

Background

- * Early intervention programs need high-quality child outcomes data for accountability and program improvement.
- * In the U.S., all state Early Intervention (EI, birth through 2 years of age) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE, ages 3 through 5) programs are required to report data on child outcomes annually to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- * OSEP does not require specific tools or methodologies. Thus, States use a variety of approaches to collect the data.

Child Outcomes

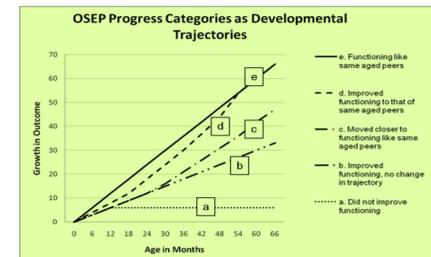
States report data for five Progress Categories and two Summary Statements for each of three Child Outcomes:

- Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
- Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication); and
- Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Two Summary Statements

- * **Summary Statement 1:** Of those children who entered or exited the program below age expectations in each outcome, the percentage who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned 3 (for EI) or 6 (for ECSE) or exited the program.
- * **Summary Statement 2:** The percentage of children who were functioning within age expectations in each outcome by the time they turned 3 (for EI) or 6 (for ECSE) or exited the program.

Five Progress Categories

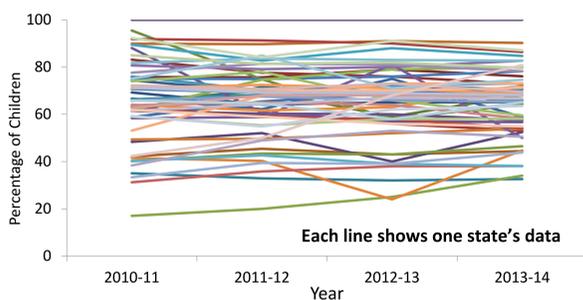


Findings

Some State Data Showed Unexpected Patterns

- * States varied considerably in the percentage of children showing greater than expected growth.
- * Most states showed the expected pattern of year-to-year stability, but some states showed dramatic differences.

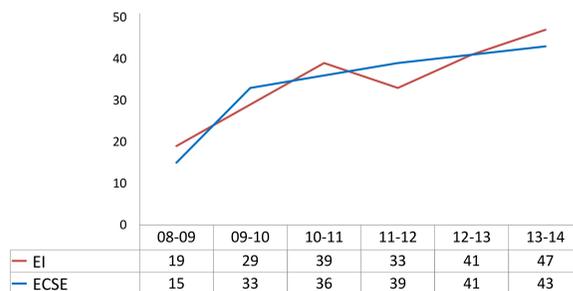
EI Trends Over Time: Greater Than Expected Growth – Social Emotional, 2013-2014, All States



Quality of State Data Has Improved

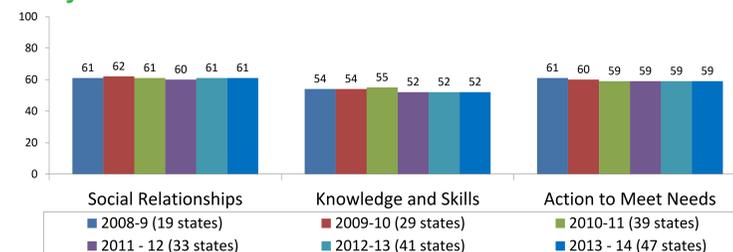
- * The national estimate uses the weighted average of states that meet minimum quality criteria.
- * Data quality criteria: Extent of missing data and anomalies in the progress category data patterns.

Number of States That Met Criteria for Inclusion in the National Analysis (N = 51)

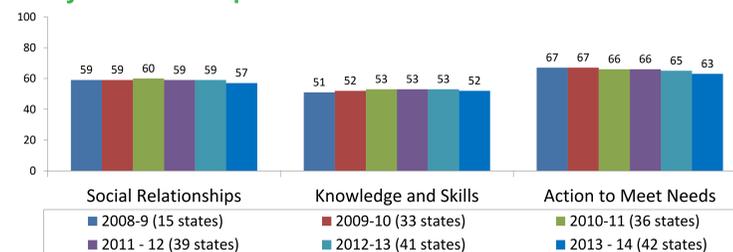


Percentage of Children Exiting at Age Expectations

Early Intervention



Early Childhood Special Education



Factors Influencing Data Quality

Before the Data Collection

Professional Development

- * Providers have sufficient training to collect accurate child outcomes data.
- * Data entry clerks are trained.
- * Directors, supervisors, and others have sufficient training to support implementation.

During or Near the Data Collection

Supervision, Feedback, and Coaching

- Program Directors, supervisors, or others support providers in implementing the data collection by:
 - * Reviewing the quality of the process for collecting child outcomes data;
 - * Checking the quality of documentation;
 - * Ensuring all providers participating in the data collection have been trained and have the knowledge and skills to collect accurate data (includes providing feedback, coaching, and additional training as needed).

Data Entry Checks

- * Data entry processes do not accept out-of-range values.
- * Data entry rules require that critical information be provided.

After the Data Collection

State/Regional Monitoring

- * State/regional staff ensure local programs monitor implementation of child outcomes measurement and/or monitor implementation directly.

Analyzing Data to Check for Quality

- * Basic checks are run for out-of-range values and missing data (if data entry check not in place).
- * Pattern checking analyses are conducted.

Data Use

- * State and local staff use data for program operations, program improvement, and accountability.
- * Note: Use improves commitment to quality data.

Discussion and Implications

Improving Data Quality

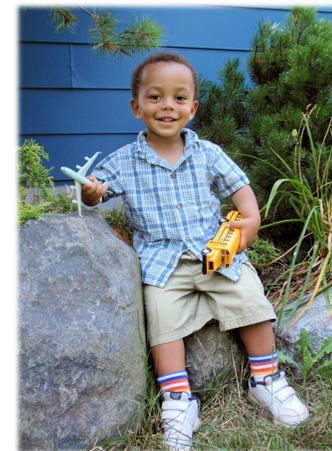
- * Although all states in the U.S. have been required to measure child outcomes for over ten years, producing consistently high quality data continues to be challenging for states.
- * The national data have shown slight year-to-year fluctuations as states build their capacity to collect valid and reliable data.
- * Until all states have procedures in place for collecting accurate data, it will remain difficult to determine whether year-to-year changes are due to programmatic differences or higher quality data.
- * Data quality must be supported before, during, and after data collection.

Role for Researchers

- * The creation of an outcomes measurement system underscores the need for researchers to work collaboratively with government agencies to enhance their capacity to ask and address data-based questions.

Policy Implications of Having High-Quality Data

- * The ongoing availability of data on child outcomes has assisted the U.S. Department of Education in making a case in the President's budget for investing in EI and ECSE; some states have made similar use of the information with state policy makers.



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