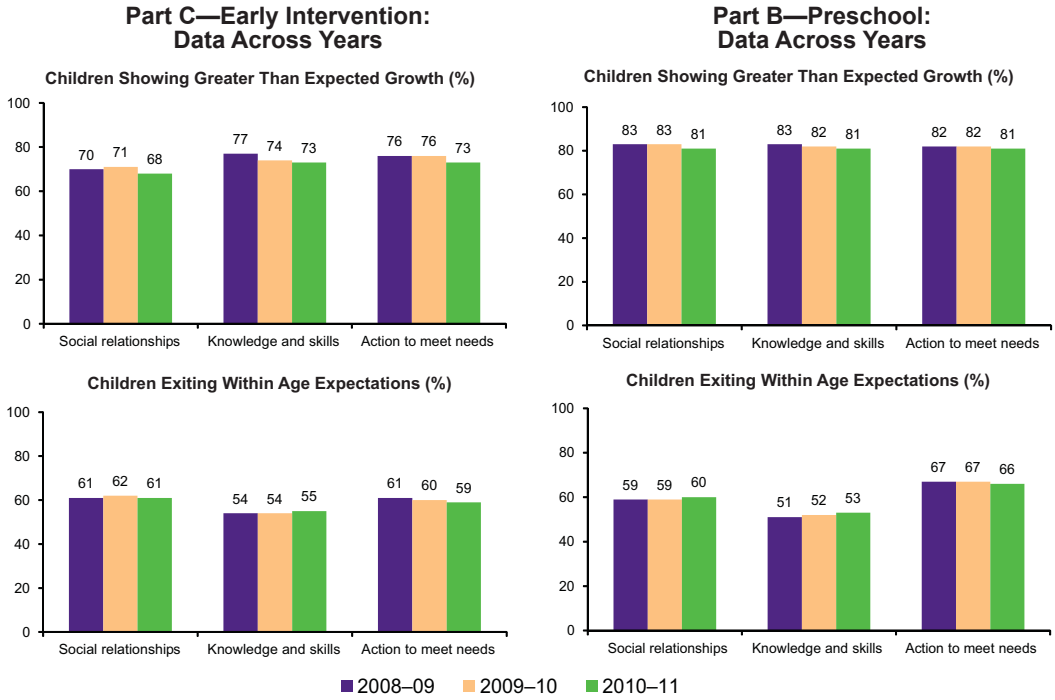
What is Greater than Expected Growth?



Developmental science has provided information about the skills children master at different ages. Knowledge of what is expected for each age enables us to identify children who are developing too slowly. Children who are substantially behind their peers are referred to as having a developmental delay. The solid line on the graph opposite (line e) illustrates typical development. All the other lines represent some kind of delay in the early years. If Angela is 12 months old with the skills of a 6-month-old, without intervention it is likely that she will continue to grow at the same rate and have the skills of a 9-month-old at 18 months of age. We provide intervention services because Angela is acquiring skills at about half the rate she should be and will continue to fall further behind her peers. This pattern of growth is illustrated in the b line in the graph. The purpose of intervening early in life is to change the child's rate of skill acquisition. The c and d lines illustrate children whose growth was *greater than expected* because their growth rate with intervention was greater than their growth rate before intervention. The children with growth pattern d catch up to what is expected for their age. States report the percentage of children in each of the five growth trajectories to the U.S. Department of Education. The percentages of children showing greater than expected growth and exiting within age expectations are computed from these five percentages.

Trends Over Time

The national data have shown slight year-to-year fluctuations. States are still building their capacity to collect valid and reliable data (see "Quality of the Data"). Until all states have procedures in place for reporting accurate data, it is difficult to know whether slight year-to-year changes are due to programmatic differences or reporting of higher quality data.



Quality of the Data

Collecting data on outcomes for young children with disabilities is a complex undertaking and is a new activity for states. States are at various stages in implementing procedures for measuring child outcomes data. The first year that any state had child outcomes data for a full cohort of children was 2008–09. States have made varying degrees of progress toward having reliable statewide data. The number of states that met the criteria for quality data for inclusion in the national analyses has increased over time for both Part C and Part B Preschool (from 19 for 2008–09 to 29 for 2009–10 to 39 for 2010–11 for Part C; from 15 for 2008–09 to 33 for 2009–10 to 36 2010–11 for Part B Preschool). Data quality is expected to continue to increase in future years as states focus on improving the quality of data for all children and using the data for program improvement.

Additional information about the measurement of child outcomes is available from the Early Childhood Outcomes Center at www.the-eco-center.org.