



Outcomes for Children Served Through IDEA’s Early Childhood Programs: 2011–12



In 2011-12, 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.

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

1. Social relationships, which includes 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
3. Taking action to meet needs, which includes feeding, dressing, self-care, and following rules related to health and safety.

In 2011-12, for Part C (birth through age 2),

- The percentage of children who showed greater than expected growth was between 66% 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 52% for knowledge and skills to 60% for social relationships.

In 2011-12, for Part B-Preschool (ages 3 through 5),

- Across the three outcomes, 80-81% of children showed greater than expected growth.
- The percentage of children who exited within age expectations ranged from 53% for knowledge and skills to 66% for taking action to meet needs.

Outcomes for Children, 2011–12 (percent)

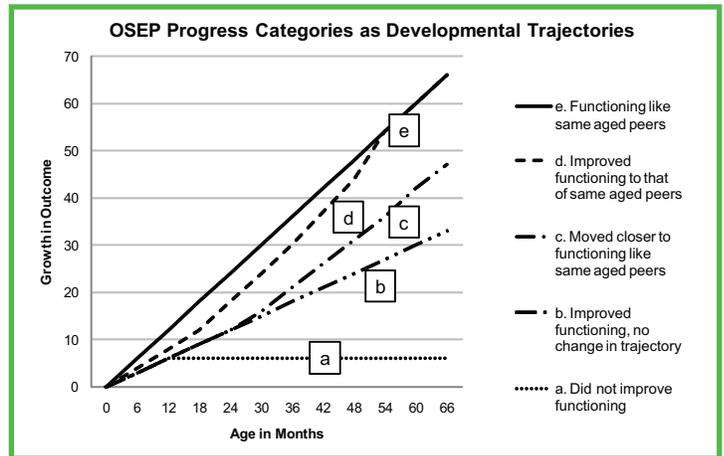
	Showed greater than expected growth	Exited the program within age expectations
Part C—Early Intervention (birth through age 2)		
Social relationships	66	60
Knowledge and skills	72	52
Action to meet needs	73	59
Part B—Preschool (ages 3 through 5)		
Social relationships	81	59
Knowledge and skills	81	53
Action to meet needs	80	66
Note: Data for Part C are based on 33 states weighted to represent the nation. Data for Part B Preschool are based on 39 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. Children with severe disabilities may acquire skills slowly, and some may even lose skills. For other children, interventions help them catch up with 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 programs and that a substantial percentage were within age expectations when they left them. Additional data reported by states showed that nearly all children acquired new skills during their time in the programs (98% for all outcomes for both programs). As states increasingly use these child outcomes data to improve IDEA-funded programs, we can expect even better results.



What Is Greater Than Expected Growth?

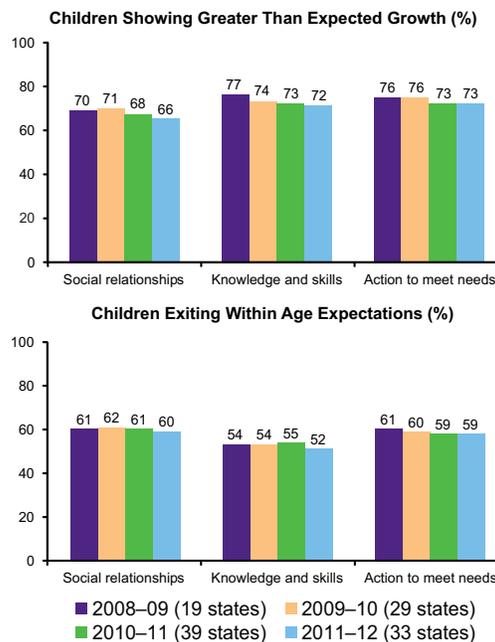
Developmental science has provided information about the skills children master at different ages. Knowledge of what is expected for each age enables us to identify children who are developing too slowly. Children who are substantially behind their peers are referred to as having a developmental delay. The solid line on the graph (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 9-month-old at 18 months. 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 line b on the graph. The purpose of intervening is to change the child's rate of skill acquisition. Lines c and d 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.



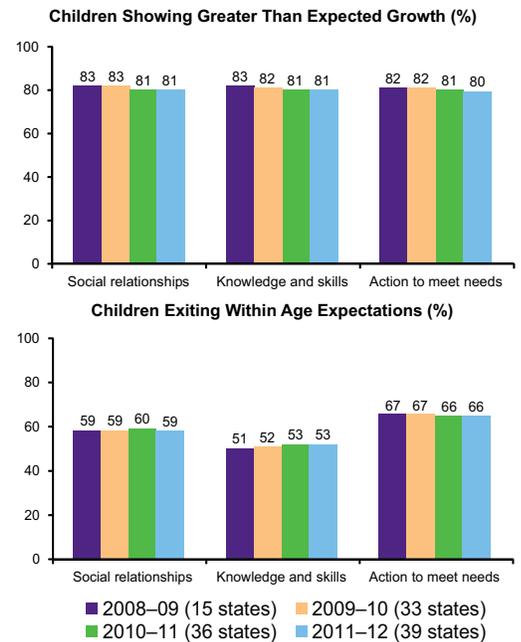
Trends Over Time

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

Part C—Early Intervention: Data Across Years



Part B—Preschool: Data Across Years



Quality of Data

Collecting data on outcomes for young children with disabilities is a complex and relatively 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 and it takes several years for quality improvement practices to be reflected in outcomes data. Over time, the number of states that met the criteria for quality data for inclusion in these analyses generally has increased, as shown in the legend of the charts above. Fluctuation in the number of Part C states that met quality criteria for 2011-12 data resulted mostly from program decisions to shift state data collection approaches. Data quality is expected to continue to improve in future years because many states have initiatives under way to address quality issues. As individual states find increasing evidence of quality in their data, they are beginning to use these data for program improvement.

